

Mas`udi, *Muruj al-Dhahab wa Ma`adin al-Jawhar*. Translated by Tarif Khalidi  
(2020)

### **Translator's Introduction**

In the truly vast field of Arabic/Islamic historiography, and as far as this eye can see, there are no historical works that can be compared to Mas`udi's *Muruj al-Dhahab wa Ma`adin al-Jawhar* ("Meadows of Gold and Mines of Gems"). It is framed as a history, which from the Islamic era onwards, is arranged according to reigns of caliphs. But it is also, and concurrently, a window open onto his own contemporary world, a world where scholars like Mas`udi were witnessing, often with horror, the rapid disintegration of the Abbasid empire in the late ninth and early tenth centuries AD. An urgency is detected in the words he uses to describe his object in writing: "to preserve for our world a memorial that can be of value, and a science that is systematic and ready to hand." [sec. 7]

In order to capture in a historical frame and preserve as "a science" this portrait of his age, Mas`udi's *Meadows of Gold* will often appear to its readers as a stock-taking, a representation of a culture described in multiple realities. It is backward-looking when it sketches the ancient and contemporary history of the civilizations known to him. It is intensely present-looking and subjective when it inserts everywhere the author's own reflections, observations and conversations garnered from extensive travel over the territories he describes, painting a portrait of all the nations known to his world. It is meta-historical when he overshadows the historical account with an ever-present and divine providence, most vividly represented in the Talibid line of Imams. It is a "science" in the sense that it preserves an accurate account of reality, relying, for example, on almanacs for dating, and on the natural sciences and philosophy to distinguish the plausible from the implausible in historical accounts. And finally it seeks to save in a record as many of the features and principles of the

arts and sciences of his age as he could: memorable poetry, eloquent prose, the value and pitfalls of such natural sciences as alchemy, astronomy and astrology, theological and juristic debates, the ascetic and the ribald in discourse, popular games, fashions in clothes, types of food and other aspects of cultural life too numerous to cite.

For a work that reveals so much of its author's inner self and views, it is ironical that his own life is wrapped in mystery. There is practically nothing about him by his contemporaries. Only two of some forty works of his have survived. He tells us that he was born in Baghdad but from a Kufan family. How he sustained himself and how he financed his extensive travels are both unknown. His date of birth is also unknown and the date of his death is given as 345/956, but the place where he died is unknown, though Egypt is conjectured. Given the fact that the great Ibn Khaldun, while unfairly censuring him for credulity, nevertheless calls him the "Imam of historians," it is extraordinary that so little is known about him in an age when Arabic/Islamic biographical writing was hyperactive. But this may be due to the fact, entirely hypothetical, that he never stayed long enough in any one location to acquire lasting colleagues or students. It is beyond question that Mas`udi was an Imami Shi`ite, yet his Shi`ism, at least in his own words, was not sectarian or partisan or led him to support any particular view [sec 3609]. Was he a Mu`tazilite in theology? Here too one observes a certain sympathy for them as against their obscurantist enemies, but there is little else besides sympathy. Was he anti-Umayyad? Yes, by and large, and again by and large pro-Abbasid, but exceptions abound in both directions. Did he have a bloated sense of the importance of his works? Probably, since he saw history as the acme of all the sciences [sec 989] and the climatic end in which all his earlier works were consummated. Thus he perceived his works as a structure or pyramid crowned by history and saw history as the ultimate achievement of his scholarly life.

In reflecting on his own world, Mas`udi will often emphasize the transient, the ephemeral, the soon to be extinguished. There is a restlessness in his story reflected not only in his travels, which he repeatedly asserts add great value to his history, but in his style of constantly interrupting the narrative with digressions. He claims he digresses in order not to bore his readers, an aesthetic stratagem, but this also serves him, I believe, to underline the abruptness of life, the sudden reversals of human existence, and the illusory nature of human achievement. Here, a reader needs to pay close attention to the very large volume of verse that Mas`udi quotes, for it is in his choice of verse where human tears and frustrations, intermixed with ribaldry, are most vividly represented.

How then can one classify Mas`udi's *Meadows*? It is a work of history in which is wrapped a geography, an ethnography, a compendium of the sciences, a broad portrait of literature, a survey of political and social life, and a constant striving, never quite fulfilled, to find a pattern into which all this vast erudition and curiosity can be fitted. Ibn Khaldun is not wrong when he says that Mas`udi "hovered around" but never actually managed to formulate the laws of history, such as one finds in Ibn Khaldun's theory of *Umran*. And yet, had we possessed his lost works, which mainly treated theological topics or topics in natural science, we might well have had a better conception of his theoretical reflections on historical transformation.

Given the vast canvas of his history, it may be salutary for us not to slot him into any rigid religious sect, camp or philosophical school. We nowadays tend too readily to label pre-modern authors like Mas`udi as belonging to one such category or another when in fact many of them, perhaps because they were steeped in *Adab*, had a far more eclectic outlook. As we have seen above, his interests ranged too widely over his world to allow us to brand him as belonging to this or that religious or intellectual tradition. Was he a Twelver Shi`ite? Yes, but obviously not bound by any strict adherence to its teachings. Was he a

historian? Yes, but obviously one who thought far more deeply about its value and method than any of his predecessors. Was he an *Adib*? Yes, but obviously one who understood *Adab* to include a far wider gamut of sciences than did his predecessors, with the possible exception of Jahiz. If this latter had taken the trouble to write a world history, the result might well have resembled Mas`udi's *Muruj al-Dhahab*.

### **This translation**

To forestall any criticism of this translation, several disclosures are required. To begin with, I based my translation on the excellent Arabic edition of the text of the *Muruj* by Charles Pellat, preserving his division of it into numbered paragraphs. However, I decided not to consult either the old French translation by Barbier de Meynard and Pavet de Courteille or the amended translation by Charles Pellat or the partial translation by Paul Lunde and Caroline Stone. Let these translations stand side by side and let scholars or interested readers accept or reject from them what they please.

Secondly, I decided not to burden the text with an extensive glossary, since an exhaustive glossary in two volumes, and in Arabic, is appended to the edition of the Arabic text by Pellat. My glossary therefore will be found to provide a minimum of glossing, and frequently less than a minimum, and there is no excuse for this except the lack of energy in old age to track down and translate the innumerable terms to be found in Mas`udi's vast coverage of his world. Specialists in the various fields will no doubt be able to correct my translation where it deals with their specialties, although my hope remains that non-specialists will find this translation adequate to derive from it general conclusions regarding the place of Mas`udi in world historiography, or at least to savor the style and world view of one of the earliest and greatest of world historians in Arabic-Islamic civilization.

Thirdly, this not so much a translation as an approximate rendering of Mas`udi's *Muruj* into English. I found the large volume of verse in particular to

be often very challenging and I cannot claim for my translations anything other than a conjectural rendering, expressed as frequent question marks. My hope is that diligent readers will spot and correct my mistakes.

Tarif Khalidi

Beirut, September 6, 2020

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### **Mas`udi, *Muruj al-Dhahab*, Vol.I**

In the Name of God, All-Merciful, Compassionate to each, through whom success.

Praise be to God, worthy of praise, veneration and glory. The blessings of God and his salvation upon Muhammad, Seal of Prophets, and upon his pure family.

## **Chapter One**

### **A general account of the contents of this book**

1. Al-Mas`udi said: Let me begin by stating that we had previously composed a work entitled *Akhbar al-Zaman* where we began by describing the shape of the earth, its cities, wonders, seas, lowlands, mountains and rivers. We then discussed the marvels of its minerals, its diverse sources of water, facts about its jungles, the islands in its seas and its small lakes, and particulars concerning towering monuments and venerated abodes. We then mentioned the world's beginning, the origins of humanity and the diversity of habitats, and what was once a river then turned into sea, what was sea and turned into land, and what was land and turned into sea across the passage of the days and the succession of epochs, the reasons for all these transformations, both astronomical and natural, the divisions among climes through the actions of the planets, and the curvature of the poles and measurements of spheres and horizons. We also cited the differences among mankind regarding ancient history and their conflicting

views regarding origins and beginnings among Indians and other types of atheists, together with the views of peoples possessing scripture and what revealed books mentioned or what was related by religious peoples.

2. We followed this up with the ancient histories of kings, of extinct nations, past centuries and vanished communities, with their diverse races, breeds and religions. We further mentioned their ancient wisdom, sayings of their philosophers, news of their kings and Caesars, including histories of prophets, messengers and saints until the point in time when God's grace bestowed the honor of prophecy upon His prophet Muhammad, God bless and save him. Here, we cited his time of birth, his upbringing, his emigration, his major military expeditions and his minor raids until the time of his death. This was followed by a continuous history of the Caliphate and the expansion of the realm from one era to the next, together with the deaths of Talibid rebels, until the time when we began composing the present work which took place during the caliphate of al-Muttaqi li'llah, that is to say the year 332 [943-4].

3. We next composed another historical work called *Al-Awsat* which dealt with history from the beginning of creation until the time at which our previous and major work comes to an end. Accordingly, we thought fit to summarize what we had set out at greater length and abbreviate what we had composed in *Al-Awsat* and to do so in a smaller and more accessible work where we include highlights from the above two works together with discussions of various sciences and histories of past nations and eras not mentioned in these two earlier works.

4. We must, nonetheless, apologize for any shortcomings that may occur and absolve ourselves from any inadvertent deficiencies. This is due to anxious thoughts and worries that troubled us, the result of far-flung journeys and travels across wildernesses, at times by sea, at others on land. We were intent upon learning the characteristics of countries through direct observation and upon acquainting ourselves with the peculiar features of regions through close

scrutiny. We thus traversed the regions of Sind, Zanj, Sanf, China and Zabij, and we plunged into both east and west. At times we were in furthest Khurasan, at others in central Armenia, Adharbaijan, al-Ran and al-Bailaqa,\* at yet others in Iraq or Syria, travelling by night across far-flung regions just as the sun moves towards dawn. It was as the poet said:

*He heads towards regions and countries,  
At times to furthest east, at others to west,  
Like the sun's journey by night;  
Tossed ceaselessly by diverse destinations  
Towards a distant horizon caravans fail to reach.*

5. The author said: We also conferred with rulers of diverse styles, of diverse moralities, diverse ambitions and in far-flung countries, and we came to understand every single aspect of their beliefs and principles. However, all traces and shining lights of knowledge have nowadays become extinguished. The ignorant are many, the wise are few. You will not encounter except an ignorant pretender to knowledge, deficient in what he practices, content to believe in illusions and blind to certainty and truth. Accordingly, we decided not to compose any work of history or devote ourselves to it until we had finished our other works which were devoted to the various types of beliefs and religions such as: *Exposing the Principles of Religion*, *Theories regarding the Principles of Religions*, *The Secret of Life*, and *Systems of Proof in the Principles of the Islamic Religion*. This last work dealt with the principles of *Fatwa* and the laws concerning judgments, such as attaining certainty through *Qiyas* and *Ijtihad* in issuing judgments; the effect of *Ra'y* and *Istihsan*; knowledge of *Nasikh* and *Mansukh*; how *Ijma`* is arrived at and its nature; knowledge of the particular and the general in legal commandments and prohibitions; prohibited and permitted acts; the significance of reports, whether through multiple or through individual transmission; and the acts of the Prophet, together with all other matters relevant to the above such as the principles of

*Fatwa* and debates with adversaries who disputed our views or agreed with some of them.

6. Also to be mentioned is our work entitled *Rational Reflections on the Imamate*, where we cited diverse opinions as for instance the views of those who believed in designation or else in election, and the arguments advanced by each party; also our work entitled *Choicest Views regarding the Imamate*, which together with our other books discussed the sciences of the manifest and the hidden, the visible and invisible, the ruined and the standing [reading *al-waqif*], and revealed the views of those who expect the end of days and who refer to a stream of light shining on earth and spreading through barren and fertile lands; we also discussed what is to follow the terrible conflicts of the end of time which are reported in literal form and whose interpretation is clear. We might also allude to our other works that deal with the art of government, like the governance of cities, the parts of a city, its natural constitution, the manner in which a religion splinters and moves away from its basic principles; the structure of the worlds and heavenly bodies; what can and cannot be sensed of dense or fine matter; and what men of religion have said about these topics.

7. What drove us to compose these books of ours that deal with history, with world events and with the passage of years past, such as the histories of prophets and kings and their life stories as well as nations and their habitats, is our desire to emulate the example pursued and followed by scholars and wise men. In other words, our purpose is to preserve for our world a memorial that can be of value, and a science that is systematic and ready to hand. For we have noted that among authors there are some who excel and others who fall short, some who write at great length and others who write abridged works. We also find that history itself grows ever in quantity with the passage of days and the progress of time, and it may be that some memorable events might escape the attention of a perspicacious and intelligent author. Thus each author has his own particular portion of knowledge in accordance with the effort he puts into his

work. Each region of the world possesses its own marvels known only to its own inhabitants. Accordingly, one who stays put in his own homeland and is content with news that reach him from a particular region is not at all like one who spends half his life journeying across foreign lands, spending his days tossed here and there, and who extracts each nugget of information directly from its mine and each priceless ore from its hiding place.

8. People have composed works of history basing their accounts on predecessors. Some were successful, others failed; each author had exerted his abilities and displayed the full extent of his understanding. For example, there is Wahb ibn Munabbih; Abu Mikhnaf Lut ibn Yahya al-Ghamidi; Muhammad ibn Ishaq; Al-Waqidi; Ibn al-Kalbi; Abu `Ubaida Ma`mar ibn al-Muthanna; Ibn `Ayyash al-Hamdani; al-Haitham ibn `Adiyy al Ta`i; al-Sharqi ibn al-Qutami; Hammad al-Rawiya; al-Asma`i; Sahl ibn Harun; `Abdullah ibn al-Muqaffa`; al-Yazidi; al-`Utbi al-Umawi; Abu Zaid Sa`id ibn Aws al-Ansari; al-Nadr ibn Shumail; `Ubaidullah ibn `A`isha; Abu `Ubaid al-Qasim ibn Sallam; `Ali ibn Muhammad al-Mada`ini; Damadh ibn Rufai` ibn Salama; Muhammad ibn Sallam al-Jumahi; Abu `Uthman `Amr ibn Bahr al-Jahiz; Abu Zaid `Umar ibn Shabba al-Numairi; al-Zuraqi al-Ansari; Abu al-Sa`ib al-Makhzumi; `Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Sulaiman al-Nawfali; al-Zubair ibn Bakkar; al-Injili; al-Riashi; Ibn `A`idh; `Umara ibn Wathima al-Nasri; `Isa ibn Lahi`a al-Misri; `Abd al-Rahman ibn `Abdullah ibn `Abd al-Hakam al-Misri; Abu Hassan al-Ziadi; Muhammad ibn Musa al-Khwarizmi; Abu Ja`far ibn Abi al-Sariyy; Muhammad ibn al-Haytham ibn Shababa al-Khurasani, author of *The Book of Government*; Ishaq ibn Ibrahim al-Mawsili, author of the *Book of Songs* and other works; al-Khalil ibn al-Haitham al-Harthami, author of *Tricks and Deceits in Warfare* and other works; Muhammad ibn Yazid al-Mubarrad al-Azdi; Muhammad ibn Sulaiman al-Minqari al-Jawhari; Muhammad ibn Zakariyya al-Ghallabi al-Misri, author of the book called *Generous Men* and other works; Ibn Abi al-Dunya, tutor to the caliph al-Muktafi; Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Khuza`i, better

known as al-Khaniqani al-Antaki; `Abdullah ibn Muhammad ibn Mahfuz al-Balawi al-Ansari, a companion of Abu Yazid `Umara ibn Yazid al-Madini; Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Khalid al-Barqi, the state secretary and author of the *Book of Elucidation*; Ahmad ibn Abi Tahir, author of the *History of Baghdad* and other works; Ibn al-Washsha'; `Ali ibn Mujahid, author of *History of the Umayyads* and other works; Muhammad ibn Salih ibn al-Nattah, author of *The Abbasid State* and other works; Yusuf ibn Ibrahim, author of *History of Ibrahim ibn al-Mahdi* and other works; Muhammad ibn al-Harith al-Taghlibi, author of *The Moral Conduct of Rulers*, composed for al-Fath ibn Khaqan, and other works; and Abu Sa`id al-Sukkari, author of *Arab Verse*.

9. To these one must add `Ubaidullah ibn `Abdullah ibn Khurradadhbeh who was a truly distinguished and delightful author, imitated by those who followed his style and learnt from him. If you care to check the truth of this statement, look at his major work of history. It is the most painstaking of all these historical works, the most skillfully composed, the most learned, and the most comprehensive where the history of non-Arab nations and kings, as well as others, is concerned. Among his other valuable works is his work entitled *Routes and Kingdoms* and other works, where a reader will find what he seeks and will come to appreciate that work when closely examined. Notable also is the work of Muhammad ibn `Ali al-Husaini al-`Alawi al-Dinawari, which deals with the biography of the Prophet from birth to death and with the later history of caliphs and kings until the caliphate of al-Mu`tadid, covering all events of their times. Also to be noted is the work on genealogies by Ahmad ibn Yahya al-Baladhuri, and his other work on countries and their conquests, both by force and by treaty, from the Hijra of the Prophet onwards, and what was conquered in his days as well as in the days of later caliphs with all the events pertaining thereto. In it too is a description of countries in the east and west, north and south. We know of no better work on the conquests than this book.

10. There is also the book of history written by Dawud ibn al-Jarrah which includes a comprehensive account of Persian and other national histories. He was the grandfather of the vizier `Ali ibn `Isa ibn Dawud ibn al-Jarrah. In addition, there is the work of history written by Abu `Abdullah Muhammad ibn al-Husain ibn Sawwar, better known as Ibn Ukht `Isa ibn Farrukhan Shah, which is a comprehensive history of events of the pre- and post-Islamic era, reaching to the year 320 [932]. Abu `Isa ibn al-Munajjim wrote a history based on the Bible and other sources, covering the history of prophets and kings. Abu `Abd al-Rahman Khalid ibn Hisham al-Umawi wrote a history of the Umayyads, in which he recounted their achievements, virtues and unique and unparalleled institutions. There is also Abu Bishr al-Dulabi's work on history. Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Khalaf, known as Waki` al-Qadi, wrote a noble work of history. Muhammad ibn Khalid al-Hashimi wrote a work on biography and history. A similar work of biography and history was written by Abu Ishaq ibn Sulaiman al-Hashimi. Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Zakariyya al-Razi, author of the medical treatise *Al-Mansuri*, also wrote a history of the caliphs.

11. As regards `Abdullah ibn Muslim ibn Qutaiba al-Dinawari, he was a prolific author on a wide variety of topics, as for instance his book called *Al-Ma`arif* and other works. When we come to the history of Abu Ja`far Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari, we encounter a work that surpasses all other works. In it he gathered all sorts of histories, traditions and sciences. It is a work of great value and consequence. This is not surprising since its author was the most prominent jurist of his age and whose life, hermit-like, was totally devoted to scholarship. In him was consummated the knowledge of the jurists of all countries and of all historians and Hadith scholars. Next comes the history of Abu `Abdullah Ibrahim ibn Muhammad ibn `Arafa al-Wasiti al-Nahwi, known as Niftawayh. This is a work full of charm and value such as is found in the books of the elite and of the upper classes. He was the most accomplished author of his age and the most delightful of writers. So too is the work entitled *Al-Awraq* by

Muhammad ibn Yahya al-Suli, which is devoted to the Abbasid caliphs and their poetry, and also his work on Abbasid viziers and poets. In these works he mentioned certain unusual events not cited by other authors and found nowhere else since he himself had witnessed them directly. He was a gifted and serious-minded scholar, and a successful and proficient author.

12. Next is the history of the viziers written by Abu'l Hasan `Ali ibn al-Hasan, known as Ibn al-Mashita, which he brought down to the end of the caliphate of Al-Radi. There is also the work of Abu'l Faraj Qudama ibn Ja`far, the state secretary, who was a skilled and astute author, precise in language and exact in expression. If one wishes to ascertain this, one might look at his book of history called *Zahr al-Rabi`* or examine his work called *Kitab al-Kharaj*, and one will be satisfied as to the truth and accuracy of our description. Next is the work of history called *Al-Bahir* written by Abu'l Qasim Ja`far ibn Muhammad ibn Hamdan al-Mawsili, the jurist, where he contests the book called *Al-Rawda* by Al-Mubarrad. Then there is the book written by Ibrahim ibn Mahawayh al-Farisi where he contests the work called *Al-Kamil* by Al-Mubarrad. Next is the work of Ibrahim ibn Musa al-Wasiti, the state secretary, devoted to the histories of viziers, in which he contests the book of Muhammad ibn Dawud ibn al-Jarrah on the viziers. `Ali ibn al-Hasan ibn al-Fath, known as al-Mutawwaq, wrote a history of several viziers of the caliph al-Muqtadir.

13. The following works should also be cited: *Zahrat al-`Uyun wa Jala' al-Qulub* by al-Misri; the history written by `Abd al-Rahman ibn `Abd al-Razzaq, known as al-Jurjani al-Sa`di; the history written by Ahmad ibn Ya`qub al-Misri on the Abbasids and other works; the history of Abbasid caliphs and others written by `Abdullah ibn al-Husain ibn Sa`d, the state secretary; the history of Mawsil and other topics written by Abu Zakariyya al-Mawsili, and the history written by Muhammad ibn Abi al-Azhar, as well as his other work entitled *Al-Haraj wa'l Ahdath*.\*

14. As for Sinan ibn Thabit ibn Qurra al-Harrani, I found him to have arrogated to himself what is not his specialty, and followed a path he should not have followed. I refer to a work he wrote in the form of an epistle addressed to some of his colleagues, the secretaries of state. He began this work by discussing in general terms the virtues of the soul and its divisions namely the rational, the righteously angry and the appetitive. He then briefly alluded to the political regime, along the lines of Plato's work on the political regime, which is in ten chapters, together with fleeting remarks regarding the duties of rulers and viziers. He went on to mention certain historical events which he asserted to be true though not witnessed directly by him. He coupled this with reports about the caliph al-Mu`tadid, how he kept the caliph's company and the times in the past that he spent with him. He then went back in time to mention every single caliph, in a manner which directly controverts normal historical method and the usual practice of historians. Although it is a good work which does not transgress its subjects, it has nevertheless been found deficient because he went beyond the boundaries of his specialty and arrogated to himself a profession other than his own. Had he written a work of science on which he was a sole expert, like the geometry of Euclid, the secant lines, the Almagest and the Circles; and had he begun by explaining the views of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, treating the heavenly systems, meteorological phenomena, natural temperaments, relations, compositions, conclusions, premises and compound syllogisms, how natural things are distinguished from divine, substances, figures, and measurements of forms and other problems of philosophy, he would have avoided superficiality and would have produced something more worthy of his own area of expertise. But those who know their own capabilities or can spot error are few. `Abdullah ibn al-Muqaffa`\*wrote: "He who writes a book has made himself a target. If he does well, he gains renown. If he does badly he exposes himself to reproach."

15. Al-Mas`udi said: Of the books of history, biography and traditions cited above, we mentioned solely those works whose authors are renowned and well known and made no mention of authors on Hadith and prosopography and their times and generations, since this would exceed what we can mention in this our present work. We have already made mention of Hadith scholars, biographers, historians and classes of scholars of every single age, from the Companions of the Prophet on to their Followers, the scholars of each age with their various and contrasting opinions among jurists of various countries, together with scholars of diverse views, religions, sects and polemics, taking this down to the year 332 [943-4]. All this may be found in our two works called *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *Al-Awsat*.

16. This present work I have called *Muruj al-Dhahab wa Ma`adin al-Jawhar* (“Meadows of Gold and Mines of Gems”), because of its highly valuable and significant content. It includes the highlights found in our earlier works that deal with its subject. I have dedicated it to the elite among rulers and scholars because of what it contains by way of summary information that people need or desire to know as regards the past. I planned it so as to refer to our earlier works but also to include summaries that every rational or well-educated person ought to know and cannot possibly ignore. No kind of science and no kind of history or tradition was left without mention in this book, either in detail or in an abbreviated form, or else alluded to it through one passing reference or another.

17. If anyone distorts any idea to be found in this work, or removes any concept from its context, or deliberately disregards any clear expression of its thoughts, or casts doubt on any evidence cited in its biographies, or otherwise alters it or changes it, or extracts from it, or abbreviates it, or attributes it to another author, may the anger and vengeance of God and His calamities speedily fall upon him whereby he can no longer bear them, leaving him in utter confusion and making him an example to the world and an admonition to men who reflect and heed the signs of the divine. May God, Creator of heavens and earth, deprive him of

what He had bestowed upon him, and cut short what He generously granted him of power and prosperity, whatever his religion or opinion might be. God is all-powerful.

I have recorded this warning at both the beginning and the end of my book to act as a deterrent to anyone whose fancies have led him astray, or whose wickedness has taken possession of him. Let him guard against the power of his Lord and be watchful as to his own end, for life is brief and the distance is short, and to God is the journey's end.

18. We next turn to the headings of our book's content and what each chapter contains by way of historical reports, if God wills, and the blessings and salvation of God upon our Prophet Muhammad and his family.

## **Chapter two**

### **A mention of this book's contents divided by chapters**

19. We have set forth above the broad purposes of this work. We shall now cite in brief its chapters in order and as they relate to the work in general, so that it becomes easier for readers to consult, if God wills.

Chapter 3. An account of the world's creation and the creation of humanity from Adam to Ibrahim.

Chapter 4. An account of the story of Ibrahim and the prophets and kings of the Israelites that came after him.

Chapter 5. An account of Arkhubu`am, son of Sulaiman son of Dawud and of later kings of the Israelites and a brief mention of the prophets.

Chapter 6. An account of the interval between Christ and Muhammad.

Chapter 7. A brief account of the history of India, of Indian beliefs, the origin of its kingdoms, their moral conduct and modes of worship.

Chapter 8. An account of the earth, its seas, sources of rivers, mountains, the seven climes and the planets that govern them, and so forth.

Chapter 9. A brief account of the fluctuation of the seas and a brief account of major rivers.

Chapter 10. An account of the Abyssinian Sea and opinions regarding its extent, its branches and its gulfs.

Chapter 11. An account of conflicting views expressed regarding the ebb and flow of the tides and a summary of these views.

Chapter 12. An account of the Mediterranean Sea and of the views expressed regarding its length, breadth, and where it begins and ends.

Chapter 13. An account of the Black Sea, the Sea of Azov and the Gulf of Constantinople.

Chapter 14. An account of the Caspian Sea, the Seas of Khazar and Jurjan, and a brief mention of the geographical disposition of all seas.

Chapter 15. An account of the Kings of China and the Turks, the dispersal of the children of Gomer, a history of China and its kings, and a brief account of their conduct and policies, and so forth.

Chapter 16. A brief account of reports about the seas, what they contain and their surroundings, with respect to their wonders, nearby nations, classes of kings and so forth.

Chapter 17. An account of the Caucasus mountains and a history of their nations such as the Alans, the Avars, and the Khazar, together with various kinds of Turks, Bulgars, and a history of al-Bab wa'l Abwab and neighboring kings and nations.

Chapter 18. An account of Suryani kings.

Chapter 19. An account of the kings of Mosul and Nineveh, that is to say the Assyrians.

Chapter 20. An account of the kings of Babylon, both Nabat and others, that is to say the Chaldeans.

Chapter 21. An account of the first Persian kings, their conduct and a brief history of them.

Chapter 22. An account of the independent kings and of the Arsacids who reigned between First and Second Persians.

Chapter 23. An account of the genealogies of the Persians and the views of people concerning them.

Chapter 24. An account of Sasanid kings, that is to say Second Persians, their conduct and a brief history of them.

Chapter 25. An account of Greek kings, their history, and what people have asserted regarding their early genealogy.

Chapter 26. A brief account of historical reports concerning Alexander and his exploits in India.

Chapter 27. An account of Greek kings after Alexander.

Chapter 28. An account of the Romans and what people have asserted regarding their earliest genealogies, the number of their kings, their dates and a brief account of their manners.

Chapter 29. An account of Christian Roman kings, that is, the kings of Constantinople, and a brief history of their era.

Chapter 30. An account of Roman kings after the coming of Islam and down to Romanus who is currently the king in the year 332.

Chapter 31. An account of Egypt, its history, its Nile, its wonders and reports about its kings.

Chapter 32. An account of the history of Alexandria, its construction, its kings, its wonders and other relevant matters.

Chapter 33. An account of Black Africans, their genealogies, their diverse races and kinds, their different habitats and a history of their kings.

Chapter 34. An account of the Slavs, their homelands, a history of their kings and the dispersal of their groups.

Chapter 35. An account of the Franks and Galicians, their kings and a brief history of these nations and their wars against the inhabitants of Andalusia.

Chapter 36. An account of the Lombards, their kings and their habitats.

Chapter 37. An account of `Ad, its kings and a brief history of this nation and what has been reported regarding the length of their life-spans.

Chapter 38. An account of Thamud, its kings, and of Salih its prophet, together with a brief history of this nation.

Chapter 39. An account of Mecca, its history, the building of the Ka`ba, and who were successively in charge of it, such as Jurhum and others, and matters relevant thereto.

Chapter 40. An account of diverse reports relating to the description of the earth, its countries and how human souls long for their homelands.

Chapter 41. An account of the disputes among people as to the reason why Yemen, Iraq, al-Sham and Hijaz were called by these names.

Chapter 42. An account of the Yemen, its genealogies and the views of people regarding this subject.

Chapter 43. An account of the Yemen, its kings such as the Tubba` and others, their conduct and their length of years.

Chapter 44. An account of the kings of al-Hira, both Yemenites and others, and their history.

Chapter 45. An account of the kings of al-Sham, both Yemenites, such as Ghassan, and others, and their history.

Chapter 46. An account of Arab and other nomads and the reason for their living in deserts together with an account of the Kurds of the Jibal region, their genealogies, a brief history of them and matters relevant thereto.

Chapter 47. An account of the religions of the Arabs and their beliefs in the pre-Islamic period, their dispersal in the lands, together with reports about the men of the elephant, the Abyssinians and `Abd al-Muttalib, and matters related thereto.

Chapter 48. An account of Arab beliefs regarding the spirit, the *Ham*, the *Safar* and what they related regarding these topics.

Chapter 49. An account of Arab views regarding the *ghul* and its phenomenon, and what others have said regarding this topic, together with matters relevant to this subject.

Chapter 50. An account of people's views regarding the *hawatif* and the *jinn*, among both Arabs and others, as well as those who affirmed their existence and those who denied it.

Chapter 51. An account of Arab beliefs regarding tracking, augury, divination from birds, auspicious and inauspicious gazelles and other matters.

Chapter 52. An account of soothsaying and its characteristics and people's reports of it, together with the definition of the rational soul and how it is distinguished from other parts of the soul, in addition to what has been said about what one sees during sleep and matters related thereto.

Chapter 53. A brief account of reports concerning soothsayers, the flood of 'Arim in the land of Saba' and Ma'rib, and the dispersal of the Azd in the lands, and where they eventually settled.

Chapter 54. An account of the chronology of Arabs and non-Arabs, their months and where they agree and disagree.

Chapter 55. An account of the months of the Copts and Syrians, and the differences in naming them, together with a brief history and other relevant matters.

Chapter 56. An account of the months of the Suryan and where these agree with the months of the Romans, together with the number of days in a year and knowledge of meteorology.

Chapter 57. An account of the months of the Persians and matters related thereto.

Chapter 58. An account of the Persian days and related matters.

Chapter 59. An account of the years and months of the Arabs and what they called their days and nights.

Chapter 60. An account of Arab views regarding the nights of lunar months and matters related thereto.

Chapter 61. A brief account of views regarding the effects of sun and moon on the world, and matters related thereto.

Chapter 62. An account of the earth, its natural characteristics, its climates and what is distinct in each sector such as east, west, north and south, and other matters to do with the influence of the stars.

Chapter 63. An account of the great temples and hallowed sanctuaries and fire temples or idols, together with an account of the religions of India and a mention of the planets and other wonders of the world.

Chapter 64. An account of the great temples of the Greeks and a description thereof.

Chapter 65. An account of the great temples of the early Romans and a description thereof.

Chapter 66. An account of the great temples of the Slavs and a description thereof.

Chapter 67. An account of some great temples and hallowed sanctuaries of the Sabeans among the people of Harran and others, and what they contain of wonders together with their history.

Chapter 68. An account of the history of fire temples and how they were built, together with a history of the Magians and other reports relevant to their construction.

Chapter 69. A summary account of the world's history from the beginning to the birth of our Prophet Muhammad and reports relevant thereto.

Chapter 70. An account of the birth of the Prophet and his lineage together with reports relevant thereto.

Chapter 71. An account of his mission and reports relevant thereto until his emigration.

Chapter 72. An account of his emigration and a general narrative of his life and times until his death.

Chapter 73. An account of reports concerning certain matters and events that took place from his birth until his death.

Chapter 74. An account of his sayings, uttered for the first time and unrecorded by any human being before him.

Chapter 75. An account of the caliphate of Abu Bakr al-Siddiq, his lineage and a brief account of his history and conduct.

Chapter 76. An account of the caliphate of `Umar ibn al-Khattab, his lineage and a brief account of his history and conduct.

Chapter 77. An account of the caliphate of `Uthman ibn `Affan, his lineage and a brief account of his history and conduct.

Chapter 78. An account of the caliphate of `Ali ibn Abi Talib, his pedigree and a brief account of his history and conduct, together with the pedigree of his brothers and sisters.

Chapter 79. An account of the Battle of the Camel, how it began, the fighting therein, and matters relevant thereto.

Chapter 80. A summary account of what happened between the peoples of Iraq and al-Sham at Siffin.

Chapter 81. An account of the two arbitrators and of the arbitration.

Chapter 82. An account of his [ `Ali's ] wars against the people of Nahrawan, that is the Kharijites, and matters related thereto.

Chapter 83. An account of the murder of `Ali ibn Abi Talib.

Chapter 84. A comprehensive account of his words, his ascetic conduct and other reports relevant thereto.

Chapter 85. An account of the caliphate of Al-Hasan ibn `Ali, and a brief account of his history and conduct.

Chapter 86. An account of the days of Mu`awiya ibn Abi Sufyan and a brief history.

Chapter 87. A brief account of Mu`awiya's moral conduct, his policies and some choice and entertaining reports from his history.

Chapter 88. An account of the Companions of the Prophet and the praises that are their due, and of the virtues of `Ali ibn Abi Talib and al-`Abbas, God's mercy upon them.

Chapter 89. An account of the days of Yazid ibn Mu`awiya ibn Abi Sufyan.

Chapter 90. An account of the murder of al-Husain ibn `Ali ibn Abi Talib and of those who were murdered from among his family and followers.

Chapter 91. An account of the names of the progeny of `Ali ibn Abi Talib.

Chapter 92. A brief account of the history of Yazid, his conduct, some of his unusual acts and how he behaved at the Battle of the Harra and elsewhere.

Chapter 93. An account of the days of Mu`awiya ibn Yazid, Marwan ibn al-Hakam, al-Mukhtar ibn Abi `Ubaid and `Abdullah ibn al-Zubair, and a brief narrative of their histories, conduct and some events of their times.

Chapter 94. An account of the days of `Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan, a brief account of his history and conduct and a mention of al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf, his actions and some of his unusual stories.

Chapter 95. A brief account of the history of al-Hajjaj and his speeches, and how he acted on certain occasions.

Chapter 96. An account of the days of al-Walid ibn `Abd al-Malik, and a brief account of his history and conduct.

Chapter 97. An account of the days of Sulaiman ibn `Abd al-Malik, and a brief account of his history and conduct.

Chapter 98. An account of the caliphate of `Umar ibn `Abd al-`Aziz ibn Marwan ibn al-Hakam, and a brief account of his history, conduct and his ascetic way of life.

Chapter 99. An account of the days of Yazid ibn `Abd al-Malik, and a brief account of his history and conduct.

Chapter 100. An account of the days of Hisham ibn `Abd al-Malik, and a brief account of his history and conduct.

Chapter 101. An account of the days of al-Walid ibn Yazid ibn `Abd al-Malik, and a brief account of his history and conduct.

Chapter 102. An account of the days of Yazid ibn al-Walid ibn `Abd al-Malik and his brother Ibrahim, and a brief account of the events of their times.

Chapter 103. An account of the reason for partisanship between the Yemenis and the Nizaris, and the effects of this on the Umayyads because of the ensuing civil strife.

Chapter 104. An account of the days of Marwan ibn Muhammad ibn Marwan ibn al-Hakam.

Chapter 105. An account of the length of time and the years during which the Umayyad family ruled.

Chapter 106. An account of the noble Abbasid state, a brief account of the history of Marwan and his death, and a brief narrative of his history and conduct.

Chapter 107. An account of the caliphate of al-Saffah and a brief narrative of his history and conduct together with a summary account of his days.

Chapter 108. An account of the caliphate of al-Mansur and a brief narrative of his history and conduct together with a summary account of his days.

Chapter 109. An account of the caliphate of al-Mahdi and a brief narrative of his history and conduct together with a summary account of his days.

Chapter 110. An account of the caliphate of al-Hadi and a brief narrative of his history and conduct together with a summary account of his days.

Chapter 111. An account of the caliphate of al-Rashid and a brief narrative of his history and conduct together with a summary account of his days.

Chapter 112. An account of the Barmakids and their history and the events of their times.

Chapter 113. An account of the caliphate of al-Amin and a brief narrative of his history and conduct together with a summary account of his days.

Chapter 114. An account of the caliphate of al-Ma'mun and a brief narrative of his history and conduct together with a summary account of his days.

Chapter 115. An account of the caliphate of al-Mu'tasim and a brief narrative of his history and conduct together with a summary account of his days.

Chapter 116. An account of the caliphate of al-Wathiq and a brief narrative of his history and conduct together with a summary account of his days.

Chapter 117. An account of the caliphate of al-Mutawakkil and a brief narrative of his history and conduct together with a summary account of his days.

Chapter 118. An account of the caliphate of al-Muntasir and a brief narrative of his history and conduct together with a summary account of his days.

Chapter 119. An account of the caliphate of al-Musta'in and a brief narrative of his history and conduct together with a summary account of his days.

Chapter 120. An account of the caliphate of al-Mu'tazz and a brief narrative of his history and conduct together with a summary account of his days.

Chapter 121. An account of the caliphate of al-Muhtadi and a brief narrative of his history and conduct together with a summary account of his days.

Chapter 122. An account of the caliphate of al-Mu'tamid and a brief narrative of his history and conduct together with a brief account of his days.

Chapter 123. An account of the caliphate of al-Mu'tadid and a comprehensive narrative of his history and conduct together with a summary account of his days.

Chapter 124. An account of the caliphate of al-Muktafi and a brief narrative of his history and conduct together with a summary account of his days.

Chapter 125. An account of the caliphate of al-Muqtadir and a brief narrative of his history and conduct together with a summary account of his days.

Chapter 126. An account of the caliphate of al-Qahir and a brief narrative of his history and conduct together with a summary account of his days.

Chapter 127. An account of the caliphate of al-Radi and a brief narrative of his history and conduct together with a summary account of his days.

Chapter 128. An account of the caliphate of al-Muttaqi and a brief narrative of his history and conduct together with a summary account of his days.

Chapter 129. An account of the caliphate of al-Mustakfi and a brief narrative of his history and conduct together with a summary account of his days.

Chapter 130. An account of the caliphate of al-Muti` and a brief narrative of his history and conduct together with a summary account of his days.

Chapter 131. A second comprehensive account of history from the Emigration until the present time which is the month of Jumada I, in the year 336, when we finished writing this book.

Chapter 132. An account of those who led the pilgrimage from the beginning of Islam until the year 335.

33. Al Mas`udi said: These as a whole are the chapter headings of this work. However, it may happen that in each chapter mention might be made of various sciences or historical reports not indicated in the chapter headings. These are arranged as outlined above but with a detailed treatment of the history of the caliphs and their ages in separate chapters devoted to each caliph, their conduct and history. This is followed by carefully chosen reports about them, their typical conduct, a general narrative of events during their reigns, reports about their viziers and the sciences discussed at their assemblies. In doing so, we shall allude to our other writings and works that have dealt with these subjects and disciplines.

This book has a total of 132 chapters, the first of which mentions the general purpose of the work while the second lists its chapters, and the last is a list of those who led the pilgrimage from the beginning of Islam until the year 335 [946-7].

### Chapter 3

#### **An account of the beginning of the world, of its creation and the creation of mankind**

34. Al-Mas`udi said: There is general agreement among all Muslims that God created things in a matchless manner and having no origin. It is reported from Ibn `Abbas that God first created water so that His throne rested on water. When He desired to create His creation, He made smoke to rise from water which then ascended above the water and became the sky. He then caused the water to dry and made it into a single land. This land He then rent in two days into seven lands, these days being Sunday and Monday. God then created the earth upon the whale, the whale being the one mentioned in the Qur'an {By the Pen and what they trace in lines}. The whale was in the water, the water on a rock, the rock on the back of an angel, the angel on a boulder and the boulder on the wind. This boulder is mentioned in the Qur'an when reporting the words of Luqman\* to his son: { My son, even if it were the weight of a mustard seed upon a rock, or in the heavens, or on earth, God shall bring it to light. God is All-perceptive, All-experienced.} The whale shuddered and the earth trembled, so God fastened the mountains upon it and it became stable as mentioned in the Qur'an {He cast upon the earth towering mountains lest it should shake you violently.} He thus created the mountains and created what sustains life for its inhabitants, its trees and other requirements. This was done in two days, on Tuesday and Wednesday, as in the Qur'an {Say: You are blaspheming against Him who created the earth in two days, and you set up rivals to Him—He who is Lord of the Worlds. Above the earth He erected towering mountains and He blessed it and appraised its provisions in four days in equal measure to those who need them. Then He ascended to heaven while yet smoke and said to it and to the earth: “Come forth, willing or unwilling” and both responded “We come willingly.”}

35. That smoke was from the substance of water when it vaporized, so He made it into a single heaven. He then rent it into seven heavens in two days, on Thursday and Friday. In fact, Friday (*Jum`a*) is so called because God brought together (*jama`a*) the creation of the heavens and earth. Then God said: {And inspired each heaven with its disposition} which means that God created in each heaven its created beings, whether angels, seas or mountains with hailstones [Q.24:43].

36. The heaven above the earth is made of green emerald, the second heaven of white silver, the third of red ruby, the fourth of white pearl, the fifth of red gold, the sixth of yellow sapphire and the seventh of light. This last God covered with angels standing on one leg out of awe for God's glory because of nearness to Him. Their legs pierce the seventh earth while their feet rest at a distance of a five hundred year-journey beneath the seventh earth and their heads are under the Throne but without touching it, while they repeat "There is no god but God {August Lord of the Throne}". Such has been their ritual ever since their creation and until the coming of the Last Hour. Beneath the Throne is a sea from which descend sustenance for humans and animals. God inspires it so that it sends down rain from one heaven to the next until the rain ends at a place called al-Abram. He then inspires the wind to carry the rain to the clouds which sift it. Beneath the sky of the earth is a sea of water which teems with crawling creatures, just like the seas on earth, and is held firmly through divine power.

37. Once having finished creating the earth, God first populated its surface with *jinn*, before Adam, creating them {from shimmering flame}. Iblis [Satan] was among them. God forbade them from shedding the blood of dumb animals and from open disobedience, but they shed blood and fought one another. When Iblis saw that they did not desist, he asked God to take him up to heaven where he joined the angels and worshipped God with great earnestness. God then sent the *jinn*, the party of Iblis, a troop of angels who drove them off to far distant

islands, killing of their number what God willed. God made Iblis overseer of the earthly heaven, so his heart grew arrogant.

38. Then God willed to create Adam and said {to the angels: I shall appoint a deputy on earth}. They responded: Lord, who may this deputy be? He said: He shall have a progeny who will corrupt the earth, grow jealous of one another and kill one another. They said: O Lord {will you place therein one who sows discord and sheds blood while we chant your praises and proclaim your holiness? God said: I know what you do not}. God then sent Gabriel down to earth to bring Him some mud from it and the earth said to Gabriel: I take refuge in God lest you might diminish me. So Gabriel returned having taken nothing from it. Then God sent Michael and the earth repeated its earlier words so he too returned without taking anything. Finally, God sent the angel of death.

When the earth repeated its invocation the angel said: And I seek refuge in God if I return without having fulfilled His order. He then took some black, red and white soil. This is why the sons of Adam are of diverse colors. Adam was so called because he was taken from the soil (*adim*) of the earth. Other explanations for the name are also given.

39. God entrusted the angel of death with death. He then kneaded the soil and left it for forty years until it became clammy mud whose parts stuck together; he further left it for another forty years until it began to stink and change its form, as reported in the Qur'an {from fetid mud}, meaning malodorous. He then gave it a form but without a soul as expressed in the Qur'an {from dried clay}. When one hundred and twenty years had passed----some say forty---- as the Qur'an says {Surely there came upon man a span of time when he was a thing not worth remembering} the angels would pass by that form and be terrified, Iblis being the most terrified of the lot. He would pass by it and kick it with his foot and it would emit a sound as though from clay, like a clattering, as in the Qur'an {from dried clay}. Other views have been expressed regarding the term “dried

clay”. Iblis would enter through its nose and exit from its posterior and say:  
“You have been created for some purpose”.

40. When God wanted to breathe a spirit into that form He said {to the angels: ‘Kneel before Adam’; they knelt, all except Iblis who disdained and grew proud}. He said: ‘Lord {I am better than he. You created me of fire but him You created from mud} and fire is a more noble substance than mud. It was I who was Your deputy on earth, I who was dressed in feathers, adorned with light and crowned with honor. It was I who worshipped You in Your heaven and on Your earth.’ God said to him {Depart from this place, ever to be stoned. My curse shall be upon you until the Day of Judgment}. Iblis asked to be deferred {till the day they are resurrected} so God deferred him {until that well-known moment}. Iblis thus missed the purpose and significance for which he had been ordered to kneel before Adam.

41. Some people claim that Adam was a prayer niche for those ordered to kneel, the Creator himself being intended, and that the divine order to obey Adam was a kind of trial or test to those obligated to follow religious commandments. Others hold a different view. Then God breathed into him some of his spirit. Each time the spirit settled in some part of his body, he would go to sit, so God said: {Man has ever been impatient}. When the spirit attained its full extent in him, he sneezed and God said: “ O Adam, say ‘Praise be to God’ and your Lord will have mercy upon you.”

42. Al-Mas`udi said: What we have cited above of reports concerning the beginning of creation is cited in religious traditions and has been transmitted from earlier to later generations. We reported all this as was transmitted to us in their very words, or as we found it in their books, in addition to the existence of proofs regarding the creation of the world, making its creation certain. We have not seen fit to cite either the opinions of those who agree with this view and hold to it from among religious communities who believe in creation, nor seen fit to respond to those who oppose them and maintain that the world is eternal.

This is because we have treated this question in our earlier books. At many points in this present work we mention in brief a number of sciences that use rationality, proof and dialectics which relate to several systems of belief and religions, but only to report them.

43. The following is reported from the Commander of the Believers, `Ali ibn Abi Talib: “When God wished to begin His creation, to create mankind and to originate His wonders, He set up all creatures in images like fine dust. This was before the leveling of the earth and the raising of the sky. God was still in the solitude of His sovereignty and might. He made a light to spread from His light and a beam from His radiance which glowed. The light was then focused in the midst of these obscure forms and settled upon the image of our Prophet Muhammad. God said: ‘You are the chosen one, the elect. With you is consigned My light and the treasures of My guidance. For your sake I have leveled the earth, caused the waters to roll, and the sky to be lifted. For your sake I have instituted reward and punishment, paradise and hell. I have appointed your family as guides, granting them of My hidden knowledge so that no subtle or secret learning can escape them. I have made them to be My proofs among mankind and to attest to My omnipotence and My oneness.’

44. “God then accepted their witness to His divinity and allegiance to His oneness. Once this was done, God caused the election of Muhammad and his family to infuse the intellects of mankind, and showed them that guidance lies with Muhammad, that the light was his, and that the imamate\* belonged to his progeny, in order that justice might be instituted from the very beginning and also act as a warning. God then concealed creation in His divine invisibility and knowledge, set up the worlds, began time, caused the waters to roll, foam to rise, and smoke to be agitated. God’s throne then floated upon the waters. He leveled the earth on the surface of the water and made mist to rise from the waters, creating the sky. He then summoned them all to obedience and they submitted to his summons. God then created the angels from lights He

originated and spirits He fashioned, and linked His oneness to the prophethood of Muhammad which became renowned in heaven before he was sent as a prophet on earth.

45. “When God created Adam, He revealed his excellence to the angels and showed them why He had singled him out by way of prior knowledge. When selecting him for prophecy He informed them that He had taught him the names of all things. God thus made Adam into a prayer niche, a *ka`ba*, a gate and a direction of prayer, and made the saints and other illuminated spiritual beings kneel to him. He then alerted Adam to what He had consigned in him, and revealed to him the enormity of what He had entrusted to him, having called him an *imam* among the angels. Thus, Adam’s share of virtue is to have acted as a repository for our [ `Ali and his progeny’s] light. God continued to hide the light beneath the passage of time until He selected Muhammad in the purest of progenies. He called upon people openly and in secret, and invited them covertly and publicly and reminded them of the covenant which had preceded the creation of mankind. Whoever was fortunate to glimpse a beam of that ancient light was guided to His secret and came to recognize His truth. Whoever was driven by Iblis to ignore this deserved condemnation.

46. “Then the light passed on to our distinguished family members and shone forth in our *imams*. We [ `Ali’s family] are the lights of heaven and earth. Through us lies salvation and in us is the repository of knowledge. To us all matters shall end, and with our *Mahdi* all other proofs shall be set aside. He shall be the seal of *imams*, the savior of the community, the final object of the light, and the origin of all matters. We are the best of creation, the noblest of beings, and the proofs of the Lord of the worlds. Whoever cleaves to our allegiance and is firmly attached to our bond will truly enjoy happiness.”

All this was related from Abu `Abdullah Ja`far ibn Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn `Ali ibn `Ali ibn al Husain, from Husain ibn `Ali, from the Commander of the Believers `Ali ibn Abi Talib. We have not bothered to cite the lines of

transmission of these reports because we have already mentioned them in detail together with their uninterrupted transmission in our previous works, where we attributed them to the authorities mentioned in these works, the intention being to avoid wordiness and prolixity in this present work.

47. As to what is found in the Torah, we are told there that God began His creation on Monday and ended it on Saturday. This is why the Jews adopted that day as a feast day. The people of the Gospels claim that Christ rose from the tomb on Sunday and adopted that day as a feast day. However, the majority of jurists and historians assert that creation began on Sunday and ended on Friday. This is when the spirit was breathed into Adam, coinciding with April 6. Eve was created from Adam and they were made to inhabit paradise, three hours having passed of that day. They remained in paradise for a further three hours, that is, a quarter of a day, which equals 250 years of earthly time. Adam was made to descend in Sarandib\*, Eve in Juddah\*, Iblis in Baisan\* and the snake in Isbahan. Adam landed in India on the island of Sarandib, on a mountain called al-Ruhun\*, still covered with the leaves he had torn from the leaves of paradise. The leaves then dried and the winds scattered them throughout the land of India.

48. It is stated, and God knows best, that the reason why India is the land of perfumes is because of those leaves, but other views also exist. This is why India is specially endowed with aloes wood, carnation, spices, musk and other perfumes. On that mountain [al-Rahun] glowed rubies and diamonds, and in the islands of its seas are colored crystals and diving fields of pearl in its depths. It is said that when Adam was made to descend from paradise, he brought out with him a heap of cereals and thirty branches from the trees of paradise laden with diverse kinds of fruits, ten of which have a shell, these being: walnuts, almonds, hazelnuts, pistachios, poppy, chestnut, pomegranates, oranges, bananas and oak nuts; ten had stones: plums, apricots, pears, dates, sorb, buckthorn, medlar, jujube, doum and black plums; ten have no shell and no

covering when eaten: apples, quince, grapes, pears, figs, mulberry, citron, Armenian cucumber, cucumber and melon.

49. It is said that when Adam and Eve were driven from paradise, they landed in separate locations and met one another in a place called `Arafat, which was so called because this is where they recognized one another (*ta`arafa*). Adam desired Eve, so he slept with her and she conceived and delivered a male and a female. He called the male Qayin and the female Lubada. He slept with her again and she also delivered a male and a female. The male he called Habil and the female Iqlimiya. There is disagreement as to the name of the first born. Most people possessing revealed scriptures and others state that his name was Qayin, as we have mentioned. Other groups of people state that his name was Qabil, but the majority view is what we cited above. In his poem on the beginning of creation and of mankind, `Ali ibn al-Jahm declaimed:

*They begat a son who was called Qayin  
And lived to see of his progeny what they saw.  
Habil grew up, as did Qayin  
And no difference existed between them.*

50. The people of revealed scripture state that Adam married the sister of Habil to Qayin and the sister of Qayin to Habil and differentiated between the two wombs in marriage, this being the custom of Adam in taking as much precaution as he could among close relatives because of necessity and the inability of progeny to be different or to move away. The Magians assert that Adam did not differentiate between wombs and did not seek to separate them. In this regard they have a hidden aim, for they claim that it is a virtue and an advantage if a brother marries a sister or a mother marries her son. We have already discussed this matter in chapter 14 of our book called *Akhbar al-Zaman*.

51. Habil and Qayin then offered a sacrifice. Habil took care to select his best sheep and food, while Qayin deliberately selected his worst possessions. What transpired between them is related in the Qur'an and how Qayin murdered

Habil. It is said that he killed him stealthily in the wilderness of Qa`, this being a locality in the region of Damascus in al-Sham. He killed him by crushing him with a stone. It is stated that the wild beasts from that moment grew averse to man since it was man who started to commit evil and murder. Having killed him, he was at a loss as to how to hide his body, and carried him from place to place on earth. God then sent one raven who killed another raven and buried him. Qayin felt remorse and said what is reported in the Qur'an: {What a wretch I am! Am I incapable of being like this raven and so conceal my brother's corpse?} He then buried him. When Adam learnt what had happened he was sad, dejected and horrified.

52. Al-Mas`udi said: A poem widely known among people which they attribute to Adam is one which he recited when in sorrow for the loss of his son, and is as follows:

*The lands and all upon them have changed;  
The earth's surface is dusty and ugly.  
All tastes and colors have changed,  
And handsome faces have lost their joy.  
Its inhabitants, in exchange for the perfumed gardens of paradise,  
Have as substitute trees bearing bitter fruit and tamarisk bushes.  
An enemy has become our neighbor, accursed, who does not forget,  
And does not die so we can find relief.  
Qayin has killed Habil, unjustly,  
Alas for that handsome face!  
Why should I not freely pour out my tears  
As Habil now lies in his grave?  
My long life is a burden to me  
And I am not happy to be alive.*

53. I found that several books of history, biography and genealogy report that when Adam recited this poem, Iblis answered him from where he could be heard but not seen:

*Remove yourself from the lands and their inhabitants:*

*The wide earth has grown too narrow for you.*

*In paradise, you, Adam, and your wife Eve*

*Were free from the harm of this world.*

*My cunning and my scheming continued*

*Until the rich reward escaped you.*

*It was only through the mercy of the Almighty*

*That a breeze from the eternal garden now suffices you.*

54. In another work I found a single line of verse different from what we cited namely, that Adam heard a voice but saw no one, which recited:

*O father of Habil, both are killed*

*And your clan is like a slaughtered man.*

55. When Adam heard this, his sorrow increased for the past and present, and he knew that the killer will himself be killed. Then God communicated the following to him: “From you I shall make My light to issue forth, a light I want to pass through pure pedigrees and noble bloodlines, a light to be glorified above all others, and make him [Muhammad] to be the seal of prophets. I shall make his family the noblest of *imams* and caliphs. I shall bring time to an end with their era, spread their call throughout the earth and illuminate it with their adherents. So mention the divine name, purify yourself, glorify God and praise Him, then sleep with your wife when in a pure state and My trust shall be transferred from you two to the child who will be born to you.”

56. Adam slept with Eve and she conceived at once. Her forehead shone and the light glowed in her visage and glittered in her eyes. When her confinement ended, she delivered a child as noble and dignified, and as handsome in face and perfect in form as a male child can be. He was enfolded in light and awe,

majesty and nobility. The light passed from Eve to him until it glittered in the folds of his forehead and shone forth in his whole visage. Adam called him Shith, though some say Hibatullah. As he grew up and attained his youth and perfection and became fully mature, Adam communicated his trust to him and acquainted him with what he was to relay to him, informing him that he was the next proof of God after him [i.e. Adam] and deputy on earth, who would transmit God's truth to his legatees. He told him that he was the second bearer of the pure progeny and untainted posterity. So Adam delivered the trust to Shith who grasped it firmly and understood its import.

57. The death of Adam drew near and he died on Friday, April 6, at the same time as his own creation. Adam was 930 years old. Shith was the guardian of Adam's progeny. It is said that when Adam died he had forty thousand descendants, children and grandchildren. People hold different views as to his place of burial. Some say his tomb is in Mina in the Mosque of Khaif, others that he is buried in a cave on Mount Abu Qubais,\* and others mention other places. God knows best about this matter.

58. It is said that Shith acted as judge among the people and used as legal sources the revelations of his father and other legal revelations that he himself had received. Shith slept with his wife and she conceived Anush. So the light was transferred to her and when she delivered him the light shone upon him. When Anush attained the prescribed age, Shith communicated the trust to him, and told him that this was their special honor, instructing him to acquaint his progeny with the truth and the importance of this honor, and to disclose this to their own progeny, thus making it a testament that is transmitted down the generations of mankind. This testament continued to be transmitted from one age to the next until God delivered the light to `Abd al-Muttalib and his son `Abdullah, father of the Prophet of God.

59. This topic is a point of contention among members of the Muslim community between those who believe in specific delegation and others who

believe in election. Those who argue for delegation are the party of the Imamate, the party of `Ali ibn Abi Talib, and of his pure progeny. They hold that God left no historical age bereft of one who rises to preach the true word of God, whether they be prophets or trustees (*awsiya`*) and whose specific names are designated by God and his Prophet. Those who believe in election are the jurists of the major cities, the Mu`tazilites, the sects of the Khawarij, the Murji`a, many Hadith scholars, the commoners and some sects of the Zaydiyya.\* These groups claim that God delegated the Muslim community to choose a man from among their number and to set him up as an *imam*. They claim that certain ages may be devoid of a divine proof, who is the infallible *imam* of the Shi`a. In what follows of this present work we shall make mention in brief of the arguments of both sides and their conflicts, and clarify the issues involved.

60. It is said that Anush continued to build up the earth, and that he is the progenitor of mankind from Adam to the exclusion of Adam's other progeny, though other views also exist. Shith had died at age 912. In the time of Anush, Qayin ibn Adam, the murderer of his brother Habil, was himself killed. A strange story is told of his death which we have already related in our two books *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*. Anush died on October 3, his lifespan having lasted 960 years. To him had been born Qainan on whose forehead the light had shone. So his father entrusted him with the covenant. He built up the lands until he died and his life span lasted 920 years. It is said that his death occurred in July, after the birth of his son Mihla'il, whose lifespan lasted 800 years. To Mihla'il was born Yarad and the light was passed on, the covenant was transmitted, and God's truth was proclaimed. It is said that many kinds of entertainment began in his days, brought about by the children of Qayin.

61. Wars then broke out between the children of Qayin and Yarad, and their stories have already been mentioned in our book *Akhbar al-Zaman*. Discord arose between the children of Shith and others from the children of Qayin. A

certain race in India who acknowledge Adam belongs to this branch of Qayin's progeny. Their land is the land of Qimar\* in India, to which is attributed Qimari aloes wood. Yarad lived till the age of 962 and died in March.

62. Yarad was succeeded by Akhnukh, who is the prophet Idris. The Sabians\* claim that he is Hermes, who is Mercury. God in the Qur'an informs us that he raised him {to an elevated rank}. His life on earth lasted 300 years, though some say more. He was the first to sew and thread and use the needle. Thirty divine revelations descended upon him. Twenty-one had already been revealed to Adam while twenty-nine were revealed to Shith, in which are found hymns and glorifications of God.

63. After him rose his son Mattushalakh son of Akhnukh, who built up the lands. The light shone on his forehead, and children were born to him. People have discussed many of his progeny, claiming that the Bulgars, Rus and Slavs are from that progeny. He lived till the age of 960 and died in September. His son Lamak succeeded him, in whose days there was tumult and a mingling of races. He died aged 777 years.

64. After him came Nuh son of Lamak. Corruption and injustice had increased on earth so Nuh rose and called to the worship of God. But people persisted in their injustice and blasphemy. God cursed them and inspired Nuh to {build the Ark}. When this was completed, Jibril brought him Adam's coffin which contained his remains. He and those who followed him boarded the ship on Friday, March 19. Nuh and those with him stayed on board ship and afloat for five months while God flooded the whole earth in five months. God then ordered the earth to swallow the waters and the sky to stop raining. The ship came to settle on Mount Judi, which is a mountain in the land of Basurin and Jazirat Ibn `Umar in the region of Mosul. Between Mount Judi and the Tigris is a distance of 8 *farsakhs*. The place where the ship settled on top of that mountain is well known to this day.

65. Some say that certain parts of the earth did not quickly swallow up the waters, while other parts did so. Those parts which obeyed the divine command contained sweet water when dug up while other delinquent parts were punished by God with salt and briny water, salt pans and sand. What remained of waters that the earth could not swallow ran down to the deep cavities of the earth, among which are the seas. These latter are what remained of water whose earth had disobeyed God and in whom many nations were made to drown. Later in this book we shall make mention of reports concerning the seas and their description.

66. Nuh came down from the ship with his three sons: Sam, Ham and Yafith and his three daughters-in-law and, likewise, forty men and forty women. They walked down the mountain slope and there built a city they called Eighty (*Thamanin*) which retains that name to the present day, that is, the year 332 [943-4]. The progeny of those eighty people became extinct and God consigned the propagation of mankind to the progeny of Nuh's three sons. God in the Qur'an tells us this: {making his progeny the only survivors}. But God knows best if this is the correct interpretation. The son who stayed behind and to whom his father said {My son, embark with us} was Yam.

67. Nuh divided the earth among his sons, assigning to each a particular part. Nuh cursed his son Ham because of a well known quarrel between them, saying: "Cursed be Ham, a slave of slaves shall he be to his brothers." Nuh also said: "Blessed is Sam. May God multiply Yafith, and may Yafith settle in the habitations of Sam." I found in the Torah that Nuh lived after the flood for 350 years, thus making his total lifespan 950 years. Other figures are also given. So Ham set off followed by his children, and settled down in their habitations on the sea or land in accordance with what we shall mention below.

68. We shall now mention the dispersal of mankind on earth and their habitations from the children of Yafith, Sam and Ham. Sam settled in the midst of the earth, from the holy land [Hijaz] to Hadramawt, Oman and `Alij [desert

in central Arabia]. Among his children were Aram son of Sam and Arfakhshad son of Sam. Among Aram's children are `Ad ibn `Us ibn Aram, a group who settled in the Ahqaf desert [between Oman and Hadramawt]. To them, God sent their fellow clansman, the prophet Hud. Among them too is Thamud ibn Ghathir ibn Aram who inhabited al-Hajr between al-Sham and the Hijaz. To them God sent their fellow clansman, the prophet Salih. Their affair with Salih is widely known and reported. We shall mention below some brief reports about him and about other prophets.

69. There were also Tasam and Jadis, the two sons of Lawidh ibn Aram. They settled in al-Yamamah and Bahrain. As to their brother `Amliq ibn Lawidh, some of his progeny settled in the holy land while others settled in al-Sham. From among the latter descended the `Amaliqa, a number of nations who dispersed throughout the earth. Their brother, Amaim ibn Lawidh ibn Aram, settled in the land of Persia. In the chapter of this book devoted to conflicting views concerning Persian genealogies, we will mention the views of those who regard Kayumarth as a descendant of Amaim ibn Lawidh. It is claimed that Amaim settled in the land of Wabar which, according to Arab historians, is dominated by the *jinn*.

70. The children of `Abil ibn `Us, brother of `Ad ibn `Us, settled in Medinah, the city of the Prophet, while Mas ibn Aram ibn Sam settled in the land of Babil [Babylon], on the banks of the Euphrates. The son of Mas was Nimrud who built the tower of Babil and the bridge of Babil on the Euphrates. He reigned for 500 years and is the king of the Nabat. In his days God dispersed languages, creating 19 languages among the children of Sam, 17 among the children of Ham and 36 among the children of Yafith. Thereafter, languages and dialects subdivided and dispersed. In later sections of this work we shall mention how mankind dispersed on earth and the verses they recited when they scattered from Babil. It is said that Falagh is the one who divided the earth among the nations, hence his name "Falagh" or "Falij", which means the divider.

71. Arfakhshad son of Sam son of Nuh begat Shalakh, and Shalakh begat Falagh who divided the earth. Falagh is the grandfather of Ibrahim. There is also `Abar ibn Shalakh and his son Qahtan ibn `Abar and his son Ya`rub ibn Qahtan. `Abar was the first to be greeted by his sons with the royal greeting: “Happy morning to you, and may you disdain any curse!” Some say others were greeted thus from among the kings of Hira. Qahtan is the ancestor of all Yemenites as will be mentioned in the chapter on conflicting opinions regarding Yemenite genealogy in this work. He is the first person to speak Arabic because he expressed (*a`raba*) its meanings clearly.

72. Yuqtan ibn `Abar ibn Shalakh is the father of Jurhum, and Jurhum are paternal cousins of Ya`rub. Jurhum once lived in the Yemen and spoke Arabic, then settled in Mecca and remained there, as will be recorded of their history below. Qaturah are their paternal cousins. Then God made Isma`il settle in Mecca and he married into the Jurhum clan, who thus became the maternal uncles of his children.

73. The People of the Book state that Lamak son of Sam son of Nuh is still alive because God inspired the following to Adam: “He to whom I entrusted Adam’s dead body shall be made to live forever.” This is because Sam buried Adam’s coffin in the middle of the earth and put Lamak in charge of the tomb. Sam died on a Friday in September and when God took his soul he was 600 years old. In charge of the earth after Sam was his son Arfakhshad who lived for 465 years and died in April. When God took his soul, his son Shalakh succeeded him and he lived 430 years before God took his soul. At his death, Shalakh was succeeded by his son `Abar who built up the earth. In his days there were tumults and conflicts on earth and he was 340 years old when God took his soul.

74. When God took `Abar’s soul, his son Falagh arose and maintained the way of his ancestors. When God took his soul he was 239 years old. We mentioned him above when discussing the confusion of languages in Babil. When God

took Falagh, his son Ar`u succeeded. It is said that the tyrant Nimrud was born in his days. When God took him, Ar`u was 200 years old. He died in April. Ar`u was succeeded by Sarugh, his son, and it is said that in his days there began the worship of idols and images because of certain misfortunes which were made to happen on earth. When he died, he was 230 years old.

75. When God took Sarugh's soul, his son Nakhur arose in his place and continued the way of his ancestors. In his days there were unprecedented tumults and earthquakes and a number of crafts and instruments were invented. His days also witnessed wars and the rise of sects in India and elsewhere. He was 146 years old when God took his soul. After him arose his son Tarah, who is Azar, father of Ibrahim. In his days lived Nimrud son of Kan`an in whose days the worship of fires and lights was first instituted upon earth, and for which rituals of worship were instituted. The earth witnessed great tumults such as wars, the establishment of regions and kingdoms in east and west, and other events. There also began the study of stars and their effects, the constellations were drawn, instruments were invented to study them, and all this was made intelligible to people. The star gazers examined the ascendant for the year in which Ibrahim was born and what that entailed. They informed Nimrud that a child was about to be born who would disdain their fantasies and abolish their religious worship, so Nimrud ordered all newborns to be killed. Ibrahim was hidden in a cave. Azar, that is Tarah, was 260 years old when God took his soul.

#### **Chapter 4**

#### **A mention of the story of Ibrahim, friend of God, and of later prophets and kings of the Israelites and others**

76. When Ibrahim grew up and left the cave where he had been hiding, he contemplated the world, the signs of its creation, and the divine effects upon it. He first looked at Venus as it shone and said: "This is my God". When he saw that the moon shone more brightly he said: "This is my God". When he saw that the sun shone brightest of all he said: "This is my God". Diverse views have

been expressed regarding that saying of Ibrahim. Some argue that he said that phrase by way of deduction and investigation; others argue that this was said by him before the age of maturity and legal obligation; yet others have held different views. The angel Jibril then came to him and taught him his religion, and God chose him to be a prophet and friend. He, as related in the Qur'an, {had been bestowed with reason before that}. Whoso has been bestowed with reason and right guidance is immune from error and defect or the worship of any save the one eternal God. So Ibrahim reproached his people when he saw them worshipping carved images as gods. When Ibrahim's censures of their gods grew and became widely known, Nimrud prepared a fire into which he threw him but God made that fire {cool and comforting}. That day, all fires throughout the earth were extinguished.

77. To Ibrahim was born Isma'il, Ibrahim being then 86 years old, or 90 in some accounts. His mother was Hajar, a slave girl of Sarah. Sarah had been the first to believe in Ibrahim. She was the daughter of Batu'il son of Nakhur, and thus a paternal cousin of Ibrahim. Other views have also been expressed which we shall cite later.

78. Lut also believed in God, Lut being the son of Haran, son of Tarah son of Nakhur, and so Ibrahim's nephew. God sent Lut to the five towns: Sadum, Ghamura, Admuta, Saghura and Sabura. The people of Lut were the people inhabiting the toppled cities (*mu'tafika*), and the name itself is derived from lying (*ifk*), in the view of etymologists. God mentioned this in the Qur'an in saying: {it was he who toppled the towns}. These lands lie between the borders of al-Sham and the Hijaz, close to al-Urdunn and Palestine but remain in the ambit of al-Sham. They still exist at this present time which is the year 332, and are in ruins and uninhabited. The stones {piled and marked} are still in evidence and can be seen by travelers, black and shiny. Lut remained among them calling to God for twenty and some years but they did not believe. So the divine

punishment overtook them in accordance with what God has related of their story and their affairs.

79. When Isma`il was born to Ibrahim from Hajar, Sarah was jealous, so Ibrahim carried Isma`il and Hajar to Mecca and settled them there. God thus reported that incident, quoting the words of Ibrahim {Our Lord, I have settled some of my progeny in a valley where no vegetation grows}. God answered his prayer and comforted their solitude by having Jurhum and the `Amaliq as their neighbors and turned {the hearts of some towards them}. God also destroyed the people of Lut in the time of Ibrahim because of their open and manifest sins.

80. God then ordered Ibrahim to slaughter his son, and he was quick to obey his Lord and {bent his head down and on its side} but God ransomed him {with a mighty sacrifice}. Then Ibrahim raised up {the foundations of the House with Isma`il}. To Ibrahim was born Ishaq from Sarah when he was already 120 years old. People have disagreed about which son was the one about to be sacrificed, with some maintaining it was Ishaq and others Isma`il. If the divine order to sacrifice took place in Mina, it was Isma`il because Ishaq never entered the Hijaz; if the order took place in al-Sham, it was Ishaq because Isma`il never returned to al-Sham once he had been taken away from it. Sarah then died and Ibrahim later married Qiturah who delivered six male children: Zimran, Yaqsan, Madan, Madyan, Yasbaq and Suwah. Ibrahim died in al-Sham and was 175 years old when God took his soul. To him were revealed ten scriptures.

81. After Ibrahim's death, Ishaq married Rafaqa daughter of Batu'il. To him were born Al`is and Ya`qub, twins from one womb. The first to emerge was Al`is, followed by Ya`qub. At the time of their birth Ishaq was 60 years old. He then grew blind so called for Ya`qub to be head of his brothers and for prophecy to descend in his progeny while kingship was to descend in the progeny of Al`is. Ishaq, when God took his soul, was 185 years old and was buried with his father Ibrahim, the Friend of God, their tombs being well known and at a

distance of 18 miles from Jerusalem in a mosque there known as the Mosque of Ibrahim and his pastures.

82. Ishaq had ordered his son Ya`qub to travel to al-Sham and gave him tidings of his prophecy and that of his twelve sons. These were: Rubin, Shim`un, Lawi, Yahuda, Yashsakh, Zabulun, Yusuf, Binyamin, Dhan, Niftal, Qadh and Ashar. These are the twelve tribes. Prophecy and kingship are in the progeny of four of them: Lawi, Yahuda, Yusuf and Binyamin. Ya`qub grew increasingly afraid of his brother Al`is but God set his mind at rest. Ya`qub had 5500 head of sheep so gave a tenth of these to his brother Al`is to ward off his evil and from fear of his anger, although God had calmed his fear and assured him that he would have no power over him. God then punished Ya`qub for disregarding his promise, and inspired him with the following words: "You refused to be reassured by what I had said to you, so I shall make the progeny of Al`is rule over yours for 550 years." Thus, the period from the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and the enslavement of the Israelites until `Umar ibn al-Khattab conquered Jerusalem was 550 years.

83. Yusuf was the dearest of Ya`qub's sons to his father, so his other brothers grew jealous. What transpired between him and his brothers has been narrated by God in his book as revealed to his Prophet, and is widely known among Muhammad's community. God took Ya`qub's soul in Egypt when aged 140 years, so Yusuf carried his body to be buried in the land of Palestine at the tomb of Ibrahim and Ishaq. God took Yusuf's soul when aged 110. His body was placed in a coffin made of marble, fastened with lead and coated with pigments which resisted water and made the coffin airtight. The coffin was then thrown into the Nile near the town of Manf [Memphis], where his mosque stands. It is also said that Yusuf stipulated in his will that he should be buried near his father Ya`qub's tomb in the Mosque of Ibrahim.

84. In his days lived the prophet Ayyub. He is Ayyub ibn Amus ibn Zarah ibn Ra`wil ibn Al`is ibn Ishaq ibn Ibrahim. He lived in al-Sham in the region of

Hawran and al-Bathaniyya in the land of al-Urdunn, between Damascus and al-Jabiya. He was a very wealthy man with many children. God tested him by sending him calamities that ravaged him, his wealth and his children, but he bore them all with patience. God then restored what he had lost, and ended his travails. God narrated some of his story in His book as revealed to His Prophet. His mosque and fountain where he cleansed himself both exist to the present day, which is the year 332, and are widely known in the region of Nawa and al-Jawlan between Tiberias and Damascus, in the land of al-Urdunn. This mosque and fountain are at a distance of three miles or so from the town of Nawa, and the rock where he and his wife Rahma used to take refuge during their calamities can still be found in the mosque until the present day.

85. The people of the Torah and of ancient scriptures state that Musa ibn Manashsha ibn Yusuf ibn Ya`qub was a prophet before Musa ibn `Imran, and that it was he who sought out al-Khadir ibn Malkan ibn Falagh ibn `Abar ibn Shalakh ibn Arfakhshad ibn Sam ibn Nuh. Some People of the Book assert that al-Khadir is Khidrun ibn `Ama'il ibn Alifaz ibn Al`is ibn Ishaq ibn Ibrahim, that Moses was sent to his people, and that they responded to his call. On the other hand, Musa ibn `Imran ibn Qahat ibn Lawi ibn Ya`qub lived in Egypt at the time of the mighty Pharaoh, the fourth of Egypt's Pharaohs. This latter had lived long and his body had grown large. His name was al-Walid ibn Mus`ab ibn Mu`awiya ibn Abi Numair ibn Abi al-Hilwas ibn Laith ibn Haran ibn `Amr ibn `Imlaq.

86. Following the death of Yusuf, the Israelites were enslaved and their calamities multiplied. Soothsayers, astrologers and magicians had informed the Pharaoh that a child was about to be born who would destroy his kingdom and bring about great changes in the land of Egypt. The Pharaoh was alarmed and ordered all babies slaughtered. The story of Musa and of how God inspired his mother to throw him into the water has been told clearly in the Book of God revealed to His Prophet Muhammad. At that time there also lived the prophet

Shu`aib who is Shu`aib ibn Nawil ibn Ra`wa`il ibn Murr ibn `Ifa ibn Madyan ibn Ibrahim. Shu`aib spoke Arabic and was sent to the people of Madyan. When Musa left Egypt, escaping Pharaoh, he passed by the prophet Shu`aib and God in the Qur`an has made mention of their encounter, and how he gave Musa his daughter in marriage.

87. {And God spoke to Musa in plain speech}. God supported him with his brother Harun and sent them both to Pharaoh who rejected their call, so God drowned the Pharaoh. God had ordered Musa to depart with the Israelites from Egypt and into the desert. They were six hundred thousand in number, both adults and non-adults. The tablets that God had sent down to his prophet Musa ibn `Imran on Mount Sinai were made of green emerald with the writing in gold. As he descended from the mountain he saw that some Israelites had taken to worshipping a calf. Musa shook with anger and the tablets fell from his hand and broke. He collected the fragments and placed them in the coffin of Sakina with other objects, and put them in the temple. Harun was a priest and guardian of the temple. God completed His revelation of the Torah upon Musa while he was in the desert. God took Harun`s soul and he was buried in the mountain of Mu`ab near the Sarat mountains beyond Mount Sinai. His tomb is well known and is in an ancient cave where on certain nights, a loud clamor is heard coming out of it that terrifies every living creature. It is said that he is not buried there but simply placed in it. This locality has an unusual history and whoever has visited it will know what we have here described.

88. His death took place seven months before the death of Musa. At his death he was 123 years old, though 120 is also mentioned. It is said that God took Musa`s soul three years after the death of Harun, that he went into al-Sham where he waged war, sending expeditions from the desert against the `Amaliq, the Qurbaniyyun and the Madyanites among others, as mentioned in the Torah. God made ten scriptures to descend upon Musa, a total of one hundred. He then revealed to him the Torah in Hebrew which contains commandments and

prohibitions, the licit and illicit, rules and regulations, and this in five books (*asfar*) and by book they mean a scripture (*sahifa*). Musa had constructed the coffin in which lay the Sakina from gold, weighing 600,750 *mithqals*\*.

Following Harun, the leader was Yusha` ibn Nun, from the tribe of Yusuf.

89. God took Musa's soul at age 120. Neither he nor Harun experienced any grey hairs nor did they change their youthful appearance. When Musa died, Yusha` ibn Nun urged the Israelites to proceed to al-Sham, then dominated by the Jababira, kings of the `Amaliq, and other kings. Yusha` sent out expeditions against them and there were wars between them. He conquered the region of Jericho and Zughar from the land of Ghawr, that is, the land around the Foul-smelling Lake. This lake does not swallow up those who drown nor can any living creature survive in it, whether fish or anything else. The author of the Logic [Aristotle] and other philosophers before and after him have mentioned it. Into it pour the waters of Lake Tiberias, that is, the Jordan river (*al-Urdunn*).

The waters of Lake Tiberias originate from Lake Kfarla and al-Qar`awn, in the region of Damascus. As the waters of the Jordan debouch into the Foul-smelling Lake, they cut through to its midst, remaining distinct from the waters of that lake, then sink into its center. The Jordan is a great river but it is not known where it sinks, and this without adding to or diminishing from the lake itself.

90. The Foul-smelling Lake has engendered many lengthy reports and stories that we have cited at length in our two previous works, *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*. In these works, we mentioned the stones thrown up by that lake in the shape of melons. These come in two forms, each of which is called the "Jewish stone". This stone is mentioned by the philosophers and is used by physicians to treat gall-bladder stones. It comes in two forms, male and female, the male to treat males and the female females. From this lake is also extracted the medicine called Jew's pitch (*humar*). There is no lake on earth---and God knows best--- where no living creature, fish or otherwise, can live except this lake and another lake I once sailed on in the land of Adharbajjan between the towns of Armiya

and Maragha. That lake is known there as Kabudhan. People in the past have discussed the reason why no living being can survive in the Foul-smelling Lake but made no mention of Lake Kabudhan. By analogy with their reasoning, the cause in the two cases must be one.

91. The king of the Greeks [*al-Rum*], al-Samaida`\* ibn Hawbar ibn Malik, marched against Yusha` ibn Nun, and, following several battles, Yusha` killed him and took over all his domains, and added other domains like those of al-Jababira and al-`Amaliq. He also raided the land of al-Sham. Yusha` led the Israelites for twenty-nine years after the death of Musa. He is Yusha` ibn Nun ibn Ifra'im ibn Yusuf ibn Ya`qub ibn Ishaq ibn Ibrahim. It has been asserted that Yusha` began his campaign against the king of the `Amaliq, al-Samaida`, in the land of Ayla near Madyan. Concerning this `Awf ibn Sa`d al-Jurhumi recited the following verse:

*Have you not seen how the flesh of `Amlaqi, son of Hawbar,  
Has been torn to shreds at Ayla?  
Marching against him were Jewish armies,  
Eighty thousand in number, both armorless and wearing armor.  
They thus became the equal of the `Amaliq, after his death,  
Marching on earth, ascending or descending [reading furra`an].  
It was as if the `Amaliq had never existed among Mecca's mountains,  
Or as if none had ever seen al-Samaida`.*

92. In a village in the Balqa`\* region of al-Sham there lived a man called Bal'am ibn Ba`ur ibn Samum ibn Firistim ibn Mu'ab ibn Lut ibn Haran. He was a man whose prayers were answered. His people forced him to call down curses on Yusha` ibn Nun but he could not carry this out. He advised some kings of the `Amaliq to bring out beautiful women and parade them before the troops of Yusha`. These latter quickly fell upon the women so a plague struck them and ninety thousand of them died---some say more. Bal'am is the one of whom God

in the Qur'an spoke as having received revelations but {he forsook them}. It is said that Yusha` ibn Nun died aged one hundred and ten years.

93. After Yusha` the Israelites were led by Kalib ibn Yufanna ibn Baras ibn Yahuda. Yusha` and Kalib are the two men mentioned in the Qur'an {upon whom God bestowed his favor}. Al-Mas`udi said: I found in another version that the leader of the Israelites after Yusha` was Kushan al-Kufri, who led them for eight years then died. Following him as ruler was `Uthuna'il ibn Qanas from the tribe of Yahuda who reigned for forty years. He killed a mighty man called Kush who lived in the Balqa' in Ma'ab. Thereafter the Israelites apostasized, so God caused Kan`an to rule over them for twenty years, after which he died. The Israelites were then led by `Imlal (`Ili?), the priest (*ahbari*), for forty years. Then Shamuil rose to lead them, who was followed by Talut, at which time the mighty Jalut, king of the Barbar in the land of Palestine, attacked them.

94. Al-Mas`udi said: If we follow the first version cited above, the ruler after Yusha` was Kalib ibn Yufanna after whom came Finhas ibn Al`azar ibn Harun ibn `Imran, who led them for thirty years. Finhas took the scriptures of Musa and put them in a cask of copper, sealed its mouth with lead and took it to the rock in Jerusalem before there was a building there. The rock parted to reveal a cave and a second rock. He put the cask on top of it and the rock closed up again to become as it had been before. When Finhas died, the Israelites were governed by Kushan the wicked, king of al-Jazira\*. He enslaved the Israelites and brought them calamities for eight years.

95. The Israelites were then led for forty years by `Uthuna'il ibn Yufanna, brother of Kalib from the tribe of Yahuda; he was followed by `Ajlun king of Mu'ab for eighteen years but with great duress; he was followed by Ahud from the progeny of Ifra'im for fifty-five years. Thirty-five years had elapsed from his reign when the world itself became four thousand years old, but other dates have also been cited. He was followed by Shamghar ibn Ahud who led them for twenty-five years. The Israelites were then subjugated by Yabin al-Kan`ani,

king of al-Sham, for twenty years. He was followed as ruler by a woman called Dabura, said to have been Yabin's daughter, who associated with her a man from the tribe of Niftal called Baraq, and this lasted for forty years.

96. They were then ruled by chieftains from the tribe of Madyan: `Urib, Zawib, Banuria, Dara` and Salta for a period of seven years and three months; they were followed by Jad`un from the tribe of Manashsha who led them for forty years and killed the kings of Madyan; he was followed by his son Abu Malakh for three years and three months; he was followed by Tula` from the tribe of Ifra'im for twenty-three years; he was followed by Ya'ir from the tribe of Manashsha for twenty-two years; then there followed the kings of `Amman for eighteen years; then these were followed by Bajshun from Bethlehem for seven years; then by Shanshun for twenty years; then Amlah for ten; then `Ajran for eight; then they were subjugated by the kings of Palestine for forty years; then `Ilan the priest for forty years.

97. In his days the Babylonians conquered the Israelites and carried away the coffin [Ark] which the Israelites had used to implore God's assistance. The Babylonians carried it to Babylon after driving the Israelites from their homes along with their children and what remained of the family of Hizqil. These are mentioned in the Qur'an: {those who left their homes in their many thousands, fearing death, but God said to them, "Die"; then he restored them to life}. A plague had fallen upon them and three tribes remained: one group travelled into sandy wastes, another to an island in the sea, a third to the high mountains. A lengthy story is told of them and of how when they returned home they said to Hizqil: "Has any nation ever suffered the calamities that we have?" He replied: "No, nor have I heard of a nation who fled from God the way you have." After seven days, God struck them with a plague and they all perished.

98. Following `Ilan the priest the Israelites were led by Ishmawil ibn Yaruhan ibn Nakhur, who claimed to prophesy and lasted twenty years. God relieved them from the duty of fighting and put their affairs in order. Thereafter,

however, they grew restive and said to Ishmawil: {Send us a king, and we will fight in the way of God}. So he ordered that Talut be appointed king. Talut's name is Shawil ibn Qis ibn Abi'al ibn Sarur ibn Bakhurath ibn Afyah ibn Samidah ibn Falakh ibn Binyamin ibn Ya`qub ibn Ishaq ibn Ibrahim. So God made him reign over them and none before Talut had ever succeeded in uniting them. Between the exodus from Egypt under Musa and the appointment of Talut as king of the Israelites was a period of five hundred and seventy-two years and three months.

99. Talut was a tanner who worked in leather. Their prophet Ishmawil had informed them that {God has sent you Talut as king}. They said of him what God has related in the Qur'an: {How can he have kingship over us while we are more worthy of kingship than him, and he has not been given any measure of wealth?} Their prophet told them that {a sign of his kingship is that the coffin will come to you in which is assurance from your Lord and a remnant of what the family of Musa and the family of Harun had left, carried by the angels}. Thus the coffin remained in Babylon for ten years. At dawn they heard the rustling of angels carrying the coffin back.

100. The might of Jalut grew, as also his armies and commanders. When Jalut heard that the Israelites had submitted to Talut, he marched against them from Palestine with diverse kinds of Barbar. Jalut is ibn Malud ibn Dibal ibn Hattan ibn Faris. He then camped in the abode of the Israelites. Ishmawil ordered Talut to march out with the Israelites against Jalut, but God tested by placing a river between al-Urdunn and Filastin and tormented them with thirst, the story being narrated in the Qur'an. They were commanded as to how to drink from that river, but those whose faith was weak lapped up the water like dogs, so Jalut killed them all. Talut then chose 313 of their best warriors among whom were the brothers of Dawud. Dawud joined his brothers and the two armies faced each other. The battle between them went to and fro. Talut then called out to people and promised anyone who would face Jalut in single combat a third of

his kingdom and marriage with his daughter. Dawud came out to meet him and killed him with a sling, using a stone which he carried in his satchel. Jalut fell down dead. God in the Qur'an informs us that {Dawud killed Jalut}. It has been said that the stone in Dawud's satchel was three stones joined together to make one stone. The narratives relevant to this incident have been cited in our previous books. These were the stones that killed Jalut.

101. It is said that it was Jalut who killed those who lapped up the water and disobeyed their commands. In our earlier work, *Akhbar al-Zaman*, we mentioned the story of the coat of mail that their prophet informed them would fit only him who would kill Jalut and how it fitted Dawud alone, as well as the wars between them, as also the river that dried up, the tyranny of Talut, and the history of the Barbar and the origins of their genealogies. In later sections of this book and in their appropriate places we shall make mention in brief of their history and their dispersal in the lands.

102. God elevated the prestige of Dawud and diminished the prestige of Talut. Talut refused to carry out his earlier promise to Dawud. When he saw how people's hearts inclined to him, Talut gave him his daughter in marriage, surrendered a third of the kingdom's taxes to him plus a third of the government and rule over a third of the population. Thereafter, he grew jealous of him and wanted to assassinate him but God prevented this, and Dawud refused to share the kingdom with him. Dawud's power increased, and Talut, going to sleep on his royal throne, died at night from sorrow. The Israelites then submitted to Dawud. Talut's reign lasted twenty years. It has been stated that the place where Jalut was killed was in Baisan, in the region of Ghawr, in the land of al-Urdunn.

103. God softened iron for Dawud so he made of it coats of mail. God also made mountains submit to him as also the birds who glorified God with him. Dawud waged war against the people of Mu'ab in the land of al-Balqa'. God also revealed al-Zabur [Psalms] to him in Hebrew in 150 chapters and divided this into three parts: the first third speaks about what they shall suffer at the

hands of Nebuchadnezzar [Bukht Nassar] and other future events; the second third what they will suffer at the hands of the people of Athur; and the last third sermons, incitements to virtue, glorification of God and warnings of His anger. But it contains no religious commandments, prohibitions, or the licit and illicit. Dawud's affairs were now in order. The rebels among the unbelievers fled to the ends of the earth from fear of Dawud. Dawud built a house of worship in Jerusalem, a structure that still stands to the present time, that is, the year 332, and is known as the prayer niche (*mihrab*) of Dawud. It is the tallest structure in Jerusalem at this time and from its top can be seen the Foul-smelling Lake and the River Jordan, already mentioned above.

104. The incident involving Dawud and the two adversaries has been correctly narrated in the Qur'an and how Dawud said to one of them before hearing the other {He has treated you unjustly}. People have argued at length regarding Dawud's sin. Some state what we have stated, denying that prophets can commit major sins and intentionally act immorally, that they are infallible, and that his sin was what we have described. This is confirmed in the Qur'an as follows: {O Dawud, We have appointed you a deputy on earth so judge among people with justice}. Others argue that his sin relates to the story of Uriah ibn Hayyan and the manner of Uriah's death as related in history books that deal with ancient history and other works. God pardoned Dawud after he had spent forty days fasting and weeping. Dawud married a hundred women. Sulaiman grew up to be an outstanding person who shared with his father the task of judging. God granted him eloquence and excellence in judgment as mentioned in the Qur'an {to each we granted judgment and learning}. When Dawud was about to die, he appointed his son Sulaiman to succeed him and died. Dawud reigned over Palestine and al-Urdunn for forty years. His army was sixty thousand in number, with swords and shields, hairless and beardless, men of courage and bravery.

105. In the days of Dawud, there lived in the land of Ayla and Madyan Luqman the Wise. He is Luqman ibn `Ifa ibn Madyan ibn Sarur. He was a Nubian, client\* of al-Qayn ibn Jasr, and was born ten years into the reign of king Dawud. He was a virtuous servant of God, and God bestowed wisdom upon him. He remained alive on earth displaying his wisdom and asceticism until the days when Yunus ibn Matta was sent to the people of Ninawa in the region of Mosul.

106. When Dawud died, Sulaiman his son succeeded, possessing both prophecy and wisdom. His justice safeguarded his subjects, his affairs were in order and the armies submitted to him. Sulaiman began the building of the holy house which is al-Aqsa Mosque, whose precincts God had blessed. When this was finished, he built for himself a mansion which today is called the Church of Resurrection, the greatest church for Christians in Jerusalem. The Christians have other great churches in Jerusalem such as the church of Sahyun, mentioned by Dawud, and the church of Jusmaniyya [Gesthemane], which they claim contains the tomb of Dawud. God granted Sulaiman of the power of kingship what He had granted none before him, causing mankind, the *jinn*, the birds and the winds to submit to him, as recorded in the Qur'an. Sulaiman ruled over the Israelites for forty years and died aged fifty-two years.

## **Chapter 5**

### **A mention of Arkhubu`am ibn Sulaiman ibn Dawud and the kings of the Israelites who followed him, and a brief history of the prophets**

107. Following the death of Sulaiman, his son Arkhubu`am became king of the Israelites, and the tribes all agreed to his rule. Later, they all abandoned him except the tribes of Yahuda and Binyamin. His reign lasted seventeen years until his death. Yurubu`am ruled over the ten tribes, and wars and other events then took place. He made a golden calf studded with jewels and took to worshipping it, so God destroyed him. His rule lasted twenty years. Succeeding him was Abya son of Arkhubu`am son of Sulaiman who reigned for three years.

He was followed by Akhab for forty years then Yuram. This last declared the worship of idols and images and ruled for eight years. After him came Akhazyia for one year.

108. The Israelites were then ruled by a woman called `Ataliya who put to the sword the progeny of Dawud of whom there only remained one child. The Israelites condemned her action then killed her. She reigned for seven years, and other figures are also given. They then set up that youth as king over them. He was seven years old when his reign began and he remained king for forty years, though some say less. Following him as king was Amsya who reigned for twenty-nine years, then `Uzia for fifty-two years. In his days lived Ish`iya the prophet, and many incidents are reported between them. `Uzia waged several wars which we have mentioned in our *Akhbar al-Zaman*. He was succeeded by his son Yutam for ten years; some say sixteen. He was followed by Ahaz who proclaimed the worship of idols, and was tyrannical and immoral. Against him marched a king of Babil called Fal`asar, a great and mighty king, who waged war against the Israelite king until he captured him and destroyed the towns and habitations of the tribes.

109. In his days too there was a religious split among the Jews. Leaving their ranks were the Asamira [Samaritans] who denied the prophecy of Dawud and of later prophets and refused to acknowledge any prophet after Musa. They choose their leaders from among the progeny of Harun ibn `Imran. Until the present time, the year 332, the Asamira may be found in the lands of Palestine and al-Urdunn in scattered villages such as the village of `Ara between Ramlah and Tiberias and other villages. Most of them congregate in the town of Nabulus where they have a mountain called Tur Barik. On this mountain the Asamira hold their prayers at designated times. They have silver trumpets in which they blow to mark times of prayer. It is they who, as reported in the Qur'an, say {No touching}. They claim that Nabulus is Jerusalem, which is the city of Ya`qub and his pastures. They are two distinct groups, as distinct from each other as

they are from other Jews. One group is called Kushan, the other Dustan. One of these two groups holds that the world is eternal and other ideas which we omit to mention for fear of making this work too long, since it is a work of history and not of philosophical or religious opinions.

110. Ahaz reigned for seventeen years before being captured by the Babylonian. When he became a prisoner, a son of his, Hazqiya, became king, and decreed the worship of the All-Merciful God and the destruction of idols. During his reign, Sannajarib, the king of Babil, marched to Jerusalem where many battles ensued with the Israelites. These latter killed many of his troops while he took captive many tribes. Hazqiya reigned for twenty-nine years until his death.

111. Following Hazqiya there reigned a son of his called Manashsha. His evil spread widely throughout his kingdom. It was he who killed Ish`iya the prophet. So God sent against him Qustantin king of the Romans with his armies who defeated his army and captured the king. Manashsha remained a prisoner of the Romans for twenty years. He forsook his earlier conduct and returned to his kingdom. He then reigned for twenty-five years, though some say thirty.

112. A son of his called Amun then followed him as king. He was a tyrant, blasphemed against the All-Merciful and restored the worship of idols. When his tyranny grew in severity the Pharaoh, called the Lamé, led an army out of Egypt, and slaughtered the Israelites. The Pharaoh then captured and led him away to Egypt where he died. His reign lasted five years, but other dates are also given. He was succeeded by a brother of his called Yu`aqim who was the father of the prophet Daniyal.

113. During that king's reign, Albukhtnassar was appointed governor of Iraq and the west by the king of Persia, who then resided in Balkh, capital of the empire. Albukhtnassar carried out a large-scale massacre and enslavement of the Israelites and transported them to the land of Iraq. He took the Torah and what the Jerusalem Temple contained by way of prophetic books and histories of kings, and threw them all into a well. The coffin of Sakina he buried in some

hole in the ground. It is said that the number of Israelites enslaved was eighteen thousand. In that age lived the prophet Irmiya. Albukhtnassar then marched to Egypt and killed Pharaoh the Lamé, then ruling in Egypt, then marched westwards where he killed several kings and conquered some cities.

114. The king of Persia had married a slave woman of the Israelites who gave birth to a son. It was he who restored the Israelites to their homes after some years. When the Israelites returned, they chose Zurubabil ibn Salatiyal as king. He rebuilt Jerusalem which had been ruined, and the Israelites recovered the Torah from the well so their affairs were well ordered. This king reigned for forty-six years, rebuilding the land, and instituting prayers and other religious obligations such as had been lost during their enslavement.

115. The Samiriyya allege that the Torah in the hands of the Jews is not the Torah brought by Musa ibn `Imran but has been tampered with and changed, and that it was that king who was responsible for that distortion because he collected it from the Israelites who knew it by heart. As for the genuine Torah, this exists only among the Samiriyya and nowhere else. That king reigned for forty-six years. I found in another version that the person who married the Israelite slave girl was Albukhtnassar himself, and that it was he who restored the Israelites to their homes and showed them kindness.

116. Isma`il son of Ibrahim al-Khalil regulated the affairs of the Holy House (*Ka`ba*) after Ibrahim. God made him a prophet and sent him to the `Amaliq and the tribes of Yemen, and he forbade them the worship idols. Some believed but most blasphemed. To Isma`il were born twelve male children: Nabit, Qidar, Adbil, Mibsam, Misma`, Duma, Massa, Hadar, Thima, Yatur, Nafis and Qidma. Ibrahim had delegated Isma`il and Isma`il delegated Ishaq, though some say he delegated his son Qidar. When God took his soul, Isma`il was 137 years old. He was buried in the Mosque of the Sanctuary in the place where the Black Stone was placed. After him, his son Nabit regulated the affairs of the House in the

same manner as was done by Isma`il. It is also stated that he was his father's delegate.

117. Between Sulaiman ibn Dawud and Christ there were a number of prophets, saints and righteous men among whom were Irmiya, Daniyal and `Uzayr --- there is some dispute as to his prophethood---Ayyub, Ish`iya, Hizqil, Ilyas, Alisa`, Yunus, Dhu'l Kifl, al-Khadir----Ibn Ishaq states that he was Irmiya, while others state he was a pious servant of God---and Zakariyya. Zakariyya is the son of Adaq from the progeny of Dawud and the tribe of Yahuda. He had married Ishba` daughter of `Imran, sister of Mariam daughter of `Imran and mother of Christ. `Imran is the son of Maran son of Yu`aqim, also from the progeny of Dawud. The mother of Ishba` and Mariam was Hanna who gave birth to Yahya son of Zakariyya. Yahya was the maternal cousin of Christ.

118. Zakariyya was a carpenter. The Jews spread a rumor that he had committed adultery with Mariam, so they killed him. He had sensed danger and hid inside a tree. Iblis, God's enemy, revealed to them his hiding place so they sawed the tree with him inside it, cutting them both. When Ishba` daughter of `Imran and sister of Mariam, mother of Christ, gave birth to Yahya ibn Zakariyya, she escaped with him to Egypt, fleeing from a king. When Yahya grew into manhood, God sent him to the Israelites. He proclaimed the commandments and prohibitions of God so they killed him. There was much tumult among the Israelites, so God sent them a king from the east called Khardush who slaughtered thousands in revenge for the blood of Yahya, raging all the while until the slaughter stopped after a long period of turmoil.

119. When Mariam, daughter of `Imran, reached the age of seventeen, God sent her Jibril who breathed into her a spirit so she conceived the Christ `Isa and delivered him in a village called Bethlehem, at some miles distance from Jerusalem. He was born on Wednesday, the twenty-fourth of December (*Kanun al-Awwal*). His history is narrated in the book of God and made clear by the mouth of the Prophet Muhammad. The Christians claim that Ishu` of Nazareth,

that is Christ, remained attached to the religion of his people, reading the Torah and other writings in the town of Tiberias in al-Urdunn, in a temple called al-Midras for thirty years, though twenty-nine years has also been mentioned. It is stated that one day, as he was reading in the book of Ish`iya, his eye fell upon a book of light in which was written: "You are my son and beloved whom I have chosen for myself." He closed the book, handed it to the servant of the temple and left saying: "Now has the word of God been made perfect in the Son of Man". It is stated that Christ was in a village called Nazareth (*al-Nasira*) in al-Lajun in the land of al-Urdunn, hence the name of the religion "Nazarene" (*al-Nasraniyya*).

120. In this village I once visited a church held in great esteem by the Christians (*Nasara*). In it are coffins made of stone containing the bones of the dead, from which oozes an oil thick as molasses which the Christians consider sanctified. It is also said that Christ passed by Lake Tiberias where there were some fishermen from the tribe of Zabada and twelve fullers. He invited them to respond to God saying "Follow me and you will be fishers of men". Three fishermen, sons of Zabada, and twelve fullers became his followers.

121. Matta, Yuhanna, Marqush and Luqa, the four evangelists who transmitted the Gospel, have mentioned in it the story of Christ, his birth, his baptism by Yahya ibn Zakariyya, who is Yahya the Baptist (*Ma`madani*) in Lake Tiberias--the river Jordan is also mentioned, which is a river that flows from Lake Tiberias and into the Foul-smelling Lake-----the wonders and miracles he performed and his suffering at the hands of the Jews until God lifted him up to him, aged thirty-three years. The Gospel contains many particulars about Christ, Mariam and Yusuf the carpenter which we have omitted to cite here since neither the Almighty nor his Prophet Muhammad made mention of any of these particulars.

## **Chapter 6**

## **A mention of the people who lived in the interval between Christ and Muhammad**

122. Al-Mas`udi said: In the interval between Christ and Muhammad lived a group of people who believed in the one God and in the resurrection. There has been some dispute regarding them: some say they were prophets, others say otherwise. Among those mentioned as prophets are Hanzala ibn Safwan from the progeny of Isma`il, who was sent to the people of al-Rass, themselves also from Isma`il's progeny. They were two tribes, Qadman and Yamin, or Ra`wa'il according to some. They lived in the Yemen. Hanzala rose among them calling to God so they killed him.

123. God inspired a prophet of the Israelites from the tribe of Yahuda to command Albukhtnassar to march against them; he did so and utterly destroyed them. This is reported in the Qur'an: {But no sooner did they sense our might than they ran away from it} down to where it states: {until we turned them into parched stubble}. It is said that these people belonged to Himyar and a poet from that people mentioned this in his elegy for them:

*My eye wept for the people of al-Rass, Ra`wil and Qadman,  
And for Aslam from Abi Dar`, avenger of the tribe, Qahtan.*

124. Wahb ibn Munabbih\* mentioned that the Two-Horned, who is al-Iskandar [Alexander], lived after Christ in the Interval, and that he saw in a dream that he drew near to the sun and took hold of its two horns, its eastern and western. He related the dream to his people who called him the Two-Horned. There is much dispute among people regarding the Two-Horned and we have reported this in our two works, *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*. We shall mention his history in brief when we come to the kings of the Greeks and Romans.

125. Similarly, people have disputed concerning the People of the Cave and to which era they belonged. Some claim they lived during the Interval while others deny this. We will mention their history in brief when we come to the kings of

the Romans in this work although we have already mentioned their history in our *al-Awsat* and in its predecessor, *Akhbar al-Zaman*.

126. Among those who lived during the Interval, after Christ, was Jirjis. He was a contemporary of some of the Apostles. God sent him to a king of Mosul to call him to God and the king killed him. God resurrected him and sent him again, so he killed him again, and again God resurrected him. At the third try, the king ordered him to be sawn in half, burnt and his ashes to be scattered in the Tigris. So God destroyed that king and all who followed him among his subjects. All this is in accordance with the histories found among the People of the Book who have true faith, and can also be found in the books of creation and history by Wahb ibn Munabbih and others.

127. Among those who lived during the Interval was Habib the carpenter. He lived in the city of Antioch in the land of al-Sham. In that city was a tyrannical king who worshipped idols and images. Two disciples of Christ went to him to call him to the worship of God, so he imprisoned and beat them. The Qur'an states that God aided these two {with a third}. There is a dispute regarding the latter's identity. Many claim that this man was Butrus, this being his name in Greek, while his Arabic name is Sim'an and his Syriac name is Sham'un the Rock (*al-Safa*). Many others, who include all sects of the Christians, claim that the third who aided them was Bulus and that the first two who were imprisoned were Tuma and Butrus. Many stories are narrated about them and that king, and of the miracles and wondrous signs they performed such as curing the blind and the lepers and resurrecting the dead, as also the trick practiced on the king by Bulus, and how he gained entry to him, placated him, and got his two companions released from prison.

128. Habib the carpenter saw them and believed when he witnessed the signs of God. The Qur'an narrates their history as follows: {We had sent the two of them but they called them liars so we backed them with a third} until where it says {a man came running}. Butrus and Bulus were killed in the city of Rome

and crucified upside down. Much is narrated of these two and of their dealings with the King and with Sima [Simon] the magician. Later, and following the victory of the religion of the Christians, their bodies were placed in crystal basins, and their sanctuary lies in a church in that city. We mentioned this in our book *al-Awsat* when we narrated the wonders of Rome, the histories of Christ's disciples and their dispersal in the lands. We shall deal in brief with their histories later on in this work.

129. As for the People of the Trench (*Ashab al-Ukhdud*), they lived in the Interval in the Yemeni city of Najran, during the reign of Dhu Nuwas who killed Dhu Shanatir. Dhu Nuwas was Jewish in religion. He heard that some people in Najran followed the religion of Christ so led an army against them, dug trenches, filled them with cinders and set them alight, then called on them to convert to Judaism. Whoever consented was left alone and those who refused were tossed into the flames. A woman and her seven-month old infant were brought forward. She refused to recant her religion so was led to the flames. She was terrified and God made the infant speak and say to its mother: "Mother, remain faithful to your religion for after this fire there shall be no more fires." The two were then thrown into the fire. In that period, they were believing monotheists and not Christians.

130. A man among those people, named Dhu Tha`laban, then travelled to the Roman Caesar to seek his help, and Caesar wrote on his behalf to the Najashi of Abyssinia because he lived close to them. What later transpired, namely the Abyssinians crossing the sea over to Yemen, their conquest of that land, then the appeal made to kings by Saif ibn Dhi Yazan and the help extended to him by Anushirwan has all been set out in *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*. We will allude in brief to these events in their proper place in this work when we mention the histories of the chieftains and kings of Yemen. God in the Qur'an mentioned the story of the People of the Trench as follows: {Perish the people of the trench} up until {Almighty, All-praiseworthy}.

131. Also belonging to the Interval was Khalid ibn Sinan al-`Absi. His full name is Khalid ibn Sinan ibn Ghaith ibn `Abs. He was mentioned by the Prophet Muhammad who said of him: “That was a prophet whose people failed him.” This was because a fire appeared among the Arabs so they were fascinated by it. It was a fire that moved from place to place and the Arabs were about to embrace Magianism. Khalid took a truncheon and entering the fire said: “Evident, evident is every guidance that leads to the highest god! I shall enter the fire as it rages and shall leave it with my clothes wet!” So he put the fire out. On his death bed he said to his brothers: “When I am buried, a flock of wild asses will arrive from the land of Himyar, led by a tailless ass. He will strike my grave with his hoof. When you see this, you are to dig me up from the ground and I will come out and tell you all about what happens after death and about purgatory (*barzakh*) and the tomb.”

132. When he died and was buried, his people remembered what he had told them, and wanted to dig him up but some were averse to this saying: “We fear the Arabs might abuse us for digging up a dead man”. His daughter later came to see the Prophet and heard him reciting {Say: He is God, unique, God, eternal} and said: “I used to hear my father reciting this”. Later in this work we shall mention his history in brief and where appropriate.

133. Al-Mas`udi said: Among those who lived during the Interval was Ri`ab al-Shanni, from the tribe of `Abd al-Qays and the clan of Shann. He was a Christian before the coming of Muhammad. They heard a voice proclaiming from heaven before the coming of the Prophet: “The best of mankind are three: Ri`ab al-Shanni, Bahira the monk and another who has yet to come”, this last being the Prophet. Not a single descendant of Ri`ab would die and be buried without people noticing a shower of rain falling upon their graves.

134. Among them too was As`ad Abu Karib al-Himyari, who was a believer and believed in the Prophet seven hundred years before his mission. He recited the following verse:

*I witness that Ahmad [Muhammad] is a prophet from God,*

*Pure in line of descent.*

*Were my time to stretch to his,*

*I would be his vizier, his cousin.*

*I would enforce obedience to him on all who live on earth,*

*Arab and non-Arab.*

He was the first to deck the Ka`ba with pelt and drapes. This is why a man of Himyar recited:

*We decked the House that God sanctified*

*With embroidered weaves and drapes.*

135. Among them was Quss ibn Sa`ida al-Iyadi, a descendant of Iyad ibn Nizar ibn Ma`add. He was the arbiter of the Arabs and believed in resurrection. It was he who said: "He who lives must die, and he who dies has vanished, and whatever is to come will come." He is proverbial among Arabs for his wisdom and learning. Al-A`sha recited:

*Wiser than Quss and more daring than him*

*Who, at Dhi'l Ghail, in Khaffan, has fallen into oblivion.*

136. A delegation from the tribe of Iyad visited the Prophet who asked them about him. They said, "He has died." The Prophet said: "May God have mercy on his soul. I vividly remember him mounted on a red camel in the market of `Ukaz saying: 'O people, gather around, listen and mark my words. He who lives must die, and he who dies has vanished and whatever is to come will come. To proceed, there is news in the heavens and there are lessons on earth. Seas in turmoil, stars sinking, a canopy is raised and cradles are put in place. I swear by God an oath: that to God belongs a religion more pleasing to him than what you currently believe in. What is it with people? They depart and do not return. Is it that they are happy and stay where they are, or have they been abandoned and so are asleep? Here then is a path rapidly traversed, and moral

deeds that are divergent.” The Prophet continued: “He then recited some verses that I do not remember.”

137. Abu Bakr al-Siddiq then rose and added: “Prophet of God, I remember them.” The Prophet said: “Let us hear them.” Abu Bakr recited:

*In those who departed in previous centuries we have cause to reflect,*

*When I saw paths towards death but none leading out of it.*

*I saw my people departing towards it, both the low and the high.*

*The past does not return, and of those who are left behind, none remains.*

*Thus I am certain that I shall doubtless go where others have gone before.*

The Prophet said: “God have mercy on his soul! I pray that God will resurrect him as if he, by himself, was a single nation.”

Al-Mas`udi added: Qass has many verses, words of wisdom and reports attributed to him that indicate his deep knowledge of medicine, augury, omens, and all kinds of learning. We cited these in our earlier works, in *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*.

138. Among those who lived during the Interval was Zaid ibn `Amr ibn Nufail, father of Sa`id ibn Zaid, one of the ten who were promised paradise [by Muhammad]. He is first cousin, paternal, of `Umar ibn al-Khattab. Zaid had decided to reject and condemn the worship of idols. His uncle al-Khattab set on him some impudent Meccans and allowed them to gain power over him, causing him harm. He retired to a cave in Hira' and would enter Mecca in secret. He travelled to al-Sham, seeking a true religion, but the Christians poisoned him and he died in al-Sham. A long story is narrated about him, the king, and the translator, and about some Ghassanid kings in Damascus, all of which we mentioned at length in our earlier works.

139. Among them too is Umayya ibn Abi al-Salt al-Thaqafi, who was a poet and a man of reason. He traded with al-Sham where he would meet Jews and Christians in their temples and read sacred books. He had known that a prophet will arise among the Arabs and used to recite verses based on the opinions of

religious communities in which he described heaven and earth, the sun and moon, angels and prophets, and make mention of the resurrection and re-emergence of mankind, and of paradise and hell, and glorified God alone.

Among his verses are the following:

*Praise be to God who has no partners:*

*Whoever does not say this is unjust to himself.*

Describing the people of paradise in some verses, he recited:

*There is no idle talk and no recrimination in it,*

*Whatever they speak remains with them.*

140. When he heard that the Prophet had appeared he was annoyed and regretful, and travelled to Medinah to embrace Islam but turned back out of envy and went to Ta'if instead. One day, as he sat drinking wine with some youngsters, a crow fell to the ground, screeched three times then flew away. Umayya asked : "Do you know what the crow said?" They answered, "No." He said: "He said Umayya will die when he drinks his third glass." They said: "You will surely prove him false!" Umayya said: "Sip your drink!" They did. When the cup had passed three times to Umayya, he became unconscious then fell silent and woke up reciting:

*"I answer the call of the two of you!*

*I answer the call of the two of you!*

*Here am I, in the presence of the two of you.*

I am one upon whom grace descended but was not thankful enough." He then recited:

*O God, if you forgive, you forgive much,*

*Which of your servants is without sin?*

He then repeated: I am one upon whom grace descended but was not thankful enough, and recited:

*The Day of Reckoning is a dreadful day,*

*In which a young person's hair will turn grey and long.*

*If only, before what came upon me,  
I had been herding goats on mountain tops!  
Every life span, though lasting an age,  
Must one day pass away.”*

He then sighed deeply and expired.

142. Al-Mas`udi said: Some scholars with knowledge of history and the past, such as Ibn Da`b, al-Haitham ibn `Adiyy, Abu Mikhnaf Lut ibn Yahya and Muhammad ibn al-Sa`ib mention that the reason why Quraish began their letters with the phrase “In your name, O God” is that Umayya ibn Abi al-Salt travelled to al-Sham with some companions from Thaqif and Quraish in a camel caravan. On their return journey, they camped at a place and gathered to have their evening meal. Suddenly a small snake approached them, so some of them flung stones at it and it retreated. They then packed their food, saddled their mounts and left that place. As they drew away, an old woman rose to sight on a sand dune, leaning on a stick, and said to them: “What prevented you from feeding Rahima, that orphaned young woman who came to you last night?” They said, “Who are you?” She answered: “Umm al-`Awamm, for many years a widow. By the Lord of mankind, you shall be dispersed throughout the lands”. She then struck the earth with her stick, causing the sand to rise, and said: “Make their return journey long and their mounts to run away!” The camels sprang forward in panic as if a demon had mounted each of them. We could do nothing with them and they scattered in the wilderness. By the end of the day we barely managed to gather them. As we got them to kneel down in order to saddle them the old woman reappeared, stirred up the earth with her stick and repeated her earlier words: “What prevented you from feeding Rahima, that orphaned young woman who came to you last night? Make their return journey long and their mounts to run away!” The camels sprang forward in panic. We could do nothing with them and by that day’s end barely managed to gather them once more. As we got them to kneel down in order to saddle them the old woman reappeared,

doing once more what she had done on the two previous occasions. The camels panicked and we ended up on a moonlit night without hope of recovering our mounts. So we turned to Umayya and said: “What about all that you told us about yourself?”

143. Umayya headed towards the sand dune from where the old woman used to appear descending from one side then ascending and descending from another sand dune. A church with lamps appeared before him and there sat a man with grey hairs and beard. Umayya said: “When I stood over him he raised his head to me and said ‘Are you the one who is shadowed by a spirit?’ ‘Yes,’ I replied. ‘From which direction does your spirit approach you?’ he asked. ‘From my left ear’, I replied. ‘What clothes does he order you to wear?’ ‘Black,’ I replied. ‘This is *Jinn* speech. You were about to be graced but did nothing. The person chosen is approached from his right ear and his favorite clothes are white in color. What brings you here and what do you want?’ I related to him the incident of the old woman. He said: ‘She spoke the truth but she is not truthful. She is a Jewish woman whose husband died some years ago. She will keep on doing this to you until she kills you all, if she can.’ I said: ‘So what is the ruse that one can employ?’ He answered: ‘Gather around and if she comes near and does what she has been doing, call out seven times from above and seven from below: ‘In your name, O God!’ and she will not harm you.’

144. So Umayya returned to his companions and told them what had happened. When she appeared once again and did what she’d done before, they called out, seven times from above and seven from below: “In your name, O God!” and no harm came to them. When the old woman saw that the camels did not move she said: “I recognize your companion. His top half shall be whitened and his bottom half blackened.” So they marched out by night and when morning came they found that Umayya’s cheeks, neck and chest had turned leprous while his bottom half was black. Arrived in Mecca, they related that incident, so the first formula of writing that the Meccans used was “In your name, O God.” When

Islam came, this was abandoned and the formula “In the name of God, Merciful to all, Compassionate to each” was substituted in its place. Of Umayya other stories are told which are related in our earlier work *Akhbar al-Zaman* and in our other books.

145. Among them is Waraqa ibn Nawfal\*ibn Asad ibn `Abd al-`Uzza ibn Qusayy, who was the first cousin, paternal, of Khadija bint Khuwailid, wife of the Prophet. He had read sacred books, was a seeker after knowledge, and decided to abandon idol worship. It was he who brought glad tidings to Khadija regarding the Prophet and that he was the prophet of his nation, that he would suffer harm and be called a liar. He met the Prophet and said to him: “Son of my brother, remain steadfast to your calling. I swear by Him who holds Waraqa’s soul in His hand that you are the prophet of this nation. You shall suffer harm, be called a liar, be driven out and fought against. If I live to reach the time of your public ministry I shall aid the cause of God in a manner known to Him.” A dispute has arisen regarding Waraqa. Some claim that he died a Christian, did not live long enough to witness Muhammad’s ministry, and did not fulfill his desire to aid the Prophet, while others say that he died as a Muslim and that he praised the Prophet in a line of verse:

*He forgives and pardons, and does not repay evil with evil,*

*He curbs his anger when cursed or enraged.*

146. Among them is `Addas, client of `Utba ibn Rabi`a. He was a man from Nineveh who met the Prophet in Ta’if when he was calling its inhabitants to God. He had a well known encounter with the Prophet in the garden and was killed at the Battle of Badr\* while still a Christian. He was one of those who brought glad tidings of the coming of the Prophet.

147. Among them is Abu Qais Sirma ibn Abi Anas, from the Ansar\* and the clan of Banu al-Najjar. He had become a monk and wore haircloth, abandoning idol worship, and had entered a house which he adopted as a house of prayer and to which no menstruating woman or persons unwashed after

intercourse were admitted. He said: "I worship the God of Ibrahim." When the Prophet arrived in Medinah, he embraced Islam and became a devout believer. It was for his sake that the Qur'anic verse regarding the last meal before daybreak during Ramadan was revealed: {And eat and drink until the white streak of dawn can be distinguished from the black streak}. He it was who composed the following verse about the Prophet:

*He remained with Quraish for some ten years, calling to God:*

*If only he had met a friend to comfort him!*

148. Among them too was Abu `Amir al-Awsi, whose name was `Abd `Amr ibn Saifi ibn al-Nu`man, from the clan of Banu `Amr ibn `Awf, and the tribe of Aws. He is the father of Hanzala, called "He who was washed by angels". He was a chieftain and had become a monk and wore haircloth in the pre-Islamic era. When the Prophet came to Medinah he had a long encounter with him, then left for al-Sham with fifty of his retainers and died there as a Christian.

149. Among them is `Ubaidullah ibn Jahsh al-Asadi from the tribe of Asad ibn Khuzaima. He was the husband of Umm Habiba bint Abu Sufian ibn Harb before the Prophet married her. He had read sacred books and inclined towards Christianity. When Muhammad was summoned to prophecy, he with other Muslims emigrated to the land of Abyssinia along with his wife Umm Habiba. There, he apostasized and became a Christian and died in Abyssinia. To the Muslims he would say: "We have open eyes (*faqqahna*) while yours are still murky (*sa'sa'tum*)." He meant: We have come to see the truth while you still are groping in the dark. This is an adage he coined for them because when a new-born dog first opens its eyes the verb *faqqaha* is used while if it desires to open its eyes but still cannot the verb *sa'sa'a* is used.

When `Ubaidullah died, the Prophet married Umm Habiba. It was the Negus [*Najashi*] of Abyssinia who married her to the Prophet and paid her dowry, which was 400 dinars.

150. Among them is Bahira the monk who was a believing Christian. His name in the books of the Christians is Sarjis [Sergius]. He was from the tribe of `Abd al-Qais. When the Prophet, aged twelve, travelled with his uncle Abu Talib to al-Sham to trade, accompanied by Abu Bakr and Bilal, they passed by Bahira in his hermit's cell. Bahira recognized the Prophet from his personal traits and signs as he found them in his books. He saw a cloud giving him shade wherever he sat. So Bahira invited them to join him, honored them and prepared some food for them. He then descended from his cell and came to examine the mole of prophecy between the Prophet's shoulder-blades, placing his hand on it. He believed in the Prophet and told Abu Bakr and Bilal about his calling and what was to happen to him. He then asked Abu Talib to take him back from where they had come and warned them against the People of the Book, telling all this to his uncle Abu Talib, who then turned back with him. Returning from that journey there began his story with Khadija and how God revealed to her his signs of prophethood, and what was related to her regarding the events of that journey.

151. Al Mas`udi said: This then is a resume of the events from the creation to where we have ended here. We have not included any extraneous matter except what religious laws, sacred books and prophets have set forth or explained. We now turn to mention the earliest kingdoms of India with a brief account of their beliefs, and follow this up with mention of other kingdoms, for we have already treated in brief the kings of the Israelites as we found it set forth in the books of religious communities, if God so wills, and with His help.

## **Chapter 7**

### **A brief mention of the history and beliefs of India and the origin of their kingdoms**

152. Al-Mas`udi said: A group of scholars known for their perspicacity and scholarly research, and who combine exactness with ability to contemplate the affairs of this world and its origin, state that India was in ancient times the

nation in which piety and wisdom was first found. When the generations of mankind began to diverge and sects began to form, India tried to unite the kingdom, gain power over the whole territory and assume leadership. Their chieftains said: “We were at the very beginning of creation, and creation will end with us. We are the world’s final aim, and to us belongs its role of leadership. From our land the First Father went forth to the rest of the world. We have overcome or destroyed all who stood in our way or opposed us or tried to deceive us until they submit to us.” So they settled on this policy, set up a king over them, who is the great Barhamn, their great king and foremost leader. In his days, wisdom arose and scholars thrived. They extracted iron from mines, and swords and daggers and other instruments of fighting were forged. He built temples and embellished them with sparkling precious stones and painted in them the celestial spheres, the twelve constellations and the heavenly bodies. He illustrated the shape of the worlds and the effects of the heavenly bodies on this world and how they create all living beings, rational and otherwise. He also clarified the status of the Great Manager, that is to say the sun. In his book, he demonstrated the proofs for all these matters and brought them close to the understanding of the commoners, while instilling in the hearts of the elite the understanding of matters even more profound. He drew attention to the First Originator who lends all existents their being and whose bounty overflows upon them.

153. So India submitted to him, the land prospered and he showed them how earthly wellbeing can be achieved. He assembled wise men who in his days produced the work called *Sind Hind*, which means “Eternity of Eternities”. From this work descended other books such as *al-Arjabhad* and *al-Majisti*. From the former descended *Al-Arkand* and from the latter the book of Ptolemy. From these works were later derived the astronomical almanacs. The wise men further contrived the nine digits which define Indian mathematics. He was the first to speak of the apogee of the sun and mentioned that the sun remained in

each constellation for 3000 years, crossing the orbit of celestial spheres in 36,000 years. At this point in time, which is the year 332, the apogee according to the Barhamns is in the constellation of Gemini. If it moves towards the southern constellations, civilization will move with it, and lands of plenty will be desolate while desolate lands will prosper, the north will become south and the south north. In the Golden Temple, he set up the first *Budd* computation and the ancient dating system which India used to date the *Budds* and their appearance in the land of India to the exclusion of all other kingdoms.

Regarding the *Budds*, they have much to relate but we decided not to mention this because our present work is a work of history and not of research and theory, and we have already alluded to this subject in our *al-Awsat*.

154. Some in India maintain that the world begins anew every seventy thousand years, called *hazarwan*, and that once the world passes through this period of time, the world begins again, mankind comes forth, dumb animals roam, the waters penetrate into the earth, animals move about, vegetation sprouts and breezes pierce the air. However, most Indians argue for recurrences based upon cycles where powers begin by being evanescent and resembling individual forms, potentially powerful and erect in essence. For these cycles they determined a time limit, calling this the Great Cycle and Great Event, and named it the age of the world. They calculated the time between the beginning and the end at 36,000 years multiplied by 12,000 years. This they term the *hazarwan*, which determines and controls all powers in things.

155. They further state that these cycles contract and expand all existents included in them, that life-spans are long at the beginning of each recurrence because the cycle is set free and powers gain mastery over their spheres, whereas life-spans shrink at the end of each recurrence because the cycle narrows and becomes subject to the many sorrows that reduce life-spans. This is because the powers of bodies and their serenity at the beginning of a recurrence appear and range wide since serenity outstrips dejection and what is pure

outstrips what is turgid. Life-spans grow long depending upon serenity of temperament and the integration of powers that produce the elements, and lead to a medley of corrupt, ever-changing and perishable existents. They further argue that the end of the Great Recurrence and the final aim of the Great *Budd* reveal all forms as mutilated, souls as weak and temperaments as mixed and varied. Powers start to decrease, what holds them together dissipates, and all matter returns to the cycles wrong side up and congested, so those living in these eras do not have the chance to complete their life-spans.

156. For all the above, the Indians offer causes and proofs derived from first principles. For what we set out in brief above as regards their dividing time into cycles and *hazarwans*, they offer symbols and spiritual secrets as to how souls are connected with the worlds above and how they begin from higher to lower, together with other matters determined for them by the Barhamn at the beginning of time.

157. The Barhamn reigned for 366 years until his death. His progeny are known as the Barahima until today. The Indians treat them with the greatest respect and they are the highest and noblest class. They eat no meat of any animal. Around the necks of their men and women are yellow bands which they wear like sword clamps, to distinguish themselves from other classes of Indians.

158. In ancient times, and in the days of Barhamn, seven of their wise and respected sages met in the Golden Temple and said to one another: "Come let us debate and see what account we can give of this world and what is its secret. Where have we come from and where do we end up? Does the fact that we are brought out of non-existence and into existence hide some wisdom or its opposite? Does our creator who originated us and formed our bodies derive some benefit from creating us? Or does he ward off some harm from himself by removing us from this earthly domain? Does he suffer from want and privation as we do, or is he self-sufficient in every respect? Why does he annihilate and do away with us once we come into existence and are born?" The first sage, the

most prominent among them, said: “Has anyone ever really and truly understood both present and absent matters, thus gaining his objective and feeling confident about what he knows?” The second sage said: “If the wisdom of the creator were to reach its ultimate end in a human mind, this would mean a decrease in the creator’s wisdom, the objective would not be reached and that decrease would prevent full understanding.” The third sage said: “It is our duty to begin by first understanding our spirits which are the nearest things to us, for we are better suited to understand them and they are better suited to be understood by us, before we devote ourselves to understanding what is far-removed from us.” The fourth sage said: “Wretched indeed is one who stands in need to understand himself.” The fifth sage said: “This is why it is necessary to associate with scholars endowed with wisdom.” The sixth sage said: “This is why he who desires happiness must not neglect this matter, especially since remaining in this earthly abode for ever is impossible and leaving it is inevitable.” The seventh sage said: “I do not understand what all of you are saying but I have been brought into this world against my will, I have lived in it in a state of doubt, and I leave it against my will.”

159. The Indians, ancient and modern, differed regarding the opinions of these seven sages. They had all followed their example and adopted their beliefs but then split into sects with opposing views. Seventy of these sects have been counted. Al-Mas`udi added: Abu`l Qasim al-Balkhi dealt in his work called *Uyun al-Masa`il wa`l Jawabat*, as did al-Hasan ibn Musa al-Nawbakhti in his *al-Ara` wa`l Diyanat*, with India’s sects and their beliefs, and the reason why they burn themselves in fires and cut up their bodies using all kinds of torture, but neither writer alludes to what we have mentioned here nor anything resembling what we have described.

160. The Barhamn has also been a subject of controversy. Some claim he is Adam and a prophet of God sent to India, others that he is a king, as we ourselves stated, and this is the better known view. When Barhamn died, India

sorrowed greatly and was quick to appoint a king from among his oldest children who was his heir apparent and delegated to succeed. This was Bahbud. He followed his father's policy, attended well to their affairs, increased temple building, raised the standing of wise men, elevated their rank, encouraged them to teach wisdom and sent them off to seek it. His reign lasted a hundred years. 161. In his days backgammon was invented as a game, and he made it into an example of gaining wealth in this world, for this is not gained solely by shrewdness or cunning, and livelihood is not attained solely by skill. It is stated that it was Ardashir ibn Babik who first played backgammon and set down its rules. He had observed how the world constantly alters the affairs of its people and is in itself ever changing. He made its points twelve in number, like the number of the months, and its checkers thirty like the days of a month. The two dice he made as an example of fate and how it constantly overturns the affairs of mankind. As a person plays this game he attains his desire when fortune is happy with him while the smart and intelligent person might not attain what another person attains whose fortune is happier. The object is to demonstrate that luck and livelihood in this world can only be attained through serious effort.

162. Succeeding Bahbud as king was Zaman who reigned for 150 years. Historical reports about Zaman's conduct and his wars against the kings of Persia and China have been briefly mentioned in our previous works. After him came Fur whom Alexander met in battle and killed in single combat. Fur's reign lasted 140 years until his death.

163. Succeeding him was Dabshalim who authored the work called *Kalila wa Dimna*, rendered into Arabic by Ibn al-Muqaffa'. Sahl ibn Harun authored for the caliph al-Ma'mun a work called *Tha'la wa 'Afra* where he matches and contests *Kalila wa Dimna* in its chapters and proverbs, and excels it in eloquence. Dabshalim reigned for 110 years though other years are also given.

164. Succeeding him was Balhit, in whose days chess was invented. When he played it, he put an end to backgammon and showed how victory may be won by a man of foresight and how defeat afflicts the ignorant. He calculated its moves and included this in a book called *The Ways of Janka*, well known among Indians. He played chess with his wise men and shaped its pieces in the form of speaking and dumb animals, giving them ranks and grades. He made the king (*shah*) to be like a chief controller as also the pieces that follow him in rank, making them into emulations of heavenly bodies, both the seven and the twelve, making each piece subject to a heavenly body and the manager of a kingdom. If any enemy comes up with a trick during a war, the players would consider where that enemy could sooner or later be defeated.

165. As regards the game of chess, the Indians have a symbolism which they secrete in the folds of its calculations and advancing thereby to the highest celestial spheres, thus ending in the First Cause. This is because the number of chess squares, when multiplied, amount to 18,000,000,000,000,000,000 and 464,000,000,000,000,000 and 744,000,000,000,000 and 73,000,000,000 and 700,000,000 and 9,000,000 and 555,615. These thousands come in ranks: first six then five—which is a thousand repeated five times---then four then three then two then one. For Indians these have hidden meanings which they mention in connection with eons and eras and with what other heavenly effects entail as regards this world and their affinities with the souls of rational beings.

166. The Greeks, Romans and other nations also speak of chess and have their own strategies of playing the game. This has been set forth in their books all the way from earlier writers to recent figures like al-Suli and al-`Adli, who are the grand masters of the game in our present time.

167. Balhit reigned for eighty years before he died, though some histories claim he reigned for 130 years. He was succeeded by Korash, who formulated new religious views for India according to what he thought suitable for his times and what people could bear of religious obligations. He thus abandoned the ways of

ancestors. In his kingdom, and during his reign, lived Sindibad, author of the books called *The Seven Ministers* and *The Teacher, the Squire and the King's wife*. This is referred to as the *Book of Sindibad*. At the library of this king was produced the major work on knowledge of diseases, medications and remedies, and herbs were collected and illustrated. His reign lasted 120 years before he died.

168. At his death, India split in its opinions. Sects and groups were formed and split, and different rulers arose in each region. The region of Sind had its own king, as also the regions of Qannuj and Qashmir. The capital city of Mankir was ruled by a king called al-Ballahari, who was the first of a line called by this name. This name later became a title of succeeding kings of that city up until the present which is the year 332.

169. The land of India is wide in extent, stretching across land, sea and mountains. Their kingdom is adjacent to the realm of al-Zabaj\*, the capital of the kingdom of al-Mahraj, king of the islands. This kingdom is midpoint between India and China, and is included in India. Beyond the mountains, India adjoins the land of Khurasan while the Sind adjoins Tibet. Between these kingdoms exist enmities and wars, and their languages are different as also their religious views. Most believe in transmigration of souls, as already stated.

170. In their rationality, politics, wisdom, bodily health and clarity of color the Indians differ from all other black races such as the Zanj, the Damadim\* and so forth. Galen mentions ten qualities found only in blacks and in no other group: frizzy hair, thin eyebrows, spacious nostrils, thick lips, jagged teeth, body odor, black irises, cracked hands and legs, a long penis, and much merriment. Galen adds: "Merriment dominates the black person because of his corrupt brain so his reason is weakened." Writers other than Galen have discussed the reasons for the dominance of merriment and joyfulness in black people which we have cited in our earlier works.

171. Ya`qub ibn Ishaq al-Kindi\* argued in some of his Epistles that deal with the effects of heavenly beings and bodies on this world as follows: “All that God has created has been fashioned as causes one for the other. A cause generates in its effect an impression that is itself a cause but the effect does not influence its effective cause. The soul is the cause of the celestial spheres, not its effect, so has no influence over these spheres except that it is in the nature of the soul to follow the temperament of the body if it finds nothing else. This is the case with the Zanj individual whose habitat is hot. Thus, the celestial beings exercise their effects on him, drawing humidity up to the upper parts of his body. Accordingly, his eyes bulge, his lips dangle, his nose flattens, and his head is elevated because of the copious amounts of humidity attracted to the upper parts of his body. Hence the temperament in his brain is immoderate and the soul cannot show its effect on him to perfection. His discrimination is consequently corrupted and rational actions are denied him.”

172. Ancient and modern authorities have discussed the causes of the creation of black people and their habitat in connection with the celestial spheres, and that the seven planets, i.e. the sun and moon and the other five, have taken over their actions and uniquely fashioned them and affected their bodies. Our present work does not deal with such matters and hence we will not cite what has been said about this issue, since we have adduced all their views and proofs in our earlier work, *Akhbar al-Zaman*. In that work we cited the views of astrologers, ancient and modern, who attributed the actions of the blacks to Saturn. Some later poets among Muslim astrologers and astronomers described this matter thus:

*Chief among them is celestial Saturn,  
A great chief, a powerful king.  
Its temperament is melancholic and cold  
Black is the color of its soul in its swarthinness.  
Its effects are felt on Zanj and black slaves,*

*Also on lead and iron.*

173. Tawus\* the Yemenite, companion of `Abdullah ibn al-`Abbas\*, would not eat any meat slaughtered by a Zanj and said that the Zanj is a mutilated servant of God. I have been told that the caliph Abu'l `Abbas al-Radi bi'llah [d. 940], son of the caliph al-Muqtadir, would not take anything offered by the hand of a black person and would say that he is mutilated. I am not sure whether he followed Tawus in this view or some other opinion. `Amr ibn Bahr al-Jahiz composed a work on the boasts of the blacks and their debates with whites.\*

174. Indians do not set up a king over them unless he reaches the age of forty. Their kings do not appear in public except at certain well known occasions when they attend to the affairs of their subjects. This is because of their belief that if the public sees their kings at all times, awe of them would diminish and their royal privileges would be disparaged. Rulers in India can only be elevated to their high ranks by choice, so that matters can be settled in their right political order.

175. Al Mas`udi said: I once witnessed in the land of Sarandib\*, an island in the sea, that if a king dies, his body is placed on a low carriage with small wheels prepared for the occasion, with his hair dragging on the ground. A woman with a broom strews earth on his head and calls out: "O people, this is your king who ruled over you yesterday and whose authority and commands were obeyed. He has now ended up as you can see when he departed this world, the angel of death and the ever-living and deathless god having taken his soul. Henceforth, do not be tempted by this world." There followed more words to this effect to do with admonition and with having an ascetic attitude to the world. The body is then paraded throughout the city streets in this condition, then cut into four pieces, with sandalwood and camphor and other spices, burnt in a fire and his ashes are scattered to the winds. Thus did most Indians treat their kings and chieftains and this they do for a reason that they cite and a custom they will follow in future days.

176. Kingship is restricted to members of a single family and cannot pass to anyone else, as is also the case with the families of ministers, judges and other people of rank, a matter that can never change.

177. In India, wine is prohibited and those who drink it are subject to rebuke. This is done, not for religious reasons, but in order to protect their minds from what might cause them to be clouded, rendering them incapable of performing their intended mental functions. If they find out that a king of theirs has drunk wine, he deserves in their view to be stripped of his power, since he cannot manage affairs of state when inebriated. They do sometimes listen to music and entertainments, and they have musical instruments which produce particular effects on people such as laughter or weeping. Sometimes they give their female slaves to drink, and these sing in their presence, so the men derive pleasure from these singing girls.

178. India has many customs and social practices, and we have given an account of much of their history and traditions in our two earlier works, *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*. In this work we have included only a digest of such information. Among the strange and entertaining stories of Indian kings who ruled them in ancient days is that there was once a king of Qimar\*, an Indian land from which kingdom and region is imported Qimari aloes wood which is called after that region. This land is not an island but is coastal and mountainous. Few Indian kingdoms are more populous or have a cleaner mouth odor, because they use dental sticks, like Muslims. They further prohibit adultery among Indians and avoid many filthy habits as well as wine, though in this they are similar to most Indians. Most of them are infantrymen because of the many mountains and valleys and the few plains and plateaus. The land of Qimar is adjacent to the kingdom of Mahraj whose king rules islands like Zabaj, Kalah\*, Sarandib and others.

179. They relate that in ancient times a young and impetuous king came to the throne of the land of Qimar. One day he sat on his throne in his palace

overlooking a great river of fresh water, like the Tigris or Euphrates. Between the palace and the sea was a distance of one day's journey. Near him sat his vizier. Mention was made of the kingdom of Mihraj, its greatness, prosperity and dominion over many islands and the king said to his vizier: "I have a desire I would like to fulfill." The vizier, a wise counselor who knew his impetuous character said: "What is that desire?" The king replied: "I would like to see the head of the Mihraj, king of Zabij, on a basin in front of me." The vizier recognized that jealousy had inspired that thought in him and said: "O king, I had not imagined that the king would contemplate such an idea. Neither in ancient days nor in modern has there ever been any vendetta between us and these people, nor have we ever been harmed by them. They live in islands distant from us and their lands do not adjoin ours, nor do they covet our realm." Between the two kingdoms of Qimar and Mihraj is a distance of some ten to twenty sailing days. The vizier added: "It is not fit that this speech of the king should be heard by anyone, nor should the king repeat what he has said."

180. The king was angry and did not listen to his counselor. Instead, he proclaimed his intention to his commanders and other notables in his court. The news spread until they reached the ears of the Mihraj, who was a man of intelligence and cunning and had reached middle age. So he summoned his vizier and told him what he had heard, adding that they should not simply ignore what that fool had stated in public to be his intention simply because he is young and impetuous, for this would be an insult to royalty. The king then ordered his vizier to keep their conversation a secret and to prepare for him a thousand sturdy ships with all their tackle, and assign to each ship enough weapons and fighters to make each ship self-sufficient. He then announced that he planned to tour his islands as a recreation and wrote to all the island kings who were his vassals announcing his intention to visit them on a tour. The news spread, and each island king prepared to receive the monarch as was fit.

181. When all these preparations were completed, the king went on board and headed with his armada to the kingdom of Qimar. The king of Qimar was totally unaware of what was happening until the invaders reached the valley that led to the capital of the kingdom. His army and its commanders were taken by surprise and captured, his capital was seized and the entire population was at the mercy of the invading king. Safe-conduct was proclaimed and the Mihraj went and sat on the throne of the king of Qimar. This latter had been taken prisoner and was now brought before the Mihraj along with his vizier. The Mihraj addressed him as follows: “What led you to desire something that you could not achieve, nor was there any benefit to you if you had achieved it, nor had you any means to facilitate its achievement?” The king of Qimar fell silent, so the Mihraj continued: “Had you desired, in addition to seeing my head in a basin before you, to devastate my realm and destroy it utterly, I would have done all this to you and your realm. But since you desired only one specific thing, I shall do this to you and return to my country without stretching my hand to grab anything, valuable or otherwise, in your realm. Let this be a lesson to those who succeed you; let every person know his prescribed limits and let each person avail himself of his good fortune once he finds it.” He then ordered his head cut off.

182. Turning to the dead king’s vizier he said: “You have done well as a vizier for I learnt that you gave sound advice to your master, if only he had followed it. Accordingly, find out who is fit to succeed this fool and set him up in his place.” The Mihraj then returned at once to his kingdom without he or any of his followers laying a hand on anything in the kingdom of Qimar. Arrived in his realm, he sat on his royal throne which overlooks a brook called “The Brick of Gold” with the basin before him holding the head of the king of Qimar. He then summoned the notables of his kingdom and told them the story and why he did what he did. His subjects praised and approved his actions.

183. He then ordered the severed head to be washed and perfumed, placed it in a covering and sent it back to the then king of Qimar with the following message: “What made us do this to your colleague was his outrage against us and our desire to make an example of him and his likes. We have achieved what we wanted and thought fit to return his head to you, for there is no reason for us to keep it, nor do we have any reason to boast of what we did to him.” When news of this reached the kings of India and China, the Mihraj grew in stature in their eyes. Thereafter, the later kings of Qimar would each morning turn their faces towards the land of Zabij, kneel in worship and call the Mihraj the greatest of kings, in reverence to him.

184. Al-Mas`udi said: The reason they called that brook the “Brick of Gold” is that the palace of the Mihraj overlooked a small brook which fed into the greatest of bays in Zabij. That bay was mostly filled with sea-water at high tide and emptied of sweet water at low tide. Each morning the head of the royal household would enter into the king’s presence carrying a brick cast in gold weighing several *manns*\*----the exact weight is unknown to us---which he then would toss into the brook in the king’s presence. At high tide, that brick together with others would be submerged, but low tide would expose these bricks which would glow in the sun. The king meanwhile would observe the scene from where he sat and overlooked it. This would be repeated every day as long as a king reigned, and none of this gold could be touched. When a king died, his successor would remove all the bricks, count them, then have them melted and distributed among the royal family, men, women and children, and among commanders and retainers according to their ranks and salaries. If anything is left, it is distributed among the wretched and poor. The number of bricks would be recorded and weighed and people would say: “King so and so reigned for so and so years and left behind such and such a number of bricks in the royal brook, all of which were distributed among the people of his realm

after his death.” A point of pride among them was a king who reigned long and thus increased the number of golden bricks in his legacy.

185. At the present time, the greatest of Indian kings is Ballahara, ruler of the city of Mankir.\* Most kings of India turn to him in prayer and bow down before his messengers when they visit them. Next to the kingdom of Ballahara are many Indian kingdoms. Some rule mountainous areas with no access to the sea like Raba, ruler of Qashmir, the king of Taqa and others. Some rule regions which include both land and sea. As for Ballahara, there is a distance of eighty Sindi *farsakhs*---the *farsakh* being eight miles---between his capital city and the sea. He has armies and elephants innumerable, and most of his armies are infantry because his capital is located among mountains.

186. Similar to him among Indian kings who have no access to the sea is Baruza, ruler of the city of Qannuj\*. This name is a title of all kings of that realm. He has armies deployed north, south, east and west since he has an enemy king facing him in each of these directions. We shall mention in brief a history of the kings of Sind and India as well as other kings of the earth when we come in this book to deal with seas and what surrounds them by way of wonders, nations, classes of kings and so forth, even though we have already treated these subjects in our earlier works. In God is success and there is no power or strength save in God.

## **Chapter 8**

### **A description of the earth, seas, sources of rivers, mountains, seven climes and which planets govern them, the arrangement of the heavenly bodies and other matters**

187. Al-Mas`udi said: Scholars have divided the earth in four directions, east, west, north and south. They further divided it into two parts, inhabited and uninhabited, prosperous and wastelandt. They also mention that the earth is spherical and its location is in the middle of the heavens with air surrounding it on all sides, and that with respect to the constellations it is as tiny as a dot. They

calculated its inhabited part as extending from the Khalidat\* islands in the western ocean---these are six prosperous islands---to the outer limits of China's civilization and found this to be twelve hours. They concluded that if the sun sets in furthest China its rising would be in those islands in the western ocean and if the sun sets in these islands its rising would be in furthest China. This is half the circumference of the earth and represents the extent of civilization which these scholars assert is confined to that portion of the earth. Calculated in miles, it amounts to 13,500 miles, that is, the miles they adopted to calculate the earth's circumference.

188. They then examined width and found that civilization from the equator all the way northwards ends at the island of Thuli which is in Britain, where the day is at its longest, that is, twenty hours. They mention that the equator is located where it cuts from east to west at an island between India and Abyssinia, inclining southwards. Between north and south, the equator widens in the middle between the Khalidat islands and furthest China, and this is known as the dome of the earth according to what we have mentioned. The width from the equator to Thuli is almost sixty parts, this being one sixth of the earth's circumference. If this sixth, which is the extent of width, is multiplied by the half which is the amount of length, the extent of civilization northwards amounts to half of one sixth of the earth's circumference.

189. As for the seven climes, the first is the land of Babil, to which belong Khurasan, Faris\*, al-Ahwaz, Mosul and the Jibal. Their constellations are Aries and Sagittarius, and among the seven planets, Jupiter. The second clime is Sind, India and the lands of the blacks. Their constellation is Capricorn and among the seven planets, Saturn. The third clime is Mecca, Medinah, the Yemen, al-Ta'if, al-Hijaz and regions in between. Their constellation is Scorpio and among the seven planets, Venus or Sa`ida. The fourth clime is Egypt, Ifriqiyya, the Berber region, Andalusia and regions in between. Their constellation is Gemini and among the seven planets, Mercury. The fifth clime

is al-Sham, Byzantium and al-Jazira. Their constellation is Aquarius and among the seven planets, the Moon. The sixth clime is the Turks, Khazar, Dailam and Slavs. Their constellation is Cancer and among the seven planets, Mars. The seventh clime is Daibul and China. Their constellation is the Balance and among the seven planets, the Sun.

190. Husain the astronomer, author of the work entitled *Astronomical Almanac*, reports from Khalid ibn `Abd al-Malik al-Marwaruwidhi and others, that they had taken measurements of the sun at the command of the caliph al-Ma'mun in the wilderness of Sinjar, in the region of Diyar Rabi`a. They found that a single degree of the face of the earth came to 56 miles. They multiplied this by 360 and found that the circumference of the earth including land and sea amounted to 20,160 miles. This was then multiplied by 7 and the total came to 141,120 miles. When divided by 22, the earth's diameter was found to be approximately 6414 miles and one half mile and one fifth mile. Half its diameter is thus 3207 miles, sixteen minutes and thirty seconds, which amount to a quarter of a mile and one fourth of one tenth of a mile. A mile is four thousand *dhira`* known as *dhira` al-aswad*,\* established by the caliph al-Ma'mun to measure cloth, building areas and stone cutting. The *dhira`* is twenty-four fingers.

191. Al-Mas`udi said: The philosopher [Ptolemy] in his book entitled the *Geography or Description of the Earth*, mentions its cities, mountains, seas, islands, rivers and springs and its inhabited cities and thriving regions. He states that the cities in his own times are 4530 in number, and names every single one in every single clime. In that work he also mentions the colors of the mountains: red, yellow, green and so forth, and gives their number as a little over 200, together with their elevations and what they contain of mines and precious stones.

192. That philosopher also states that the number of seas surrounding the earth is five, and mentions the islands therein, both inhabited and uninhabited, as also the famous islands but neglecting the not so famous. For in the Abyssinian Sea

are found a series of adjoining islands some one thousand in number, called al-Dibajat,\* all of which are inhabited, with two to three miles or more separating them, not counting other islands of that sea. In his *Geography* he states that the sea of Egypt and Byzantium begins at the Sea of Idols---bronze idols---and that the major springs number 230, not counting minor springs. He gives the number of great rivers running through the seven climes perpetually as 290 rivers.

193. He described the climes as we have described them above. Each clime is 900 *farsakhs* in length by 900 in width. Some seas are filled with animals, others not, such as the surrounding *Uqyanus* or ocean. In this work we shall briefly mention and describe the seas. All these seas are pictured in the *Geography* and painted in different colors and shapes. Some have the shape of a hood, others of a trumpet, others of intestines, and some are round while others are triangular. But their names in that work are given in Greek and are thus difficult to understand.

194. It is also stated in that work that the diameter of the earth is 2100 *farsakhs*, but this should be corrected to 6600 *farsakhs*, where each *farsakh* is 16,000 *dhira`*. The sphere of the moon, which surrounds the lowest circle of the stars, measures 125,660 *farsakhs*, while the diameter of the heavenly spheres from the top of the constellation of Aries to the top of the constellation of the Balance is 40,000 *farsakhs*, as these are measured here.

195. The heavenly spheres are nine in number. The first, shortest and nearest to earth is the sphere of the moon, the second of Mercury, the third of Venus, the fourth of the sun, the fifth of Mars, the sixth of Jupiter, the seventh of Saturn, the eighth of the fixed stars, and the ninth of the constellations. In shape these are circular, with some inside others. The sphere of the constellations is called the universal (*kulli*) sphere which determines night and day since it is the sphere which rotates the sun, moon and other planets from east to west each day and night in one circle on two fixed axes. The first axis lies to the north, which is the

axis of Ursa Major, and the second lies to the south, which is the axis of Canopus.

196. The constellations are nothing other than heavenly bodies, they being locations given these names in order to determine the locations of the planets with respect to the universal sphere. It follows that the constellations become narrower as they approach the two axes and grow wider in the middle of the circle. The line that cuts the sphere in two and proceeds from east to west is called the circle which equalizes the day because, when the sun passes over it, night and day are equal in length in all countries. The portion of the spheres that proceeds from north to south is called latitude while that from west to east is called longitude.

197. The heavenly spheres are circular and surround the earth, revolving on the earth's center. The earth is in the midst like the center of a circle. The spheres are nine in number. The nearest to earth is the sphere of the moon, above which is the sphere of Mercury, then of Venus, then of the sun---which is the center of the seven spheres--then of Mars, then of Jupiter, then of Saturn. In each of these seven spheres there is a single planet. Above Saturn is the eighth sphere where the twelve constellations and the other planets are found. The ninth sphere is the highest and greatest in mass and is the Great Sphere which surrounds the lower spheres that we have just named as also the four elements and the whole of creation. There is no planet in it and it completes from east to west one perfect circuit each day. Through its rotation all spheres below it, as mentioned above, rotate. However, the seven spheres mentioned above rotate from west to east and ancient authorities have advanced arguments to explain this fact which are too long to mention here.

198. The planets which are fixed in their movements and which we see, as also the other planets, are in the eighth sphere. This eighth sphere revolves on two axes which are different from the two axes of the Great Sphere mentioned earlier. They claim that the proof that the movement of the constellations is

different from that of the spheres is that the twelve constellations follow one another in their progress and do not leave their locations or change their movements when rising and setting. On the other hand, each of the seven planets has a movement different from the other and they diverge in their progress. It thus may happen that a planet would speed up its movement and progress and may turn northwards or southwards.

199. According to these authorities, the definition of the heavenly spheres is the point at which natures are perfected, in height or depth. Their definition with respect to their nature is that they are circular in shape, the circle being the widest of all shapes and the one that comprehends all other shapes. They assert that measurements of the movement of these planets in their spheres are divergent. Thus the moon remains in each constellation for two days and a half and crosses the heavenly bodies every month. The sun remains for one month in each constellation, Mercury remains fifteen days, Venus twenty-five days, Mars forty-five days, Jupiter one year and Saturn thirty months.

200. Ptolemy, author of *Almagest*, claims that the total circumference of the earth, both mountains and seas, is 24,000 miles, while its diameter, i.e. its width and depth, is 7636 miles. They calculated this by measuring the elevation of the North Pole in two cities on the equator like the city of Tadmur in the desert between Iraq and al-Sham, and the city of al-Raqqa. They found the elevation at al-Raqqa to be 35 degrees and one third and at Tadmur to be 34 degrees. They then measured the distance between Tadmur and al-Raqqa and found it to be 67 miles. So what is visible from the heavenly spheres on earth is 67 miles, while the heavenly spheres are 360 degrees, and this for reasons they cite too long to go into here. This is in their estimation a correct division because they found that the heavenly spheres were divided among the twelve constellations and that the sun crosses each constellation in one month and all twelve constellations in 360 days.

201. He also states that the heavenly spheres are circular and rotate on two axes or poles, and these resemble the pivot of a carpenter or wood turner who planes wooden globes or bowls or other wooden utensils. He further states that the inhabitants of the center of the earth on the equator experience days and nights equal in length at all times and can see both poles, i.e. the northern and southern. Those who inhabit northern regions can see the north pole and Ursa Major but cannot see the southern pole or the planets near it. Similarly, the star known as Canopus cannot be seen in Khurasan but can be seen on certain days in Iraq. When a camel sees this star it dies, as we stated before, and people have offered reasons for the death of this species of animal in particular. Inhabitants of southern lands, however, can see Canopus all the year round.

202. Astronomers are in disagreement as regards the two poles that the heavenly bodies make use of in their rotation: are they fixed or mobile? Most believe that they are fixed. In our earlier works we mentioned the arguments of each group as regards the fixity of these two poles and whether or not they are of the same kind as other heavenly bodies.

203. There is also a dispute as regards the shape of the seas. Most ancient philosophers of India and Greece, except for their opponents among religious communities, assert that the seas surround the earth, giving many proofs for this. One such proof is that if one sails far into the sea, the earth gradually disappears from view until it disappears completely and even towering mountains are no longer visible. Similarly, if one approaches a coast these mountains appear little by little, and when near the coast the land and trees become visible.

204. Consider the example of Mount Dunbawand [Damavand] between Rayy and Tabaristan. Because of its height and prominence on the skyline it can be seen from a distance of one hundred *farsakhs*. From its summit rises a mist, and snow accumulates on its heights at all times. From its base flows a large, yellow, sulfuric river, golden in color. It takes three days and nights of climbing

to reach its summit. Whoever reaches that summit finds it to be one thousand by one thousand *dhira`* in area. From below, it appears to the eye like a flattened dome. On that open space on its heights there is red sand in which a foot can sink. No beast or bird can attain that summit because of the very high winds, the turbulence and the great cold. On its slopes are some thirty holes from which issues an immense and sulfuric smoke accompanied by extremely loud sounds like the loudest of thunder, these being the sounds of raging fires. Whoever puts his life at risk and climbs its heights might carry away with him from these holes a yellow sulfur, like gold, which goes into the manufacture of certain crafts and of alchemy and other pursuits. Whoever ascends its heights and looks around him, towering mountains nearby will appear to him like mere hills and dunes, so great is its height.

205. Between that mountain and the Sea of Tabaristan [Caspian Sea] is a distance of some twenty *farsakhs*. When ships sail away in that sea, Mount Damavand will disappear and become invisible. However, a person sailing on that sea and approaching the mountains of Tabaristan will, at a distance of about one hundred *farsakhs*, catch a glimpse of the summit. As he draws nearer to the coast the mountain will gradually be revealed. This is further proof in support of those who claim that the waters of the seas are curved in shape.

206. So too is the case with one who sails in the Sea of al-Rum [The Mediterranean], which is the sea of al-Sham and Egypt. He will see al-Jabal al-Aqra' [Mount Keldag], a high mountain whose height cannot be estimated. It overlooks the regions of Antioch, Latakiya, Tripoli, Cyprus and other Byzantine territories. This mountain will disappear from view for those in a ship, as they dip when sailing in that sea from the place where the mountain had been visible. Later in this work we will mention some information about Mount Damavand and what Persians relate regarding it, e.g. that Al-Dahhak of the Many Mouths\* is chained in irons on its heights. That dome at its summit is one of the earth's greatest volcanoes and one of its wonders.

207. People have discussed the dimensions of the earth. Most maintain that the distance between the center of the earth and the point at which air and fire come to an end is 168,000 miles. They say that the earth is approximately thirty nine times larger than the moon; that the earth is twenty three times larger than Mercury; that the earth is twenty four times larger than Venus; that the sun is one hundred and sixty-six times and one fourth and one eighth larger than the earth, and one thousand six hundred and forty four times larger than the moon; the earth itself is half of one tenth of one eighth of the sun; the sun's diameter is 42,000 miles; Mars is larger than earth by sixty-three times, with a diameter of 8700 and one half miles; Jupiter is larger than earth by eighty-one times and one half and one quarter, with a diameter of 33,016 miles; Saturn is larger than earth by ninety-seven times and a half, with a diameter of 32,786 miles. As regards the fixed stars in the furthest east, fifteen in number, each is larger than the earth by ninety-four times and a half.

208. As regards distances from earth, the nearest is the moon at 118,000 miles. Its furthest distance from earth is 124,000 miles. The furthest that Mercury is from earth is 900,730 miles; from Venus, 4,019,600 miles; from the sun 4,820,000 and one half mile; from Mars, 33,600,000 and some; from Jupiter, 54,166,000, less a little; from Saturn 77,000,000, less a little. The farthest of fixed stars are about that far from the earth's center.

209. Based on the divisions, parts and measurements cited above, it became possible for people to deduce the science of the hours and eclipses and to construct instruments and astrolabes and write all their books. This however is a subject which, if we deal with it even partially, will require a lengthy discussion. Accordingly, we only dealt with these sciences in brief in order to fill a gap in our earlier works where these sciences were discussed. We shall later on deal in general terms with these subjects already mentioned in this work.

210. The Sabians of Harran, who are considered the plebs of the Greeks and the vulgar exponents (*hashwiyya*) of ancient philosophers, arranged the clergy of their temples in ranks in accordance with these nine planets. Thus the head of their clergy is called *Ras Kumra*. They were followed by the Christians who arranged their clergy in ranks, as was done earlier by the Sabians. The Christians called these ranks *Al-Ta`at* (hierarchies of obedience). The first is *al-Salt* [psalter, i.e. cantor ], the second is *Aghust* [anagnostes, i.e. lector], the third is *Yudhaqin* [ deacon], the fourth is *al-Shammas* [assistant priest], the fifth is *Qassis* [priest], the sixth is *Bardut* [vicar], the seventh is *Hurasfitus* [Chorepiskopos] who is a bishop's deputy, the eighth is the *Usquf* [bishop], and the ninth is the *Mutran* [Metropolitan] which means "head of a city". Above them all in rank is the *Batruk* [Patriarch] which means "father of fathers". The ranks cited above and other lower and common ranks are what exist among the elite of the Christians.

211. The commoners among them, however, cite, regarding these ranks, facts that differ from what we mentioned. They say that a king rose among them and instituted certain matters which we need not cite here. These ranks belong to the Melkites who are the pillars and poles of Christianity. This is because the easterners, the communities known as Nestorians and Jacobites, were an offshoot from the Melkites and diverged from them. The Christians, as already stated, adopted these ranks in general from the Sabians such as the priest and cantor and other ranks, as did the Manicheans but not al-Musaddiqiyyun [Mazdakites] and al Shamma`\* and others, although Mani came after Christ as also Ibn Daisan (Bar Daysan) and Marqiyun (Marcion). The Manicheans were called after Mani, the Marcionites after Marcion and the Daysanites after Bar Daysan. Thereafter the Mazdakites and others split off from among those who followed the doctrine of the two gods.

212. In our two works, *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*, we cited in general the peculiarities of these sects and the fabricated legends and fables they

embellished, not to speak of our discussion of their beliefs in our work entitled *Al-Maqalat fi Usul al-Diyanat*, as also in our other work entitled *Al-Ibana `an Usul al-Diyana*, where we demonstrated the falsity of their views and refuted these sects. In these chapters we merely mention what the general context of our discussion has led us to, and thus cite these matters in brief by way of a report and description of a sect, not rational examination and argument, in order that this work does not omit what is necessary for us to mention, if God wills. There is no strength save in God.

## **Chapter 9**

### **A mention of reports concerning the shifting of the seas, and brief reports regarding the great rivers**

213. The author of the *Logic* [Aristotle] stated that seas shift their location with the passage of the years and eras, so that they end up in different places, and that all seas are therefore mobile. However, despite this movement, and given the volume of the waters involved, the width of their surfaces and their depths, they appear motionless. Then again, wetlands have not always been wet nor dry lands dry, but these also change and become transformed when rivers pour into them or else stop doing so. This is why the location of seas and lands shift; land is not forever land nor is sea forever sea. Thus what was once sea is now land and what was land is now sea. This is caused by the flow of rivers, for the courses of the rivers experience youth and old age, life and death, trickle and flood. The same is true of animals and plants except that youth and old age in these do not happen segment after segment, for their segments grow and are enlarged as a whole so that they become old and die at one point in time, whereas the earth grows old or grows larger segment after segment, according to the rotation of the sun.

214. Opinions differ regarding rivers and springs and where they originate. Some argue that they flow from one single place which is the Great Sea, and that this is a sweet water sea and not to be identified with the ocean. Others

assert that they are present on earth like the veins in the body. Still others affirm that it is natural for water to exist on some surface. However, since certain parts of the earth are elevated while others are low lying, water flows down to the depths of the earth. When water is trapped in these depths and cavities, it seeks to breathe, being pressured by earth from below, so it gushes out in the form of springs and rivers. Water may also be generated in the depths of the earth from the air found therein, since water is not an element (*istaqiss*) but is generated from the putridity and mist of the earth. Many opinions have been advanced regarding this matter but we refrain from reporting them, seeking to condense and abbreviate such discussions, though we have dealt at length with them in our other works.

215. As regards the source, course, location and length of the great rivers on earth, like the Nile, Euphrates, Tigris, the river of Balkh, which is Jaihun [Amu Darya/Oxus], the Mihran in Sind [Indus], the Ganges, a great river in India, the Sabat [Sobat], a great river, the river [Don] of Tanais which flows into the Black sea, together with other major rivers----much has been written as regards the extent of their course on the earth's surface. In the work called *Geography* I saw the Nile drawn as originating from the Mountain of the Moon. Its source and origin comes from twelve springs which flow into two lakes in that locality that resemble marshes. The waters collect there then flow forth, passing through deserts and mountains of that region then cut through the land of the Sudan near the land of the Zanj, at which point a tributary is formed which pours into the sea of the Zanj, this being the sea around the island [Pemba] of the city of Qanbalu\*. This is a thriving island inhabited by Muslims but they speak a Zanj language. The Muslims overpowered that island and subjugated its Zanj inhabitants just as the Muslims conquered the island of Crete in the Mediterranean sea. This took place towards the end of the Umayyad and the beginning of the Abbasid period. From that island to Oman is a distance of 500

*farsakhs* by sea, as reported by sailors, but this is a mere guess and not based on accurate measurement and observation.

216. Some ship captains from Siraf and Oman who sail on that sea report that during the period when the Nile rises or a little before, they observe a body of water which crosses that sea, cutting through a portion of it because it runs so fast, originating from the Zanj mountains. This body of water is about a mile in width and is sweet but becomes turgid when the Nile rises in Egypt and the Sa`id. In it is found the animal called *al-Susmar*, which is the Nile crocodile and is also called *al-Waral*.

217. Jahiz states that the Mihran in Sind is a tributary of the Nile. He reached that conclusion by noting that crocodiles exist in that river too. I wonder how he obtained that proof. This is mentioned in his book called *al-Amsar wa `Aja`ib al-Buldan*, a truly delightful work even though Jahiz himself never crossed any seas or travelled much, or closely investigated kingdoms and cities. Did he not realize that the Indus issues from several well known springs in the highlands of Sind, in the land of Qannuj in the kingdom of Barwaza, the land of Kashmir, Qandahar and al-Taqi until it reaches the land of Multan, where it is called the Golden Mihran, and Multan itself is called the Aperture of the House of Gold?

218. The ruler of the kingdom in the land of Multan is a man from Quraish, a descendant of Sama ibn Lu`ayy ibn Ghalib. Caravans to Khurasan congregate and proceed from his territory. The ruler of the kingdom of al-Mansura is also a man from Quraish, a descendant of Habbar ibn al-Aswad, and kingship resides in that line. Kingship in Multan is as old as early Islamic times and is hereditary. The Indus ends in the territory of al-Mansura and flows into the Indian Sea near the land of Daibul. There are many crocodiles in the gulfs of that sea like the Gulf of Sindapura in the kingdom of Baghira in India and the gulfs of al-Zabij in the kingdom of Mahraj, as also in the gulfs which adjoin the island of Sarandib. Most crocodiles live in sweet water and the Indian gulfs mentioned here are mostly sweet water because rainwater flows into them.

219. Let us now turn back to the Nile of Egypt. Philosophers state that it runs on the surface of the earth for a distance of 900 *farsakhs*; some say 1000. It traverses both the sown and the desert, inhabited and uninhabited regions, until it reaches the territory of Aswan in the Sa`id of Egypt. To this locality ships go up from Fustat in Egypt. At some miles distant from Aswan are mountains and boulders in the midst of which the Nile flows, so ships cannot pass through them. This locality is the boundary between the ships of Abyssinia and those of the Muslims, and is known as *Al-Janadil* [rocks] and *al-Sukhur* [boulders].

220. The Nile then reaches Fustat, having traversed the Sa`id, Mount Tailamun and the Rock of al-Lahun in the territory of Fayyum. This locality is an island that the Prophet Yusuf took as his home. The Nile crosses that place. Later in this work we shall speak of Egypt's history and its cities and how the Prophet Yusuf built them up. The Nile then flows on and is divided into gulfs in the territory of Tinnis, Dimyat and Rashid then flows into the Mediterranean in Alexandria, creating several lakes in these regions. The Nile had stopped flowing into the territory of Alexandria before its increase this year which is the year 332. News reached me while at Antioch, the Shami border port, that the Nile had increased that year by 18 *dhira`s*. However, I do not know whether that increase in the level of its water did or did not flow into the gulf of Alexandria.

221. Alexander son of Philip the Macedonian had built Alexandria on that gulf of the Nile. Into it poured most of the Nile's waters, irrigating the territory of Alexandria and Maryut. This latter was a land of great prosperity with gardens extending all the way to the land of Barqa in the Maghrib. Ships used to sail on the Nile until they reached the markets of Alexandria. In that city the bed of the Nile was tiled with stones and marble. The water then receded because of certain blockages that obstructed its gulf, preventing the water from reaching the city. Other reasons have also been given which prevented the waters from being purified and returned them to where they had been constricted. But this

work of ours cannot go into detail about these matters since we have decided to restrict its scope. The people of Alexandria then resorted to wells for their drinking water and the Nile came to be at one day's distance from them. We shall later on cite in brief some historical reports about Alexandria and how it was built.

222. We mentioned above the fact that sweet water pours into the Sea of the Zanj. We now state that it issues from a gulf that is formed from the highlands of the Zanj and is the border between the land of the Zanj and the furthest territories of the Abyssinian races. Were it not for that gulf and the deserts of sand and quicksand separating them, the Abyssinians would not last long in their country, for the Zanj are very numerous and warlike.

223. As for the Balkh river, called the Oxus, it issues from springs and flows until it reaches the land of Khwarizm, having already traversed the regions of Tirmidh, Isfara'in and other regions of Khurasan. When it reaches Khwarizm, it branches into certain territories there while the rest continues until it flows into a lake [Aral Sea] near the well-known town of Jurjaniyya, in lower Khwarizm. In that land, there is no lake larger than this. It is said that nowhere in the inhabited world is there a lake larger than this, for in length and width it extends for a distance of one month. Ships run in it, and into it flows the river [Syr Darya] of Farghana and al-Shash, which passes through the region of Farab, by the city of Wasij. Ships run in the river up to that lake, at which point there is a city of the Turks called "The New City", where there is a Muslim community.

224. Most Turks in that locality are Ghuzz, both sedentary and nomadic. This race of Turks is of three varieties: lower, upper and middle. They are the most warlike of Turks, the shortest in stature and the smallest of eye. Among the Turks there are some shorter than them, and these are mentioned by the author of the *Logic* in his *Book of Animals* in the fourteenth and eighteenth chapters where he discusses the birds known as *gharaniq* [cranes]. We shall make

mention of the history of the Turks in later sections of this book, both in one place and here and there.

225. The city of Balkh has a frontier post called Badakhshan, some twenty days' distance, and is the furthest point in its territory. Facing them are various races of unbelievers called Wakhkhan and Tubbat, and to their right is another race called Abghan [Afghan] From that region flows a great river called Abghan [Panjkora?]. Some specialists claim that this river is the source of the Oxus, which is the river of Balkh. It runs on the earth's surface for some 150 *farsakhs*---some say 400---from the source of the river of the Turks, which is Abghan. Some authors mistakenly report that the Oxus flows into Mihran of Sind.

226. We have not mentioned the Black Irisht [Irtysh] nor White Irisht rivers upon which the kingdom of Kimak Uyghur is based. They are a race of Turks beyond the river of Balkh, the Oxus. On these two rivers are found the Turkish Ghuzz tribes. Information exists regarding these two rivers but we were unable to determine the extent of their courses on earth in order to mention it.

227. There is also the Ganges, the river of India. It issues from mountains in farthest India, near China, from the direction of the country of the Turkish Tughuzghuz. Its course until it flows into the Abyssinian sea near the Indian coastline is 400 *farsakhs*.

228. As for the Euphrates, it begins from the land of Qali-Qala [Erzurum], one of the Armenian frontier posts, from mountains there called Afardahs, at a day's distance from Qali Qala. It flows through the land of the Byzantines for about 100 *farsakhs* before it reaches the town of Malatya. A Muslim brother who had been a prisoner in Christian lands told me that as the Euphrates reaches the midst of Byzantine territory, many waters flow into it, among which is a river [Murat] which issues from the environs of Lake Marzabun [Lake Van]. There is no lake larger than this in Byzantine territory, being one month's distance in length and width---some say more. Ships run in that lake. The Euphrates reaches the Manbij Bridge having traversed the castle of Sumaisat, which is the

Mud Castle, then passes on to Balis and through Siffin, the scene of the battle between the people of Iraq and al-Sham, and then down to al-Raqqa, al-Rahba, Hit and al-Anbar.

229. From these latter localities canals are dug like the `Isa Canal and others which end in the City of Peace [Baghdad] and pours into the Tigris. The Euphrates proceeds to the territory of Sura, Qasr ibn Hubaira, Kufa, al-Jami`ain, al-Nars and al-Tufuf and finally ends in the swamp between Wasit and Basra. Accordingly, it flows on the face of the earth for a distance of around 500 *farsakhs*---some say more. In the past, most of its waters ended in the territory of al-Hira, and its channel may still be seen to the present day and is called the Old River. Upon it took place the battle, known as al-Qadisiyya, between the Muslims and Rustam. It then used to flow into the Abyssinian sea, for the sea at that time reached up to the locality known as al-Najaf today. There, ships from India and China would dock when journeying to the kings of al-Hira.

230. Some older historians who are knowledgeable about the battle-days of the pre-Islamic Arabs such as Hisham ibn Muhammad al-Kalbi, Abu Mikhnaf Lut ibn Yahya and al-Sharqi ibn al-Qutami report the following story. When, in the caliphate of Abu Bakr, Khalid ibn al-Walid al-Makhzumi\* marched on al-Hira, following the conquest of Yamama and the killing of the Liar of the Hanifa tribe [Musaylima], he saw that the people of al-Hira had taken refuge in the White Fort, the Qadisiyya Fort and the Banu Tha`laba Fort. These were the names of forts that existed in al-Hira but are at this point in time, the year 332, desolate ruins lying some 3 miles distant from al-Kufa. When Khalid saw that the people of al-Hira had taken to the forts against him, he ordered his troops to camp near Najaf then rode out on his horse with Dirar ibn al-Azwar al-Asadi, a famous Arab knight. They halted below the Banu Tha`laba Fort and the `Ibadiyyun [Nestorian Christians] began to fling fire projectiles at them. His horse bolted and Dirar said to him: "God steady you! They have no trick more grievous than what you see."

231. Khalid then returned to his camp and sent a message to the people of al-Hira: "Send us a man of reason and long experience from among you so I can parley with him." They sent him `Abd al-Masih ibn `Amr ibn Qais ibn Hayyan ibn Buqaila al-Ghassani. It was he who built the White Fort. His ancestor Buqaila was so called because he went out one day dressed in green silken garments so his people said: "This is nothing but a *buqaila* [a small vegetable]!" so he was called Buqaila. It was this same `Abd al-Masih who had gone to see Satih, the Ghassanid seer, to ask him about the dream of the *Mobidhan* [Zoroastrian priest], the quaking of the Portico and the future of Sasanid kings. `Abd al-Masih, then 350 years old, approached Khalid. As Khalid saw him coming he asked: "From where did your footsteps proceed, old man?" "From my father's loins," he answered. "Where did you come from?" "From my mother's belly," he answered. "Damn it, upon what [i.e.errand] are you set?" "Upon the earth," he answered. "What [i.e.mission] are you in, may you perish?" "In my clothes," he answered. "Are you rational, may you lose your reason?" "Yes, by God, and I can write," he answered. "Son of how many [i.e. years] are you?" "Son of one man," he answered. Khalid said, "O God, degrade this city's people! They merely increase our bewilderment. I ask him about a certain matter and he answers with another." "No indeed. I swear I only answered you as you had asked me. Ask me what you like," he answered. Khalid said: "Are you Arab or Nabat [natives]?" "Arabs who *Nabatized* and Nabat who *Arabized*." "Is it to be war or peace between us?" "No, peace," he answered. "What about these forts, then?" "We built them to imprison the vicious until the wise can come and restrain them," he answered. "How many [years] have passed you by?" "Three hundred and fifty," he answered. "What [events] have you witnessed?" "I witnessed ships at sea sailing up to us in this land of Najaf bearing the merchandise of Sind and India, and the waves of the sea crashing beneath your feet where you are now standing. But observe how far the sea is from where we are today. I used to see the women of al-Hira

bearing large baskets on their heads and carrying for provisions a single loaf of bread. They would walk through one thriving village after another, continuous habitations, fruit-bearing trees, running streams, and flowing brooks that reached all the way to al-Sham. Today you can see that it is all a desolate wilderness. This is God's habit when He deals with His lands and creatures."

232. Khalid and his companions fell silent when they heard this from him and knew who he was. He was famous among the Arabs for his long life span and for the soundness of his mind. He said all this while twirling in the palm of his hand a poison that kills at once. Khalid asked: "What do you have there?" "A poison that kills at once," he answered. "What do you intend to do with it?" "I came to you so that if I hear from you what pleases me and agrees with my countrymen I would accept it and offer thanks to God. If it is the other thing, I will not be the first person to bring humiliation and destruction upon my townsmen, so I will swallow this poison and be rid of this world. I have only a few more years to live." Khalid said: "Give it to me." He took the poison, placed it in the palm of his hand and said: "In the name of God, by God, Lord of earth and heaven, in the name of God in whose name nothing can bring harm." Khalid then swallowed it, was numbed for a while, with his chin resting on his breast, then recovered and came to, as if released from shackles.

233. The *`Ibadi* then returned to his people. He was a *`Ibadi* in faith, that is, a Nestorian Christian. He addressed them as follows: "O people, I come to you from a demon who swallowed a poison that kills at once but was not harmed by it. Make peace with him and get him to leave you in peace. These people are favored by God, the future belongs to them and the Sasanid dynasty is doomed. Their religion will have an impact that spreads throughout the world. Then it will experience certain setbacks." So they made peace with Khalid in return for one hundred thousand *dirhams* and *tailasan* [shawl-like] garments. Khalid then departed and `Abd al-Masih recited the following verse:

*Will I ever see, after the two Mundhirs [kings of al-Hira] have gone,*

*Camels resting near Khawarnaq and Sadir [famous palaces]?  
 With knights from every clan protecting them,  
 Fearing a lion with a loud roar?  
 And, after the knights of al-Nu`man,  
 Will I behold gardens between Murra and al-Hufair?  
 After the death of Abu Qubais [ al-Nu`man] we have become  
 Like sheep in a day of pouring rain.  
 The tribes of Ma`add [desert Arabs] have carved us up,  
 Out in the open, like butchers with lumps of meat.  
 We [reading nu`addi] pay taxes like the taxes of Chosroes,  
 Or the taxes paid by Quraiza and al-Nadir [Jewish clans of Medinah].  
 Such is Time. It twists and turns,  
 One day of sorrow, another of joy.*

234. We mentioned this story here in order to support our view regarding the shift in the position of the seas and penetration of waters and rivers across time. When the waters were cut off from their source at that site the sea turned into land so that today the distance between al-Hira and the sea is a journey of several days. Whoever has seen al-Najaf and observed it closely will verify what we have described above.

235. Similar too is the case with the shift of what is called the One-eyed Tigris (*Dijla al-`awra`*) which today is at a considerable distance from the Tigris. It is now known as the Valley of Jukha, which runs from the borders of the city of Badhbin in the region of Wasit in Iraq to the territory of Dur al-Rasibi and on to the neighborhood of the land of Sus in the territory of Khuzistan. The same thing happened on the eastern side of Baghdad at the site known as Raqqa al-Shamasiyya and also what the current carried away of farms on the western side which used to exist between Qutrabull and Baghdad, like the village known as Qubb, the locality known as Bushra, the one known as al-`Ain and other villages of Qutrabull. Their inhabitants filed complaints against the inhabitants

of the eastern side who took possession of Raqqa al-Shamasiyya in the days of the caliph al-Muqtadir and in the presence of the vizier Abu'l Hasan `Ali ibn `Isa, and what answers were given at that time. All this is well known in Baghdad.

236. If the waters carry away one seventh of a mile of land in about thirty years, this becomes a mile in around two hundred years. If the river moves away by 4000 *dhira`* from its main course, some land sites will be destroyed while others will thrive. If the waters find a downward slope into which they pour, the river will broaden and flow faster, tearing up localities on land from their furthest extent. Wherever it finds wide lowlands, it will fill them up through the speed of its flow, thus creating lakes, swamps and marshes, and in the process destroying some lands while causing others to thrive. Anyone with any understanding will know what we are talking about.

237. Some discriminating historians of the world and its kings state that in the year when the Prophet of God sent ambassadors to Chosroes, which was year 7 of the Hijra, both the Euphrates and the Tigris experienced a huge rise never seen before. Huge gaps appeared and cracks opened up in many canals with the waters carrying away many barrages and dikes. The waters flooded the lowlands. Abarwiz [title of Chosroes] tried hard to contain the waters and rebuild its flood-gates, dikes and flanks, but the flood was unstoppable and flowed into where the marshes are today. The waters flooded habitations and the sown, overwhelming villages and agricultural areas there, and the king could find no way to contain the waters. Shortly thereafter, the Persians were busy with the wars against the Arabs and the waters would gush forth without any attention paid to the matter, so the marshes grew ever wider.

238. When Mu`awiya assumed supreme power he delegated his client, `Abdullah ibn Darraj to collect the land-tax of Iraq. From lands in the marshes he was able to collect what amounted to 15 million *dirhams*. He did this by cutting down the reeds that grew in the marshes and holding back the waters

through dikes and barrages. In later times Hassan the Nabati, client of the tribe of Dabba, was able to salvage for al-Hajjaj in the days of the ruler al-Walid more lands from the marshes. Today, the marshes extend as far as the waters had covered of land, an area of 50 *farsakhs* by fifty or so. In the midst of these marshes there are many villages such as Qa`r al-Jamida and others. This is a town surrounded by water. When the water is clear, one can see in its depths traces of buildings, some of stone, others of brick, and some that have collapsed but with visible traces. The same can be seen in Lake Tinnis and Dimyat, as is recounted in more than one place in our present work and in our other works.

239. Let us now turn back to the Tigris, its source and its outlet. The Tigris issues from the region of Amid in the territory of Diyar Bakr, from springs in the land of Khilat in Armenia. Flowing into it are several rivers: Saryat and Satidma, which issue from the territory of Arzan and Mayyafariqain, together with other rivers like Dusha and Khabur which issue from Armenia and flow into the Tigris between the towns of Basurin and Qabr Sabur in the regions of Qarda and Bazabda in the territory and province of Mosul. These lands are known as the lands of Banu Hamdan. Concerning them a poet has recited:

*In Barda and Bazabda is a summer resort and a place to settle,*

*Sweet and cool like Salsabil [spring in paradise].*

*But Baghdad? What is Baghdad?*

*Its soil is like hot embers, its heat is intense.*

The Khabur mentioned above is not the same as the one that issues from the springs of the town of Ra's `Ain, and flows into the Euphrates below the town of Qarqisia.

240. The Tigris then passes by the city of Mosul where the Greater Zab river, issuing from Armenia, flows into it when it is past Mosul and above the town of al-Haditha. Another river, also called Zab and issuing from Armenia and Adharbajjan, flows into the Tigris above the town of al-Sinn. The Tigris proceeds to Takrit, Samarra and Baghdad, where the canals called al-Khandaq,

al-Sarrat and Nahr `Isa flow into it. These canals, as already mentioned, lead from the Euphrates and pour into the Tigris. The Tigris then leaves Baghdad where several rivers pour into it like the ones known as Diyala, Bin and Ruwan in the vicinity of the territory of Jarjaraya, and also al-Sib and Nil al-Nu`maniyya. As the Tigris exits the city of Wasit, it divides into many rivers all the way to the marshlands of Basra with rivers like Sabus, al-Yahudi and al-Ma`muni, then on to the mouth of the river which ends with al-Qatr. In it, most ships of Basra run when coming from Baghdad and Wasit. The total length of the Tigris in its flow upon the earth's surface is around 300 *farasakhs*, though some say 400.

241. We have left out the mention of many other rivers, mentioning only the major and most famous among them, though we have treated this subject at length in our two earlier works, the *Akhbar* and *al-Awsat*. In the present work we include only some reports of rivers we have cited by name and others that we have not.

242. Basra has a number of major canals like Nahr Shirin, Nahr al-Dair and Nahr Ibn `Umar. So too is the case with the canals in the region of Al-Ahwaz, in the lands separating it from the region of Basra. We have left out this subject for we have already treated its history at great length. Also treated at great length are reports concerning the manner in which Bahr Faris [Persian Gulf] terminates in the regions of Basra and al-Ubulla and reports concerning a locality called al-Jarrara. This latter is an inlet of the sea into land near the region of al-Ubulla. Because of this, most canals of Basra have turned saline. Because of al-Jarrara, wooden platforms have been set up near the inlet of the sea in the vicinity of Ubulla and `Abbadan. On the platforms are stationed people who light fires at night, mounted on three legs like chairs in the midst of the sea, to warn ships coming from Oman and Siraf not to fall into the Jarrara or other places like it, where ships would founder and be lost. All this has been related at length in our

earlier works. These localities are remarkable in the way they flow into the sea and the way the sea is connected to them.

## **Chapter 10**

### **An account of the Abyssinian Sea and opinions regarding its extent, its branches and its gulfs.**

243. It has been estimated that the Indian Sea, that is, the Abyssinian Sea, extends from west to east, from furthest Abyssinia to furthest India and China, for a distance of eight thousand miles in length and 2700 in breadth but in other places 1900 miles. Its breadth varies, being less in some places and more in others. Other figures for its length and breadth have also been given but we have disregarded them since they lack evidence of accuracy according to experts. No greater sea exists on the inhabited earth.

244. This sea has a gulf which adjoins the land of Abyssinia and passes on to the region of Barbara in the land of the Zanj and Abyssinia, called the Barbari Gulf. It is 500 miles in length and 100 in width. This Barbara is not to be confused with the land of the Berbers which is in the Maghreb in the territory of Ifriqiya, for this is a different locality but bears the same name. Ship captains from Oman cross that sea to the island of Qanbalu\* in the sea of the Zanj. In that island Muslims live alongside the unbelieving Zanj.

245. The above-mentioned Omani captains allege that this Barbari Gulf, known to them as the sea of Barbara and the land of Hafuna, is longer than we have cited. They say that its waves are mountainous and blind, by which they mean that these waves rise to the height of mountains then sink like the lowest of valleys. They further assert that its waves do not break and create foam as in all other seas, and that its waves are crazy. The Omanis who sail in this sea are Arabs of the Azd tribe. Once far at sea and with the waves rising and falling, they chant *rajaz*\* verses as they toil:

*Barbara and Hafuni*

*And your crazy waves;*

*Hafuni and Barbara,*

*And its waves are as you see.*

246. The final destination of these sailors in the Zanj Sea is, as was mentioned, the island of Qanbalu, then the lands of Sufala and Waq Waq in furthest Zanj land and the lowest points of their sea. This sea is crossed by the people of Siraf. I myself sailed on that sea from the town of Suhar in Oman, Suhar being the chief city of the land of Oman. I did so in the company of some Sirafi captains like Muhammad ibn al-Zaidabud and Jawhar ibn Ahmad, known as Ibn Sirah. This latter would later be lost at sea with his crew. The last time I sailed that sea was in the year 304 [916-17], from the island of Qanbalu to Oman in a boat captained by Ahmad and `Abd al-Samad, brothers of `Abd al-Rahim ibn Ja`far al-Sirafi from Mikan, a quarter of Siraf. They too would later sink with their boats and passengers---I mean Ahmad and `Abd al-Samad, sons of Ja`far. When last I sailed that sea, Oman was ruled by Ahmad ibn Hilal, nephew of al-Qaital. I have sailed on many a sea such as the Chinese, the Mediterranean, the Red Sea and the sea of Yemen, experiencing untold terrors, but never did I experience a more terrifying sea than the sea of the Zanj, described above.

247. In that sea is the fish known as *uwal* [whale]. Each fish is about 400 to 500 *dhira`*, known as *dhira` `umariyya*, which is the measure of length used by those who sail that sea. Most fish of this species, however, measure 100 *dhira`*. When the sea is calm, the edges of its fins may be seen, resembling huge sails. It might also raise its head and blow out water which shoots up into the air faster than an arrow. Ships are scared of it by day or night so they beat on pieces of wood and rattles to drive it away. With its tail and fins it drives fish into its open mouth and the fish pour into its entrails. When this fish grows too aggressive, God sends it a fish a *dhira`* in length called *lashk* which attaches itself to the base of its pectoral fins and from which there is no escape. The *uwal* then dives to the bottom of the sea and strikes itself until it dies, then floats up to the surface appearing like a great mountain. It also happens that the *lashk*

might attach itself to a ship so the *uwal*, with all its vast size, will not come near and in fact runs away when it sees that little fish, for it is a fatal menace to it.

248. So too is the case with the crocodile, to which a small animal is a fatal menace. This animal lives on the banks and islands of the Nile. The crocodile has no rear end and what it eats turns into worms in its belly. When these worms annoy it, the crocodile crawls out onto land, lies on its back and opens its mouth. God then disposes certain water-birds, like the *titawa*, *hisani* and *shamurk*\* and others, habituated to do so, to eat the worms that come out of its entrails. That little animal is meanwhile hiding in the sand observing the scene, then creeps into its throat and down to its entrails. The crocodile then thrashes itself on the ground and plunges into the depths of the Nile. But the little animal devours its entrails, then cuts through its belly and comes out. It may also happen that the crocodile kills itself before the little animal has gone out so it comes out from its belly after the crocodile's death. This little animal is about a *dhira`* in length and looks like a weasel with several limbs and claws.

249. In the Zanj sea, there are several species of fish of different shapes. Were it not that people reject what they do not know or are not familiar with, we would have related the wonders of those seas and what they contain by way of whales and animal life and other wonders of these waters.

250. Let us now turn back to speak of the branches and gulfs of that sea and where it enters land or land enters it. Another gulf extends from that sea reaching the town of Qulzum\*. Between this city and al-Fustat is a three-days journey. Lying on that gulf too is the town of Aila, the Hijaz, the town of Juddah and the Yemen. The gulf extends for 1400 miles, with a width of two hundred miles, which is the nearest distance between its two shores. In its middle its width reaches 700 miles, this being its widest extent. Facing the Hijaz and the land of Aila on its western shore is the land of `Allaqi, the region of `Aidhab in the Sa`id of Egypt, and the land of Bujja, then the land of the

Abyssinians and the Sudan, then all the way to the furthest point in the lands of the Zanj. This last is the land of Sufala, in the territory of the Zanj.

251. Another gulf which branches from that sea is the Persian Sea (*Bahr Faris*). This sea ends in al-Ubulla, al-Khashabat and `Abbadan, in the territory of Basra. In length, this gulf is 1400 miles with a width at its center of 500 miles, shrinking to about 150 miles. This gulf resembles a triangle with the region of al-Ubulla forming one of its angles. On its eastern coast lies the coastline of Faris with the following territories: Dawraq al-Furs; the towns of Mah Ruban and Siniz, whence the cloth known as *Sinizi* where this is made; the town of Jannaba, whence the cloth known as *Jannabi*; the town of Najiram in the territory of Siraf; the land of Ibn `Umara; the coast of Kirman, which is the land of Hurmuz, with Hurmuz facing the town of Suhar in Oman. Next to the coast of Kirman and connected to it on the coastline of that sea is the land of Makran. This latter is the land of the sect of Khawarij\*, also known as *al-Sharat\**. These are all palm tree lands.

252. Next comes Tiz Makran, then the coast of Sind into which flows the river of Mihran [Indus], this being the river of Sind, as already mentioned. There too is the town of Daibul to which is joined the coast of India until it reaches the land of Barwas, whence *Barwasi* spears. This coastline then extends to the land of China, forming one continuous coastline, both flourishing and desolate.

253. Facing the lands just mentioned, starting with the coastline of Faris, Makran and Sind is the territory of Bahrain\*, the islands of Qatar, the coast of Banu Jadhima, the land of Oman, the land of Mahra and on to the territory of Ra's al-Jumjuma in the land of al-Shir and al-Ahqaf\*. There are many islands here such as the Island of Kharak which is in the land of Jannaba, since Kharak is counted as belonging to Jannaba. Between that island and the mainland is a distance of some *farsakhs*, and in it are pearl- fisheries and the pearls known as *kharaki*. There is also the Island of Uwal\* inhabited by Banu Ma`n, Banu Mismar and many other Arabs. Between it and the towns of Bahrain is a day's

distance or even less. On that coast too lie the towns of al-Zara and Qatif, on the coast of Hajar. Following Uwal are many other islands such as the Island of Lafit, also called the island of Banu Kawan. It had been conquered by `Amr ibn al-`As and his mosque is still there. It is densely inhabited and has contiguous villages and dwellings.

254. Nearby is the Island of Hanjam, where ships stock up on water, then the mountains known as “Kusair, `Umair and a third with no benefit (*khair*) in it.” Then comes the locality known as the Durdur [whirlpool] known as Durdur Masandam, which sailors call Abu Humair. These localities in the sea are black mountains rising high where there is neither plant nor animal life, surrounded by deep sea waters and crashing waves that terrify the beholder. These are found between Oman and Siraf\*, and ships are obliged to pass them by and enter into their midst, with unpredictable results.

255. This sea is the Gulf of Persia, known also as the Persian Sea (*Bahr Faris*). On it are the lands described above, viz. Bahrain, Faris, Basra, Oman and Kirman up to Ra’s al-Jumjuma. Between the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea (*Khalij al-Qulzum*) lies Aila, the Hijaz and Yemen. Between these two gulfs is a distance of 1500 miles by land. It is a land that enters a sea while the sea surrounds it on most of its sides, as already described.

256. This then is the sea of China, India, Persia, Oman, Basra, Bahrain, the Yemen, Abyssinia, the Hijaz, Qulzum, the Zanj and Sind, together with its inhabited islands and the numerous nations surrounding it, whose description and number is known only to their Creator. Each part of that sea carries a name distinct from the others, though the water itself is one, continuous and undivided. In that sea are fisheries of precious stones and pearls among which are carnelian and *madinj* [sard], which is a form of *bijadi* [chalcedony] and diverse kinds of rubies, diamonds and *sunbadhaj* [corundum]. In it too are gold and silver mines near the lands of Kalah [Kedah?] and Sribuza [Srivijaya?] and around it are iron mines near Kirman and copper mines in Oman. In it too are

diverse kinds of perfumes, spices, amber, different medicaments and drugs, teak wood, the wood known as *darzanji* [ebony?], reeds and rattan. We shall later on specify the localities where such precious stones, perfumes, and plants may be found since they are all in or around that sea.

257. All that we have described above pertains to, and is called the Abyssinian Sea. The winds in each part of it are different, that is, in each part which is called a separate sea such as the Persian Sea, the Yemen Sea, the Red Sea, the Abyssinian Sea, the Zanj Sea, the Sind Sea, the Indian Sea, the Kalah Sea, the Zabij Sea and the China Sea. Some winds rise from the depths of the sea, churning the waters and heightening its waves, like a cauldron boiling because of what comes to it from below of the heat of fire. Other winds derive their menace from the depths and from surface breezes. Yet others have their winds from surface breezes but not from the depths. What we have called winds coming from the depths are the result of vents which appear in the depths of the seas then ascend to the surface. God knows how this happens.

258. Those who sail this sea know the times when these winds blow, having acquired this knowledge through long practice and experience, passing this knowledge on, both in theory and practice. They operate according to certain signs and indications regarding times of its storms, its calm times and its turbulent. This all concerns the Abyssinian Sea. The same is true of the Byzantines and Muslims who sail the Mediterranean or who sail the Caspian Sea from the Khazar land to Jurjan, Tabaristan and the Dailam. Later on, we shall describe in both general terms and in detail the science of seafaring and the wonders and accounts of the seas, if God wills. There is no strength save in God.

## **Chapter 11**

**An account of conflicting views expressed regarding the ebb and flow of the tides and a summary of these views**

259. The flow is when water runs in, in accordance with its nature and the laws governing the manner of its flowing, while the ebb is when water recedes contrary to the laws of its flow and inversely to how it normally runs. This ebb and flow is found in the Abyssinian Sea which also encompasses the India, China, Basra and Persia Seas, as already mentioned above. Seas in general are of three kinds in this respect: some in which ebb and flow appear quite clearly, some in which ebb and flow are barely detected or else are slight and hidden, and some in which there is no ebb and flow.

260. Seas where there is no ebb and flow lack this occurrence for three reasons. The first kind of sea is because waters remain still for a long time so they grow dense, their salinity increases and its winds congeal. This is because water might end up in certain localities for some reason and becomes like a lake where the water volume decreases in summer and increases in winter, an increase which can be detected by the rivers and springs that flow into it. The second kind of sea is one which is situated very far from the rotation of the moon and its approaches to earth, thus precluding ebb and flow. The third kind is where the sea-bed is porous whereby waters seep into other seas, causing the winds in that sea-bed to be released by degrees and the other winds to overcome it. This occurs mostly in the wide expanses of a sea and in its islands.

261. Conflicting views have been expressed regarding the causes of tides. Some argue that these are caused by the moon, which is of the same substance as water, and it is the moon which heats the water, causing it to expand. They compare this to fire when it heats water in a cauldron causing it to boil. Water might be at the half point or two-thirds in a cauldron but when water boils, it expands in a cauldron, rises up, is agitated then boils over so its quantity appears to the senses to have been doubled but decreases in weight, for it is a condition of heat that it expands bodies while coldness contracts them. Thus, the sea-beds grow hot, generating sweetness which changes its character and grows warm, as happens in cesspools and wells. Once heated, that water

expands, increases in volume, then each level agitates the next until it floats to the surface and is far from the sea-bed, needing more space than its chasm.

When the moon is full, it heats the atmosphere greatly, causing the waters to increase. This is called the monthly tide.

262. Such a sea would lie below the meridian, commencing from east to west, with the erratic stars [planets] revolving around it, along with what faces it of fixed stars, provided the erratic stars are so inclined as to pass beyond it. If these erratic stars pass beyond it, the fixed stars draw near and have an effect, by day and night, on that sea from where it begins to where it ends. Yet the place that faces the depths rarely experiences any increase. Rather, it appears in rivers where tides are visible at its ends and where all other waters flow into it.\*

263. Another group of scholars argue as follows. If the tides are comparable to the fire that heats water in a cauldron, and it expands it so that water seeks a wider space and spills over, with the result that the cauldron is empty of water; and if water, once out of the cauldron, seeks by its nature the deeper spots on earth, then is forced to turn back----if this is comparable to boiling water in a cauldron or bottle once it spills over and fire is continuously heating it, it follows that the sun would emit even more heat. If the sun was the cause of its flow, the tides would flow when the sun rises and ebb when it sets.

264. These scholars claim that the cause of the ebb and flow of tides are vapors that are generated in the depths of the earth. These vapors continue to be generated until they grow dense and abundant, and through their density propel the waters of that sea. The vapors continue to do so until their components below decrease, at which point the waters retreat to the depths of the sea.

Because of this, the ebb and flow of the tides occur by day and night, in winter and summer, and whether the moon appears or not, or whether the sun is rising or setting. They argue that this can be confirmed by eyesight, since no sooner is the ebb complete than the flow begins and vice versa. This is so because these vapors do not change for, once released, they generate others in their place and

because when the sea-waters recede to the bottom these vapors are generated where land touches water. Each time the waters recede, vapor is generated and each time it spills over, the vapors are exhaled.

265. Religious communities on the other hand believe that whatever cannot be known of the course of nature nor has an analogy is in fact a divine act which proves the unity and wisdom of God. Thus, the ebb and flow of tides has no natural cause whatever and no analogy.

266. Other scholars assert that the turmoil of the waters of the seas is like the turmoil of the humors of the body. Thus, one can observe the nature of a choleric or sanguinary person, for instance, become agitated then grow calm. In this case too there are components that supply such agitation by degrees. When powerful, they become agitated, then are slowly calmed until they return to their normal state.

267. Yet others reject all that we have set forth above. They allege that the air above a sea is constantly being transformed. When it is transformed, seawaters increase and spill over, which then becomes the flow of tides. At that point the waters are transformed and breathe out, turning into air, so the sea returns to what it was, namely the ebb. This is a transformation that is continuous, successive and uninterrupted, for water is continuously changed into air and vice versa. It is possible that this occurs more often when the moon is full, for when it is full more air is transformed than when it is not full. Hence the moon is a cause for excess in the tide but not for the tide itself, for the moon might be waning when the tide occurs. The tides in the Persian Sea occur most often at dawn.

268. Many ship captains among the Omanis and Sirafis who cross that sea and travel to its inhabited areas, sailing among the nations in its islands and around its basin, assert that tides in that sea occur only twice a year. The tide at one time flows in a northeasterly direction during the six months of summer. When it does so, the waters overflow in eastern lands, such as China and regions

nearby, and recede from regions west of that sea. At another time it flows in a southwesterly direction during the six months of winter. In summer, the waters overflow in the western regions of that sea and recede from China. The sea might move through the movement of the winds. If the sun is to the north the air moves southwards for reasons these captains have mentioned. The seawaters through the movement of the air then flow southwards. Hence, seas lying to the south are high when the north wind blows whereas waters decrease in northern seas. Likewise, when the sun is to the south and the air flows from south to north, the seawaters flow alongside it from a southerly to a northerly direction. The waters in the southern regions decrease and the movement of the seawaters in these two directions, i.e. north and south, is called the ebb and flow of the tide. This is because the flow of the south is the ebb of the north and vice versa. If the moon overlaps with some planets in either direction, the effect is intensified and heat grows more extreme and more severe, thus intensifying the flow of air and consequently the tilting of seawaters towards the side facing the one where the sun is found. Al-Mas`udi said: This is the view of al-Kindi\* and of Ahmad ibn al-Tayyib al-Sarakhsi\* as transmitted by us on their authority, namely, that seas move with the movement of the winds.

269. I was once in the city of Kanbaya [Cambay], in India, the city known for the production of laced Kanbaya shoes, and also in nearby cities like Sandan and Sufara. I entered that city in the year 303 [915-16]. The king at that time was called Baniya, a Brahmin, who was a deputy of al-Balhara, ruler of Mankir. This Baniya was fond of debating with Muslims and others who visited his city. The city itself lay on an inlet of the sea, a gulf [Gulf of Khambhat] wider than the Nile, Tigris or Euphrates, on which were situated towns, villages and habitations, gardens and Narjil palm trees, with peacocks and parrots and other Indian birds flitting between the gardens and the water. Between the city of Kanbaya and the sea from which this gulf issues is a distance of two days or a bit less. The waters recede from that gulf until the sand at the bottom of the gulf

becomes visible, with just a little water in its midst. I once saw a dog stranded on that sand from which the water had receded and looking like a desert, when suddenly the tide flowed in from the sea, from the mouth of the gulf, sprinting forward like horses in a race. The dog sensed the waters coming and, fearing them, began to run as fast as he could towards any land not reachable by the waters. But the waters were so fast and strong that they overtook the speeding dog and drowned him.

270. Similar to this is the tide which comes in between Basra and al-Ahwaz, in a locality known as al-Basiyan and the region of Qunduz. There, that tide is called the “wolf”. It emits a very loud boiling noise which terrifies sailors. It is a locality known to whoever follows that route to reach the region of Dawraq and the land of Faris.

## **Chapter 12**

### **An account of the Mediterranean Sea and of the views expressed regarding its length, breadth, and where it begins and ends**

271. As regards the Mediterranean (*Bahr al-Rum*) which adjoins Tarsus, Adana, al-Massisa, Antioch, Latakiya, Tripoli, Sidon, Tyre and other cities of the coast of al-Sham, as also Egypt, Alexandria and the coasts of al-Maghrib, some authors of astronomical almanacs like Muhammad ibn Jabir al-Battani\* and others mention in their works that it is 5000 miles in length but fluctuates in width between 600 and 800 miles and less, depending on the narrowness and closeness of sea to land and vice versa.

272. This sea originates from a gulf that comes out of the sea known as the Ocean (*Uqyanus*). The narrowest point of this gulf is the one between the coast of Tangier and Ceuta in the Maghrib and the coast of al-Andalus. This place is known as Sibta\*, with a width of ten miles between the two coasts. This is the place used for the crossing from al-Andalus to the Maghrib and vice versa, and is known as *al-Zuqaq* [corridor]. When we come to the history of Egypt we shall mention the bridge that once existed between these two coasts and how it

was overwhelmed by the waters of the sea, as also the road connecting the island of Cyprus and the land of al-`Arish which caravans once traversed.

273. At the common boundary between these two seas, I mean the Ocean and the Mediterranean, stood the brass lighthouse and the stone monuments erected by the mighty king Hirqil [Hercules] with their inscriptions, and with statues pointing with their hands that “there is no passage beyond me and no entry into that sea from the Mediterranean”. For the Ocean is a sea where no ship can run, where there is no habitation and where no animals live. It is a sea whose extent cannot be measured and whose end is unreachable and unknown. It is called the “Sea of Darkneses”, the “Green Sea” and the “Surrounding Sea” (*Muhit*). It is said that the lighthouse mentioned above is not on that Zuqaq but instead is on one of the islands of the Ocean and its coasts.

274. Some have argued that this Ocean is the source of water for all seas. Many wondrous tales are told of it which we have already cited in our *Akhbar al-Zaman*, when we related accounts of people who put their lives in danger by sailing in it, and of these who survived and those who perished, and what they saw in that sea. Among them was a fellow from al-Andalus called Khashkhash who was a leader of youth gangs in the city of Cordoba. He collected a number of young stalwarts and sailed with them in ships specially constructed for that Ocean. Having disappeared for some time, he returned with much booty. His story is well known among the people of al-Andalus.

275. Between the lighthouse standing there and the location where the two seas meet is a long distance along the mouth of that gulf and the flow of water. This is because the waters flowing from the Ocean and into the Mediterranean can be sensed, and their flow can be ascertained.

276. From the Mediterranean and the seas of al-Sham and Egypt there branches off a gulf some 500 miles long which adjoins the city of Rome and is called *Adrias* in Greek. There are many islands in the Mediterranean, among which is Cyprus which lies between the coast of al-Sham and the Byzantines; also the

island of Rhodes, opposite Alexandria, and the islands of Crete and Sicily. We shall later on give an account of Sicily when we mention the volcano from which fire is emitted and where there are huge burial mounds and corpses.

277. Ya`qub ibn Ishaq al-Kindi and his pupil Ahmad ibn al-Tayyib al-Sarakhsi mention certain figures regarding this sea's length and breadth which differ from ours. We shall return to this subject later and describe these seas, observing a certain orderliness in composing and arranging this work, if God wills.

### **Chapter 13**

#### **An account of the Black Sea [*Buntus*], the Sea of Azov [*Mayutis*] and the Gulf of Constantinople**

278. The Black sea stretches from the territory of Ladhika\* to Constantinople, with a length of 1100 miles and a width in its midst of 300 miles. Into it flows the great river called Tanais [Don], already described. This river originates from the north and along its banks live many descendants of Yafith son of Noah. It originates from a great northern lake, from springs and mountains, and it flows on the surface of the earth for about 300 *farsakhs* with continuous and built up regions belonging to the progeny of Yafith. It crosses the Sea of Azov, as asserted by careful scholars who know about this subject, until it pours into the Black Sea. This latter is a great sea with many kinds of precious stones, herbs and medicaments, and is mentioned by some ancient philosophers. Some people consider the sea of Azov to be a lake and give its length as 300 miles and its width as 100.

279. From the Black Sea issues the Gulf of Constantinople which then pours into the Mediterranean, with a length of 300 miles and a width of about 50 miles. Upon it is the city of Constantinople and built up areas stretch all the way from its beginning to its end. Constantinople lies on the western side of the gulf and is connected with the lands of Rome, al-Andalus and other western territories.

280. It must follow from the assertions of astronomers who compile almanacs and others that the seas of the Bulghar, Rus, Bajni, Bajnak and Bajghird, who are three kinds of Turks, are in fact the Black Sea. Mention will be made of these nations in later sections, God willing, as and when appropriate, together with their uninterrupted habitations, and which of these nations sail that sea and which do not. But God knows best about all this and there is no strength save in Almighty God.

#### **Chapter 14.**

#### **An account of the Caspian Sea, the Seas of Khazar and Jurjan, and a brief mention of the geographical disposition of all seas**

281. As regards the “Sea of Foreigners” (*Bahr al-A`ajim*) on the coasts of which are located their houses and habitations, it is inhabited on all its sides. It is also known as the sea of al-Bab wa’l Abwab (*Derbent*), of the Khazar, of the Jil, of Dailam, of Jurjan and of Tabaristan. On its coasts live a variety of Turks. One of its boundaries ends in the territory of Khwarizm, in the land of Khurasan. It is 800 miles long and 600 miles wide and is rounded in shape and somewhat long. In later sections of this book we shall deal in brief with the nations that surround these inhabited seas. This sea, that is the “Sea of Foreigners” has many “dragons” (*tannanin*), singular *tinnin*.

282. “Dragons” are also numerous in the Sea of al-Sham, and these are mostly found in those parts that adjoin the regions of Tripoli, Latakiya and Mount Keldag (*al-Jabal al-Aqra`*) in the province of Antioch, beneath which mountain is found the largest volume of water of that sea and where it is called the “last part” (*`ajuz*) of the sea. The sea extends to the coasts of Antioch, Ruis, Iskenderun, Ayas, the Castle of Muthaqqab, the areas beneath the Lukkam [Amanus] Mountains, the coasts of al-Massisa [Mopsuestia] where is found the mouth of the river Jaihan [Ceyhan], the coast of Adana where is found the mouth of the river Saihan [Seyhan], and the coast of Tarsus where is found the mouth of the river Baradan [Berdan], which is the river of Tarsus.

283. The sea then borders the land that is uninhabited and ruined between the Byzantines and the Muslims near the town of Qalamiya, then on to Cyprus, Crete and Qarasiya, then the land of Saluqiya and its great river which flows into that sea, then the forts of the Byzantines all the way to the Gulf of Constantinople. We have omitted to mention many rivers in the land of the Byzantines which flow into this sea such as the Barid and `Asal rivers and others. Habitations are continuous along the coasts of the Mediterranean, all the way from the straits mentioned earlier, which is the Gulf of Tangier, to the coasts of the Maghrib, the lands of Ifriqiya, al-Sus, Tripoli of the West, Qayrawan, the coast of Barqa, al-Rafada, the territory of Alexandria, al-Rashid, Tinnis, Dimyat [Damietta], the coast of al-Sham and the coast of the Shami frontier posts. Then again, the coasts of Byzantium stretch to the territory of Rome and connect with the coast of al-Andalus until it ends with the straits opposite Tangier. This is one continuous, uninterrupted and inhabited Muslim and Byzantine land, broken only by rivers running to the sea and by the Gulf of Constantinople, about a mile in width, and also by other gulfs of the Mediterranean which enter land and from which there is no exit.

284. All the territories above mentioned and lying along the coasts of the Mediterranean adjoin each other without interruption or anything that impedes or divides them, save the rivers we mentioned and the Gulf of Constantinople. In shape, the Mediterranean with its habitations, that is to say where it ends with the Straits that open onto the Ocean where is found the brass lighthouse then the nearest locations in Tangier and the coast of al-Andalus---its shape resembles a cabbage held in the palm of that gulf. The cabbage resembles the sea but is not as rounded because of its length.

285. "Dragons" are unknown in the Abyssinian Sea or in any of the gulfs on its shores, as described above. They are most frequent in parts of the sea that lie next to the Ocean. Opinions differ regarding these "dragons". Some say they are a black wind which forms on the sea bed then rises to the atmosphere above,

reaching up to the clouds. It resembles a hurricane on land which twists and stirs up the dust, chaff and vegetation, then grows long and soars into the air. People imagine them to be black snakes that rise from the sea because of the black clouds, faint light and recurrent winds.

286. Others say that they are beasts that are formed on the seabed. When they become harmful to other sea animals, God sends angels in the clouds who pull out these beasts from the sea. This action assumes the form of black snakes and is accompanied by flashes of glowing light. As these forms move, their tails destroy everything in their path, whether it be a huge structure, trees or a mountain. Blowing hard, they may tear through a forest and the clouds will carry some trees and dump them in the land of Ya'juj [Gog] and Ma'juj [Magog]. The clouds will then send down hail upon the "dragons" and kill them, and Gog and Magog then feed upon them. This is an interpretation attributed to Ibn `Abbas.

287. Other views about the "dragon" that differ from the above have also been expressed. Some historians and storytellers have maintained certain views that we have not bothered to cite, for instance that dragons are black snakes that exist in deserts or mountains. Torrents and floods carry them and dump them in the sea where they feed on sea animals, their bodies are enlarged and their lifespans grow long. When a dragon attains the age of 500 years, it overcomes other sea animals. These accounts agree with the above-cited report from Ibn `Abbas, claiming that some dragons are white and others are black, like the color of the snake itself.

288. The Persians do not deny the existence of the dragon in the sea, alleging that it has seven heads. They call it *Ajdaha* and include its stories in their proverbs. God knows whether these reports are true or not. Reports to do with such subjects are denied by many people on impulse and rejected by rational persons. We omitted mention of them such as the story of `Imran ibn Jabir. He is said to have gone up the Nile reaching its end, and that he crossed the sea

riding on the back of a beast while clutching its hair. This is a sea beast with its legs an inch from the ground. It keeps pace with the sun's disc from the moment it rises until it sets. Its mouth is open in order to swallow the sun into itself. It is further related that this man, clutching the beast's hair, crossed the sea as the beast circled seeking the sun, till he arrived at the other side and saw the Nile flowing down from golden palaces of paradise where an angel gave him a bunch of grapes. It is further related that `Imran came back to see the man he first encountered on his journey, and who had described to him how to reach the source of the Nile, but found him dead. Then there is his story with Satan and the bunch of grapes and other legends made current by Hadith transmitters who cram their accounts with fables.

289. Among other accounts is one that maintains that a golden dome exists in the midst of the Green Sea [Ocean] which stands on four pillars made of green, red, blue and yellow precious stones. From each pillar is discharged a vast amount of water, flowing in four separate directions of that Green Sea and neither mixing nor sinking in the waters of the Ocean itself. These waters then end up in different places on the coasts of that Ocean: first the Nile, second the Syr Darya, third the Amu Darya and fourth the Euphrates.

290. Yet other accounts hold that the angel in charge of the seas places his hindquarters at the furthest point of the China Sea whereupon the sea rises, causing the tide to flow. When the angel removes his hindquarters from the sea, the waters return to their midst, seeking the sea bed, causing the tide to ebb. Those who relate this tale compare it to a bowl half filled with water. If a person places his hand or foot in that bowl, the water fills the bowl. If he removes them, the water returns to its normal and general level. Some say that the angel places the thumb of his right hand in the waters causing the flow of the tide, then removes it, causing the ebb.

291. What we have mentioned here is neither impossible nor necessary and falls under the category of the possible and plausible since the manner in which these

reports were transmitted was from one single individual to another. These reports were not transmitted through multiple transmitters nor are they widely known, thus necessarily generating certain knowledge and legal obligations, and being free of blemish in their manner of transmission. If such reports are coupled with evidence which establishes their truth, one must accept them and submit to what God obliges us to accept from among religious reports, and act accordingly. This is clear in the following Qur'anic verse: {Whatever the Prophet commands you to do, accept it; whatever he disallows, desist.} If what we related above turns out to be false, we have simply reported what certain people have said. We mention this in order that readers of this book would know that we have exerted ourselves in this book and in our other works, and that we have not failed to understand what people have related in all the accounts cited above. In God is success.

292. This then is a resumé regarding the seas. Most people regard them as being four in number in the inhabited parts of the earth, while some say they are five, others six and yet others seven, separate and unconnected. The first is the Abyssinian Sea, then the Mediterranean, then the Black Sea, then the Sea of Azov, then the Caspian, then the Ocean, most of whose boundaries are unknown. This latter is also called the Green, Dark and Surrounding Ocean.

293. The Black Sea is connected to the Sea of Azov. From it issues the Gulf of Constantinople which flows into the Mediterranean and with which it is connected, as described earlier. The Mediterranean commences from the Green Ocean. Accordingly, what we have described must constitute one single sea whose waters are connected. But none of these waters or any part of them---God knows best---is in any way connected with the Abyssinian sea.

294. The Black Sea and the Sea of Azov should be regarded as one sea even though in certain places land constricts them, forming a sort of narrow straits between the two bodies of water. Nor, if we call one of them the sea of Azov, because of its width and plentiful volume of waters, and the other the Black Sea,

because of its narrowness and shallow waters, does this fact prevent us from calling both the “Azov” or both the “Black” Sea. If in later passages in this book we refer to the “Azov” or to the “Black” sea, we are simply referring to where that sea widens or where it becomes narrow.

295. Al-Mas`udi said: Some people mistakenly believe that the Caspian is connected to the Azov Sea. I have not met any merchant who entered the land of the Khazar or sailed on the Azov and Black Seas on their way to the land of the Rus or Bulghar who claimed that the Caspian is connected to any other sea or any of its waters or gulfs, except through the river of the Khazars [Volga]. We will mention this when we come to discuss the Mountain of Qabq [Caucasus], the city of al-Bab wa'l Abwab [Derbent] and the kingdom of the Khazars, and how the Rus sailed into the Caspian, an event which took place after the year 300 [912-13].

296. Most authors, ancient and modern, who attempted in their books to describe the various seas, state that the Gulf of Constantinople which issues from the Sea of Azov, is connected to the Caspian. I do not know how this can be or how they arrived at that conclusion: was it from sense-data or from rational deduction and analogy? Or did they imagine that the Rus and other neighboring nations living by that sea are in fact the Khazars? I myself have sailed in that sea from Abaskun\* which is on the coast of Jurjan, to the land of Tabaristan and elsewhere. There was not a single merchant or ship captain I encountered, possessed of education and understanding, whom I did not question about this issue. Everyone told me that there was no entry into the Caspian save through where the ships of the Rus had entered it. The same was told to me by some individuals from Adharbaijan, al-Ran, al-Bailaqan and the territory of Bardha`a, the Dailam, the Jil, Jurjan and Tabaristan, since they had never experienced an enemy that attacked them through that sea, nor was this ever known in the past. What we have stated here is well known in the regions stated and among nations and countries. They do not deny this since it is

common knowledge among them. This [Rus invasion] took place in the days of Ibn Abi al-Saj [ruler of Adharbaijan].

297. In some books attributed to al-Kindi and his student al-Sarakhsi, companion of the Caliph al-Mu`tadid, I found a reference to a vast lake at the edge of the inhabited world to the north, some of which lies beneath the northern pole, near which is a city beyond which there is no habitation and called Tulia [Thule]. In some epistles of the Banu al-Munajjim\* I found a reference to that lake.

298. In his epistle on seas, rivers and mountains, Ahmad ibn al-Tayyib al-Sarakhsi states, on the authority of al-Kindi, that the Mediterranean is 6000 miles long when measured from the coasts of Tyre, Tripoli, Antioch, Latakia, al-Muthaqqab, al-Massisa, Tarsus and Qalamiyya all the way to the lighthouse of Hercules. He further states that at its widest it is 400 miles. This is the view of al-Kindi and Sarakhsi. We mentioned above the views of both al-Kindi and the almanac astronomers and the differences between these two groups as we found them in their books or heard them from their followers. However, we have not cited the evidence which supports each view because we have made it a condition in this work to abbreviate and condense its contents.

299. As regards the opposing views of early Greek thinkers concerning the origins of the seas and the evidence cited for such views, we have mentioned these in detail in our *Akhbar al-Zaman*, in chapter 2 of that work, which is in 30 chapters. In that work, we cited the views of each group among them, attributing each view to the persons who held it, although we have in this work touched in brief upon these views.

300. Some of them hold the view that the seas are remnants of a primordial wetness most of whose essence was dried by midday heat while the rest changed their nature through being heated. Others maintain that as the accumulated primordial wetness was burnt up through the rotation of the sun, pure water was extracted and the rest turned saline and bitter. Others believe

that the seas are a perspiration flushed out of the earth because of the heat of the sun and its continued rotation. Yet others argue that the seas are remnants of the wetness filtered from the earth because of its dense substance, as happens with sweet water when mixed with ashes. Once the ashes are filtered out, the water is found to be saline after it had been sweet.

301. Others maintain that water, both sweet and saline, was once mixed together and that the sun causes sweet water to rise because of its lighter weight. Others say the sun does so in order to be nourished by it, while others argue that it turns again into water through a transformation of its substance when it reaches in its ascent a place where the cold surrounds and thickens it. Others argue that water, which is an element, if found in the air or is affected by the cold is always sweet whereas if found on earth is always bitter because of the burning heat which affects it. Some say that all the water which flows into the sea from all surfaces and depths on earth and that once it ends up in that great hole [the sea]---that water itself is absorbent while earth pours into the sea all its salinity. Those portions of fire that exist in water and that ascend from the depths of earth because of the portions of fire mingled with it, cause the purer parts of water to rise and turn into vapor. Once the purer parts of water are raised high, they turn into something like rain, this being an unchanging routine. However, that pure water then turns saline since the earth provides it with salinity while fire removes its sweetness and lightness. It therefore necessarily turns saline once again. This is why seawater is always stable in volume and weight since the heat removes its lighter portions, turning it into drizzle and water. This rainfall then turns into floods that seek lower ground and depths and runs into the deepest parts of the earth until they reach the lakes. Accordingly, no water is ever lost and no portion of it is ever wasted, as evidenced by a water-wheel which scoops water out of a river then pours it into a stream which then flows back into that river.

302. Some have compared this process to the body parts of animals. When an animal feeds, heat affects its food, removing from food those sweet portions and turning them over to nourish body members while leaving behind the heavy elements, that is, the saline and the bitter, whence comes urine and sweat. These are remnants with no sweetness in them but issue from sweet moistness turned through heat into bitterness and salinity. If the heat were to increase beyond its normal level these remnants would be even more bitter than what is normally found in urine and sweat, since we find that anything burnt is bitter to the taste. This is the view of some ancient authorities.

303. However, what one finds by direct observation and experimentation is this. All moist substances which possess a flavor, if made to rise by heating in a bottle or alembic, maintain their scent and flavors as they rise, such as vinegar, date wine, rosewater, saffron and carnation, but this is not the case with saline substances, especially if made to rise twice and heated repeatedly. The author of the *Logic* [Aristotle] has much to say about this subject. Thus, he says that saline water is heavier than sweet, adducing as proof that saline water is murky and thick while sweet water is transparent and soft. Furthermore, if a lump of wax is taken and fashioned into a container and its aperture is sealed, and if it is then placed in saline seawater, the water that seeps into that container will be found sweet to the taste and light in weight whereas the salt that surrounds it is found to be the exact opposite, i.e. more bitter and saline than normal.

304. Every running water is a river, every source of water is a spring and every large body of water is a sea. Al-Mas`udi said: Much has been written about water and its causes and nature. In the second chapter of our work *Akhbar al-Zaman*, which is in thirty chapters, we cited the proofs adduced by people as regards the area and size of the various seas, the benefits derived from their salinity, how they are connected or separated, why they neither increase nor decrease, and why the ebb and flow of the tides is more apparent in the Abyssinian Sea than in any other sea.

305. I have found that ship captains of the China, India, Zanj, Yemen, Red and Abyssinian seas, from among Sirafi and Omani sailors, report information regarding the Abyssinian Sea that mostly contradicts what philosophers and others have stated regarding distances and areas, as cited above. These sailors report that certain parts of that sea are without end. Likewise, I encountered ship owners and captains of the Mediterranean Sea, both military and commercial—these are called *Nawatis*, *Ashab al-Arjul* and commanders who equip ships for war---all of whom inflate the length and width of the Mediterranean and the great number of its gulfs and branches. These captains include Lawun, nicknamed “Abu’l Harith”, a former slave of Zurafa, governor of Tripoli in al-Sham, on the coast of Damascus. I met him after the year 300.

306. The same view of the Mediterranean was expressed to me by `Abdullah ibn Wazir, governor of the town of Jabala, on the coast of Homs in al-Sham. There is no one remaining at this time, which is the year 332, who is more knowledgeable or experienced about the Mediterranean than him. There is no ship captain, military or commercial, who does not listen to his advice and does not admit his great knowledge and experience of that sea, in addition to his piety and his record of *jihad* in it.

307. We have mentioned in our previous works the wonders of these seas, their history and their dangers as we heard them from people named above, and what these people witnessed in those seas. We will include below and in brief a resumé of reports concerning them.

308. Some people have a certain method for detecting signs of the presence of water and the places where it collects underground. They say that water may be found in places where plant life, such as reeds, esparto and soft grass are visible. These plants are an indication to those who dig that water is near. Otherwise, water would be far. In the book called *al-Filaha*\* I found the following information. Anyone wishing to know whether water is near or far should first dig a hole in the ground to a depth of three or four *dhira`*. He should then take a

brass pot or earthenware crock, with a wide opening, and smear it with grease on the side up to a straight level. Once the sun has set, he should take a piece of white, washed and fluffy wool, then take an egg-sized stone and wrap the wool around it like a ball, then smear a side of the ball with molten wax and stick it into the bottom of the vessel, smeared with grease or fat. Then one should place the vessel at the bottom of the hole. The wool would be stuck, held in place by the wax, and would be wrapped around the stone. Then earth should be strewn up to a depth of one or two *dhira`*s and the whole thing be left in place for the night. The following dawn, before the sun has risen, the earth is cleaned off and the vessel is removed. If water is seen stuck to the inside of the vessel in the form of many drops next to each other and the wool is full of water, it means that water is present nearby. If the drops of water are disconnected and neither collected together nor near each other and the wool is only moderately moist, water is neither near nor far. If the water drops are far from one another and the wool has only a little moisture, water is far. If neither little nor much water is found in the vessel or the wool, there is no water in that locality so one should not bother to dig for it.

309. In some copies of the book called *al-Filaha* on this same subject [i.e. dowsing] I found the following piece of information. If one wishes to gain knowledge of this subject, let him regard the colonies of ants. If he finds that ants are thick in body, black, and slow in movement, water is as near to them as their slow movement will carry them. If ants are found to be agitated and moving so fast that they can hardly be followed, water is at a distance of about 40 *dhira`*s from them. The first water will be found sweet and tasty while the second will be heavy and salty. This is another indication for anyone who wishes to dig for water.

310. In our work *Akhbar al-Zaman*, we set forth in detail the information provided above. In this work we simply mention what needs to be mentioned by alluding to a subject without treating it or explicating it at length. Now that we

have given a resumé of information about the seas and other subjects, let us turn to a history of the kings and people of China and related subjects, God willing. There is no strength save in God.

**Chapter 15. An account of the Kings of China and the Turks, the dispersal of the children of Gomer, a history of China and other matters related to this chapter**

311. Opinions differ regarding the genealogies of the Chinese and their origins. Many authorities state that the progeny of `Amur son of Tubil son of Yafith son of Noah---after Faligh son of Arfakhshad son of Sam son of Noah had divided the earth among Noah's progeny---set out to the east. Some of them, from the children of Ar`u, crossed the northern azimuth and dispersed over the earth, forming several kingdoms among which are the Dailam, Jil, Tailasan, Babr, Muqan, the inhabitants of the Caucasus mountain with various kinds of al-Lakz, then al-Lan, Khazar, Abkhar, Sarir and Kashak, together with all other nations of that region reaching to Trebizond, the Sea of Azov, the Black Sea, the Caspian up to the Bulghar and nations nearby.

312. Many other children of `Amur crossed the Balkh river [Oxus] heading in the direction of China and dispersed into several kingdoms in that land and spread out in those regions. Among them are the Khuttal, the inhabitants of Khuttalan, the Ruwaisan, Ashrusana, Sughd, who live between Bukhara and Samarqand, then Farghana, al-Shas, Isbijab and the inhabitants of the land of Farab. They built towns and villages while others settled in the wilderness. Among the latter are the Turks, Kharlukh and Tughuzghuz, who inhabit the city of Kushan, a kingdom between Khurasan and China. At this present time, i.e. the year 332, there is no race of Turks more powerful, domineering or more orderly in their kingdom than these. Their king is Uighur Khan and their religion is Manichaeism. No other Turkish race follows this religion.

313. Among Turkish races are the following; the Kimakiyya, Barskhaniyya, Baddiyya and Majghariyya. The most warlike are the Ghuzziyya. The prettiest

and tallest are the Kharlukhiyya who rule the regions of Farghana, al-Shas and nearby territories. To them belonged kingship and among them was the Khaqan of Khaqans, who used to gather in his dominion all other Turkish kings and to whom these kings submitted. Among these Khaqans was Farasiyab the Turk, who conquered the Persian realm. Among them too was Shabah. At present, there is no Khaqan to whom Turkish kings submit, and this ever since the city known as `Amat was destroyed. This city was located in the deserts of Samarqand. In our previous work called *al-Awsat* we related how and why kingship passed away from that city.

314. One group of the progeny of `Amur headed towards India and these territories affected them so that their color changed from those of other Turks and became like the color of Indians. They are both sedentary and nomadic. A second group settled in Tibet [Tubbat] and chose a king to rule over them who used to submit to the Khaqan. When the dominion of the Khaqan ended, as mentioned earlier, the people of Tibet called their king Khaqan in imitation of the earlier Turkish kings who were called the Khaqan of Khaqans.

315. The majority of the progeny of `Amur marched along the coasts of the sea until they reached their furthest penetration in the land of China, dispersing in that country and its regions. They settled the land, built it up, building towns and cities. As capital of their kingdom they built a great city which they called Yansu [Kiang-Sou?]. Between that city and the coast of the Abyssinian Sea, which is the China Sea, is a journey of three months, passing through continuous towns and built-up areas.

316. The first king to reign over them in that land, namely in the city of Yansu, was Nastartas son of Ba`ur son of Madaj son of `Amur son of Yafith son of Noah. He reigned for a little over 300 years. He dispersed his people throughout that land, dug canals, killed the wild beasts, planted trees and grafted fruit trees, then died. A son of his called `Awun succeeded. He laid his father's body inside a statue of red gold, as a mark of grief and veneration, and set it up on a throne

of red gold studded with precious stones, placing his own throne below it. He and the people of his kingdom then began to bow in worship morning and evening to his father who was inside that statue, as a sign of respect. He lived for 250 years after his father then died.

317. A son called `Aithdun succeeded him. He too placed his father's body in a statue of red gold and laid it on a throne of red gold below that of his grandfather's. He, along with the people of his kingdom, would worship these statues, beginning with his grandfather's then his father's. He ruled his subjects well and made them equal in all their affairs, and spread justice among them. The population increased and the land was fertile. He reigned for about 200 years until he died.

318. He was succeeded by his son `Aithnan, who also placed his father's body in a statue of red gold and continued the custom of worship and reverence. His reign lasted long, and his kingdom came to adjoin that of the Turks, his cousins. He lived for 400 years and in his days he created many crafts of exquisite manufacture.

319. Succeeding him was his son Haratan who built ships loaded with men and fine Chinese products, and sent them in the direction of Sind, Hind, Babylon and other kingdoms near and far by sea. To the kings he sent wondrous presents and valuable gifts, and ordered his own expedition to bring back whatever they found to be of delicate or luxurious manufacture together with varieties of food, drink, clothing and furnishings. They were also instructed to study the policies of each king and the religion of each nation, its laws and its customs, and to make people desire what there was in their own country [China] by way of precious stones, perfumes and instruments. The Chinese fleet then circulated among various countries, visiting kingdoms and doing what they were ordered to do. In every kingdom, the Chinese were met with great admiration, and the products they carried were found captivating. The kings of coastal kingdoms also equipped ships and sent them to China, carrying goods not found in that

country and sending letters to the Chinese king with presents in return for what he had sent. So prosperity was widespread in China and he ordered its affairs well. His reign lasted around 200 years until his death.

320. The people of his kingdom were filled with grief at his death and mourned him for a whole month. They then turned to his eldest son and appointed him as their king. He laid the body of his father in a statue of gold and followed ancient practice in imitation of his ancestors. The name of this king was Tatal. His affairs were well ordered and he instituted a number of praiseworthy laws none of which had been instituted by any previous king. He claimed that kingship can only be made stable through justice, since justice is the balance of the Creator. He also claimed that justice decrees that an increase in liberality depends upon an increase in good works. He thus elevated some people and honored or greatly esteemed others, ordering people in ranks and vindicating their way of life. He once went out to scout a place where he might build a temple and found a site full of plants and flowers and traversed by waters, so he planned to build his temple on that spot. Stones of diverse colors were brought to that place so he built the temple and topped it with a dome with air vents evenly placed. Rooms were built and set aside for those who wanted to pray in solitude. Once the temple was finished, he placed on its dome the statues of his ancestors and said: "If I abandon this custom I would be transgressing wisdom. This is a custom that shall last for ever." He ordered that great reverence be paid to those bodies atop the dome.

321. He collected together the elites of his kingdom and informed them that he was of the view that people should abide by a religion which would be their point of reference, unite them and establish order among them. If kingship lacks a religious law and orderly government it cannot be immune from instability, corruption and confusion. So he instituted for them a religious policy and rational obligations and made it binding upon them along with punishments to be administered, both spiritual and corporal. He also instituted regulations to do

with licit marriages whereby women can be properly married and genealogies are suitably maintained. The laws were arranged in ranks. Some were obligatory and mandatory with grave consequences if violated while others were voluntary and to be performed at will. He mandated for them certain prayers to their creator to draw near to their object of worship where there is no bowing or prostration, and to be performed at certain designated times by night and day, while other prayers involved bowing and prostration at certain designated times in a particular year or month. He also instituted feast days for them.

322. He decreed certain punishments for adultery, and women who sought to practice prostitution were made to pay a designated tax and could not be legally married at any time. If they abandoned that profession they would no longer pay tax. Any male issue born to them would be made soldiers or slaves of the king, while female issue would remain with their mothers and follow their profession. He also ordered them to provide sacrifices for the temple along with vapors and incense offered to the planets. Each planet was assigned a particular time for worship through vapors prepared from specific perfumes and lotions. All affairs were thus firmly regulated, his days witnessed an era of stability and the population increased. His lifespan lasted 150 years until his death.

323. The people were stricken with grief at his death. They placed him in a statute of red gold studded with various precious stones, built a great temple for him and placed on its roof seven types of precious stones representing in their colors the sun, moon and five planets with their colors and shapes, and made the day of his death a day of prayers and a holy day where they would gather at that temple. They painted his picture and his life on a golden panel and placed it on the heights of the temple where all could see him in order that he would act as a model of sound policy and righteous manner of life to the kings who followed him. His image was also placed on the gates of the city, on their gold and copper coins, and on textiles. Most of their money is yellow gold and copper.

324. The city of Yansu remained the capital of the Chinese kingdom, and a distance of a three months' journey or more separated it from the sea, as already noted above. They have another great city in the western portion of their kingdom called Madu, which borders the land of Tibet. Wars are continuous between that city and the land of Tibet.

Kings who followed him continued to practice orderly government, with stability, prosperity and justice spread wide and injustice unknown in their country. They continued to follow the laws instituted by the last mentioned king, but their wars against their enemies were unending, their frontier posts were well fortified, salaries to soldiers were paid regularly, while merchants kept travelling by land and sea to their country from every land, carrying all kinds of merchandise.

325. Their religion is that of their ancestors and is called Samaniyya [Shamanism]. Their mode of worship resembles the worship of Quraish before the coming of Islam. They worship idols and pray to them, though the intelligent among them direct their prayers to the Creator, to whom all power and glory, and view the idols as merely symbolizing the direction of prayer. However, the ignorant among them who lack understanding associate these idols with divinity and worship both. These latter believe that their worship of idols brings them nearer to God by flattering him. They further believe that their status as worshippers renders them deficient in worshipping the Creator because of his majesty, glory and power. Thus, their idol worship is a kind of submission to him and a way to approach him.

This was the case until there appeared in China new religions deriving from Dualism and Materialism [*Ahl al-Dahr*]. Before that time the Chinese in their religious opinions and idol worship were similar to the commoners and elite of India. Then their situation began to change, and discussions and debates arose among them, though they still abide in all their regulations by the laws instituted for them beforehand.

326. The Chinese realm adjoins the realm of the Tughuzghuz. These latter, as noted above, are Manicheans and believe in light and darkness. Before that time they were plunged in total ignorance and their beliefs resembled those of the other Turks. Then there came among them a devilish Manichean, and through rhetorical flourish showed them how this world was made up of opposites and contradictions such as death and life, health and sickness, wealth and poverty, light and darkness, unity and disunity, connection and separation, risings and settings, existence and non-existence, night and day, and other oppositions and contradictions. He then cited the various kinds of painful diseases which befall all animals, human and non-human alike, and what befalls children and idiots and mad people, and that the Creator has no need to harm them. He showed them that a mighty and opposing principle had invaded the principle of virtue, this being God---may God be far above this calumny-- in his actions. With such fantasies he was able to corrupt their minds and they came to believe what he told them.

327. Hence, when the king of China is a Samani in religion and slaughters animals, war between him and Uighur Khan, ruler of the Turks, is continuous. But when the Chinese king is a Manichean, kingship is held in common between them. The kings of China hold diverse views and religious beliefs, but despite this diversity in religions they do not abandon rationality and the principles of justice in appointing judges and arbitrators, and both elite and commoners submit to their judgment.

328. The Chinese are of diverse races and tribes, just like the Arabs with their various tribes and clans and their complex genealogies. They care for and respect their genealogies. A man among them might claim descent from as many as fifty fathers, or more or less, going all the way back to `Amur. Those belonging to a certain tribe do not marry anyone of their own tribe. To give an Arab example, a man from say Mudar would marry a woman from Rabi`a or vice versa, or be from Kahlan and marry from Himyar or vice versa. They claim

that this produces a healthier progeny, more sturdy bodies and longer-lived individuals, citing other reasons for this practice along the lines just mentioned.

329. Justice continued to prevail in China as instituted by their ancient kings until the year 264 [877/8]. In that year, events took place which shook the foundations of government and destroyed their regulations and laws. This crisis has lasted until the present time, which is the year 332. A rebel named Yanshu [Huang Chao] who lived in a city in China and was not a member of the royal house led a rebellion. He was an evil man who was intent on civil war. To him rallied all immoral and criminal elements. The king and his administration paid no attention to him because he was of no consequence and unworthy of notice. His movement thus grew stronger, as did his reputation, and his insolence increased as did his power. Criminals would cross great distances to join him, so his army swelled and he marched from his original locality raiding built up areas until he reached the city of Khanfu [Guangzhou]. This is a major city located on a great river, greater than the Tigris or similar, which flows into the China Sea. Between this city and the sea is a six or seven days' journey. Into this river sail ships arriving from Basra, Siraf, Oman, the cities of India, the Zanj islands and al-Sanf, as also from other kingdoms, bearing diverse goods and merchandise.

330. The rebel then approached the city of Khanfu which was inhabited by a mixed population of Muslims, Christians, Jews, Magians and other Chinese. That enemy arrived at the city and laid siege to it. The king's troops advanced to meet him but he defeated them and violated the womenfolk. His armies swelled and he captured the city of Khanfu by force, massacring its inhabitants to an extent too enormous to be counted. From among Muslims, Jews, Christians and Magians two hundred thousand were either killed or drowned from fear of the sword. The number just cited could be verified because the kings of China take great care to count the number of subjects of their realm as well as people from other nations who live under royal protection, inscribing this in special bureaus

and entrusting this task to secretaries who carry out the census of population. So great is their care for those living in their realm.

331. The rebel then proceeded to cut down the forests of mulberry trees, cultivated so that its leaves may be fed to the silkworms which produce silk. The destruction of these trees led to a cessation in the export of Chinese silk to Islamic lands.

Yanshu then marched with his army to one city after another, conquering them. He was joined by countless criminals, thieves and others who feared for their lives. He headed towards the city of Khumdan [Chang'an], the capital of the kingdom, at the head of three hundred thousand horsemen and infantry. The king marched out to meet him with about one hundred thousand who had remained loyal to him. The two armies met and war was continuous between them for a month. The two sides remained steadfast but eventually the king was defeated and fled. The rebel pursued him and the king took refuge in a city on the border of his kingdom.

332. The rebel then captured the capital, seizing the royal palace and the treasuries of former kings which had been set aside for emergencies. He raided all inhabited regions and conquered cities, though he realized that he could not be a king since he was not of the royal house. He thus grew ever more violent in destroying the land, plundering all wealth and shedding blood.

333. Meanwhile, the king, now in the city of Madu on the borders of Tibet, as mentioned above, wrote to Uighur Khan, king of the Turks, pleading for his help, informing him of his dire situation and reminding him of the obligations of royalty when fellow royals plead for help. These, he wrote, were among the duties and obligations of kingship. Uighur Khan came to his aid by sending his son at the head of four hundred thousand horsemen and infantry. By then the rebellion of Yanshu had become vast. The two armies met and wars between them were continuous and lasted a whole year, and a great number of lives were lost on both sides. Eventually, Yanshu went missing; some said he was killed

while others said he drowned. His family and intimates were captured and the king of China returned to his capital and realm.

334. The commoners call this king Baghbur which means “Son of Heaven”, as a mark of respect for him. The most typical name of Chinese kings with which they are normally addressed is “Tamghaj Khan” but they are not addressed as “Baghbur”.

335. Each strong man now came to rule over a particular region, a situation similar to the rise of the kings of separate principalities (*Muluk al-Tawa'if*) which came into existence when Alexander son of Philip the Macedonian killed Darius son of Darius, king of Persia, and also similar to our situation in the Islamic world of today, which is the year 332. The King was content with their submission to him and with addressing him as king but was unable to march out to all regions in his kingdom nor overcome those who had come to rule these regions. He was satisfied with what we described above while the independent rulers stopped sending money to him. He left them alone and in peace.

Meanwhile, each independent ruler attacked his next-door neighbor according to his resources of power, and so general order and stability, which had once been instituted by ancient kings, broke down throughout the kingdom.

336. These ancient kings used to practice policies and norms consistent with justice and the requirements of reason. The story goes that a merchant from Samarqand, from the land of Transoxania, travelled from his homeland with a lot of merchandise until he reached Iraq where he carried its merchandise and descended to Basra whence he travelled by ship to Oman. From there he sailed to Kala which is roughly the halfway point to China, and where Muslim ships of the Omanis and Sirafis end up at this time. In Kala these merchants meet with ships coming from China. This was not the case in former times, since Chinese ships would sail as far as Oman, Siraf, the coasts of Persia and Bahrain and all the way to al-Ubulla and Basra. Likewise, ships from those regions would sail all the way to China. When order and justice broke down and corruption was

rife following the events in China described above, the two groups would meet at the halfway point between them.

337. This merchant then boarded a Chinese ship at Kala and sailed to the city of Khanfu where ships normally dock as stated earlier. The king heard of these ships and the merchandise they carried so dispatched a servant of his whom he trusted and who was a eunuch---the Chinese make use of eunuchs as servants for tax collection and other tasks, and some castrate their own children seeking their advancement. The royal servant arrived in Khanfu, summoned the merchants, including the Samarqand merchant, and pointed out the merchandise he needed but set aside things that would be fit for the king. The royal servant negotiated with the Samarqand merchant for his merchandise, offering him a sum which did not satisfy him. An argument ensued until the servant ordered the merchant to be dragged away and forced to acquiesce. The slave had given the merchant assurances regarding the justice of the king. So the Samarqandi merchant travelled at once to Khumdan, capital of the kingdom, and there assumed the attitude of one seeking justice. This is so because when a person seeks justice after having arrived from a distant land, he wears a kind of red silk garment and stands in a special spot set aside for such people. Some rulers of the regions are delegated with the task of holding people seeking justice who stand in these spots, and then sending them on the postal service from their own lands for a journey of about one month.

338. This was what happened to the merchant. He stood before the provincial ruler who was delegated with the task mentioned above. The ruler then said to him: "You have put yourself in a very dangerous spot where your life is in danger. Make sure that what you say is the truth or else we shall dismiss you and send you back where you came from." This was the ruler's normal address to those who claimed that they were unjustly treated. If that person hesitated in his speech or showed signs of fear he was beaten one hundred strokes with a stick and sent back where he came from. If, however, he showed tenacity and

patience, he was dispatched to the king to stand in his presence and have his case heard.

339. When the Samarqandi merchant displayed firmness in his demands and his plea for justice, and they saw that he was telling the truth and was neither fearful nor stammered in his speech, he was dispatched to the king. He stood in his presence and told him his story. When the interpreter drew near and heard his plea for justice, the king ordered him to be taken to certain quarters where he was put up and well treated. The vizier was summoned together with the commander of the right and the commander of the left, these latter being officials delegated to deal with crises and at times of war. Each knew his own rank and what was required of him. The king ordered each of them to write to his own appointed deputy in Khanfu---each of them had a deputy in every province---to inform them about the merchant and the royal eunuch, and the king likewise wrote to his deputy in that province.

340. The news about the merchant had spread widely in that province. The letters then arrived on the postal mules confirming the merchant's story. The kings of China have on all their provincial highways mules with upraised tails to carry the post and postal bags. The king ordered his royal servant brought to him, and when this latter stood in his presence the king confiscated all that he had bestowed upon him, then addressed him as follows: "You undertook on purpose to mistreat a merchant, one who had travelled from a distant land, crossed kingdoms and passed by kings on sea and land and was nowhere molested, who sought to reach my kingdom, trusting in my justice. And you treated him in this manner! He would have left my kingdom, denouncing me in all kingdoms and spreading ugly tales about my conduct. Were it not for your previous service to me I would have executed you. But I shall punish you in a manner which, if you truly grasp its significance, is in fact worse than death. I shall put you in charge of the tombs of previous kings since you have failed in your duty to the living and in carrying out the task entrusted to you."

341. The king then treated the merchant well and sent him back to Khanfu, saying to him: "If you find yourself willing to sell what has been chosen for us of your merchandise at the very best price, so be it. Otherwise you are free to market your property as you please. You may stay here if you wish, sell your merchandise or leave in peace whenever you want." He then sent the royal servant to the tombs of the kings.

342. Al-Mas`udi said: Among other entertaining stories of Chinese kings is the following. A man from Quraish, from the progeny of Habbar ibn al-Aswad, who was a wealthy inhabitant of Basra, headed to the city of Siraf. This happened during the well-known rebellion of the Master of the Zanj in Basra. From Siraf he sailed to the Indian Sea. Embarking on one ship after another and passing through one Indian kingdom and country after another he finally ended up in China and in the city of Khanfu. However, he was determined to reach the capital of the kingdom which at that time was the city of Khumdan, one of the great cities of their realm.

343. He remained for a long time outside the royal gate, submitting one petition after another in which he stated that he belonged to the family of the prophet of the Arabs. Eventually the king ordered that he be lodged in a house and that all his grievances and needs be satisfied. The king then wrote to his deputy in Khanfu instructing him to inquire from merchants there as to the claim of the man to be related to the prophet of the Arabs. The deputy in Khanfu answered by confirming his genealogy. So the king admitted him to his presence and conferred much wealth upon him which he carried back with him to Iraq.

344. He was an old man of understanding. He related the following regarding his audience with the king. The king began by asking him how the Arabs managed to destroy the Persian realm and he answered: "It was done with the help of the Almighty and because the Persians worshipped fire and bowed in prayer to sun and moon instead of to God." The king said, "The Arabs have conquered the greatest of kingdoms, the widest in extent, richest in income and

wealth, most rational as regards their inhabitants, and most widespread in their fame.” The king then asked him, “How do you rank the kings of the world?” He answered, “I have no knowledge of this.” The king said to the interpreter, “Tell him that we count kings as five in number. The widest in realm is the king of Iraq because he is in the middle of the earth and all other kings surround him. His name in our traditions is ‘King of Kings’. Next is the king of China whom we call ‘King of Mankind’ because no other king is our equal in sound policy, and in control over his realm, nor is there a population more submissive to its kings than ours. We therefore are the ‘Kings of Mankind’. Next is the ‘King of Lions’ who is our neighbor, the king of the Turks, who is king of the lions among men. Next is the ‘King of Elephants’ who is the king of India. We regard him in our tradition as the king of wisdom because wisdom originated among them. Next is the king of the Byzantines whom we call the ‘King of Men’ because nowhere on earth are found men more handsome or more beautiful of face. These are the elite among kings and all others are below them in rank.”

345. The king then told the interpreter to ask him: “Would you recognize your friend---meaning your prophet---if you saw him?” I replied, “How can I see him when he is now with Almighty God?” “I did not mean that. I meant his picture.” I said, “Yes.” He ordered a pouch to be brought in from which he took out a dossier and said to the interpreter, “Show him his friend.” In that dossier I saw pictures of the prophets so I quietly moved my lips in blessings upon them. He was not expecting me to recognize them so said to the interpreter “Ask him why he moved his lips.” I replied, “I was mouthing blessings upon them”. He asked, “How did you recognize them?” I answered: “I recognized them through what has been painted of episodes in their lives. Here is Noah in his ship escaping with his companions when God ordered the whole earth to be flooded with all its inhabitants but God saved him and those with him.” The king laughed and said, “You are right in identifying Noah. As for the flood, we do not know it. The flood affected only parts of the earth and did not reach our land. If what

you assert is true regarding that part of the earth, we in China, India, Sind and other communities and nations know nothing of what you assert, nor did our ancestors transmit to us any such report. The kind of flood you mention which overwhelms the whole earth is a great catastrophe that people would remember and reports concerning it would circulate among the nations and be widely transmitted.”

346. “I was anxious not to respond to him and offer him any proofs since I knew he would reject them so I said, ‘And here is Moses with his stick and the Israelites with him.’ He said, ‘Yes, though his country was tiny and insignificant and his own people rebelled against him.’ I said, ‘And here is Jesus riding on an ass with the apostles surrounding him.’ He said, ‘He did not live long. His prophetic ministry lasted a little more than thirty months or so.’ He proceeded to recount the stories of other prophets only a few of which are mentioned here.

347. This man of Quraish called Ibn Habbar then claimed that he saw above each picture a large piece of writing which he estimated recounted their names, countries, ages and their prophetic lives and careers. “I then saw a picture of our prophet Muhammad on a camel with his companions around him, their feet in Arabic sandals made of camel skins. Around their midst they hung ropes of fiber to which were attached toothpicks. When I saw that picture, I wept.” The king asked the interpreter to ask me the reason for my crying and I replied, “This is our prophet and master and my cousin Muhammad ibn `Abdullah.” “You are right,” said the king, “He and his people came to rule over the greatest kingdoms but he did not live long enough to see the kingdoms conquered. This was left to his successors, to those who ruled his nation after him.”

348. “I saw the pictures of prophets many of whom pointed with their right hand, their forefinger and thumb forming a ring as if to say that mankind could all fit into a ring while others pointed to heaven with their forefinger as if to warn mankind to what lies above them. The interpreter claimed that these were

Chinese and Indian prophets. The king then asked me about the caliphs and their attire and about many of our laws and I answered to the best of my knowledge. Then he asked, “How old is the world according to your people?” I replied, “There is some dispute concerning this matter. Some say six thousand years, some say a little more, some a little less.” “Is this what your prophet actually says?” he asked. “Yes,” I replied. He roared with laughter as did his vizier standing next to him, indicating his rejection of this last answer. He said, “I doubt that your prophet has said this.” I insisted that he did so. I saw an expression of dissent on his face and he told the interpreter to say to me, “Tell him to weigh his words carefully. Kings are not addressed except with precision and reason. As to your claim that there is a dispute among you about this issue, you have simply disputed regarding what your prophet actually said. The speech of prophets must not be a subject of dispute but be accepted on trust. Beware of saying these or similar things.”

349. Ibn Habbar mentioned many other things which he had now forgotten because it happened so long ago. “The king then said to me, ‘Why did you leave your own domain which is nearer to you than we are both as homeland and by ties of kinship?’ I replied, ‘Because of what happened in Basra and my escape to Siraf, I determined to come to you, O king, having heard about the stability of your realm, your virtuous conduct, your widespread justice and the soundness of your policy that embraces all your subjects. I wished to visit this kingdom and see it for myself. God willing, I shall return to my country and to my cousin’s kingdom and shall spread the news about what I have seen of the majesty of this realm, the wide extent of its land, the prevalent justice and your virtuous conduct, O king, whose character is worthy of all praise. I shall describe all this in the highest terms of praise.’”

350. “The king was pleased and ordered that an expensive gift and fine garments be bestowed upon me, then commanded that I be transported on the postal mules to Khanfu. He wrote to the ruler of Khanfu to treat me with all

honor and to set me above all other elites of the foreign people in his province and to provide me with suitable lodging until I was to leave China. I remained there living a life of the greatest ease and comfort until I left China.”

351. Al-Mas`udi said: In the year 303 [915-16], I was told by Abu Zaid Muhammad ibn Yazid al-Sirafi in Basra, in which city he had settled after moving from Siraf, he being a man of education and understanding and the cousin of Mazyad ibn Muhammad ibn Abrad ibn Bistasha, ruler of Siraf, that he asked the man from Quraish, Ibn Habbar, for a description of the capital city of Khumdan. Ibn Habbar mentioned its wide area and numerous inhabitants and stated that it was divided into two parts separated by a long and wide avenue. The king, his vizier, his chief judge, his troops, his eunuchs and all his royal officials reside on the right side, towards the east. No commoners are allowed to mingle with them and there are no markets on that side but only canals dug in straight rows with trees planted alongside and imposing mansions.

352. The left side, facing west, is the home of the citizens, merchants, stores and markets. In the daytime, one can see the king's stewards, household officials, young commanders and their deputies, both mounted and on foot, entering the side where the markets and merchants are located and getting their daily rations and needs then leaving. None of them returns to that part of the city except on the following day. In that part are found lovely gardens and lawns and plenty of canals. However, the palm tree is not found there.

353. The Chinese are among the most skillful of God's creatures in handcrafts such as carving and all other similar crafts. Among all nations they are second to none in these skills. A man among them will make some object with his hands that he thinks others are incapable of making so he takes that object and goes to the gate of the king, seeking a reward for his original creation. The king will then order that object to be displayed at the royal gate for one whole year. If no one can find fault with it, the man is inducted among royal craftsmen. If a fault is found, the object is rejected and the man is not rewarded.

354. The story goes that a Chinese painter painted a stalk of grain on a silk canvas on which was perched a bird. No one who saw it could doubt that it was a picture of a bird on a stalk. The canvas stayed at the royal gate for a while. Then a hunchback passed by and criticized it. When the hunchback was admitted into the king's presence and the painter was summoned, the hunchback was asked what fault he found in it and said, "All people agree that a bird cannot perch on a stalk without bending it, whereas this painter depicted the stalk as straight and the bird too as standing straight. This is the fault in this painting." The hunchback's criticism was judged to be sound and the painter received no reward. Their intention in these and similar matters is to train those who practice such crafts and to force them to be very careful, cautious and rational in whatever each person makes with his hands.

355. There are strange and entertaining tales told about the Chinese and we shall mention some of these in brief later on in this work, though we have already mentioned all other tales in our two previous works, the *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*. It may also happen that we mention in this work certain reports that were not mentioned in these earlier works.

## **Chapter 16**

**A brief account of reports about the seas, what they contain and their surroundings with respect to their wonders, nations, classes of kings and so forth as also reports about al-Andalus, the sources of perfume and its origins and kinds, and other subjects.**

356. We mentioned above in brief the layout of the seas, both connected and disconnected. In this chapter, we shall mention in summary form reports having to do with the Abyssinian Sea, and kingdoms and kings associated with it, together with how the seas are arrayed and other kinds of wonders. We stated above that the waters of the seas of China, India, Persia and Yemen are all connected, but the turmoil or calmness of these seas differ depending upon the

blowing of their winds and the times in which these winds blow, as also upon other factors.

357. Thus, the Persian Sea has high waves and is difficult for sailors to navigate when compared to the calm of the Indian Sea, its easy sailing and its low waves. However, the Persian Sea becomes calm and its waves become low and easy to sail in when the Indian Sea becomes very rough with high waves, darkness and difficulty of sailing in it. Turmoil in the Persian Sea begins when the sun enters Virgo and the autumn equinox approaches. That sea remains agitated each day until the sun passes to Pisces and is at its most agitated during late autumn when the sun is in Sagittarius. The sea then returns to calmness when the sun is once more in Virgo. It is at its calmest at the end of spring when the sun is in Gemini. The Indian Sea remains very rough until the sun enters Virgo when sailing in it becomes possible. It is at its calmest when the sun is in Sagittarius. One can sail on the Persian Sea at all times of the year from Oman to Siraf, a distance of 160 *farsakhs*. From Siraf to Basra is 140 *farsakhs*. There are no other crossings on this sea than to the two just mentioned localities and their vicinity.

358. In his work entitled the *Al-Madkhal al-Kabir ila `Ilm al-Nujum*, the astronomer Abu Ma`shar \*related what we mentioned above about the turbulence and tranquility of these seas when the sun enters the constellations named earlier. Hardly any crossing is possible from Oman to India in the fourth month [*Tir Mah*] except in boats risking their safety and with a very light cargo. Such boats if they cross to India at that time of year are called in Oman “Tir Mahi” boats. This is because in India and the Indian Sea this season is *al-Yasara*, which is winter. When it rains in our country in December, January and February this is summertime for them and contrariwise when the hot season begins in our country in June, July and August. Thus our winter is their summer and their summer is our winter. This is the case for all the cities of India, Sind and other neighboring lands to the furthest reaches of that sea. Whoever spends

winter in India during our summer is said to have “*yasara*” in India, that is, spent the winter there. This is because of the sun drawing near or moving away.

359. Diving for pearls in the Persian Sea lasts from the first of April till the end of September, but in no other months of the year. In our previous works, we treated of the various diving spots in this sea since there are no pearls in other seas. It is thus peculiar to the Abyssinian Sea and to localities like Kharak, Qatar, Oman, Sarandib and others on that sea. We also mentioned in these works of ours how pearls are formed and the differing opinions concerning this subject, and how some attribute their formation to the rain and others to other causes. We also described the appearance of the shells of pearls of both the ancient (*ʿatiq*) variety and the new (*hadith*), called *al-Mahar* and commonly known as *balbal*, as also the meat and grease to be found inside the shell. For it is an animal which fears the pearl divers for the pearls inside just like a mother fearing for her children.

360. In our earlier works, we treated the subject of diving for pearls and how this is done and how the divers barely eat any meat except for fish and dates, but no other food. We also explained the harm done to their ear drums because they exhale from them rather than their nostrils. This is so because they place on their nostrils a piece of turtle shell from which combs are made, or else of horn. These grip the nostrils like an arrow-head but not made of wood. We also described how they insert in their ears pieces of cotton dipped in grease, a small portion of which they squeeze on the seabed which then lights up; and how they smear their feet and legs with black matter to ward off attacks by beasts of the sea, which shun black; how they shout to one another below water like dogs and how their voices reach each other. Marvelous stories are related about divers, diving and pearls and about the animals which enclose them. In our previous works we described all this, as also the characteristics of pearls, their distinguishing marks, prices and weights.

361. The beginning of the Abyssinian Sea which lies beyond Basra, al-Ubulla, Bahrain and from the wooden props of Basra, is the sea of Larawi on which are located the lands of Saimur, Subara, Tana, Sandan, Kanbaya and other lands of India and Sind. Then comes the Sea of Harkand\*, then the Sea of Kalah Bar\*--- the sea of Kalah and the islands---then the sea of Kanduranj\*, then the Sea of Sanf---from where comes Sanfi wood--- then the Sea of China, also called the Sankhi Sea\*, beyond which there is no other sea.

362. As already mentioned, the Sea of Persia begins with the props of Basra and the locality known as Kankala. These are wooden props set in the sea to act as signs for ships. From there to Oman is a distance of 300 *farsakhs*. On this sea lies the coastline of Persia and the lands of Bahrain. From Oman, whose capital is called Suhar, or Mazun in Persian, to Musqat, a village where ship captains draw sweet water from wells, is a distance of 50 *farsakhs*. From Musqat to Ra's al-Jumjuma is 50 *farsakhs*. This is where the Sea of Persia ends, its total length being 400 *farsakhs* as measured by sailors and ship captains. Ra's al-Jumjuma is a mountain which is connected to the land of Yemen and the territories of al-Shihr and al-Ahqaf. The sandy part of that mountain, i.e. Ra's al-Jumjuma, has an undetermined extension below water. In the Mediterranean, if a mountain is found both on land and below the sea it is called *al-sufala*. Thus, there is a *sufala* on the coast of Saluqiya\* in Byzantine territory which stretches below water almost to the island of Cyprus. Upon this many Byzantine ships have been wrecked and lost. Here, we reproduce the terms used by the people of each sea and in their common usage.

363. From Ra's al-Jumjuma, ships set out to the second sea of the Sea of Persia, known as the Sea of Larawi [Gujarat]. This is a sea whose depth, extension and limits are unknown because of its vast volume of water and wide horizons. Many sailors claim that no description can adequately account for its limits because of its numerous gulfs, described above. Ships might cross it in two or three months or else in one, depending on the winds and safety of passage. In

none of the seas, i.e. of the Abyssinian Sea, is there a greater or more arduous sea than Larawi. Its width is formed by the Sea of the Zanj and their lands.

Amber in this sea is scarce since most of it is found in the land of the Zanj and on the coastline of al-Shihr in the land of the Arabs.

364. The people of al-Shihr are Arabs from the tribe of Quda`a ibn Malik ibn Himyar as well as other Arab tribes. Arabs inhabiting this land are called *al-Mahra*, and have long hair hanging down to their ears. Their Arabic pronunciation is somewhat different from common speech. Thus they substitute *shin* for *kaf* and say *lash* instead of *lak* and *ma`ash* instead of *ma`ak*,\* in addition to other cute and odd forms of speech. They are a poor people and have swift camels which they ride by night called *Mahriyya* camels, which resemble *Bujawiyya* camels. In fact, some claim that the *Mahriyya* are faster. They mount these camels by night and proceed along the seashore. If the camels feel the amber thrown out by the sea they crouch down, having been trained to do so, and the rider simply picks the amber up.

365. The best kind of amber is that which is found in the region just mentioned and in the islands and coasts of al-Zabaj\*. This is round in shape and blue in color, the size of an ostrich egg or a little smaller. Another kind is that which is swallowed by the above mentioned whale. This is because when the sea is rough it casts out from the sea-bed the size of mountain boulders or less, as already described. When a whale swallows this amber, it kills him so the whale floats to the surface. There, observing it, are men in boats from al-Zabaj or elsewhere, who throw hooks and ropes and drag it to the coast where they split open its belly and extract the amber. What comes out of the whale's belly has a fishy smell and is known to perfumers of Iraq and Persia as *nadd*. If any amber is found on the other side of the whale it is pure and of good quality, depending on how long it stayed in its belly.

366. Between the third sea, Harkand, and the second, Larawi, as already mentioned, there are numerous islands scattered between the two seas. Some

say these are 2000 in number though a more accurate estimate puts their number at 1900 islands. These are all inhabited and all owned by one woman. This has been their custom since ancient times, namely, not to be ruled by a man.

367. Amber is also found in these islands where the sea casts it out. It is found in their sea to be as big as bits of boulders. More than one sailor from Siraf and Oman as also merchants who frequented these islands told me that amber is formed in the bed of that sea, shaped like a mushroom, both black and white, or a truffle. When the sea grows very rough it throws out from the seabed rocks and stones and pieces of amber.

368. The people of these islands are all of one opinion and are innumerable, like the armies of their queen. Between one island and the next is a distance of one mile or one, two or three *farsakhs*. Their palm tree is of the Coconut Palm (*narjil*) variety but there is no date palm. Some people who specialize in animal breeding and the grafting of trees claim that the Coconut palm is in fact the Theban (or *Doum*) Palm (*muql*), which was affected by the soil of India when planted there and turned into the Coconut Palm, though it is in fact the Theban Palm.

369. In a previous work of ours entitled the *Kitab al-Qadaya wa'l Tajarib*, we set forth how every region on earth and its climate affect animal life, human and otherwise, and how these regions impact plant life, both that which grows and that which does not, i.e. is inanimate. For example, consider the effect of the land of the Turks on their faces and their small eyes to the point where this affects their camels, whose limbs are short, necks are thick and fur is white. Or else consider the land of Gog and Magog and its effect on their faces, and other such effects which a person of knowledge, whether living in the east or the west on this earth, would find to be as we described.

370. Among islanders of the seas, there are none more skillful in all crafts and industries, whether in textiles, tools or otherwise. The monies of this queen are seashells in which is found a kind of animal. When the treasuries are depleted,

the queen orders the islanders to cut down coconut palm leaves which they plait and throw into the water. This animal then begins to form on the surface of the leaves and these are collected and deposited on the sandy beaches. The sun burns the animals inside the seashells and these become empty, thus refilling the treasuries.

371. These islands are all known as *Dibajat* [Maldives] from which most *Ranaj*, which is *Narjil* [coconut] is imported. The outermost of these islands is Sarandib beyond which are other inhabited islands stretching for a thousand *farsakhs* and known as *al-Ramni*.\* In them are found kings and numerous gold mines. Beyond them is the land of Fansur\* from where comes Fansuri camphor. A year that witnesses a lot of thunder, lightening, tremors, eruptions and quakes is one where camphor appears in plenty. If these conditions are less frequent, camphor decreases in quantity.

372. The food of most of the islands mentioned is the coconut. From these islands are also imported brazilwood (*baqqam*), bamboo and gold. They have many elephants, and among the islanders are some cannibals. These islands are connected to the islands of Lanjabalus\*, populated by strange looking nations who go about naked. When ships appear they go out in boats carrying amber, coconut and other products. These they exchange for iron and cloth and do not deal in dirhams or dinars. Next to them are islands known as Andaman populated by black people of strange visage and wooly hair. The foot of one of them is longer than a *dhira`* and they have no ships. If a person who is shipwrecked ends up on their shores, they eat him, as also ship passengers wrecked on their shores.

373. Some sailors have told me that they would at times observe in that sea small white clouds from which dangles a long white tongue reaching down to the sea. If it touches the sea, the sea boils and great storms issue forth which will destroy everything in their path. Then a foul-smelling rain will come down which contains the impurities of the sea.

374. The fourth sea, known as Kalah Bar, mentioned above, means the “sea of Kalah”. This is a shallow sea, and when its waters decrease, this results in more problems and evils. It is a sea with many islands and narrow passages (*surr*; plural *sara’ir*), since sailors when traversing one gulf to the next call this a *surr*. This sea contains strange varieties of islands and mountains. Here we simply allude briefly to them without giving a full account.

375. So too is the case with the fifth sea known as Kanduranj. Here too one finds many islands and mountains in which there is camphor and camphor water. It is a shallow sea with much rainfall, which is almost uninterrupted. It is inhabited by several varieties of nations, one of which is called Fanjan, who have woolly hair and strange faces. They go out in boats to meet passing ships and shoot strange arrows dipped in poison. Between that nation and the land of Kalah are mines of white lead and mountains of silver. Also present are gold and lead mines which can hardly be told apart.

376. Beyond it is the Sanf Sea in the order we outlined above. In it is the kingdom of the Maharaj\*, king of the islands. One can barely estimate the extent of his realm or the number of his troops. No one can traverse his island realm, even in the fastest of ships, in less than two years. This king has at his disposal all sorts of spices and perfumes, and no other king possesses what he does. From his land the following items are imported: camphor, wood, cloves, sandalwood, nutmeg, aniseed, ginger and cubeb, among other products not mentioned here.

377. The islands of that sea are connected to another sea whose extension and end is unreachable and unknown. It lies next to the Sea of China. On its outlying islands [Japan?] are many mountains whose inhabitants have white faces and perforated ears, their faces resembling beaten parts of a shield. They cut their hair just as hair is shaved from a water skin, i.e. in rows [chonmage?]. From their mountains fires rise by day and night, red in color by day and black by night, reaching to the uppermost sky as they ascend upwards. This is

accompanied by extremely loud noises, resembling thunder. From them may also come a strange and terrifying sound presaging the death of their king but if the noise is less loud it may presage the death of a leader. This warning sign is well known among them through long experience and habit, and does not vary. This is one of the major volcano areas on earth.

378. Beyond it is an island from which are heard at all times sounds of drums, oboes and lutes and other delightful musical sounds, together with the rhythms of dancing and clapping. Whoever hears these sounds can distinguish between the various musical instruments. Sailors who pass by that island allege that the Anti-Christ (*al-Dajjal*) lives there. In the kingdom of Maharaj is the island of Sribuza\* which stretches for about 400 *farsakhs* into the sea, with uninterrupted habitations. To this king belongs also the islands of al-Zabij and Ramni and other islands and realms which cannot be enumerated. The Maharaj is thus master of the sixth sea, which is the Sanf Sea.

379. The seventh is the Sea of China as per the order we outlined above, and is also known as the Sankhi Sea. This is a treacherous sea with high waves and *khibb*; *khibb* is an expression meaning great hardship at sea. We here reproduce the expressions used by the people of each sea in their own linguistic usage. In it are many mountains, and ships are forced to pass through them. When the sea is very rough, black figures appear from it, each about 4 or 5 *shibr*\* in length, like young Abyssinian children, and uniform in shape and height, who climb aboard the ships in large numbers but cause no harm. When sailors witness this, they are certain that hardship will follow since their appearance is always a sign of *khibb*. So they prepare for it, and they either survive it or they do not.

380. If it turns out that a sailor survives the ordeal, he will see at the top of the mast---called *duli* by ship captains in the China and Abyssinian seas and *sari* by sailors in the Mediterranean---something like a bird which glows with light. An onlooker cannot keep staring at it nor does he know what to make of it.

When this creature settles on top of the mast, they find the sea has grown calm,

the waves abate and the *khibb* subsides. That glowing light then disappears and no one knows how it appeared or how it vanished. This then is the sign and omen of salvation. What we relate here is not disputed by any sailors or merchants from Basra, Siraf and Oman and others who cross these seas. Indeed, what we relate is possible, and neither implausible nor necessary, since it is within the power of the Almighty to save His creatures from destruction and relieve their hardship.

381. In this sea is a kind of crab which comes out of the sea and is about a *dhira`* or *shibr* in length, or more or less than this. If it leaves the water in a rapid movement and reaches land it turns into stone and abandons its animal nature. These stones are used in preparing *kohl* or medicament for eyes, and what we relate about it is again common knowledge. Wonders are related about the China Sea, which is the seventh sea and is known as Sankhi. In our previous works, cited above, and devoted to this subject, we related a lot of reports about that sea and seas connected to it. In what follows we shall also mention brief reports about kings.

382. Beyond China from the direction of the sea there are no known kingdoms or lands that can be described except for the land and islands of Sila [Korea]. No foreigner from Iraq or elsewhere has ever visited that land and then left it, except in rare cases. This is because of its healthy air, pure water, fertile soil and plentiful blessings. Its people are bound by treaty to the people and kings of China and gifts are constantly exchanged between them. Some say that its people are a branch of the progeny of `Amur who settled in that land in the same manner in which we described above the settlement of the Chinese in their land.

383. China has a number of great rivers like the Tigris and Euphrates. These originate in the lands of the Turks, Tibet and Sughd; those latter live between Bukhara and Samarqand, where rise the mountains of ammonium salt. In summer and at night fires are seen rising from these mountains at a distance of

one hundred *farsakhs*. In the daytime, smoke only is seen rising because of the prevalence of the sun's rays and its radiance during the day. From that locality ammonia salt is extracted. In wintertime, and if anyone wishes to cross over to China from Khurasan, he arrives at that locality where there is a valley some forty or fifty miles in length. The traveler goes to some people who live at the mouth of that valley and tempts them with high wages so they carry his merchandise on their shoulders. Carrying sticks in their hands, they strike the traveler's sides to prevent him from becoming exhausted, or from stopping and dying from the malignancy of the valley. He is kept in front of them until they come out at the head of the valley, where there are forests and swamps in whose waters they plunge to relieve themselves of the hard ordeal and the heat of ammonia.

384. No beast of burden can take that road because the ammonia flames like fire in the summer and no one "who calls out or answers" can cross that valley. In winter, when there is much snow and humidity, this locality is covered by it and the heat and fire of the ammonia is quenched, making it possible for people to cross that valley. The beasts of burden cannot bear its heat, as mentioned above. Likewise, anyone who arrives from China is beaten in the same way as the one crossing over to China.

385. The distance from Khurasan to China via that locality is about a forty-day journey. The route passes through inhabited and uninhabited regions, soft soil and sand. An alternative route traversed by beasts of burden is a four-month journey but that route has guard-posts manned by various kinds of Turks. I once encountered in the city of Balkh a venerable old man of reason and understanding who had entered China many times and had never travelled by sea. I also met a number of people in Khurasan who had travelled from the land of the Sughd via the ammonia mountains and into Tibet and China.

386. India is connected to Khurasan and Sind through the land near al-Mansura and Multan, and caravans are continuous between Sind and Khurasan, as also to

India, reaching the land of Dhabulistan, i.e. Zabulistan.\* This is a land of wide extent and known as the kingdom of Fairuz ibn Kabak. In it are found wondrous and strong forts, and several languages and nations. There is some dispute about the genealogy of these people. Some attach them to the progeny of Yafit son of Noah while others assign them to the First Persians by way of a lengthy genealogy.

387. Tibet is a kingdom distinct from China. Most Tibetans are from Himyar and among them are some *tubba`*s as will be mentioned when later in this work we come to the kings of Yemen. This is found in the book of the history of the *tubba`*s. The Tibetans are both sedentary and nomadic. Their steppe lands are full of Turks innumerable, and no other Turkish steppe-land is its equal. All other Turks venerate them because royalty subsisted in them in ancient times and most Turks believe that royalty will once again return to them.

388. Tibet has a number of wondrous qualities with respect to its air, water, soil, plains and mountains. A person who lives there will always be found laughing and happy, and suffers from no sorrow, distress or worry. Its agricultural products, flowers, meadows and rivers have countless and wondrous characteristics. It is a land where sanguine humor predominates over all animals, speaking and otherwise. You will barely find a sad old man or woman. Rather, joyfulness is common to all, old and young alike. The inhabitants are of a delicate, smiling and generous disposition, which inclines them to use many musical instruments, to drinking alcohol and to various kinds of dance. When a person dies, even his next of kin hardly display any of the sorrow displayed by other peoples when afflicted by death or loss. They are very solicitous of one another, and mutual affection [reading *tatayyum*] is common among them, which is also true of their animals.

389. The name "Tibet" derives from those who permanently settled (*thabat*) and put down roots in that land from among the people of Himyar. So the word comes from their settlement in it, though other derivations have also been given.

The most common derivation however is the one we have cited. The poet Di`bil\* ibn `Ali al-Khuza`i boasted of this in an ode where he opposes the poet Kumait and boasts of the merits of the tribes of Qahtan as against the tribes of Nizar:

*It was they who wrote the letter [of safe-conduct, i.e. conquered]at the Gate of Merv,*

*And it was they who wrote that letter on the Gate of China.*

*It is they who called Samarqand after Shamr,*

*And they who planted there the people of Tibet.*

Later in this work, and under the heading of the history of Yemeni kings, we shall relate some of the history of these kings and those among them who traversed the earth.

390. Tibet lies next to China and its land is adjacent to one of its borders. It is also close to India, Khurasan and the deserts of the Turks. It has many cities and buildings of strength and power. In ancient times they used to call their kings *tubba`*s after the *tubba`*, the title of Yemeni kings. Then times changed and their language diverged from Himyarite and became closer to the languages of that region and of nations nearby, so they called their kings *Khaqan*.

391. The land of the musk deer, both Tibetan and Chinese, is one, and musk is common to both lands. However, Tibetan musk is superior to Chinese in two respects. First, Tibetan deer graze on spikes of fragrant plants and spices whereas Chinese deer graze on grass and not on fragrant plants like Tibetan deer. Second, the people of Tibet do not normally remove the musk from the musk glands but leave it as is, whereas the Chinese do so and deceitfully mix musk with blood, and practice other kinds of deceptions. In addition, Chinese musk is transported along vast distances by sea, undergoing much humidity and changes of climate. However, if no deceit is practiced by the Chinese in their musk, and if the musk is placed in glass bottles and is well sealed with leather

and arrives in Muslim lands via Oman, Persia, Iraq and other places, it can be as fine as Tibetan musk.

392. The best and most fragrant musk is that which is secreted by the deer when it reaches full maturity. In point of fact, there is no difference between our deer and musk deer in shape, form, color or horns, but this becomes apparent in their tusks which resemble elephant tusks. Each deer has two tusks that come out of its jaws and are white and straight, around a *shibr* in length, more or less. In Tibet, the deer are trapped by ropes, traps and nets or sometimes shot with arrows. They kill the deer and remove the musk glands while the animal's blood is still flowing from its navel, fresh and soft and uncongealed. The musk will then have a bad stench. It is then left for a while until that stench disappears and, through certain elements in the air, turns into musk. A parallel case can be detected with fruits that are cut off from trees before ripening and before they reach their full growth on the tree and attaining fruition.

393. The best musk is the one that matures in its vessel and is captured in the animal's navel after having matured inside the animal and reached the utmost in the ripeness of its substance. This is so because nature propels the blood ingredients towards its navel. When the blood is concentrated there and begins to age, this hurts the animal and makes it itch. The animal then takes to the boulders and rocks warmed by the sun and rubs itself against them, which causes it pleasure. The musk gland then bursts and the blood flows on these boulders and rocks, like the bursting of an abscess or a pustule when filled to the brim with the substances accumulated in it. The animal delights in this bursting. When it has emptied the contents of its gland or *surra*---a Persian word meaning navel---the wound heals. Thereafter, blood substances gather there again as they did at first.

394. The Tibetans then go out seeking the deer's grazing grounds among trees and mountains and find that the blood had dried on these rocks and stones, now matured in substance and its animal character ripened by nature, dried by the

sun and affected by the air. They gather it, being the best musk in quality, and put it in glands removed from other deer they had hunted and made ready for the purpose. This is the musk used by their kings and exchanged as gifts, and which merchants from their land carry on rare occasions. Tibet has many cities and the musk of each region is ascribed to it.

395. Al-Mas`udi said: the kings of China, of the Turks, of India and of Zabaj, together with all other kings of the world, have conceded that first among kings in prestige are the kings of Babylon and that they are the first kings of the world. That king is to them what the moon is to the stars, because his region is the noblest of all, and because he is the richest of kings, the best in character, the most politically skillful and the most decisive in action. This used to be the case when kings of Babylon were classified in ancient times, but is no longer the case in this year, i.e. in the year 332. They called that king *Shahan Shah*, which means “King of Kings”, claiming that his status in the world is like that of the heart in the human body or the precious stone in the midst of a necklace. Next comes the king of India who is the king of wisdom and of elephants because, according to the kings of Persia, wisdom originated in India.

396. Next to the King of India comes the king of China, king of best supervision over his people, of governance and of superior craftsmanship. No king in the world is more solicitous and caring for his people, both soldiers and civilians, than the king of China. He possesses great might and invulnerability as well as soldiers on a war-footing, cavalry and weapons. He pays his troops like the king of Babylon. Next to the king of China is a king of the Turks, ruler over the city of Kushan. He is king of the Tughuzghuz, a Turkish nation, and is called king of lions and horses, since there are no kings whose troops are more mighty or more warlike than his, nor any more willing to shed blood or more numerous in cavalry. His realm lies in a broad valley between China and the wilderness of Khurasan and his most common royal title is Uighur Khan. The Turks have

many kings and also races that do not submit to any king, but none comes anywhere near him in power.

397. Next in order comes the king of the Byzantines, called the king of men. This is because there are no men more handsome than his men. Thereafter the other kings of the world are about equal in rank and status. Some people who know intimately the history of the world and its kings quote the following verses which describe in summary form the ranks of kings, their realms and titles:

*The great realms are two in number: Iwan and Ghumdan,*

*And royalty is two in number: Sasan and Qahtan.*

*The greatest of lands is Persia, and of regions is Babylon,*

*Of Islam is Mecca, and of the earth is Khurasan.*

*The two most massive, where life is rough,*

*Are Bukhara then royal Balkh.*

*Then comes Bailaqa, with Tabaristan in between,*

*And Rayy is its lion, and the two Jils are Jilan.*

*All mankind he ordered in ranks:*

*Marzuban, Patricius and Tarkhan.*

*The Persians have Kisra, the Byzantines Caesar,*

*The Abyssinians Najashi and the Turks Khaqan.*

398. The ruler of Sicily and Ifriqiyya in the Maghrib before the coming of Islam was known as Jurjir (*Gregory*) while the ruler of al-Andalus was called Ludhariq (*Roderick*). All kings of al-Andalus were known by that name. It is claimed that these kings were descended from the Ashban, a nation descended from Yafit son of Noah and which became extinct in that land. Better attested though among Muslim inhabitants of al-Andalus is that Ludhariq was a Galician [*Jalaliqa*, from Latin *Callaicoi*], a type of Franks (*Ifranj*). The last Ludhariq who was the king of al-Andalus was killed by Tariq, client of Musa ibn Nusair,

when he conquered the lands of al-Andalus and captured their capital city Toledo (*Tulaitula*).

399. Crossing the city of Toledo is a great river called Tagus (*Tajuh*). It originates from the land of the Galicians and the Basques (*Washkand*), this latter being a great nation, with a king, who wage constant war against the people of al-Andalus, just like the Galicians and the Franks. That river flows into the Mediterranean [!]. It is one of the celebrated rivers of the world. On its banks and at some distance from Toledo is the city of Talavera (*Talabira*) where there is a great bridge called the Bridge of the Sword (*al-Saif*) built by ancient kings with great skill and renown. Its arches are more splendid than the bridge of Sanja on the frontier of al-Jazira near Samosata and the region of Sarja. Toledo is a well fortified city with impregnable walls.

400. Following its conquest by the Umayyad dynasty, the people of Toledo rebelled against the Umayyads and defied them for two years. After the year 315 [927-8], Toledo was re-conquered by the Umayyad `Abd al-Rahman\* ibn Muhammad ibn `Abdallah ibn Muhammad ibn `Abd al-Rahman ibn al-Hakam ibn Hisham ibn `Abd al-Rahman ibn Mu`awiya ibn Hisham ibn `Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan ibn al-Hakam. This `Abd al-Rahman is currently the ruler of al-Andalus, namely in the year 332.

401. When `Abd al-Rahman conquered Toledo, he demolished many of its buildings, and Cordoba then became the capital until the present time. From Cordoba to Toledo is a journey of about seven stages (*marahil*), and from Cordoba to the sea is approximately a three-days journey. The people of al-Andalus also have a city called Seville (*Ishbiliya*) on the seashore [!]. The total circuit of the towns and inhabited regions of al-Andalus is about a two-month's journey and they have around forty well known cities.

402. The Umayyad rulers of al-Andalus are called "the children of caliphs" and are not addressed as caliphs because the caliphate in their view must involve rule over the two sacred shrines of Mecca and Medina. However, the ruler is

addressed as “Commander of the Believers” (*Amir al-Mu`minin*). The first `Abd al-Rahman, i.e. ibn Mu`awiya ibn Hisham ibn `Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan, had crossed over to al-Andalus in the year 139 [756-7], and ruled it for thirty-three years and four months. At his death he was succeeded by his son Hisham who ruled for seven years, then by al-Hakam his son for about twenty years, and his descendants rule it to the present day. We mentioned above that its current ruler is `Abd al-Rahman ibn Muhammad and his designated successor is his son al-Hakam. He is the most virtuous, fairest and most just of rulers.

403. The current ruler of al-Andalus `Abd al-Rahman had in 327 [938-9] led an army of more than a hundred thousand men to the kingdom of the Galicians where he besieged their capital, a city called Zamora (*Sammura*), protected by seven walls of marvelous construction and fortified by previous kings. Between the walls were ramparts and moats and much water. `Abd al-Rahman’s army had breached two of its walls when the people of the city counter-attacked and killed some forty thousand Muslims who could be counted and known---some say fifty thousand. So it was a victory for the Galicians and the Basques, and the Muslim frontier posts adjoining the Frankish lands were also captured. In the year 330 [941-2], the city of Narbonne (*Arbuna*) was also lost to the Muslims alongside other towns and forts in their possession. At this time, which is the year 336 [947-8], the Muslim frontier post in eastern al-Andalus remains the town of Tortosa (*Turtusha*) on the Mediterranean, then the region to the north of it, i.e. Fraga (*Afragha*) on a great river, then on to Larida. It has reached me that these frontier posts face the Franks and are the narrowest regions of al-Andalus.

404. Before the year 300, there arrived at al-Andalus ships from the sea with thousands aboard them who attacked its coasts [Vikings]. The people of al-Andalus claim that these people were Magians who attack them from that sea every few hundred years. They further claim that these people arrive in their country via an inlet from the surrounding ocean which is not the same as the inlet where there is the bronze lighthouse. My view, and God knows best, is that

this inlet is connected with the Azov and Black Seas, and that these people are the Rus mentioned above, since none but they cross those seas which are connected with the Ocean.

405. In the Mediterranean, and next to the island of Crete (*Iqritush*) were found planks of teak wood belonging to ships with holes tied together by *narjil* fibers which had foundered and their planks were carried by the waves of the sea.

Such planks are only found in the Abyssinian Sea since Mediterranean and Arab ships all use nails whereas the ships of the Abyssinian Sea cannot sustain iron nails. This is because the sea-water melts these iron nails which then grow soft and weak. Accordingly, the people of that sea tied planks together with fibers instead, and then coated them with grease and slaked lime. This proves, and God knows best, that the seas are all connected, and that the sea of China and the land of Sila curves around the land of the Turks and ends in the seas of the West through certain inlets of the surrounding Ocean.

406. Once, on the coasts of al-Sham, some amber was found which the sea had thrown up. This is a most unusual occurrence in the Mediterranean and never attested before. It may be that amber found its way into this sea in the same manner as those planks from ships of the Sea of China, and God knows best how this could have happened. Amber is plentiful on the coasts of al-Andalus from where it is transported to Egypt and elsewhere. Amber is carried to Cordoba from its coastline, from towns called Santarem [Shantarin] and Medina Sidonia [Shadhuna].

In al-Andalus, an *uqiyya* [ounce] of amber costs three *mithqals* of gold, counting by the Baghdad *uqiyya* [33 grams] while an *uqiyya* in Egypt costs 10 dinars. This amber is not of good quality and the amber found in the Mediterranean may have been carried by the waves from the Sea of al-Andalus to the Mediterranean, because the waters of the two seas are connected.

407. In al-Andalus there is a great silver mine and one of mercury, but the latter is not of good quality. These are transported to other lands, both Islamic and

infidel. From al-Andalus too are exported saffron and ginger roots. The basic perfumes are five in number: musk, camphor, aloes wood, amber and saffron. All are imported from India and lands nearby except for saffron and amber which are found in the land of the Zanj, in al-Shihr and in al-Andalus. The spices are of twenty-five kinds: spikenard, cloves, sandalwood, nutmeg, rose, bark of *`arfaj*, saffron, cinnamon, stork's bill, cardamom, cubeb, green cardamom, elderberry seeds, jasmine flower, *mahleb*, dye-wood, mandrake, scented sea shells (*azfar al-tib*), myrobalam, mastic, cistus, benzoin resin, kumkum tree, lemon grass stalks and civet musk. In our *Akhbar al-Zaman*, we described silver, gold and mercury mines and the various kinds of perfumes, making it unnecessary to treat these subjects in detail in this book.

408. The Maghrib sea has many strange tales where it draws near to the inhabited regions of the black peoples and at the furthest reaches of the Maghrib. Scholars who concern themselves with the history of the world state that Abyssinia and all the lands of the blacks require seven years to traverse, and that the land of the blacks occupies one-sixtieth part of the earth, while the earth itself requires five hundred years to traverse: a third of it built and inhabited, a third uninhabited wasteland and a third of it sea.

409. The furthest reaches of the land of the naked blacks adjoin the realm of the progeny of Idris ibn `Abdullah ibn al-Hasan ibn al-Hasan ibn `Ali ibn Abi Talib which is part of the Maghrib, namely, the territories of Tlemcen, Tiaret and Fez, and all the way to the Near Sus. Between the Near Sus and the territory of al-Qairawan is a distance of two thousand three hundred miles, and between Near and Far Sus is a journey of about twenty days of continuous habitations until it reaches the Valley of Sand (*Wadi al-Raml*) and the Black Palace (*Al-Qasr al-Aswad*). This then leads to the wilderness of sand where the city known as the City of Brass (*Madinat al-Nuhas*) and the Domes of Lead are to be found. This is where Musa ibn Nusair\* marched in the days of the caliph `Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan and saw all these wonders, mentioning his adventures in a book widely

circulated among people. It is also claimed that the above-mentioned wilderness refers to a land that adjoins al-Andalus, called the Great Land\* (*Al-ard al-kabira*).

410. It was Maimun ibn `Abd al-Wahhab ibn `Abd al-Rahman ibn Rustam al-Farisi, an Ibadi sectarian, who introduced into the Maghrib the doctrine of the Khawarij. Some say they\* are remnants of the Ishban. It was Maimun who built up these lands and waged war against the Talibids. Later on in this work we will relate the arguments adduced regarding the origins of the Ishban and the view of those who maintain that they are Persians transported from the region of Isbahan. In that part of the Maghrib are found Khawarij of the Sufriyya sect who have well developed cities like the city of Dar`a, where there is a great silver mine. That part of the Maghrib lies to the south and adjoins the land of Abyssinia, and the wars between them are unceasing.

411. In our book *Akhbar al-Zaman*, we set forth a history of the Maghrib, its cities and its inhabitants from among the Ibadi and Suffriyya sects of the Khawarij, and who settled in the Maghrib from among the Mu`tazila, and the wars between them. We also made mention of Ibn al-Aghlab al-Tamimi and his appointment as governor of the Maghrib by the caliph al-Mansur, his residence in Ifriqiyya\* and his history in the days of the caliph Harun al-Rashid, and how his descendants ruled Ifriqiyya and other lands of the Maghrib. This dynasty ended with Abu Mudar Ziyadat Allah ibn `Abdullah ibn Ibrahim ibn Ahmad ibn al-Aghlab ibn Ibrahim ibn Muhammad ibn al-Aghlab ibn Ibrahim ibn Salim ibn Sawada al-Tamimi, who was the principal champion of the Abbasid cause. He was driven out of Ifriqiyya by Abu `Abdullah al-Muhtasib\* al-Sufi, who championed the ruler of al-Mahdiyya when he appeared among the Kutama and other Berber tribes in the year 297[909-10] in the days of the caliph al-Muqtadir Billah. We also mentioned how this man Abu `Abdullah marched to al-Rafiqa and al-Raqa. He was originally from the town of Ramhurmuz, in the district of al-Ahwaz.

412. We now turn back to speak of the ranks of kings and continue with a description of the kingdoms that remain on the Abyssinian Sea which we had begun to describe. We state that the king of the Zanj is called *Waflimi*; the king of al-Lan\* is called *Karkudanj*; the king of Hira is from the clan of Banu Nasr, both Nu`manids and Manadhira; the king of the mountains of Tabaristan used to be called *Qarin* and the mountain is still called by his name and that of his descendants up to the present day; the king of India is called al-Ballahara; the king of Qannuj from among the kings of Sind is called Baruza, this being the name of every king who ruled Qannuj and where there is a city called Biruza, named after that dynasty. Today this city is within the Islamic realm and is part of the region of al-Multan. From this city issues a river which, when joined with others, becomes the river of Mihran al-Sind, a river that al-Jahiz claimed issues from the Nile. Others claim that it issues from the Oxus in Khurasan. Baruza, king of Qannuj, is an enemy of Ballahara, king of India.

413. The king of Qandahar from among the kings of Sind and its mountains is most commonly known as *Jahaj*. From his country flows the river known as Rawi, one of the five sources of the Mihran al-Sind [Indus]. Qandahar is also known as the land of Rihyawt. One other river of the five flowing from the land and mountains of Sind is known as Bahatul. This river traverses the land of Rihyawt, which is the land of Qandahar. The fourth river flows from the land and mountains of Kabul, this being located on the frontiers of Sind, next to Bust, Ghaznin, Durghash, Rukhkhaj and the land of Dawar, adjoining Sijistan.

414. Another river of the above-mentioned five originates from the land of Qashmir, whose king is known as al-Rai, this being the most common title of all their kings. Qashmir is one of the great kingdoms of Sind and its mountains whose realm includes sixty to seventy thousand towns and villages. No inhabitant of this realm can reach his hometown except through one entry point, and a single gate shuts in all that we mentioned. This is because of towering and invulnerable mountains which no man or beast can climb because of their

height. Only the birds can fly over them. Where there are no mountains there are rugged valleys, trees, thickets and fast-running rivers, impossible to cross. What we have mentioned of the invulnerable character of this mountain is well known in Khurasan and other lands, and is one of the world's wonders.

415. As for the kingdom of Baruza, the realm of Qannuj, the total area of his kingdom is about 120 *farsakhs* by about the same, these being *farsakhs* of Sind where a *farsakh* is eight miles as measured by our mile. This is the king we mentioned above as having four armies that face the four directions of the winds, each army counting 700,000---some say 900,000, men. With the northern army he fights the ruler of Multan and the Muslims with him on that frontier. With the southern he fights the Ballahara, king of Mankir. With the other armies he fights whatever king he faces from whatever direction. It is claimed that his realm contains, within the area mentioned above, and as far as can be counted, cities and towns and villages numbering one million and eight hundred thousand, all lying among trees, rivers, mountains and meadows. As compared to other kings, he has few elephants and has only two thousand war elephants.

416. If an elephant is tall, experienced and courageous and his rider is a knight; and if he holds in his trunk a type of sword called *qartal* and his trunk is covered with a coat of mail and iron; and if his entire body is covered with dried leather, bark and iron; and if he is surrounded by 500 infantrymen who protect him front and back, he can take on 6,000 cavalymen in battle. At the very least, and if the elephant has 500 infantrymen, he can charge 5,000 cavalymen, passing in and out of their ranks, and moving freely among them like a knight on a horse. This is how their elephants conduct their wars.

417. As for the ruler of Multan, we have already stated that kingship is vested in the progeny of Sama ibn Lu'ayy ibn Ghalib\*. He has a strong army. Multan is one of the major Muslim frontier posts. Around the frontier city of Multan is about 120,000 villages, as far as these can be counted. In Multan, as mentioned

before, is found the well known Multan idol, where the people of Sind and Hind come from their furthest regions bearing the idol votive offerings of money, jewels, incense wood and all kinds of perfumes. Thousands go on pilgrimage to that idol and most of the income of the ruler of Multan is derived from the fine incense wood called *Qimari* the purest of which costs 200 dinars a *mann*\*. If *Qimari* is stamped, the stamp leaves an impression like that on wax. Other wondrous offerings are also carried to that idol. If infidel kings descend on Multan and the Muslims are unable to resist them, they threaten the infidels with breaking and destroying the idol, so the enemy army retires. I entered the land of Multan after the year 300 [912-13] and its king at that time was Abu al-Lahhab al-Munabbih ibn Asad al-Qurashi al-Sami.

418. At that same time I also entered the land of al-Mansura whose king was Abu al-Mundhir `Umar ibn `Abdallah. There I met his vizier Riyah and his two sons Muhammad and `Ali. There too I saw an Arab notable and one of its kings known as Hamza. In Mansura, there lives a large number of descendants of `Ali ibn Abi Talib together with those of `Umar ibn `Ali and Muhammad ibn `Ali. Between the kings of Mansura and the family of the judge Abu al-Shawarib there is a close kinship. This is because the kings of Mansura in whom kingship is vested at this time are descended from al-Habbar ibn al-Aswad and are known as Banu `Umar ibn `Abd al-`Aziz al-Qurashi. This latter is to be distinguished from `Umar ibn `Abd al-`Aziz the Umayyad.

419. When all the rivers mentioned above traverse the territory known as Farj Bait al-Dhahab, which is Multan, they join together at a place called Dushab, between Multan and Mansura, a three-days' journey beyond Multan. When all these waters reach the west of the city of al-Rur, in the district of Mansura, they are there called Mihran. The waters then divide into two parts and both then flow into that great river called Mihran al-Sind at the city of Sakara, in the district of Mansura, which then runs into the India Sea at a two-days' journey from the city of Daibul.

420. Between Multan and Mansura is a distance of 75 Sindi *farsakhs*, each of which, as mentioned above, is eight miles. The total number of estates and villages belonging to Mansura comes to 300,000 villages, planted fields, trees and continuous habitations. Wars are frequent with a race called Mand, a kind of Sind, and with other races. Mansura is the frontier region of Sind, as also Multan and what belongs to it by way of built up areas and cities. Mansura was called after Mansur ibn Jamhur, the Umayyad governor.

421. The king of Mansura has eighty war elephants and each elephant, as mentioned above, is assigned 500 infantrymen while the elephant itself can take on thousands of horsemen. I saw two enormous elephants that belong to that king, well known by repute among the kings of Sind and India for their courage, great power and ability to scatter armies. One was called Manfarqlus and the other Haidara. Of Manfarqlus wondrous tales and praiseworthy acts are related, well known to people in those regions and elsewhere. It is related, for example, that when one of his mahouts died, he remained for many days without food or drink, expressing his sorrow and moaning like a grieving person, with tears running endlessly down from his eyes. Another tale goes as follows. He went out from his keep one day, this being the elephant house, followed by Haidara and with the eighty others marching behind them. Manfarqlus ended up in a narrow street of Mansura and along his way he of a sudden encountered a woman. When she saw him, she was startled and in her fright fell on her back, and her private parts were exposed as she lay in the middle of that street. When Manfarqlus saw this he stopped astride that street, his right side blocking the other elephants behind him and preventing their further progress for the woman's sake. He then waved his trunk at the woman, urging her to stand up, gather her clothes together and cover herself up. When the woman, having recovered from her fright, stood up and moved away, the elephant proceeded on his way followed by the rest of the elephants.

422. Strange tales are told about both war and working elephants. Some elephants that do not fight are used to pull wheels, bear heavy burdens and are employed in the threshing of rice and other grains, just like water buffaloes on a threshing floor. We shall revert to the subject of elephants when speaking of Zanj history later on in this book and how elephants live in that land, for in no land are more elephants to be found than in the land of the Zanj, where all their elephants are wild. This, then, has been a short account of the history of the kings of Sind and India.

423. The language of Sind is different from the language of India [*Hind*]. Sind is the region that lies next to the lands of Islam, and beyond Sind lies India. The language of the people of Mankir, the capital of the kingdom of Ballahara, is called Kiriyya in reference to the region which is called Kira. The language of its coastal regions like Saimur, Subara and Tana and other coastal cities is called Lariyya in reference to the sea on whose coasts they live, namely Larawi, mentioned above.

424. This coast has great rivers which flow from south to north, contrary to other rivers of the earth. There are no rivers on earth that flow from south to north except the Nile of Egypt and Mihran al-Sind and a few others. All other rivers on earth flow from north to south. In our work *Akhbar al-Zaman* we mentioned the reason for this and what people said about this subject and which regions of the earth are elevated and which others are low-lying.

425. Among the kings of Sind and India none is more considerate towards Muslims living in his realm than the Ballahara. In his kingdom Islam is respected and protected. The Muslims have well built and well attended mosques for the five daily prayers and a king there rules for forty or fifty or more years. The people of his kingdom claim that their span of life grows long by reason of their just treatment and reverence towards Muslims. He is a king who pays his troops from his own treasury as do Muslim kings with their troops. They have dirhams called *tatiriyya*, each dirham weighing one and a half

dirhams of the royal mint. They date the beginning of the history of their kingdom by the death of successive kings. His war elephants are innumerable. 426. His country is also called the land of Kumkan. Warring against them from one side of the kingdom is the king of Juraz\*, a king who owns many horses, camels and troops. It is claimed that the only king more eminent than he is the king of Babylon, which is in the fourth clime. This is so because this king [i.e. of Juraz] is haughty and aggressive towards all other kings and is also inimical to Muslims. He has many elephants and his kingdom is located on a promontory. Mines of gold and silver are found in his land and they use these metals in commercial transactions.

427. Adjoining him is the king of Taqi who has peaceful relations with nearby kings and respects Muslims. His armies are not as numerous as the armies of the other kings just mentioned. No Indian women are better or prettier or more white in skin than these women. They are well known for being ideal companions in seclusion and are mentioned in books of sexual conduct. Mariners compete in buying them and they are known as *Taqiyyat* women.

428. Adjoining that king is the kingdom of Dahram\*, Dahram being the most common title of their kings. His enemy is Juraz whose realm is next to his. Dahram also wars against the Ballahara from one periphery of his kingdom. His troops, elephants and horses are more numerous than those of the Ballahara, the king of Juraz and the king of Taqi. If he marches out to battle his normal disposition is to lead fifty thousand elephants and to wage war only in winter because elephants cannot bear to go thirsty for any length of time. Those who exaggerate inflate the number of his troops alleging that merely the fullers and laundrymen in his army amount to ten to fifteen thousand.

429. The battle formation of the above-mentioned kings is the square [*kurdus*], with twenty thousand in each square facing in four directions, each having five thousand soldiers. The kingdom of Dahram pays its troops in aloda shells (*al-wada`*), which is the currency of the country. In his country are also found

incense wood, gold, silver and textiles unparalleled for their fine and delicate texture. From his country is also imported those twigs known as *samar*, used as a fly whisk enclosed in ivory or silver handles, and employed by servants who stand over the heads of kings as they sit in their assemblies.

430. In his country too is found the animal known as the spotted *al-bishan* which the common people call *al-karkadann* (rhinoceros). It has a single horn on its forehead. It is smaller than the elephant in body but larger than the water buffalo, has a blackish color and ruminates like cows and other ruminants. Elephants run away from it and there is no animal species hardier than it. This is because most of its bones are compressed together and it has no joints in its limbs so it does not kneel down nor sleeps, but is found in woods and swamps leaning against trees when sleeping. The Indians eat its meat as do Muslims who live there because it is a species of cow and water buffalo. The water buffalo is found in plenty in Sind and India. The rhinoceros is mostly found in the forests of India but is most numerous in the Kingdom of Dahram where their horns are more limpid and of better quality. Its horn is white in color in the middle of which is a dark image. In the white area an image can be detected of a person or of a peacock with its outline and shape, or else the image of a fish or a picture of itself or of some other kind of animal found in that country.

431. The horn is sawed off and from it are made leather girdles in the shape of gold or silver ornaments worn by Chinese kings and their elite. They compete in wearing them and go over the top in paying for them so that a girdle can cost two to four thousand dinars, from which hang golden pendants of remarkable beauty and craftsmanship. Its horn could also be crammed with various kinds of precious stones in filaments of gold while the outlines of these images are drawn in black on white, though white on black may be found in its horns. However, these images described above are not found in rhino horns of all countries.

432. Al-Jahiz claimed that a rhino is carried in its mother's belly for seven years and that its head appears from its mother's cavity and grazes then reinserts itself in that cavity. This is a statement he made in his *Book of Animals*, relating it as a bizarre anecdote. This statement led me to ask all who had travelled widely in those lands from among the people of Siraf and Oman and also the merchants I met in India. They all expressed their astonishment at what they heard from me. When I asked them, they all told me that the rhino's gestation and birth is similar to that of cows and water buffalos. I do not know how al-Jahiz heard that story and whether he read it in a book or was told it by someone.

433. The realm of Dahram encompasses both land and sea. Next to it is a realm which has no sea and is called the kingdom of Lakshmipur. The people of this kingdom have pierced ears. They have elephants, camels and horses, and both their men and women are good looking. Next to them is the realm of Tanluinj\* which encompasses both land and sea and is located on a headland jutting into the sea. Much amber is found in that country and also a small amount of pepper. Their king has many elephants and compared to other kings is mighty and proud though his pride is greater than his might and his boasting is greater than his power.

434. Next to this kingdom is the kingdom of al-Muja. The people of this kingdom have white skins, are good looking and do not have pierced ears. They have many horses and formidable military resources. Musk in their country is plentiful and is extracted from their deer, as described earlier in this work. This nation resembles the Chinese in their dress, and their white-topped mountains rise to very great and inaccessible heights. In all of Sind, India or other kingdoms we have mentioned there are no mountains that rise higher than these or are more difficult of access. Their musk is well known and is named after them, and mariners whose business it is to trade in musk and import it recognize its worth. It is referred to as Mujahi musk.

435. Next to the kingdom of al-Muja is the kingdom of Mabud, a realm with many cities, wide habitations and great armies. Their kings employ slaves and eunuchs in their mine industries, in tax collection and in administering their provinces, among other employments, as is done by the Chinese kings, described above. The realm of Mabud adjoins the kingdom of China and ambassadors travel to and fro between them bearing gifts. Between the two realms are towering mountains and difficult mountain passes. The Mabud king has great might and is very violent and powerful. When his ambassadors reach China they are kept under surveillance and are not permitted to roam in that country for fear they might spy out their roads and the weak points of their land, for the Mabud have an exalted view of their own strength and numbers.

436. The nations mentioned above, that is, India, China and others, have their own habits and manners in eating, drinking, marriage customs, clothes, medical treatments, and medicines such as cauterization by fire and so forth. It is related of some of their kings that they do not approve of holding wind inside the belly and believe that this causes a harmful malady. Thus they do not think it unseemly to break wind in any social situation. Their wise men act in the same way and believe that holding back a fart is a harmful malady while releasing it causes a healthy relief. They think farting is the best remedy, and that it relieves a person suffering from colic and constipation or one suffering from a malady of the spleen. Thus they do not hold back a fart or a muted fart and do not consider this shameful.

437. The Indians are very advanced in the craft of medicine and are sophisticated and skillful in its practice. The person who related this information asserts that in their opinion coughing is uglier than farting, that belching is judged similar to a muted fart, and that the sound of the fart is good for the stomach and is what dissipates its odor. That informant adduced as proof of the truth of what he related about India the fact that this piece of information

about them is very widely spread among people to the point where it is very frequently cited in their customs, histories, anecdotes and poetry.

438. Thus, for example, the poet Aban ibn `Abd al-Hamid has the following verses in his ode known as “The Ode dressed in Silk” (*Dhat al-hulal*):

*The Indian sage and true counselor  
Made a statement that I find of much merit.  
Do not hold back a fart when it is at hand  
But let it go, opening its door as wide as it wishes.  
The worst of maladies is to hold it back,  
While respite and relief come when one unchains it.  
Ugliness is in coughing and blowing one’s nose,  
And sneezing, not farting, is the evil omen.  
As for belching, it is a muted fart ascending,  
And is more foul-smelling than a muted fart.*

439. The informant goes on to relate that the wind in the stomach is the same substance but has different names depending on its exit points. What goes up of this wind is called belching and what goes down is called a muted fart but there is no difference in odor except for the difference in point of exit. Thus one speaks of a slap (*saf a*) and a clout (*latma*): the first refers to the face while the second refers to the back of the head or the behind, whereas both are of the same kind. They have two different names because of the different places where the blow lands. The reason why the human or speaking animal suffers from so many maladies and takes so many medications and why he has multiple diseases like colic, stomach pains and other symptoms is because he holds back the malady inside him and neglects to bring it out when agitated and when nature is intent upon driving it out. Dumb animals on the other hand are free from such maladies and symptoms of disease because they are quick to release whatever internal ailments are blocking and swirling inside them and not to hold them back in their guts.

440. It is also claimed that the philosophers and distinguished sages of the Greeks like Democritus, Pythagoras, Socrates and Diogenes, and other sages of other nations also did not believe that any of these actions should be held back because of their knowledge of the maladies that would ensue together with other consequences. They stated that this can be felt by any person of feeling and is something known by nature and understood by reason. However, some people who adhere to religious views and to revealed scripture hold these acts to be reprehensible because they are not allowed according to religious law and normal custom.

441. Al-Mas`udi said: In our two earlier works, *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*, we related the history of the above-mentioned nations and what we ascertained of their customs and curious habits and behavior. We also related the history of the Maharaj, king of the islands, of perfume and spices, along with the history of all other Indian kings, of the Fijabat and other mountain kings who face these islands, like Zabij and other mountains of China. We also related the history of the kings of China and the kingdom of Sarandib along with the realm of Mandura Fattan [Madourapatan] which faces Sarandib just as the land of Qimar faces the islands of Maharaj like Zabaj and others. Every king who rules Mandura Fattan is called Fandia. In what follows in this work we shall make mention of the kings of the east, west, north and south such as the kings of Yemen, the Persians, Byzantines, Greeks, the Maghrib, the various kinds of Abyssinians and Blacks as also the kings who are the progeny of Yafith, and other histories and wonders of the world.

## **Chapter 17**

**An account of the Caucasus mountains and a history of its nations such as the Alans, Avars, and the Khazar together with various kinds of Turks, Bulgars, and a history of al-Bab wa'l Abwab and neighboring kings and nations**

The Caucasus (*Jabal al-Qabkh*) is a massive mountain and a most imposing region, comprising many kingdoms and nations. This mountain encompasses seventy-two nations, each with its own king and language separate from the others. This mountain has many mountain passes and valleys and the city of al-Bab wa'l Abwab [Derbent] is located on one of these passes. This city was built by Chosroes [*Kisra*] Anushirwan and he sited it to lie between the Caucasus and the Caspian. Its wall was extended right into the sea to a distance of about a mile, then up onto the heights, depths and mountain passes of the Caucasus for a distance of about forty *farsakhs* until it reaches a fortress called Tabasaran (*Tabarsaran*). At every three miles of that wall, or less or more, depending on the road for the sake of which the gate was built, an iron gate was built. Inside each of these gates a tribe was stationed to protect that gate and the wall adjacent to it. This was done to repel the ravages of nations living on that mountain like the Khazar, Al-Lan, varieties of Turks, Avars (*al-Sarir*) and other kinds of infidels.

443. The Caucasus mountain, in height, length and breadth, is a journey of two months, perhaps more. Round about are nations whose number is known only to Him who created them. One of its passes is on the Caspian next to Derbent, as already related. Other passes adjoin the Sea of Azov, mentioned above, which flows into the Gulf of Constantinople. On the Black Sea coast lies the city of Trebizond, which has many market days throughout the year, and is frequented by a host of merchants of diverse nations such as Muslims, Byzantines, Armenians and others, and also from the land of the Circassians (*Kashak*).

444. When Anushirwan built the city known as al-Bab wa'l Abwab and the wall that traverses land, sea and mountain, he settled on it diverse nations and kings and assigned them ranks, conferring separate honors on each and giving each a distinct realm, as was done by Ardashir ibn Babik when he organized the kings of Khurasan. Among the kings of those regions adjacent to the lands of Islam that Anushirwan settled was a king of a territory called Bardha`a, named

Shirwan. His kingdom is named after him and he is thus known as Shirwan Shah. Every king who rules that territory is called Shirwan Shah.

Al-Mas`udi said: His realm at this time, which is the year 332, is about a month's journey in extension. This is so because he conquered lands not assigned to him by Anushirwan so these were added to his realm. The king at the time of our writing this work---and God knows best---is a Muslim called Muhammad ibn Yazid, a descendant of Bahram Jur, there being no dispute regarding his genealogy. The king of al-Sarir [Avars] is also a descendant of Bahram Jur. Similarly, the ruler of Khurasan at this time of writing is a descendant of Isma`il ibn Ahmad, and Isma`il is also a descendant of Bahram Jur, there being no dispute about this genealogy because it is so well known. The above-mentioned Muhammad ibn Yazid, known as Shirwan Shah, seized the city of al-Bab wa'l Abwab following the death of his brother-in-law, a man called `Abdullah ibn Hisham, a descendant of the Ansar, whose family had ruled that city. That family had lived in those regions ever since these were penetrated by Maslama ibn `Abd al-Malik and other Muslim princes in ancient times.

445. Next to the kingdom of Shirwan is another kingdom of the Caucasus called Laizan, whose king is known as Laizan Shah. At this present time, Shirwan has dominated this kingdom as also another kingdom called al-Muqaniyya. The kingdom of Shirwan relies for support on the kingdom of Lakz, a nation too numerous to count and living on the heights of the mountain. Among them are infidels, called al-Dudaniyya\*, who do not submit to the rule of Shirwan, are barbarous (*jahiliyya*) and have no king. Curious tales are told of their marriage customs and other practices.

446. The Caucasus has valleys, passes and trails inhabited by nations that do not know each other; so rugged is that mountain, so high in elevation, so many are its thickets, forests, and waterfalls, so massive its boulders and rocks. This man known as Shirwan Shah has come to dominate many mountain kingdoms that

Anushirwan had once assigned to other rulers whom he had appointed there. Muhammad ibn Yazid added these kingdoms, among which are Khursan Shah and Zadan Shah, to his realm. We shall later on mention how he took over the kingdom of Shirwan, having once been, along with his father, a ruler over Laizan only from among the other kingdoms. Next to the kingdom of Shirwan in the Caucasus is the king of Tabaristan who at present is a Muslim and nephew of `Abd al-Malik, formerly ruler of al-Bab wa'l Abwab. This is the first nation that borders on al-Bab wa'l Abwab.

447. The people of al-Bab wa'l Abwab suffer the ravages of a kingdom called Khaidhan [*Khaidhaq*], a nation included in the realm of the Khazar. The capital of that kingdom was a city eight days' journey from al-Bab called Samandar. Today, it is inhabited by a population of the Khazar. It had been conquered in early Islamic times by Salman ibn Rabi`a al-Bahili, God have mercy on his soul. So the seat of the kingdom moved to a city called Atil, a journey of seven days from the first capital. Atil is at present the seat of the Khazar king. The city has three quarters separated by a great river [Volga] which flows down from the heights of the land of the Turks. One branch of the river flows towards the land of the Burghur [Bulghar] then into the Azov Sea. The city is on two sides of the river, in the middle of which is an island which is the seat of the kingdom. The king's palace is located at one extremity of that island. It has two bridges built of boats linking it to the two river banks. In this city lives a population of Muslims, Christians, Jews and pagans.

448. As for the Jews, the king, his courtiers and the Khazars belong to that religious community. The King of the Khazar had embraced Judaism in the days of the caliph al-Rashid. A population of Jews joined him, coming to him from diverse Muslim and Byzantine lands. This is because the current king of Byzantium in this year of 332, Armanus [Romanus I], forcibly converted the Jews of his realm to Christianity. Later in this work, we will mention the history of the Byzantine kings and their number as well as the history of this particular

king and those who were his partners in rule at the time of composing this work. So a large number of Jews fled from the land of Byzantium to that of the Khazars, as already mentioned. The manner in which the king of the Khazar embraced Judaism is a narrative whose place is not here in this work, for we have mentioned that history in our earlier works.

449. As for the pagans in his realm, these belong to different races such as the Slavs [*Saqaliba*] and the Rus who inhabit one quarter of the city. They burn their dead along with their mounts, armor and jewelry. When a man dies his wife is burnt with him while alive, but if a wife dies the husband is not burnt. If a bachelor dies, he is made to marry after his death. Women are content to be burnt because they imagine that they will enter paradise. This is also practiced in India, as mentioned above, except that in India a wife is not burnt with her husband unless she herself desires it.

450. The most powerful element in this kingdom are the Muslims because they constitute the king's army and are known in that land as al-Arsiyya, in origin migrants from the vicinity of Khwarizm. In ancient times, their land suffered a severe drought and epidemics so they migrated to the realm of the Khazar. They are a people of might and bravery, and the Khazar king's principal source of support in his wars. Their residence in his country is conditional upon certain mutually agreed terms. Thus they are permitted to practice their religion openly in their mosques, are permitted the call to prayer, and that the vizierate belongs to them. The vizier nowadays is of their number and is named Ahmad ibn Kuwaih. Another condition is that if the king wages war against Muslims they would keep to their own camp and not fight their co-religionists but will fight with the king against all infidels. At this present time about seven thousand of their archers will march out with the king wearing their coats of mail, helmets and armor. Among them too are spearmen, as is the case with the weaponry of other Muslims.

451. They also have Muslim judges. The judiciary in this capital of the Khazar kingdom is organized as follows: there are seven judges, two for the Muslims, two for the Khazar who judge in accordance with the Torah, and two for the Christians who judge by the Gospel. There is another judge for the Slavs and the Rus who judges in accordance with non-religious (*Jahliyya*) laws which are in fact rational principles. If a major legal problem arises, and these judges do not know how to deal with it, they resort to the Muslim judges and submit to the verdict of Muslim religious law. In that part of the world, and among eastern kings, only the Khazar king employs mercenaries, and every Muslim in that land is called by the name of that community, al-Arsiyya.

452. The Rus and Slavs whom we earlier called “non-religious” are the king’s bodyguard and slaves. Apart from the Arsiyya, there is a large Muslim population of merchants and craftsmen who have come to settle in that king’s realm, drawn to it by his justice and the security of the kingdom. The Muslims have a congregational mosque whose minaret overlooks the royal palace. They have other mosques too to which are attached elementary schools (*makatib*) where boys are taught the Qur’an. If the Muslims and Christians in that land agree on some issue, the king cannot resist them.

453. Al-Mas`udi said: When we speak about the king of the Khazar, we are not referring to the Khaqan. This is because in the Khazar kingdom there exists a figurehead called the Khaqan who by custom must be completely subject to another king and share his place of residence. Thus, the Khaqan is kept deep inside the palace and never rides out or appears before elites or commoners, or leaves his place of residence, but is closeted with his womenfolk, neither commanding nor forbidding anything, and has no say whatsoever in the affairs of the kingdom. Yet the kingdom of the Khazar cannot be legitimate unless there is a Khaqan who resides in the king’s capital and inside his palace. If the land is struck by drought or by some major crisis, or if some enemy attacks and they fail to ward them off or for any other similar emergency, the Khazars, elite

and commoners, proceed *en masse* to the Khazar king and tell him: “We perceive an evil omen in this Khaqan and his times, and we regard him as an evil portent. Kill him or else deliver him to us so that we can kill him.” The king would then deliver him to them to be killed or else would himself kill him, or might feel compassionate and defend him as being innocent and guilty of no crime. This at present is the custom of the Khazar. I do not know if this practice is ancient or modern. In my view, it may be that the title “Khaqan” belonged to a family of their notables who may have been the royal house in times past. God knows best.

454. The Khazar have boats on which passengers sail along a river which runs above the city and flows into their river from its heights. That river is called Burtas. Along the river dwell communities of settled Turks who are part of the Khazar realm. Their habitations are continuous all the way from the Khazar kingdom to the kingdom of the Bulghar. That river flows from the vicinity of the land of the Bulghar and boats sail back and forth on that river between the Bulghar and the Khazar. Burtas, as mentioned above, is the name of a nation of Turks who dwell along the river that is named after them. From their land are exported the furs of foxes, both red and black, known as Burtasiyya. Each black fur is worth one hundred dinars though the red is less expensive. These black furs are worn by Arab and foreign kings who are proud to wear them. They consider these furs more valuable than sable, young jackal fur or other furs. Kings wear them as a headpiece, caftan or cape, and it would be hard to find a king who has no caftan or cape lined with these black Burtasiyya furs.

455. On the heights of the Khazar river, its mouth is connected to a gulf of the Black Sea called the Sea of the Rus, which only the Rus cross and who inhabit one of its coasts. The Rus are a great and pagan nation which has neither a king nor a law. Among them are traders who trade with the capital of the kingdom of the Bulghar. In their own land, the Rus have a silver mine similar to the silver mines in the mountain of Banjhir in the region of Khurasan. The capital of the

Bulghar is located on the coast of the Sea of Azov and I believe that their territory lies in the Seventh Clime. They [Bulghars] are a variety of Turks and caravans travel constantly back and forth between them and the country of Khwarizm in the land of Khurasan. But the route runs through deserts inhabited and guarded by other Turks. The king of the Bulghar at this present time, that is, the year 332, is a Muslim who embraced Islam during the caliphate of al-Muqtadir Billah after the year 310 [922-3], and this happened because of a vision he had seen. He had a son who went on pilgrimage and passed by Baghdad and carried away with him as gifts from the caliph al-Muqtadir a pennant, black cloth and money. The Muslims have a mosque in that land.

456. This [Bulghar] king raids the land of Constantinople with fifty thousand horsemen or more, and conducts raids all around it reaching all the way to the land of Rome, al-Andalus, the Burgundians [*al-Burjan*], the Galicians and the Franks [*Ifranja*]. Between the land of that king and Constantinople is a two-month journey through both inhabited and desert terrain. When the Muslims set off on their naval raids from the Shami port of Tartus, led by the commander of the frontier posts, the royal servant Thumal known as al-Dulafi, with a fleet of Shami and Basran ships in the year 312 [924-5], they crossed the mouth of the Gulf of Constantinople, then the mouth of another gulf of the Mediterranean which has no outlet, and ended up in the land of Fanadiya. There came to their rescue by land a group of Bulghar and told them that their king was in the vicinity. This proves the accuracy of our assertion above that Bulghar raids reach all the way to the Mediterranean coasts. Some Bulghars in fact went aboard the Tarsus ships and sailed with them back to Tarsus. The Bulghar are a numerous nation of great might and courage to which all nearby nations submit. A single Bulghar knight who has embraced Islam along with their king is a match for one hundred or two hundred infidel knights. The people of Constantinople can resist them only by hiding behind their wall. Similarly, all

who live in that region of the world can resist them only by taking refuge behind forts or walls.

457. At certain times of the year, night in the land of the Bulghar is extremely short. Some of them claim that a man would barely finish cooking his dinner in his cauldron before morning is upon him. In our previous works we mentioned the reasons for this from the astronomical point of view and the reason why in certain localities the nights last six continuous months without any daylight, and the days six continuous months without night, this latter occurring in regions to the south. Astronomers in their almanacs have set forth the reasons for this from the astronomical point of view.

458. The Rus comprise many and diverse nations. One race among them, the most numerous, is called Al-Ludh`ana, who trade back and forth with al-Andalus, Rome, Constantinople and the Khazar. Sometime after the year 300 [912-13], some five hundred boats of the Rus, each holding about a hundred souls, arrived and entered the Black Sea where it connects with the river of the Khazar. At that particular locality, the Khazar king had stationed well-armed troops to repel enemies approaching from that sea or from land at a point where a branch of the Khazar river flows into the Black Sea. The reason is that Ghuzz nomads come to that territory to spend winter there. It may happen that the water in that branch of the river which connects the Khazar river to the Black Sea becomes frozen, enabling the Ghuzz to cross it with their horses. This is a great body of water but nevertheless does not crack beneath them because the intense cold has made it hard as stone. These nomads then proceed to raid the lands of the Khazar. It may happen then that the Khazar king would march out to meet them if those troops stationed there cannot repel them. He would thus attempt to drive them off that body of frozen water and so defend his realm. However, the Ghuzz Turks have no means of crossing it in summer.

459. So when the Rus ships approached the Khazar garrison stationed on the mouth of the gulf, they wrote to the Khazar king requesting permission to pass

through his lands and sail down his river and enter the Khazar river, thus reaching the Caspian Sea which is the sea of Jurjan, Tabaristan and other Persian lands, as already stated. The Rus undertook to give the Khazar king half the booty they gained from nations living along that sea, so he granted them permission. They then entered the gulf and reached the mouth of the river, sailing up river on that branch of water until they reached the Khazar river down which they sailed to the city of Atil.\* They passed through Atil and reached the mouth of the river where it flows into the Caspian Sea. From the mouth of the river to Atil is...[lacuna]. This is a great river and a large body of water. The boats of the Rus spread out in that sea sending expeditions against the Jil, Dailam, Tabaristan, Abscun, which is on the coast of Jurjan, the land of Naffata and towards Adharbaijan. The city of Ardabil in Adharbaijan is about a three days' journey from the sea.

460. The Rus shed a great deal of blood, seized women and children, and gained much booty, raiding, destroying and burning. Nations living around that sea were loud in grievance because they had not been accustomed since ancient times to an enemy attacking them, for only merchant ships and fishermen's boats would sail on that sea. The Rus waged war against the Jil, Dailam, the Jurjan coast and the port city of the people of Naffata belonging to the kingdom of Shirwan, known as Bakuh. When returning from their coastal raids, the Rus would retire to some islands near the territory of Naffata and at some miles' distance from that land. The king of Shirwan at that time was `Ali ibn al-Haitham. The people readied themselves, went aboard the boats and ships of merchants and headed towards these islands. The Rus counterattacked and thousands of Muslims were killed or drowned. The Rus remained for many months in that sea as we have described and neighboring nations could find no way to overcome them. Meanwhile all the peoples of that sea [Caspian] remained on alert and very anxious since it is a sea densely inhabited by diverse nations.

461. Having gained much booty, they grew tired of their activities and sailed towards the mouth of the Khazar river where it flows into the sea. They then corresponded with the Khazar king, sending him his share of wealth and booty, as previously stipulated between them. The Khazar king has no boats and his men have no sailing experience for otherwise great harm would have resulted to Muslims from him. The Arsiyya and other Muslims in the land of the Khazar heard about the Rus and said to the Khazar king: "Leave us to deal with these people for they have raided the lands of our fellow Muslims and have shed their blood and captured their women and children." The king was unable to prevent them but sent word to the Rus informing them of the warlike intentions of the Muslims. The Muslims drew up their ranks and marched out to pursue the Rus as they sailed down the river. When they came face to face, the Rus left their boats to meet them. The Muslims numbered around fifteen thousand with their horses and armor. With the Muslims was a large number of Christians, inhabitants of Atil. The battle between them lasted for three days, God granted victory to the Muslims, and the Rus were put to the sword and were killed or drowned. So far as could be counted, thirty thousand Rus were killed by the Muslims on the bank of the Khazar river. Only five thousand of them escaped by taking to their boats and crossing over to the other bank of the river which is next to the land of Burtas, where they abandoned their boats and fled on land. Some were killed by the people of Burtas while others who ended up in the territory of the Muslim Bulghars were killed by them. That year, the Rus did not return to do that which we described above.

462. Al-Mas`udi said: We cited this story in order to refute those who allege that the Caspian is connected to the Azov Sea and the Straits of Constantinople. Had the Caspian been connected to the Straits of Constantinople by way of the Azov or Black Seas, the Rus would have entered it since the Caspian was their sea, as mentioned above. All nations who border the Caspian are agreed that this sea has no straits connecting it with other seas, it being a small sea whose

total area can be ascertained. What we mentioned regarding the boats of the Rus is widely known among all nations in that region, together with the year in which that event took place, namely sometime after the year 300, but I no longer remember its exact date. It may be that those who claim that the Caspian is connected to the Straits of Constantinople intend to assert that the Caspian is in fact the Azov and Black Seas, which is the sea of the Bulghar and Rus. But God knows best about how this might be so.

463. The coast of Tabaristan lies on that sea [Caspian]. There is a city there called Alhum, a small harbor town near the coast and an hour's travel by day from Atil. On the coast of Jurjan on that sea is a city called Abaskun, a three days' journey from Jurjan. Along that sea also live the Jil and the Dailam. Ships and merchandise go back and forth between them and the city of Atil, reaching it through the Khazar river. In that sea, boats sail back and forth between the localities we have mentioned on its coasts and the city of Bakuh, where is found white naphtha and other substances. There is no place on earth—and God knows best---where white naphtha may be found except here, which is the coast of the kingdom of Shirwan. In this land of naphtha (*naffata*) are found mounds (*atama*) which are runnels of fire that never cease at any time and whose flames shoot upwards.

464. Opposite that coast in the sea are several islands one of which lies at a three-day journey from the coast and which has great mounds that hiss at certain seasons of the year from which huge flames spring up into the air as high as the highest mountains, lighting up most of that sea. This conflagration is seen on land from a distance of about one hundred *farsakhs*. These mounds resemble the volcano in the land of Sicily in the territory of the Franks which is seen [reading doubtful] from the territory of Ifriqiyya in the Maghrib. Of all such mounds on earth none are louder, blacker in smoke or blaze more intensely than the mounds in the kingdom of the Mahraj, followed by the mounds of Barahut valley, near Ashgha and Hadramawt in the land of Shihr, which lies between

Yemen and Oman. Its noise is heard from many miles away. They throw out from their depths burning coals as large as mountains and bits of black rocks until this rises up in the air and can be felt from many miles away. These then fall back into its depths or else around them. The coals that issue from them turn red in color because of the heat of the fire. We have discussed the reasons why these fire mounds form on earth and what their substances consist of in our book *Akhbar al-Zaman*.

465. In that Caspian Sea are also islands facing the coast of Jurjan in which a kind of white falcon is stalked. This type of falcon is the fastest of all birds of prey to respond, and the least companionable but this type also has a weakness. This is so because the person stalking them in that island first feeds them with fish but when their food changes they become weak. Most experts on the various types of birds of prey among the Turks, Persians, Byzantines, Indians and Arabs maintain that a falcon whitish in color is, of all falcons, the fastest, most handsome, most imposing in body, most daring in heart and the easiest to train; further, that it is more powerful than all other falcons in its ascent and its ability to soar further than all others into the sky because of its body heat and its brave heart. They further assert that the difference in color among falcons is due to difference in habitat. This is why white falcons breed especially in lands where snow is plentiful such as Armenia, the Khazar land, Jurjan and regions nearby from the land of the Turks.

466. The following saying is attributed to a wise Turkish Khaqan, these being kings to whom all Turkish kings pay homage: “When the falcons of our land give birth to their chicks in the sky after feeding [reading *ra`a*’], they ascend upwards to the furthest reaches of the sky where the air is thick and cold. The chicks are then made to live among certain small animals that live there and they feed upon these animals. The chicks soon grow in strength and mature because the food acts quickly to nourish them. It may sometimes happen that the nests of these animals will be found to contain their scattered remains.”

Galen says that air is hot and moist and that the cold affects it because of the strength of high altitude winds but the air is not free from growing creatures and living inhabitants. Balinas [Apollonius? Apollinarius?] has said: "It follows logically that if the two elements of earth and water contain living things who inhabit them then the two upper elements, that is air and fire, must also contain living things that inhabit them."

467. In the history of the caliph Al-Rashid I found the following story. He once rode out to the hunt in the region of Mosul carrying a white falcon. The falcon trembled in his hand so he let him go and the falcon ascended into the sky and was lost to view. When they despaired of his recovery, he reappeared clutching a small animal like a snake or a fish, with feathers like fish fins. The caliph ordered this creature placed in a large bowl. Returning from the hunt he summoned scholars and asked them: "Do you know of any creature that lives in the air?" Muqatil\* replied: "O Commander of the Faithful, it has reached us from your ancestor `Abdullah ibn al-`Abbas that the air is full of different species of animals who live in it. The nearest to us are small animals which produce eggs in the air and thick air carries these upwards and cares for them until they hatch in the form of snakes or fish which have featherless wings. These animals are food for white falcons that breed in Armenia." So the caliph ordered the bowl to be brought out and showed them that small animal and rewarded Muqatil.

468. Several scholars in Egypt and elsewhere told me that they had seen snakes flying in the air faster than lightening, and white in color; that they fall upon a terrestrial animal and kill it; that their flight can sometimes be heard at night; and that when moving through the air they emit a sound resembling the tearing of a new garment. It may happen that a man of no understanding or some ignorant women say that that noise is produced by a witch in flight with wings made of reeds. People have many views about these subjects and the proof they resort to is what exists of living beings in the element of water. Thus, building

upon this observation, one must conclude that within the two light elements, air and fire, there necessarily exist growth and animal life too, just as they exist within the two heavy elements, earth and water.

469. Al-Mas`udi said: Wise men and kings have described the falcon and heaped praise upon it. A Turkish Khaqan said: "The falcon is brave and vicious." Kisra Anushirwan said: "The falcon is a companion who knows how to be patient and never misses his chance when it is within reach." Caesar said: "The falcon is a noble king. What he needs, he takes, and what he does not need, he forsakes." Philosophers have said: "Suffice the falcon the merit of speed which he displays in pursuit of his prey and his power to obtain his food from on high if his legs are long and his shoulders are broad. This makes him fly further towards his prey and makes him faster in flight because of his light weight. Do you not see how hawks do not attain their objectives except by flying further, faster and more powerfully and doing so repeatedly because of their long legs and thick bodies, whereas the falcon attains his object quickly because of his short wings and light body? If the pursuit grows long this baffles him until he grows more hardy in spirit. Game birds can only be hunted because of their short legs. Do you not see that the pheasant, the quail, the partridge and similar species with their short legs are more limited in what they can do?"

470. Aristogenes said: "The falcon is a bird with no covering over the eye, and what he lacks in limbs he makes up for in his toes and legs. He is the weakest of birds in body but the bravest in heart and the most courageous due to the heat in him which is greater than in all other birds. We have found its breast to be knitted with sinews and without any flesh." Agreeing with Aristogenes, Galen said: "The falcon builds its nest only in a tree entwined with thorns and with crooked and diverse branches of rough wood, seeking shelter and warding off the harm of heat or cold. When ready to hatch, it builds for itself a house-like structure with a roof that is impermeable to rain or snow, fearing for itself and its chicks from the cold or harm."

471. Adham ibn Muhriz has stated that the first person to amuse himself with hawks was al-Harith ibn Mu`awiya ibn Thawr al-Kindi, royal ancestor of the tribe of Kinda. One day he observed a hunter who had set a trap for birds. A hawk dived down and snatched a bird that had been trapped and began to eat it, though the hawk itself was now trapped---hawks are known also as *al-Akdar* and *al-Ajdal*. The king was amazed at the sight and ordered the hawk to be brought to him. The hawk's wing was broken but nevertheless continued to eat the bird. The hawk was placed in some part of a house. The king saw that the hawk had become domesticated and remained where he was, showing no signs of wanting to flee. When food was thrown at him the hawk would eat it and if he saw meat he would climb onto his master's hand, to the point where, when called, he would respond and eat from his master's hand. So they felt proud to handle him. One day, he saw a pigeon and flew away from his master's hand and grasped it. So the king ordered that the hawk be used for hunting. One day, as the king was walking, a rabbit sprang up and leapt forward and the hawk flew off and pounced upon the rabbit, so the hawk was used to hunt both birds and rabbits which he killed. Thereafter, the Arabs began to use the hawk for hunting and this became common among other people.

472. As regards *shahins*, or Indian falcons, the philosopher Aristogenes says, in a book sent as a present to the caliph al-Mahdi by the Byzantine king, that a king of the Greeks called Fisian once saw a *shahin* diving down upon a water bird, pecking it then flying up again, the *shahin* doing this repeatedly. The king said: "This is a bird that is harmful, as proven by the great speed with which he dived down on the water bird, while his rapid ascent into the sky shows that it is a runaway bird." When he observed how well he executed his repeated attacks he was impressed and was the first to employ the *shahin* for hunting.

473. Sa`id ibn Kathir ibn `Ufair relates from Hashim ibn Khudajj the following story: Constantine, king of Macedonia, was out hunting with falcons and arrived finally at the gulf of the Black Sea which flows into the Mediterranean. He

passed into a broad and spacious meadow between that gulf and the sea and saw a *shahin* pouncing on the water birds. The king was amazed by his speed, viciousness and courage in hunting and ordered it to be captured and domesticated. Constantine was thus the first to employ *shahin* falcons. He then looked at that wide meadow adorned with all kinds of flowers and said: “This is an impregnable location between a river and a sea, and is wide and spacious and suitable as a site for a city.” So he built Constantinople. In later portions of our book which deal with Greek kings we shall revert to the history of this Constantine, son of Helen, and events of his life. It was he who made Christianity triumph. The above story is one version cited for the reasons behind the building of Constantinople.

474. Ibn `Ufair related from Abu Zaid al-Fihri that it was a customary ceremonial of the Ladhariqa [Vandal] kings of al-Andalus that when a king among them rode out, *shahin* falcons would fly into the air and form something like an umbrella for his army and the royal procession, flying down towards it then up again. They were trained to do so and continued this pattern of flight as long as the king was riding. When the king dismounted, the *shahins* would gather round him. A king among them called Awariq [Geiseric?] rode out once with the *shahins* arrayed above him as described. A bird was stirred to flight and a *shahin* pounced upon it and seized it. The king was impressed and trained the *shahins* to hunt. He was thus the first to employ them for hunting in the Maghrib and in al-Andalus.

475. Al Mas`udi said: Likewise, a number of experts on this subject state that the first to play with eagles were the people of the Maghrib. When the Greeks saw how powerful they were in capturing their prey and how strong their weapons the wise among them said: “These are creatures whose good compensates for their evil.” It is related that Caesar once sent Chosroes an eagle as a gift and wrote informing him that the eagle performed better than the hawk whose hunting had impressed him. Chosroes then ordered it to be released, and

it pursued a passing gazelle and struck it dead. Chosroes was amazed at this and went away pleased with it. He then starved the eagle intending to domesticate it and the eagle leapt upon a child of his and killed him. Chosroes said: "Caesar has injured our children without resorting to an army." Chosroes then sent a leopard as a gift to Caesar and wrote to him saying that it was an animal that killed gazelles and other wild animals but made no mention of what the eagle had done to his own child. Caesar was impressed by the handsome appearance of the leopard which appeared to resemble a panther, so he ignored it. The leopard then devoured some of his bodyguard. Caesar said: "Chosroes has hunted us after we had hunted him, so we are even."

We have been led away to speak of birds of prey when discussing the sea and islands of Jurjan. We shall revert briefly to the subject of falcons and other birds of prey when we come to speak of Greek kings.

476. Let us now go back to speak of al-Bab wa'l Abwab and nations lying beyond the wall and Mount Caucasus. We mentioned earlier that the most vicious of kingdoms among nations nearby is the kingdom of Khidhan [Khidhaq]. Their king in this year of 332 is a Muslim who claims he is an Arab from the Qahtan tribe and is called Salifan. There is no other Muslim in his kingdom except him, his family and his children, and my view is that Salifan is a title of the kings of that territory. Between the kingdom of Khidhan and al-Bab wa'l Abwab are groups of Muslim Arabs who know no other language but Arabic and live there in thickets, forests, valleys and rivers and in villages. They have settled in that territory ever since the early conquests of these lands by nomadic Arabs. These live next to the kingdom of Khidhan but cannot be subjugated because of the trees and rivers. They live at a distance of about three miles from al-Bab wa'l Abwab and the people of that city come to their aid.

477. Next to the kingdom of Khidhan near the Caucasus Mountain and al-Sarir is a Muslim king known as Barzaban and his country is known as Kurj\*. They are tent dwellers. Each king who rules this kingdom is called Barzaban. Next to

the kingdom of Barzaban is a realm called Ghumiq. These are Christians who follow no kings but have their own leaders and live in peace with the kingdom of Al-Lan. Next to them in the direction of al-Sarir and the Mountain is a kingdom called Zirikaran\*, a word which means “workers in coats of mail” because most of them work in fashioning coats of mail, stirrups, bridles, swords and other iron instruments. They are of diverse religions: Muslims, Christians and Jews. Their country is rugged and thus impenetrable by other nations.

478. Adjoining these is the kingdom of al-Sarir [Avars] whose king is called Filan Shah. He is a Christian. Earlier in this work we mentioned that he is a descendant of Bahram Jur. He was called “Owner of the Throne” (*Sahib al-Sarir*) because Yazdajird, the last king of the Sasanid dynasty, when defeated and in flight, sent ahead his golden throne, treasuries and money with a descendant of Bahram Jur in order to convey them to that kingdom where they were to be kept under guard until Yazdajird’s arrival. Yazdajird went on to Khurasan and was killed there. This happened during the caliphate of `Uthman ibn `Affan, as will be mentioned in this work. The man entrusted with all the treasures settled down in that kingdom and took it over, passing it on to his progeny. So he was called the “Owner of the Throne”. The capital of his kingdom is known as Khunzakh and he rules over twelve thousand villages and can enslave any person in them he wants. His country is rugged and thus impregnable and comprises one mountain range of the Caucasus Mountain. He conducts raids against the Khazar and overpowers them because they live on a plain whereas he lives on a mountain.

479. Next to this kingdom is the kingdom of al-Lan\* whose king is called Karkundaj, this being the commonest name of their kings, just as Filan Shah is the commonest name of the kings of al-Sarir. The capital of this kingdom of al-Lan is called Maghas, which means “that which repels.” The king has palaces and parks elsewhere than in this city, and he moves his place of residence from one to another. A marriage alliance exists between him and the king of al-Sarir,

as each has married the other's sister. After the coming of Islam and during the days of the Abbasid state, the kings of al-Lan had embraced Christianity, having been pagans before that. After the year 320 [932] they apostasized from Christianity and expelled all bishops and priests in their country. These had been sent to them by the king of the Byzantines. Between the kingdom of al-Lan and the Caucasus Mountain is a fortress and a bridge across a great valley. The fortress is called the "Gate of al-Lan" [Narikala] and was built in ancient times by an early Persian king called Isbandiar ibn Bistasf. He stationed troops at that fortress to prevent al-Lan from crossing over into the Caucasus Mountain. The al-Lan have no other route they can use except the bridge beneath the fortress, and the fortress is built on a hard and solid boulder. There is no way to capture it or to have access to it except with the consent of its guardians. The fortress built upon this rock has a spring of sweet water which is located in its midst flowing from the top of the rock. It is a fortress that is widely known to be one of the most impregnable in the world. The Persians make mention of it in their poetry and how Isbandiar ibn Bistasf built it.

480. Isbandiar waged many wars in the east against diverse nations. He it was who marched to the furthest reaches of the lands of the Turks, destroying the city of Sufr. This was a city totally impregnable and the Persians use it in their proverbs. The achievements of Isbandiar and what we have mentioned here are related in a book called *al-Baikar* which Ibn al-Muqaffa` translated into Arabic. When Maslama ibn `Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan\* arrived in that region and overpowered its people, he settled some Arabs in that fortress who guard that place until the present time. It may happen that wages and food is conveyed by land to these guardians from the frontier city of Tiflis, this being a journey of about five days. Even if there is only one man in that fortress he can prevent all the kings of the infidels from passing through that locality, so elevated is that fortress and so commanding is it over the road, bridge and valley. The king of al-Lan marches at the head of thirty thousand horsemen and is known among

kings for his immense power, courage and wise political conduct. His kingdom has contiguous habitations such that when one cock crows all other cocks in the kingdom answer it---so closely connected are the settled areas one to the next.

481. Next to the kingdom of Al-Lan is a nation called Kashak [Circassians] who live between the Caucasus Mountain and the Mediterranean Sea. They are a wholesome and clean nation that follows the Magian religion. Of all the nations we have mentioned inhabiting that region of the world there is no nation that has clearer skins, purer colors, more handsome men, more comely women, a more shapely physique, more delicate waists, more prominent buttocks and backsides or more attractive figures than this nation. Their women are noted for the charm of their intimacy and they wear white garments and Byzantine silk brocade, *ciclatoun* and other types of gold-threaded silk. In their land may be found kinds of garments made of linen, one type of which is called *al-Tala*, which is finer than Dabiqi linen, more hardy and longer-lasting. A garment of this kind costs ten dinars. This cloth is exported to Muslim countries nearby. These kinds of garments may also be exported by neighboring nations but the finest in quality is exported from this particular nation.

482. Al-Lan dominate over this nation which cannot revenge itself upon them, but they take refuge from al-Lan in fortresses they possess on the seashore. There is some dispute as to which sea this nation is on. Some say it is the Mediterranean, others the Black Sea, but they are near by sea to the territory of Trebizond, and commerce by shipping is continuous between the two lands. The reason why the Kashak nation is weaker than al-Lan is that they have neglected to appoint a king who would unify them. Had they been of one word, neither al-Lan nor any other nation would be able to resist them. "Kashak" is a Persian word meaning haughtiness and boasting. Thus, when a person is haughty the Persians refer to him as "Kash."

483. Next to this nation on that sea is another nation known as "The Seven Countries". This is a large nation, hardy and inaccessible. I do not know its

religion nor has news reached me of their beliefs. Next to it is a great nation separated from the Kashak by a mighty river like the Euphrates and which flows into the Black Sea. Along that river is the land of Trebizond. The nation is known as Irm. They have an odd appearance and their views are pagan. Of this country which borders the sea a curious story is related. A huge fish comes to them every year and they help themselves to its flesh. When it returns, it turns its other side to them and they help themselves again while the flesh removed the first time grows once again. The story of this fish is very widely known in those infidel lands.

484. Next to this nation is a shoreline lying between four mountains, each inaccessible and rising high in the sky. Between these four mountains is a distance of approximately one hundred miles of desert. In the middle of this desert is a circular dwelling as if drawn by a compass. The circumference is a trench carved in solid and sunken rock as in a perfect circle. That sunken circumference is about fifty miles in length. It is fashioned in one piece that sinks downwards like a wall built from below upwards, with a depth of about two miles. There is no way to reach the bottom level of that dwelling. At night may be seen many fires in different sections of it and by day can be seen villages and habitations and rivers running between these villages, together with humans and dumb beasts. However, they appear to have slender bodies because of the depth of that location. It is not known to which nation these people belong nor can they ascend in any direction while those living above cannot descend to them in any way whatsoever.

485. Beyond the four mountains on the seashore is another sunken but not deep depression. In it are found thickets and forests with types of monkeys with straight backs and round faces. Most resemble human faces and shapes but they are hairy. It might happen on rare occasions that if one of these monkeys is tricked and captured, it will turn out to be exceedingly intelligent and perceptive but has no tongue to speak with though it understands all that is communicated

to it by signs. It might also happen that one of them is carried away to be presented to some king of a nation where the monkey is taught to stand over the king with a fly whisk at mealtimes because of the monkey's peculiar knowledge of poisons in food and drink. The king brings his food near the monkey who smells it and then some food is thrown to the monkey. If the monkey eats the food, the king eats it but if the monkey refrains the king knows it is poisoned and is on his guard. Most kings of China and India use monkeys for that purpose. We have mentioned in this book the report of the Chinese delegation who came to the caliph al-Mahdi and what they mentioned to him regarding the benefits of monkeys to their kings at meal times. We also mentioned the report concerning monkeys in the Yemen and the iron tablet written by Solomon son of David as a covenant for the monkeys of Yemen. We further mentioned their story with the governor of Mu`awiya ibn Abi Sufyan and the letter that the governor wrote to his master where he describes a great monkey with the tablet around his neck. Among monkeys of the world no breed is more intelligent or more wily than these.

486. Monkeys live in warm regions of the earth like Nubia and the upper reaches of the lands of the Abyssinians near the heights of the source of the Nile. These are known as Nubian monkeys. They have small waists and faces and are dark but not black in color, like Nubians. These are the monkeys found with monkey handlers. They climb up a spear and reach its top. Some are found in the north in thickets and forests as in the lands of the Slavs (*Saqaliba*) and other nearby nations. These resemble the monkeys we have described and their similarity to humans. Some monkeys are found in the gulfs of the land of Zabij in the China Sea and in the kingdom of the Mahraj, king of the islands. We have already stated that his realm equals that of the Chinese king, and his kingdom is located between the kingdom of Ballahara and that of China. These monkeys are well known in that region of the earth and known to be large in number in these gulfs, and they are perfect in form.

487. Some monkeys in chains were presented to the caliph al-Muqtadir Billah. Among them were some with beards and mustaches and they varied in age: adults, old and young. Included in those presents also were large snakes and other wondrous gifts from the seas. All these presents were carried by Ahmad ibn Hilal, the emir of Oman at that time. These monkeys are well known to sailors from Siraf and Oman who sail to the lands of Kala and Zabij, and how these monkeys use trickery to hunt crocodiles from deep waters. Al-Jahiz, however, states that crocodiles are found only in the Nile of Egypt and the river of Mihran al-Sind. But we have earlier in this work mentioned what has been said about this subject, and specified where crocodiles may be found.

488. As for Yemen, there is no dispute among those who have entered that land that monkeys are found in numerous localities and in countless numbers. Some are found in Nakhla Valley between the lands of al-Janad and Zabid, whose governor [i.e. Zabid] in this year of 332 is Ibrahim ibn Ziyad, companion of al-Harmala. Between this valley and Zabid is a day's journey and between it and al-Janad a journey of a day or more. This valley is dense with habitation and many watercourses pour into it. It has many banana trees and many monkeys, and it lies between two mountains. Monkeys move in herds, each led by a monkey known as a *hazar*, which is a great masterful male monkey acting as leader. Monkeys might give birth in one delivery to ten or twelve infants just as a sow gives birth to many piglets. A female monkey carries some of her children as a human mother carries her children while the male monkey carries the rest. They have assemblies and meeting places where a number of them congregate and they are heard speaking and talking to each other and whispering. Female monkeys, like human females, keep themselves apart from the males. If someone hears the conversing of these female monkeys at night but does not see them among those mountains and trees and banana plantations, he would be in no doubt that they were humans because of their great number by day and night.

489. In no region where monkeys are found are there monkeys more handsome, more cunning or more swift to learn than the monkeys of Yemen. The Yemenis call the monkey *rabbah*. Both males and females have combed heads of hair, some of which is as black as hair can be. When seated, they sit in ranks below their chief and imitate humans in all their actions. Some Yemeni monkeys are found in the land of Ma'rib between San`a and the fort of Kahlan in certain wildernesses there [reading *hunak*] and they look like clouds in these mountains and steppes, so numerous are they.

490. The Kahlan just mentioned is one of the fortresses (*makhalif*) of Yemen in which resides As`ad ibn Ya`fur, king of Yemen at this present time. He is secluded from people except his close intimates, and is a descendant of the kings of Himyar. He has at his command of men and horses about fifty thousand mercenaries who receive their wages each month. The time for disbursing these wages is called *nuzla*. The troops gather together then come down from these fortresses, called *makhalif*. That man, As`ad, waged war in Yemen against the Qaramita\* and the ruler of Mudhaikhira, `Ali ibn al-Fadl, after the year 290. `Ali was a figure of great importance in Yemen until he was killed and Yemen fell under this man As`ad.

491. There are many places in Yemen where monkeys are found, as also in other regions of the earth. We refrain from mentioning them here since we have already stated the reason why they are formed in certain regions of earth and not others and also reports concerning the *nasnas* in our work *Akhbar al-Zaman*. The same holds true for `arabid, singular `irbid, which is a type of serpent found, it is alleged, in the territory of Hajr in the Yamama. The caliph al-Mutawakkil had at the start of his caliphate asked Hunain ibn Ishaq\* to arrange to have some specimens of *nasnas* and `irbid sent over. Only two *nasnas* survived the journey to Samarra' and Hunain failed to devise a way to transport a `irbid from Yamama. This is because when a `irbid is carried away from Yamama and when a certain well known point is reached on the journey, the

*`irbid* expires in the container in which it is being transported. The people of Yamama make use of it in warding off snakes, scorpions and other crawlers just as the people of Sijistan make use of the hedgehog. This is because the people of Sijistan have covenanted since ancient times that no hedgehog is to be killed in their country, for it is a land of much sand and was built up by the Two-horned king [Alexander] during his expeditions. It is surrounded by many sand dunes which are closed off with wooden planks and reeds. The land has numerous and diverse kinds of snakes and were it not for the many hedgehogs the people there would have perished.

492. So too is the case with the people of Egypt in the Sa`id region and elsewhere. They have a small animal called *`ara`is* [mongoose] which is larger than a rat but smaller than a weasel, red in color with a white belly. Were it not for this small animal, snakes of the *thu`ban* variety, a species of large snakes, would have prevailed over the people of Egypt. A *thu`ban* wraps itself around this animal which expels wind upon it so the *thu`ban* desists from the stench. This is the characteristic of this animal. In the eastern portions of the earth there exists a number of peculiar natural characteristics in their lands, seas, animal and plant life and in their minerals, and the same is true of the western, southern and northern portions. We have mentioned elsewhere the nature of each quarter of the earth but mentioning them here would divert us from the purpose we have set for ourselves.

493. Let us therefore return to what we had been discussing earlier, namely the nations that surround al-Bab wa`l Abwab, the wall, the Caucasus Mountain, and the lands of Khazar and al-Lan. Lying to the west of the lands of Khazar and al-Lan are four Turkish nations all descended from a single ancestor in their genealogies, and in their manner of life are both settled and nomadic. They possess great might and courage and each nation has its own king. Each kingdom is a few days' journey in extent and some of their kingdoms are adjacent to the Black Sea. They raid as far as the land of Rome and regions near

to al-Andalus and overpower all nations there. Between them and the king of the Khazar there is a treaty as also with the ruler of al-Lan. Their lands adjoin the lands of the Khazar. The first of these nations is called Bajnai [Capni]; next to it is a nation called Bajghird [Magyars]; next a nation called Bajnak [Peceneg], the mightiest of these nations; next is a nation called Nawkarda, whose kings are nomads.

494. These nations waged wars against the Byzantines in and after the years 320. On the frontier with these nations, the Byzantines had a great city called Walandar [Vunundur?] densely inhabited and impregnable situated between the mountains and the sea. Its inhabitants constituted a barrier against the above-mentioned nations. The Turks had no access to the Byzantine lands because the mountains, the sea and that city prevented it. Wars broke out among these nations when a dispute arose among them over a Muslim merchant from Ardabil who was a guest of one of these nations. Another nation defrauded him of his rights so a dispute arose among them. The Byzantines in Walandar then raided Turkish lands while the Turks were otherwise preoccupied, enslaved a large number and captured much booty. The news then reached these nations while busy with their own civil wars so they agreed to unite, forgave each other the blood that was shed and, united, they marched on Walandar, numbering some sixty thousand horsemen. That number of horsemen collected together without any proper assemblage or mobilization. Had they mobilized, they would have numbered some one hundred thousand horsemen.

495. When the news reached Romanos king of the Byzantines at this time, which is the year 332, he sent against them twelve thousand Christian converts in Arab garb, mounted on horses and carrying spears, to which he added fifty thousand Byzantines. The army reached the city of Walandar in eight days, camped behind the city and proceeded to fight their enemy. The Turks had already killed a large number of Walandar's inhabitants who had taken refuge behind their walls until the Byzantine reinforcements arrived. When the four

Turkish kings ascertained the number of converts and Byzantines opposing them, they sent word to their countries to collect all Muslim merchants found in their lands who had come via the lands of Khazar, al-Bab, al-Lan and elsewhere. Among the four nations were some people who had embraced Islam and who did not make common cause with them except when fighting infidels. When the armies drew up for battle, and the converts lined up in front of the Byzantines, out came the Muslim merchants who accompanied the Turks and called upon the converts to embrace Islam. They explained that if they obtained assurances of safety from the Turks, the latter would conduct them to the land of Islam. They refused and the two sides began to fight. The converts and Byzantines were victorious because they outnumbered the Turks and then reached their battle stations.

496. The four kings of the Turks then held a council. The king of Bajnak said: "Put me in charge for tomorrow's battle." The other kings agreed. When morning came, he placed many battle squares on the right wing, each square holding one thousand, and did the same on the left wing. When the battle lines faced each other the squares left the right wing and aimed their arrows at the Byzantine center then moved to the left wing, while the squares of the left wing aimed their arrows at the Byzantine center and moved to the places vacated by the right squares. The arrows kept falling and the squares kept going back and forth like millstones while the center and left and right wings of the Turks remained steadfast as the squares did their work, one thousand followed by another. This is because whoever left the Turkish right wing would first shoot their arrows at the Byzantine left wing, pass by and shoot at their right wing and end by shooting at their center. Whoever left the left wing would shoot at the Byzantine right wing, pass by and shoot their left wing and end by shooting at their center. The squares would thus be constantly meeting at the Byzantine center as we have described above. When the converted troops and the Byzantines saw the disorder in their ranks and the uninterrupted volley of

arrows, they attacked with their ranks in disarray while the Turkish ranks remained firm. The Byzantine squares broke rank so all the Turks shot their arrows in one volley which led to the defeat of the Byzantines. Following that shower of arrows, the Turks then charged and overpowered the Byzantine ranks, for their squares had remained disciplined because they had been well arrayed. The Turkish squares then advanced running from right and left, the Byzantines were put to the sword, the horizon turned dark, and loud was the neighing of horses.

497. Sixty thousand Christian converts and Byzantines were killed, to the point where it was possible to climb over their bodies to reach the city walls. The city was then captured and put to the sword for some days and its inhabitants were enslaved. After three days, the Turks left the city and headed for Constantinople breaking through inhabited areas, meadows and villages, killing and enslaving, until they reached the walls of Constantinople. There they remained for about forty days selling captive women and children in return for a garment or a silk robe, and put to the sword all the men, sparing none. In some cases they even killed the women and children. They also conducted raids all the way to the Slav territory and to Rome, then continued these raids at this present time reaching the frontier posts of al-Andalus, the Franks and the Galicians. These Turkish raids on the territory of Constantinople and other kingdoms just mentioned continue up to this present time.

498. Let us now turn back to speak of the Caucasus Mountain, the wall and al-Bab wa'l Abwab, since we have already made mention in general terms of the history of the nations that inhabit that region. Among these nations is one that lies next to the territory of al-Lan and is called Abkhaz. This is a Christian nation and has a king at this present time, though the king of al-Lan holds sway over them. Their land adjoins the Caucasus Mountain. Next to the realm of Abkhaz is the realm of Jurziyya [Georgia], where lives a mighty nation, Christian in religion, called Jurzan and has a king at this present time called

Manbaghi. The capital of this king is a locality known as the “Temple of the Two-horned.” In former days, the Abkhaz and Jurziyya used to pay tax to the ruler of the frontier city of Tiflis, ever since the city was conquered and settled by Muslims. This state of affairs lasted until the caliphate of al-Mutawakkil. In Tiflis there was a man called Ishaq ibn Isma`il and he and the Muslims with him held sway over neighboring nations who submitted to him and paid him tax, and his power over the nations there increased. This state of affairs lasted until the caliph al-Mutawakkil dispatched the general Bugha, who besieged Tiflis and waged war against it until he captured it with the sword and put Ishaq to death because he had come to dominate that region. It would take too long to narrate the history of that man Ishaq but that history is well known among the inhabitants of that region and others who concern themselves with world history. In my view, he was a man of Quraish from the Umayyad clan or else a client of theirs. Thus, the awe in which the Muslims were held in Tiflis vanished from that time to the present day. Neighboring kings refused to submit to them and seized most of the countryside of Tiflis, while the route from the Muslim realm to the frontier city of Tiflis was cut by infidel nations which now surround that city. Its people are mighty and courageous though surrounded by the kingdoms mentioned above.

499. Next to the kingdom of Jurzan is one called al-Samsakha, a Christian kingdom with some pagans who have no king. Next, and between Tiflis and the fortress of Bab al-Lan mentioned above, is a kingdom called al-Sanariyya\*, whose king is called Kuriskus, the name of most of their kings. They follow the Christian religion. These Sanariyya claim that they are Arabs from the tribe of Nizar ibn Ma`add and from Mudar, and that they are a clan of the `Uqail tribe who settled in that region from ancient times. They hold sway over many nations in that locality. I once encountered in the land of Ma`rib in Yemen some individuals from `Uqail who resembled Madhhij in all respects, with no difference between them in customs and manners because their viewpoints are

undeviating and identical. They have horses and might. Throughout Yemen, there are no descendants of Nizar ibn Ma`add except that clan of `Uqail, save for the descendants of Anmar ibn Nizar ibn Ma`add and their entry into the Yemen as recorded in history, the story of Jarir ibn `Abdallah al-Bajali with the Prophet, and the story of the clan Bajila. The Sanariyya claim that they split off from the above-mentioned `Uqail in the land of Ma`rib in ancient times, citing a lengthy report about that event.

500. Next to the Sanariyya is the kingdom of Shakki, who are Christian with some Muslim merchants and other craftsmen among them. Their king at the time of writing our book is called Adarnarsa ibn Hammam. Next comes Qabala, its principal city being Muslim while the inhabited countryside is Christian. Their king at this time of writing our book is called `Anbasa al-A`war. He provides refuge to bandits, riffraff and criminals. This kingdom adjoins the above-mentioned kingdom of Muqaniyya which is now subjugated and is part of the kingdom of Shirwan Shah. This country known as al-Muqaniyya is not the same as the one which lies on the Caspian coast.

501. At that time Muhammad ibn Yazid known as Shirwan Shah was the king of Laizan as were his ancestors before him, while the king of Shirwan was `Ali ibn al-Haitham. When `Ali died, Muhammad took over Shirwan as noted earlier, killed his paternal uncles and seized the territories already mentioned. He has a fortress in the Caucasus Mountain called Niyal. Among fortresses of the world, none is more impregnable save one in the land of Persia near the territory of Siraf on the Persian coast at a locality called Zirbad, belonging to the land of `Abdullah ibn `Umara. That fortress is called Dikdan. There are many wondrous fortresses in the world and Abu'l Hasan al-Mada'ini has devoted a whole book to these fortresses called *The Book of Reports about Fortresses* where he mentions some reports concerning some of them. We too in our *Akhbar al-Zaman* have set down a history of these fortresses.

502. Al-Mas`udi said: This in summary is a history of the city of al-Bab wa'l Abwab, the wall, the Caucasus Mountain and of the nations inhabiting that region. In our *Akhbar al-Zaman* we set down a shortened account of their history, characteristics, and conduct of war along with the tricks employed by their kings. All that we have mentioned of their histories and of the description of their kingdoms is merely a report of a factual state of affairs that direct witnesses can confirm, and is well known to anyone who has visited their lands.

503. In his work entitled *Routes and Kingdoms*, `Ubaydullah ibn Khurradadhbeh\* writes that the distance from point A to point B is such and such but gives no information about kings and kingdoms. There is nothing to be gained from knowing about distances and routes for this is the job of court messengers and mail and post carriers. He also mentions that the taxes gathered from the country districts of Iraq are such and such amounts of money, but these sums rise and fall and decrease and increase depending on circumstances and changing times. He further states that Mount `Arj, which is between Mecca and Medina, is connected to al-Sham and even to Mount Keldag in the territory of Antioch and also to the Amanus. This is a strange assertion. Did he not know that all parts of the earth are connected to each other uninterruptedly and are not distant from one another? The earth, however, is full of depressions, highlands and curvatures. And yet his book is the best that may be cited on this subject. So too is his book of history and his discussion of pre-Islamic nations. I should note here that Ahmad ibn al-Tayyib al-Sarakhsi, companion of the caliph al-Mu`tadid, composed for his master a book on this subject where he dealt in brief with world history, most of whose content is quite different from the history of Ibn Khurradadhbeh. My opinion is that this is a book falsely ascribed to al-Sarakhsi because, as a scholar, he is far more accomplished than what is to be found in that book.

504. Were it not for the Almighty's gracious wisdom, omnipotence and mercy towards His creatures by granting good fortune to those Persian Kings who built

the city of al-Bab wa'l Abwab, the wall on land, sea and mountain and the fortresses, together with the nations they settled in those regions and the kings they appointed to rule them----were this not so, the kings of al-Jurz, al-Lan, al-Sarir, the Turks and other nations mentioned above would have invaded the lands of Bardha`a, al-Ran, Bailaqan, Adharbaijan, Zanjan, Abhar, Qazwin, Hamadhan, al-Dinawar, Nihawand and others such as the two citadels of Kufa and Basra and on to Iraq. However, the Almighty repelled them in the manner set forth above. This is especially fortunate at the present time when Islam is weak and non-existent, when the Byzantines have gained the upper hand over the Muslims, when the pilgrimage is in disarray, *jihad* has died out, roads are cut off and treacherous, and when each region has fallen under the rule of a strongman. This resembles the period following the death of Alexander when his realm broke up into separate kingdoms and kings until the coming of Ardashir ibn Babik ibn Sasan. It was he who brought about concord and unity, reestablished security among his subjects and restored prosperity. This lasted until God sent the Prophet Muhammad who destroyed the symbols of idolatry and erased the rituals of other religions. Islam continued on its path of triumph until the present time when its pillars and foundations began to totter, this being the year 332 in the caliphate of Abu Ishaq al-Muttaqi Billah, Commander of the Faithful. May God help us for the situation we are in today.

505. Many reports exist about the wondrous buildings in the city of al-Bab built by Kisra Qubadh ibn Fairuz who is the father of Kisra Anushirwan. Such for instance is the place called Musqat in that city which is built in stone or the walls that Kisra built in the land of Shirwan and known as the "mud wall", or else the stone wall known as "al-Barmaki" which is connected to the land of Bardha`a. We have omitted to mention these structures here, having mentioned them in our earlier works.

506. As for the river Kurr [Kura], it originates in the country of Jurzan in the kingdom of Jurjin, passes through the land of Abkhaz, reaches the frontier city

of Tiflis, divides in the middle and flows in the land of the Siyawardiyya. These latter are a kind of Armenians of great might and courage as already mentioned when speaking of their history. The halberds known as *Siyawardi* are named after them. These weapons are used by Indian (*Sayabija*) and other non-Arab troops. The river Kurr flows on until it is at a distance of three miles from Bardha`a and runs into Bardaj in the district of Bardha`a. Into it then flows the river Rass near Sannara. The river Rass [Aras] originates from near the city of Trebizond until it runs into the Kurr. The two rivers merge and then pour into the Caspian Sea. The river Rass runs between the country of Badhdh, the country of Babik al-Khurrami\* in the land of Adharbaijan, and a mountain known as Abu Musa in the country of al-Ran. This is a mountain inhabited by diverse nations who live in the country of al-Ran, which is a region of the earth. The Rass river passes by the city of Warthan and ends where we have described, that is, where it flows into the Kurr river at a village known as Sannara. These rivers we have also described in our previous works.

507. Then there is a river known as Isbidh Rudh [Safid Rud], which means the “white river” though Persian and Arabic transpose noun and adjective. It flows through the land of the Dailam beneath the fortress known as Sallar, who is the son of Uswar the Dailamite, one of the Dailam kings. At this time of writing he has gained ascendancy in the land of Adharbaijan. The river then runs from the Dailam to the Jil after whom the territory of Jilan is named. In the territory of the Dailam another river flows into it called Shah Rudh, meaning “king of rivers”, so called because of its whiteness, softness and purity. All of these then flow into the Jil Sea which is the sea of the Dailam, Khazar and other nations living around that sea [Caspian]. Along the banks of these rivers live those Dailam and Jil who have grown in power and have come to rule a large territory.

508. Now that we have dealt with the histories of the Caucasus Mountain and the nations who live in or near it, together with the history of al-Bab wa`l

Abwab and the Caspian Sea, let us turn to the kings of the Suryan who in almanacs and ancient histories are counted as the first kings of the world. They were followed by the kings of Mosul and Nineveh then by the kings of Babil who built the earth, dug canals, grafted trees, leveled rough terrain and improved roads. These will be followed by First Persians known as Khudhahan, meaning the “Lords”, up to the reign of Afridun; then by the Iskan up to the reign of Dara son of Dara, who is Darius, and these are called the Saknun; then by kings of diverse principalities known as the Ashghan; then by Second Persians, the Sasanids; then the Greeks and Romans. We will also mention those who followed them among western kings and nations, the blacks, and Egypt and Alexandria and other regions of the earth, God willing. There is no strength but in God.

## **Chapter 18**

### **An account of the Suryan kings\* with a brief history**

509. Prudent historians of the kings of the world mention that the first kings of the world after the Flood are the Suryan. There is some dispute concerning them and the Nabat\*. Some believe that the Suryan are the Nabat, others that they are brothers of the progeny of Mash ibn Nabit while still others hold different views, depending on the divergent opinions of people regarding past generations and ancient eras. The first king among them was a man called Shusan. In the histories of the Suryan and Nabat he was the first to place a crown on his head. The other kings of the earth submitted to him, and he reigned for sixteen years causing havoc on earth, corrupting the land and shedding blood. His son Barbar reigned after him for twenty years before his death. He was followed by Ahrimun for ten years. He laid down city plans and organized the countryside, acting efficiently and managing his kingdom with skill, bringing about prosperity to his land. When his affairs were put in order and his kingship was well established, a king of India heard about the might,

courage and prosperity of these people and that they were planning to conquer other kingdoms.

510. That Indian king had conquered neighboring Indian realms who had submitted to him and accepted his rule. It is said that his kingdom bordered Sind and India. So he marched towards the lands of Bust, Ghaznin, Baghnin and the country of al-Dawar along the river called Hirmand. This is the river of Sijistan and the river ends at a distance of four *farsakhs* from it. Along its banks are located the villages of Sijistan, their orchards, palm trees and parks at this time which is the year 332. This river is known as the Bust River in which boats sail from there to Sijistan carrying foodstuffs and other items. From Bust to Sijistan is a distance of one hundred *farsakhs*. The land of Sijistan is a land of wind and sand, a land known for its wind-driven mills\* which transport water from wells to irrigate the orchards. There are no people on earth who use the wind more than they do. God knows best.

511. There is a dispute regarding the origin of that river known as Hirmand\*. Some say it originates from springs in the mountains of Sind and India while others say it has the same origin as the river Kank [Ganges] which is the major river of India. This flows past many mountains of Sind and is a gushing and fast-running river. Along its banks most Indians torment themselves with weapons and drown themselves in it, out of an ascetical attitude to this world and a desire to leave it. They head for a locality on the upper reaches of this river called Kank where there are high mountains and ancient trees. There are men seated there with weapons and swords hanging from the trees and bits of wood. The Indians visit them from faraway kingdoms and countries and listen to these men who are posted on the bank of the river. These men speak to them about the need to be ascetical in this world and to desire something else. So the Indians fling themselves from the mountain heights and fall upon the ancient trees and the swords and weapons attached to them and are cut in pieces. These

pieces then flow into the river. What we have mentioned here is a well-known fact about their customary conduct along that river.

512. In that locality is also found a type of tree which is one of the wonders and rarities among plants of this world. It emerges from the ground in the form of entwined branches as pretty as any tree with leaves. It rises upwards as high as any palm tree then bends downwards in its entirety and sinks back into the ground little by little, reaching a depth equal to its earlier height until it disappears completely from view. It then throws up branches just as we described its emergence above, rises into the air then bends down again, there being no difference between the area it occupies by its rise and spread in the air and its disappearance beneath the ground. Were it not that the Indians have appointed people to cut it and keep an eye on it for a reason they mention and a matter which they describe as happening in the future, that tree would have taken over their land completely. Reports exist about this type of tree which would be too long to relate here, but these are well known to those who have visited that land, seen that tree or heard about it from others.

513. As already mentioned, the Indians torment themselves in all sorts of ways. They believe that what they will obtain of blessings in a time that is to come is commensurate with what they have done already by way of tormenting themselves in this world. Some will go to the royal gate and ask permission to burn themselves. That person will then roam the markets, a raging fire having been lit for him with people appointed to keep it aflame. He will walk in the markets preceded by drums and cymbals, his body covered by strips of silk which he has himself torn off. Around him are family and kin and on his head is a garland of sweet basil. He tears the scalp from his head and places burning coals on it together with sulfur and sandarac and walks about, with the crown of his head aflame and the stench of his sizzling brain, chewing on betel leaves and areca nut.

514. In their country, betel leaves grow as small as the smallest basil leaves. If these are chewed with lime moistened with areca---this incidentally is now prevalent among the people of Mecca, the Hijaz and Yemen instead of chewing clay, and pharmacists use this recipe to treat tumors and some call it areca---if chewed as described, it tightens the gums, strengthens the roots of the teeth, refreshes the mouth, removes harmful moisture, stimulates the appetite and sexual desire, causes teeth to be as red as pomegranate seeds, causes the spirit to become joyful and charitable, strengthens the body and causes it to emit pleasant and mellow odors. The Indians, both elite and commoners, consider white teeth to be ugly and avoid consorting with people who do not chew what we have described.

515. When the self tormentor has walked through the markets and arrives at last at that fire, caring for nothing and neither changing his stride nor showing any faint-heartedness as he steps forward, some self tormentors, as they face the fire, now turned into a huge mound of glowing embers, will grasp a dagger, called by them *jari*, and plunge it in his chest. I was once in the land of Saimur in India, in the territory of al-Lar [Gujarat] in the kingdom of Ballahara. The year was 304 [916-17]. The king of Saimur was known as Janj and at that time that land had some ten thousand Muslim residents: Bayasira, Sirafis, Omanis, Basrans, Baghdadis and others from diverse countries who had married and settled in that country. Among them were many prominent merchants like Musa ibn Ishaq al-Sindburi while the *hazma* over Muslims was then held by Abu Sa`id Ma`ruf ibn Zakariyya. By *hazma* is meant the headship of Muslims. This is because the king appoints a man from among their notables as head of the Muslim community who settles their legal disputes. The term "Bayasira" used above refers to Muslims born in the land of India and are called by this name; singular "Baysar".

516. It was then that I witnessed an Indian youth who had roamed the markets as already described. When he approached the fire, he seized a dagger, placed it

over his heart and tore his chest upon. He then placed his left hand inside his body, got hold of his liver and tore a piece out, talking all the while, cut that piece with the dagger and handed it over to his companions as a sign of contempt for death and joy over his journey to the other world. He then threw himself into the fire. If a king among them dies or is killed, many people will burn themselves because of his death. These are called “Balanjariyya”, singular “Balanmar”, which means “those who are faithful to him and die at his death or live when he lives.” Remarkable stories are told about India which shock the souls of those who hear them, and about the kinds of torments and self inflicted deaths which cause bodily pain and goose flesh when recounted. We have related many remarkable stories about India in our book *Akhbar al-Zaman*.

517. Let us now return to the report concerning the king of India and his march to the land of Sijistan, aiming to reach the Suryani realm, and turn away from what we copied of Indian history. That Indian king was called Zunbil, this being the name of every Indian king up to the present time, that is, the year 332. Great battles were fought between the Indians and the Suryan lasting about a year. The Suryan king was killed and the Indian occupied all that realm seizing all that was in it. Some kings of the west then marched against him and defeated him, restoring the kingdom of the Suryan. They then chose as their king a man called Tustar, son the slain king, and he ruled for eight years before he died. Following him was Ahrimun who reigned for twelve years, then his son Huria who reigned for twenty-two years. Huria increased prosperity and planted trees. Following him was Marub, who seized the throne and reigned for fifteen, some say twenty-two years. He was followed by Azur and Khalanjas, said to have been brothers, who ruled well and supported each other as kings.

518. It is said that one of these two kings was sitting one day and saw that a bird had hatched on the heights of his palace. The bird was beating its wings and screeching. The king observed the scene closely and saw a snake slithering upwards towards the nest to eat the bird’s chicks. The king called for a bow and

arrows, shot the snake and saved the chicks. A little later, the bird came beating its wings and carrying a seed in its beak and two seeds in its claws. Drawing near to the king the bird dropped what was held in its beak and claws, and as the king looked on, the seeds fell into the king's hands. The king pondered and said: "It must be for some reason that this bird dropped what it did. It no doubt wished to reward us for what we did to it." He examined the seeds closely but could not identify any seed resembling it in his realm. A wise man in his entourage, when he saw that the king was puzzled about the seeds, said to him: "O king, this sort of seed should be in the earth which will then reveal its secrets and the purpose behind it, and deliver what it holds of its substance." The king summoned farmers and commanded them to plant the seeds and take good care of what will come of it. The seeds were planted and the plant grew and wrapped itself around as a tree then produced unripe followed by ripe grapes. As the farmers tended it and the king took an interest in it, the plant reached its maximum growth, while they refrained from tasting it fearing it might be lethal. The king commanded some grapes to be pressed, placed in urns and the seeds removed while other grapes were to be left as is. The juice in the urns began to bubble and froth and from it exuded a powerful odor. The king said: "Get me an old man who is near death." An old man was summoned and some juice was brought to him in a bowl and he saw it to be like red ruby in color, glowing radiantly and wondrous and perfect to behold. The old man was made to drink it. He had hardly drunk a third of that bowl when he leapt up, untied the wraps of his loincloths, clapped his hands, shook his head, thumped the ground with his feet, became jubilant and raised his voice in singing.

519. The king said: "This is a drink that causes one to lose his mind and it is only fitting that it should cause death. Do you not see how this old man reverted to the condition of a child, how his sanguine nature dominated him and how he increased in youthfulness?" The king ordered more drink to be given to the old man who then fell asleep. The king said: "He is dead". The old man then woke

up and demanded more of that drink, saying: “I drank it and all my troubles and sorrows vanished. The bird simply wanted to reward you with that noble drink.” The king said: “This is the noblest drink for men.” He had observed how the color of the old man had improved, how happy he was and how elated when in the ordinary course of nature he should have been sad and dominated by phlegm. His digestion had improved, he fell asleep with ease and he felt benevolent. So the king ordered that this vine should be planted everywhere and vineyards multiplied, but he forbade the commoners from drinking it saying: “This is the beverage of kings and it was I who caused it to exist so let none drink it but I.” The king used it for the remainder of his days but then it spread among people and they consumed it. It is said that Noah was the first to plant the vine, this being in a report detailing how Satan stole it from him when Noah left the Ark and settled on Mount Judi, a report found in the book called *Al-Mubtada’* [creation] and in other books.

## **Chapter 19**

### **An account of the kings of Mosul and Nineveh, that is to say the Assyrians, with a brief history of them and their conduct**

520. Nineveh is a city that faces Mosul, with the Tigris running between them. It lies between Qarda and Bazabda, two districts of Mosul. At this present time which is the year 332, Nineveh is in ruins on the site of which are found some villages and farms. It was to its inhabitants that God sent the Prophet Jonah son of Matta. The remains of its wall are clearly visible as also some stone images with writing on their front. Outside the city there is a hill with a mosque upon it and a spring called the “Spring of Jonah.” This mosque serves as a retreat for ascetics and hermits. The first person to build this city and its wall was a mighty king to whom all kings and lands submitted and was called Ninus ibn Balus. He reigned for fifty-two years. In Mosul there was another king who warred against him and between them there were many battles and engagements. It is claimed that the king of Mosul at that time was called Sabiq ibn Malik, a man from

Yemen. Ruling after Ninus was a woman named Samiram [Semiramis] who ruled them for forty years and fought the king of Mosul. Her realm stretched from the banks of the Euphrates to Armenia in the land of Adharbaijan up to the frontier with the Jazira, Mount Judi, Mount Tital and on to the land of Zawzan and other parts of Armenia.

521. The inhabitants of Nineveh were people we have called Nabat and Suryan, being of one race and language, though the Nabat differed by having slightly different letters in their language though the spoken language was the same.

Following that queen came Lawustanas\*, said to have been her son, and reigned for about forty years. The kings of Armenia marched against him and wars were continuous during his reign. The Armenians then conquered Nineveh and wars broke out between them and the kings of Mosul. It is said that Lawustanas was the last king of Nineveh but it is also said that he was followed by twenty more kings of Nineveh who paid tribute to the kings of Armenia. These kings have histories, biographies and wars all of which we dealt with in our two books, *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*.

## **Chapter 20**

### **An account of the kings of Babylon, who are the Nabat, and others known as the Chaldeans**

522. Abu'l Hasan `Ali ibn al-Husain ibn `Ali ibn `Abdullah al-Mas`udi said: A number of scholars known for their diligence and research abilities and who concern themselves with the history of the kings of the world assert that the kings of Babylon were the first kings of the world who leveled the earth and built it up, and that First Persians seized kingship from them just as the Romans seized kingship from the Greeks.

523. The first of their kings was Namrud [Nimrod]the Mighty, who reigned for sixty years. It was he who dug the canals of Iraq which issue from the Euphrates, among them, it is said, being the Kutha canal on the road to Kufa between Qasr ibn Hubaira and Baghdad. It is too well known to need

mentioning. In what follows, we will mention many canals of Iraq when speaking of First and Second Persian kings and the other kings of independent kingdoms. The purpose of this work is in fact to summarize the history of the kings of the world and to refer to our earlier works.

524. Reigning after him for about seventy years was Bulus [Belus]. He was a violent king and a tyrant on earth and his reign witnessed many wars. He was followed by Qambirus who reigned for about a hundred years and was tyrannical; then Kisarunus for about fifty years; then Arfakhshad for about twenty years; then Samiram for about forty years, though some say more; then Zamis for about seventy years; then Arius for about thirty years; then Ablaus for about fifteen years; then Mankhalus for about forty years; then Amramithris for about thirty years; then Balukus for about thirty years; then Sifrutus for about forty years though some give other dates; then Marnus for about thirty years; then Wastalim for forty years; then Amintas for about fifty years; then Balukus for about fifty years; then Al`adas for about thirty years; then Balatirus for about sixty years; then Sawsaris for about twenty years; then Baniyus for about fifty years though some say forty five.

525. He was then followed by Susarmus for about forty years. A king of Persia invaded and reached the center of his kingdom; then Misrus for about fifty years; then Tatamus for about thirty years; then Tatawus for about forty years; then Afrus for about forty years; then Lawstanas for about fifty years though some say forty-five; then Afritidis for about thirty years; then Afrutawus for about twenty years; then Afritanus for fifty years though some say forty-two; then Manturus for about twenty years; then Fulaqsma for about sixty years; then Qanqalrus for thirty-five years though some say fifty. He was at war with a king of the Sabeans. This was mentioned in the book on ancient history.

526. He was followed by Marjad who reigned for about three years; then Marduh for about forty years though some say less; then Sannajarib for thirty years. It was he who invaded Jerusalem; then Nashuh Manusha for thirty years

though some say less; then the mighty Bukhtnassar for forty-five years; then Fil Marduh for about a year; then Baltasa`ar for about two years though some say less; then Qambisus for about eight years though some say ten; then Majusa for a year though some say less; then Darius for thirty one years though some say less; then Kasarkhus for twenty years; then Artaban for nine months until his murder; then Artakhshast for forty one years; then Kasarkhus for three years though some say two years and two months; then Sughdianus for one year though some say nine months; then Darius for twenty years though some say nineteen; then Artakhast for twenty nine years; then Dara Alisa` for fifteen years, though some say ten.

527. Al-Mas`udi said: These kings\* mentioned above by name and length of reign have their names recorded in books of ancient history. It is they who developed the kingdom, built cities, ordered the countryside, dug canals, planted trees, dug water wells, cultivated the land, dug mines of iron, copper, lead and other metals, made crude swords, adopted instruments of war and devised other military ruses, established war tactics like the heart, the right and left formations and the wings, deriving this from the model of the members of the body, and assigned each part a flag different from the others. The flag of the heart carried the picture of an elephant, a dragon or some other huge animal. The flags of the left and right flanks had pictures of wild beasts of various sizes and kinds, while the wings had flags with pictures of smaller wild animals like the panther or wolf. The troops lying in wait had flags with pictures of snakes, scorpions and other hard-to-see crawlers.

528. The colors used in each kind of flag were black or some other of the six colors namely, black, white, red, yellow, green and azure. Some people have stated that the colors are eight in number depending on where they fit best. They deny that red is mixed with any of the other colors except if tiny amounts are contained within the majority of animal images on these flags. They claim that analogy dictates that all war flags should be red since this is more appropriate

and nearer the color of blood and more suitable if it is of a single color. However, what prevents its use is the fact that red is employed in entertainment, musical parties and times of joy, as also its use by women and children to express happiness. This necessitates the abandonment of red as a flag of war. They further assert that the sense of vision is similar to red. For the nature of vision is such that when it perceives red, the light of vision expands whereas if the light of vision falls upon the color black, that light contracts and does not expand as with the perception of red. They claim that the reason for this is the match between the light of vision and the color red whereas difference and opposition exist between that light and black. These people have discussed the gradations of colors such as red, black, white and so forth as also the gradation of lights and how this relates to the secrets of nature. They speak of a common denominator between the light of vision and red and white and of the clear contradiction between black and the light of vision, to the exclusion of all other colors such as red, green, yellow and white. People have carried their discussion of these subjects to the point where they deal with the heavenly bodies such as the sun and moon and five planets and how they differ in color, taking in other heavenly bodies also. We have dealt with the opinions of these people in our previous works.

529. Likewise, we have dealt with the histories and conduct of the above-mentioned kings in our two books *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*. Some people have argued that these kings were from the Nabat or other nations, and that some of them were subject to other kings like Persian kings, especially those who ruled from the city of Balkh. But what we mentioned is the better-known account. In what follows we shall make mention in brief of the history of the Nabat and their genealogy, God willing. There is no strength except in God.

## **Chapter 21**

### **An account of the First Persian kings, with a brief history of them and their conduct**

530. Al-Mas`udi said: The Persians, despite their diverse views, their far-flung habitations, the various places where they have settled and the care they take with their genealogies as transmitted from generation to generation and from the old to the young, assert that their first king was Kayumarth. They then disagree about him. Some claim he is the son of Adam and the oldest of his children; others, who are in the minority, allege that he is the first ancestor and originator of the human race; yet others assert that Kayumarth is in fact Umaim ibn Lawid ibn Iram ibn Sam ibn Nuh because Umaim was the first among the children of Nuh to settle in Persia. Kayumarth lived in Persia and the Persians have no knowledge of the Flood of Nuh. The peoples who lived between Adam and Nuh were Suryani in language and had no king but lived in one place---and God knows best. Kayumarth was the most prominent man of his age and the leader among them and the Persians claim that he was the first king to be crowned on earth.

531. The reason that led the people of that era to set up a king and leader is that they saw that most people were by nature vicious to one another, jealous of one another, unjust and aggressive. They recognized that nothing deters the evil man except fear. They then examined the condition of creatures, the body's mode of behavior and the form of the sensible and intelligent human being, and saw that the body in its structure and being has been provided with senses which lead back to some object other than themselves; that this object imports and exports these senses; that this object discriminates among what the senses import though diverse in its understanding, and that this object resides in the heart. They thus concluded that a healthy body requires to be ruled by the heart for once that ruler is corrupted, the rest of the body is corrupted and its sound and prudent actions can no longer be detected. Accordingly, having observed that this microcosm which is the visible [reading *mar'i*] human body cannot be put right nor can be suitably regulated unless its chief is properly instituted, they realized that people cannot be set on the right path unless they have a king who

is fair to them, imposes justice upon them and implements laws in accordance with the dictates of reason. So they approached Kayumarth son of Lawid, informed him of their need for a king and an overseer who treats them justly, and said: “You are the most virtuous, the noblest and the most senior amongst us and the last descendant of our ancestor. No one in this age is your equal. Take hold of our affairs and be our ruler. We hear and obey you and comply with all your wishes.”

532. He responded to their call and obtained assurances from them through covenants and pacts that they would hear and obey and abandon all disagreements concerning his appointment. When he had placed the crown over his head, being the first person on earth to do so, he stood up and delivered the following speech: “Blessings do not last except by offering thanks, and we render thanks to God for what He has done. We thank Him for His blessings and turn to him for further acts of grace. We ask Him to lend us His support for what we have been forced to accept. We ask Him to guide us to practice justice which brings people together and makes life pleasant. Be confident in expecting us to act justly, and you too must act justly towards one another, and we shall lead you to your noblest desires. I ask God’s forgiveness for me and you.” So Kayumarth continued to rule them in the best manner, acting towards people with justice, and the land became secure and the nation was quiescent throughout his rule. The act of placing the crown over the head is one for which they have symbolic interpretations which they mention and which we omit to mention here, having done so already in our two books *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*.

533. They say that Kayumarth was the first person to order silence at mealtimes in order that nature might run its proper course, the body gain in health while ingesting food, and the soul grow still, thus commanding each body member to act in such a manner as to lead to bodily health while ingesting food undisturbed. Hence, the food that arrives in the liver and other body organs that

are nourished by food is appropriate to each organ and grants it health. They further assert that when a human being is diverted from his meal in one manner or another, some of the regulatory process and of nourishment will end up in wasting energy and the occurrence of complications. This does harm to the animal soul and the human powers. If this happens constantly, it will lead the rational soul which is distinct from this visible human body, to leave, thus causing an abandonment of wisdom and of right action. Under this heading, they have a subtle symbolic explanation of the tie that exists between soul and body but this is not the place to go into this subject. We have made mention of this in our two books entitled *The Secret of Life* and the *Book of Degrees*, where we discuss the soul and its parts namely, the rational, righteously angry, sensitive and appetitive, and what people ancient and modern have said about this subject, both philosophers and others.

534. There is some dispute regarding the age of Kayumarth. Some say that he lived a thousand years, others say less. The Magians speak at length about Kayumarth, holding that he was the originator of mankind and that he and his wife grew out of the earth like a plant, the plant being the rhubarb, and that the first couple were Mashia and Mashiana [reading doubtful] plus other tales too indecent to mention. They further relate his story with Satan and how he killed him. He resided in Istakhr, in Persia, and reigned for forty years, though some say less.

535. Succeeding him was Awshhang son of Firwak son of Siyamuk son of Yarniq son of Kayumarth the king. Awshhang resided in India and reigned for forty years, though some say less. He is the subject of a dispute. Some say he is the brother of Kayumarth son of Adam, others that he was the son of the previous king. Succeeding him was Tahmurath son of Wayuwanjan son of Anqhadh son of Awshhang, who resided in Sabur. During his reign a man appeared called Budasf who created the Sabean religion. He maintained that perfect nobility and goodness and the origin of life resided in that elevated

dome [the sky], that the stars were the rulers of all that comes into being and goes out of being, and that as they rise in their constellations and cover their distances and touch certain points and leave others, they cause all effects in this world such as long and short lifespans, the coming together of simple things and the dissolution of complex things, the perfection of forms, and the appearance and disappearance of the waters. He further claimed that in the planets and their constellations is vested supreme management of the universe together with other views the description of which would require us to abandon our plan to abbreviate and summarize. He seduced a group of weak-minded people and it is said that this man was the first who originated the religion of the Sabeans, both the Harraniyya and the Kimariyya. Those latter differ from the Harraniyya in belief and they inhabit the region between Wasit and Basra in Iraq, in the neighborhood of the swamps and jungles.

536. Tahmurath reigned for thirty years until his death, though some mention other dates. His brother Jam, who resided in Persia, succeeded him. It is said that a flood occurred in his days. Many people claim that the Nairuz Festival was instituted in his days and was ceremoniously arranged as will be described later in this book. Furthermore, Abu `Ubaida Ma`mar ibn al-Muthanna\* related from `Umar Kisra---a man who became famous for his knowledge of Persia and the history of its kings to the point where he was dubbed “`Umar Kisra”---that Jam reigned for six hundred years before he died, and some say seven hundred years and six months. Jam is said to have innovated on earth a number of crafts, types of buildings and professions and to have claimed divinity.

537. He was succeeded by Bayurasb son of Arwandasb son of Zinjad son of Barshand son of Tah son of Firwak son of Siyamuk son of Mashya son of Kayumarth, who is al-Dahhak. His two names were Arabized and some Arabs called him al-Dahhak while others called him Buhrasf. This is not correct. His true name is Bayurasb, as cited above. It is historically accurate to say that King Jam had been murdered before these kings. His [i.e. Bayurasb’s] genealogy is

disputed. Some say he is Persian, others say he is an Arab. The Persians claim him as one of them and that he was a magician who lived a thousand years and ruled over the seven climes. He was a tyrant on earth and the Persians relate long stories about him and claim that he is chained in irons on Mount Damavand between Rayy and Tabaristan. Arab poets, both ancient and modern, have mentioned him. Abu Nuwas\* boasted of him in the following line of verse, claiming he was from Yemen because Abu Nuwas himself was a client of the Yemeni tribe of Sa`d al-`Ashira:

*Al-Dahhak was one of us,*

*Worshipped by young she-camels and wild beasts*

*As they headed to pasture.*

538. He was succeeded by Afridun son of Athfiyan son of Jam, king of the seven climes. He seized Bayurasb and chained him on Mount Damavand as mentioned above. Many Persians and other experts in their history like `Umar Kisra and others maintain that the day that Afridun seized al-Dahhak was made by him into a feast day and called it al-Mihrajan, as will be mentioned later in this work together with what has been related about that event. The capital of Afridun's kingdom was Babil. That region derives its name from a village in those regions called Babil, on the banks of a canal dug from the Euphrates in the land of Iraq, and at a distance of one hour's journey known as Jisr Babil and the Nars canal. From Nars is derived a kind of cloth called Narsi. In that village is a pit called the pit of Daniel the Prophet visited by Christians and Jews at certain times of the year on their feast days. If one stands above this village and overlooks it, one will discern great traces of ruined buildings that appear like mounds. Many people claim that in that village are found Harut and Marut, the two angels mentioned in the Qur'an in accordance with the manner in which the Almighty related in detail how and why this village was called Babil. Afridun reigned for five hundred years though both more and less years are also given. He divided the world among his three sons. After the coming of Islam, a poet of

Persian origin wrote the following verses making mention of the three sons of Afridun:

*We divided our realm in our own time,*

*As meat is divided from a spit.*

*We gave al-Sham and Byzantium*

*And all the way to where the sun sets*

*To the hero Salm.*

*Tuh was given lordship over the Turks*

*And all the way to China, which was ruled by a cousin.*

*To Iran we granted by force the knighthood of the kingdom*

*And won the greatest blessings.*

539. People have discussed these subjects at great length, maintaining that the land of Babil was apportioned to Iraj, son of Afridun, and that his brother killed him in the lifetime of Afridun so he died without having assumed kingship and is not counted among kings. We will later on in this book mention how that region was apportioned to Iraj and how the letter “j” in “Iraj” was dropped and replaced by the letter “n” so that we get the phrase “Iran Shahr”, “shahr” meaning kingdom. Following Afridun came Manushihr son of Iran son of Afridun, in accordance with the dispute regarding his genealogy and his affiliation to Iraj son of Afridun. He reigned for twenty years and resided in Babil. It is said that the prophets Musa son of `Imran and Yusha` son of Nun lived in his days. Manushihr warred against his two uncles, Tuh and Salm, who had killed his father. We made mention of these wars in our previous works.

540. Succeeding Manushihr was Sahm son of Aban son of Athfiyan son of Nudhar son of Manushihr. He settled in Babil and reigned for sixty years, though some say more. He waged many wars, and devised many political principles and practical policies which we detailed in our *Akhbar al-Zaman*.

Succeeding him was Farasiyab son of Bashank son of Zay Arsan son of Turak son of Sabaniasb son of Durshasb son of Tuh son of Dusrun son of Tuj son of

Afridun. Farasiyab was born in the land of the Turks; hence the mistake made by writers and historians who claim he was a Turk. He reigned for twelve years over lands he had conquered and many claim that he was four hundred years old. In the twelfth year of his reign Zu son of Tahmasf son of Kamjahubar son of Harasf son of Waidanj son of Ragh son of Manush son of Nudhar son of king Manushihr, rebelled against him and killed him and his followers after many years and rebuilt what Farasiyab had destroyed. His length of reign is disputed: some say three years, others more. He resided in Babil.

541. The Persians have discussed at great length how Farasiyab was killed and his wars and the wars and raids between Persians and Turks and the killing of Siyawukhs together with the history of Rustam son of Dastan. All of this is found in great detail in the book known as *Sakisaran* which Ibn al-Muqaffa` translated from Old Persian into Arabic. It relates the story of the killing of Isfandiyar son of Bustasf son of Luhrasb by Rustam son of Dastan and how Bahman son of Isfandiyar then killed Rustam together with other marvelous tales of ancient Persian history. This is a book held in great esteem by the Persians because it contains the histories of their ancestors and biographies of their kings. In our earlier works, we made mention, and God be thanked, of many of these histories.

542. It is stated that the first king among them to settle in Balkh and to move away from Iraq was Kaiqawus. He had marched on Yemen after having rebelled against God in Iraq and had built a structure in order to ruin heaven. The Yemeni king attacked by Kaiqawus was at that time Shammir Yar`ash. Shammir marched out against him and captured and imprisoned him in the narrowest of dungeons. A daughter of Shammir, named Su`da, fell in love with him and would show him and his followers in their dungeon acts of kindness in secret and unbeknown to her father. He remained a prisoner for four years until Rustam son of Dustan sent out from Sijistan an expedition of four thousand men who killed Shammir Yar`ash and rescued Kaiqawus, restoring him to his

kingdom accompanied by Sa`da. Sa`da gained power over Kaiqawus and made him proud by giving birth to his son Siyawakhs who had that famous story with Farasiyab the Turk, and how Farasiyab came to trust him and how he married him to his daughter who gave birth to Kaikhusru. The story goes on to relate how Farasiyab killed Siyawakhs son of Kaiqawus and how Rustam son of Dastan killed Sa`da, as a revenge for the killing of Siyawakhs and how he killed other Turkish notables.

543. According to the Persians and as is mentioned in the book *Sakisaran*, Kaikhusru was preceded on the throne by his paternal grandfather Kaiqawus. Kaikhusru left no issue, so kingship passed to the progeny of Luhrasf. These people lived in Balkh which was their capital. The river of Balkh, the Amu Darya, is known in their language as Kalif. Many Persians living in Khurasan continue to call it by that name up to the present. They remained in Balkh until kingship passed to Humaia daughter of Bahman son of Isfandiyar son of Bistaf son of Luhrasf, who moved back to Iraq and resided in the region of al-Mada'in.

544. Succeeding Kaikhusru son of Siyawakhs son of Kaiqawus was the king Luhrasf son of Kaiuji son of Kaimanush son of Kaibasin son of Kaiabya son of king Qubadh. Luhrasf built up the land and acted virtuously and justly towards his subjects. Two years into his reign the Israelites suffered greatly at his hands and he dispersed them throughout the lands. Stories are told of the encounter between them too long to relate here. Some Persian histories relate that he built the beautiful city of Balkh because of its waters, trees and meadows. His reign lasted one hundred and twenty years. Ancient Persian histories relate the story of his killing by the Turks and how he was besieged by them and who exacted revenge for him after he was killed.

545. Many experts on Persian history mention that Bukhtnassar, the *marzuban* of Iraq and the west, was a deputy of that king. It was Bukhtnassar who invaded al-Sham, conquered Jerusalem and enslaved the Israelites. His exploits in al-Sham and the west are famous. The commoners call him Bukhtnassar. Most

historians and story-tellers exaggerate his history and inflate the description of his exploits, while astronomers in their almanacs and historians in their books speak of him as a king. In point of fact he was a *marzuban* of some kings we have mentioned above, and the word *marzuban* means a person in charge of one quarter of the kingdom, an army commander, a vizier or else a governor of a province. He carried the enslaved Israelites eastwards and married a slave girl among them called Dinazad, who was responsible for restoring the Israelites to Jerusalem.

546. It is said that Luhrasf was the one who fathered a child on Dinazad, though other versions also exist. It is also claimed that queen Humaia was a descendant of the Israelites through her mother. It is related that Luhrasf dispatched Sannajarib, his deputy in Iraq, to wage war on the Israelites but he accomplished nothing so he sent Bukhtnassar in his stead, though other versions exist regarding Bukhtnassar, which we will mention below when speaking of the reign of Bahman son of Isfandiyar son of Yistasf son of Luhrasf. Ptolemy, author of *Almagest*, dates the history in his book from the era of Bukhtnassar, *marzuban* of the west, while Theon, author of the book called the *Canon* on astronomy, dates his history from the reign of Alexander son of Philip the Macedonian.

547. Succeeding him was his son Bustasf who resided in Balkh. Thirty years into his reign, he was visited by Zaradusht [Zoroaster] son of Isbitaman. He is said to have been Zaradusht son of Burshasf son of Fidasf son of Urudasf son of Hijdasf son of Jakhnush son of Bitrasf son of Hushan son of Hirdar son of Isbitaman son of Widasf son of Izman son of Rajan son of Duwasrun son of king Manushihr. He was from Adharbaijan and the more common form of his name is Zaradusht son of Isbitaman. He was the prophet of the Magians who brought them the book known as *Zamzama* among commoners and *Bastah* [Avesta] among the Magians. Zaradusht performed miracles that awed their intellects and foretold events before they occurred, both general and particular.

By general is meant foretelling public events while by particular is meant foretelling such things as that so-and-so will die or so-and-so will fall ill or so-and-so will be born on such-and-such a day, and similar things.

548. The alphabet in this book he brought them is based on an alphabet consisting of sixty letters, and no language possesses more letters than that alphabet. In our two books *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*, we dealt with this subject at length. Zaradusht brought them a book in a language which they could neither duplicate nor fully understand. We will mention later the contents of his book and the commentary, and the commentary on that commentary that he provided for it. The book was written in gold on twelve thousand parchment leaves. It contains promises of salvation and threats of damnation as well as commands, prohibitions and other matters relating to legal acts and worship. Kings continued to follow the commandments of that book until the time of Alexander and his killing of Darius son of Darius, when Alexander burnt parts of that book. Following the era of independent principalities, kingship passed to Ardashir son of Babik who succeeded in uniting the Persians by reading a single chapter of that book called *Wandidad*. To this day, the Persians and Magians read nothing else.

549. The first book is called *Bastah*. Zaradusht then composed a commentary for those who could not understand it, and this commentary they called *Zand*. He then composed a commentary on that commentary which he called *Bazand*. Following the death of Zaradusht, their scholars composed a commentary on the two earlier commentaries and an interpretation which they called *Yarda*. Up to this day, the Magians are unable to learn their revealed book by heart so their scholars and priests enjoin upon many of them to learn by heart one-seventh or one-fourth or one-third of that book. One person begins by reciting what he has learnt of his portion, a second person follows by reciting his portion and a third person likewise, until they all together had recited the entire book. This is because no single person is capable of reciting the whole text. They used to say

that there was a man of their community from Sijistan after the year 300 who made his living by reciting this book in its entirety.

550. Bustasf reigned for one hundred and twenty years before he embraced Magianism. He then died. Zaradusht's prophetic career among them lasted for thirty-five years and he died aged seventy-seven. When Zaradusht died, a scholar named Jamasb, a man from Adharbaijan, was appointed to take his place. He was the first priest (*mubidh*) to rise among them after Zaradusht, and was appointed by king Bustasf. Succeeding him on the throne was Bahman son of Isfandyar son of Bustasf son of Luhrasf, who waged many wars against Rustam, ruler of Sijistan, until he killed Rustam and his father Dastan.

551. It is said that the mother of Bahman was an Israelite from the progeny of King Saul (*Talut*) and that it was Bahman who sent Bukhtnassar, the *marzuban* of Iraq, to the Israelites, with events ensuing as already described. Bahman reigned for one hundred and twelve years before he died, and it is said that it was during his reign that the Israelites were returned to Jerusalem. They thus stayed in Babil for seventy years before their return. This happened in the days of Cyrus (*Kurush*), appointed to rule Iraq by Bahman who then resided in Balkh. It is said that the mother of Cyrus was an Israelite and that Daniel the Younger was his maternal uncle. Cyrus ruled for twenty-three years. Other accounts hold that Cyrus himself was a king and not a deputy of Bahman, and that he became king when Bahman's reign ended. It is also claimed that Cyrus was an early king of First Persians but this is not commonly found in ancient books of history.

552. Daniel the Elder lived in the period between Noah and Abraham. He it was who worked out the science of what will happen in future days until the earth itself passes away, along with all who live on it and all kings of this world. This includes what will happen every year, month and day with the proofs for this derived from the heavenly spheres. To him is attributed the book called *al-Jafr* \*.

\*. When the Israelites returned to Jerusalem they dug up the Torah and other

writings from places in the ground where they had been buried, as we mentioned earlier.

553. Kingship then passed to Humaia daughter of Bahman son of Isfandiyar commonly known by her mother Shihrazad. This queen has a long history and waged war against the Romans and other kings of the earth. She pursued an upright policy where her subjects were concerned and reigned for thirty years after her father's death, though some say more. Succeeding her was her brother Dara son of Bahman son of Isfandiyar, who reigned for twelve years and resided in Babil. He was succeeded by Dara son of Dara son of Bahman son of Isfandiyar. In their ancient language the Persians call Dara "Darius". It was him whom Alexander the Macedonian killed after he had reigned for thirty years.

554. It is said that Manushihr, when defeated in his war against the Turkish Farasiyab, marched to the mountains of Tabaristan and fortified himself in them. Then he, as well as many others, repented his decision and resumed the war against Farasiyab who had invaded Iraq and conquered that region.

Farasiyab fled back to the land of the Turks. It is further stated that following Manushihr, kingship passed to two brothers, said to have been partners in rule, who rebuilt the land together and in agreement after the depredations of Farasiyab. One of the two kings was called [Zab son of] Tahmasaf son of Kamjahubar son of Warzaq[?] son of Hrasf son of Widanj son of [lacuna in text] son of Duwasrun son of Manushihr. The other king was called Kurshasf son of Nariman son of Tahmasf son of Ashak son of Narsi son of Arjan [lacuna in text] son of Manushihr. Kurshasf continued to wage war against Farasiyab while the other remained in Iraq rebuilding what Farasiyab had ruined. He dug the two canals called the Lesser and Greater Zab, as already noted earlier in this work. These two canals issue from the land of Armenia and flow into the Greater Tigris between Mosul and al-Haditha while the other pours into the land of Sann to which he gave his name. He dug another canal in the Sawad region of Iraq and gave it his own name. On that canal in Iraq he built three

agricultural regions consisting of villages and estates which he irrigated by means of waterwheels. All of these have survived to the present day.

555. It is said that when Kaikhusru killed his grandfather in the region of Shiz and al-Ran in the land of Adharbaijan---- the grandfather having been Farasiyab son of Bashank son of Zai Arsan son of Turk---Turk being the ancestor of all the Turks according to some people and was from the progeny of Durushab son of Afridun, a version of his genealogy already cited above--- Kaikhusru marched through the earth destroying kingdoms until he reached China, where he built a great city which he called Kankdiz. Several kings of China would reside there as they resided in Yansu and other of their cities. Some say that Kankdiz is in fact Yansu. It is also said that Kaikhusru built the city of Qashmir in India and that Siawakhs during the lifetime of his father built the city of Qandahar in the land of Sind, a city mentioned earlier in this work.

556. Al-Mas`udi said: The kings we have mentioned have histories and policies which we have set forth in detail in our earlier works. In this work we simply offer abbreviated accounts which we use to allude to the detailed accounts in our earlier works. The variety of accounts mentioned here is due to the divergence of the accounts themselves and the conflicting reports to be found in books of history. This is so in order that the readers of this work would know that we have exerted all our efforts in citing what everyone has said regarding these subjects. In God is success and succor.

## **Chapter 22**

### **An account of the independent kings who reigned between First and Second Persians**

557. Al-Mas`udi said: There is a dispute concerning the independent kings (*Muluk al-Tawa'if*) and whether they were Persians, Nabat or Arabs. Some historians who specialize in ancient history relate that when Alexander son of Philip killed Darius son of Darius, every strong man came to dominate his own region. Alexander concluded treaties with them and they were Persians, Nabat

and Arabs. Alexander's aim was to divide their word and get them to break up into separate entities so that each chief would gain mastery over his own region, thereby undermining royal authority and their submission to a single monarch who could unite them. Alexander would thus have the final say. However, most followed the Arsacids (*Ashghan*) who ruled the mountains of Dinawar, Nihawand, Hamadhan, Masabadan and Adharbaijan. Each king who ruled that territory would be called by the name most common to them, that is, Ashghan. So this name passed on to the Ashghan independent kings as an attribute since most owed allegiance to the king of that region.

558. Hisham ibn Muhammad al-Kalbi\* reported from his father and other Arab scholars that they say that the first kings of the earth were the Achaemenids (*Akyan*) and we have cited their names among First Persians until Dara son of Dara. These were followed by the Ardawan who were kings of the Nabat and are counted among the independent monarchs. They resided in Iraq near Qasr ibn Hubayra, the land irrigated by the Euphrates, al-Jami`ayn, Sura and Ahmadabad, all the way to al-Nars, Hinniba, Tall Fakhkhar, al-Tufuf and the rest of that region. The Arab kings from the tribes of Mudar ibn Nizar ibn Ma`add and Rabi`a ibn Nizar and Anmar ibn Nizar and the Mudarites of the Nadr in Yemen, as also others from the tribe of Qahtan, were all [independent] monarchs. Each grouping had set up its own king in the absence of a king who would unite them. This is what Alexander was advised to do by his teacher Aristotle who had sent him letters to that effect. So Alexander made treaties with the kings of each region and appointed each of them king over his own territory, each of whom he crowned and then taxed. So each tyrannized over his own domain and kingship passed to his progeny, and they defended their possessions and sought to enlarge their domains at the expense of the others.

559. According to many experts in ancient history and dating, the era of independent kings lasted for five hundred and seventeen years, that is, from the reign of Alexander until the coming of Ardashir son of Babik. Ardashir

subjugated the independent kings and killed Ardawan, the king of Iraq, placing Ardawan's crown on his own head. He had killed him in single combat on the banks of the Tigris. That day is counted as the first day of Ardashir's reign since he later overcame the rest of the independent kings, as the various countries submitted to him and the structure of his state was put in place. Some of the independent kings were killed by Ardashir while others responded to his call and willingly submitted to him. The independent kings thus fall between First Persians, already named, and Second Persians, who are the Sasanids.

560. Abu `Ubaida Ma`mar ibn al-Muthanna al-Taimi relates from `Umar Kisra in a book of `Umar's dealing with Persian kings where he describes the classes of their kings, early and late, their histories, speeches and complex genealogies, as also the cities they built, the agricultural regions they developed, the canals they dug, their noble classes and what each group was called such as the Shaharija and others---relates that the first of the independent kings was Ashak son of Ashak son of Ardawan son of Ashghan son of the mighty Ass son of Siyawush son of Kikawus the king. Ashak reigned for twenty years. He was followed by Ashak son of Sabur son of Ashak who reigned for sixty years. In the forty-first year of his reign Christ appeared in the land of Palestine in Aelia [Jerusalem].

561. Next to reign was Judarz son of Ashak son of Ardawan son of Ashghan who reigned for ten years. He was followed by Nidhar son of king Sabur son of king Ashak who reigned for twenty-one years. It is said that in his days Titus son of Vespasian, king of Rome, marched on Aelia, forty years after the ascent of Christ to heaven, where he killed, enslaved and destroyed. Following Nidhar was his son Judarz who reigned for nineteen years. Following Judarz was Narsi son of Nidhar who reigned for forty years. He was followed by his brother Hurmuz son of Nidhar who reigned for twenty-five years. He was followed by Ardawan son of Hurmuz son of Nidhar who reigned for fifteen years. Ardawan was followed by his son Kisra son of Ardawan for forty years. Kisra was

followed by his son Balas for twenty-four years and Balas was followed by his son Ardawan for thirteen years.

562. Al-Mas`udi said: The above is another version of what we had cited earlier. Other views regarding the dating of the regnal years of the independent kings have also been given and it is alleged that their total years were less than what we mentioned. However, what was mentioned earlier is the more accurate and well-known figure that is given for their regnal years though dates differ greatly and are often contradictory. Nevertheless, what we have cited are figures we have taken from Persian scholars who take greater care than others with their own history. This is because the Persians observe and follow what we described in word and deed, whereas other people state this in word but do not observe it in deed, given the divergence among religious communities. In our earlier works we discussed the highlights of the history of the independent kings and their policies. In God is success.

### **Chapter 23**

#### **An account of the genealogies of the Persians and the views of people concerning them**

563. There are divergent views among people regarding the Persians and their genealogies. Some hold that Faris is the son of Yasur [Ashur] son of Sam son of Noah, and also that the Nabat are the progeny of Nabit son of Sam son of Noah. This is the view of Hisham ibn Muhammad [al-Kalbi] as transmitted from his father and other Arab scholars, thus making Faris and Nabit brothers and sons of Yasur. Others hold that the Persians are from the progeny of Joseph son of Jacob son of Isaac son of Abraham. Still others assert that they are the progeny of Hidram son of Arfakhshad son of Sam son of Noah, who begat fourteen sons all of whom were brave knights. So they were called “Persians” [Furs] because of their “knightly qualities” [*furusiyya*]. On this subject there are two lines of verse by Khattab ibn al-Mu`alla the Persian:

*Because of us, knights were called by that name;*

*We are the begetters of noble youth,  
As also of old men, their bodies made firm,  
By charging and attacking,  
When attacking on the day of battle.*

564. Others have claimed that the Persians descend from Lot (*Lut*) through his two daughters Rabbatha and Za`irtha. Adherents of the Torah have much to say on this subject. Still others maintain that they descend from Bawwan son of Iran son of Yasur son of Sam son of Noah. Bawwan is the one after whom the watercourse of Bawwan is named. It is a place of great natural beauty where many trees, gushing waters and numerous kinds of birds are found. Poets have mentioned that locality, as for instance in the following verse:

*The watercourse of Bawwan and the valley of al-Rahib:  
There you find respite from troubles.*

565. Still others claim that the Persians are from the progeny of Iran son of Afridun. We mentioned above when speaking of the progeny of Afridun how he divided the earth among his sons and quoted the verse:

*To Iran we granted by force the knighthood of the kingdom  
And won the greatest blessings.*

Thus the Persians acquired that name. The Persians call Iran "Iraj" when they explain his name, and all Persians agree that they are the progeny of Iraj, who is Iran son of Afridun. This genealogy is the one most commonly cited by them, namely that they are the progeny of Iraj. Some people hold that all categories of Persians, including the inhabitants of the countryside of Ahwaz, are from the progeny of `Ilam and there is unanimity among the above two groups of genealogists that all Persians descend from the progeny of Kayumarth. This is the most common view. Kayumarth came before Iraj son of Afridun, and this Iraj is the one from the progeny of Kayumarth from whom the Persians are descended.

566. Some say that Second Persians, who are the Sasanids, have a different descent from First Persians, being the descendants of Manushihr son of Iraj son of Afridun. Others say that Manushihr is the son of Manshkhurnar son of Manush [Khurnak] son of Wayrak, and that Wayrak is Isaac son of Abraham. They add that Manshkhurnar marched on Persia where a queen was reigning named Kudak daughter of Iraj. He married her and she begat Manushihr the king. His progeny became numerous to the point where they overpowered the earth and other kings were in awe of them because of their valor and chivalry, while First Persians vanished like other ancient nations or like the extinct Arabs.

567. Al-Mas`udi said: Most wise Arabs from Nizar ibn Ma`add accept the accuracy of the above account as regards the beginning of genealogy as do also many Persians. Nizari Arab poets cite this genealogy and use it to boast over Qahtani Arabs from Yemen by claiming that the Persians are descended from Isaac son of Abraham. Thus, the poet Ishaq ibn Suwaid al-`Adawi, from the `Adiyy clan of Quraish composed the following verses:

*If Qahtan were one day to boast of some sovereignty,  
 Our own boasts would rise higher and be more convincing.  
 We ruled over them first through our ancestor Isaac,  
 And they have become our supporters and slaves for ever.  
 If Tubba`\* and his progeny were of their [i.e. Qahtan's] number,  
 Yet their kings were mere aides to our own.  
 Binding us, children of Sarah, to glory is an ancestor,  
 And we care not thereafter for any who claims superiority.  
 They gave their kings dominion over east and west,  
 Then afterwards granted them supreme rule.*

568. Regarding the same subject, the poet Jarir\* ibn [ `Atiyya ibn] al-Khatafa al-Tamimi, wrote a long ode boasting against Qahtan that the Persians and Byzantines were the children of Isaac and that the prophets were the children of Jacob son of Isaac, in which he says:

*The sons of Isaac are lions once they put on  
 The sword-tassels of death, and wear their armor.  
 When boasting they count the sabahbadh [Persian commander] of their number,  
 As also Chosroes, al-Hurmuzan and Caesar.  
 To them was granted a sacred book and prophecy,  
 And they were kings in Istakhr and Tustar.  
 Of their number is Solomon the prophet who prayed,  
 And was granted eloquence and a mighty dominion.  
 Our ancestor is the father of Isaac, and connecting us  
 Is a father who was a pure and rightly-guided prophet.  
 He built God's direction of prayer, which offers guidance,  
 And bequeathed to us glory and lasting dominion.  
 One ancestor connects us to the noble sons of Persia:  
 We care not for any ancestor who came after him.  
 Our ancestor is the friend of God, Abraham, and God is our Lord,  
 We are content with what God has given and destined for us.*

569. On this same subject, the poet Bashshar ibn Burd\* says:

*The noble sons of Persia, who are Quraish, claim me as one of them,  
 And my clan is the Quraish of the Persians.*

Another Persian poet holds that the Persians are descended from Isaac and that Isaac is the one named Wayrak, as mentioned above, and recited the following verses:

*My father is Wayrak and with him I claim highest honor  
 When some boaster boasts of his descent.  
 Our father Wayrak was a servant of God and a prophet  
 Who possessed the honor of noble birth and succored pilgrims.  
 Who can be my equal when noble men boast,  
 And when my clan is the central jewel in the necklace?*

570. Some Persians claim that Wayrak is the son of Irak son of Burak son of seven women who were begotten without a male until they reach in their ascent to Iraj son of Afridun. This claim is irrational, rejected by the senses, is contrary to natural custom and is in conflict with what can directly be witnessed. The exception is the special favor that God granted to Jesus son of Mary in order to display his miracles and his signs that transcend natural custom and what we have mentioned by way of direct witness.

571. People at this point are in dispute regarding the genealogy of Manushihr and there is confusion as to his relationship to Afridun and how Afridun slept with the daughter of his son Iraj then slept with the daughter's daughters down to the seventh of them. As mentioned above, between the reign of Manushihr and that of Afridun, a long period of time elapsed and also many kings, for the region of Babil witnessed an era of political fragmentation where no strongman was found to unite the kingdom and establish authority and concord. Thus, royal dominion passed from the progeny of Afridun to that of Isaac. If this is in fact what this group of people actually maintain, dating would require that a period of two thousand nine hundred and twenty-two years must have elapsed from Kayumarth to the passing of royal authority to the progeny of Isaac. This is what I found in the histories of this group of people in the land of Persia and Kirman.

572. Al-Mas`udi said: Some Persians after the year 290 [903] boasted of their ancestor Isaac son of Abraham as against the progeny of Isma`il, claiming that the child [of Abraham] offered as sacrifice was Isaac and not Isma`il, and composed the following verses:

*O sons of Hagar, is it not clear to you?*

*Why then this pride and haughtiness?*

*Was not your mother in olden times*

*A slave woman to our beautiful mother Sarah?*

*Did not kingship and prophecy belong to us?*

*If you deny this, you are indulging in prejudice.  
 Isaac was the one to be sacrificed,  
 As all people agree. Why claim otherwise?  
 Thus, now that Muhammad has revealed the true religion  
 And with his light dispersed darkness,  
 You come and claim descent from Quraish.  
 But true glory comes from piety, not genealogy,  
 And even if you are the progeny of Quraish, what then?*

These verses come from a long ode which we have not thought necessary to cite in full. This poet was in fact answered by `Abdullah ibn al-Mu`azz\*. The poet in question was a contemporary of `Abdullah and lived beyond the year 300 [912-13]. `Abdullah refuted him line by line in verses from which we extract the following:

*I hear a voice but see no one;  
 Who is this wretch who made his blood licit to be shed?  
 Far be it from Isaac to be your father,  
 And even if you are his progeny, so what?  
 Tell this dog who thinks himself smart,  
 A lion has opened his mouth to devour him.*

573. The Persians do not subscribe to any other view than that which holds that only the progeny of Afridun held royal authority in any age whatsoever, ancient or not. This holds true until royalty finally passed away from them, the exception being some usurper who usurped royal power unjustly. The ancient Persians used to visit the Sacred House [in Mecca] and circumambulate it in honor of their ancestor Abraham, being faithful to his guidance and in order to maintain the purity of their genealogies. The last among them to go on pilgrimage was Sasan son of Babak, grandfather of Ardashir son of Babak, Ardashir being the first of the line of the Sasanid kings. They relate to him just as Marwanid kings relate to Marwan ibn al-Hakam or `Abbasid caliphs relate to

Al-`Abbas ibn `Abd al-Muttalib\*. None but the progeny of Ardashir ever ruled Second Persians.

574. When the above mentioned Sasan used to visit the Sacred House he would circumambulate it and utter murmuring sounds (*zamzama*) at the well of Isma`il, so the well was called Zamzam because of his murmurs and that of other Persians. This indicates that their visits to that well and their murmurings must have been very frequent. An ancient poet recited:

*Persians have murmured at the well of Zamzam  
Since ancient times.*

Some Persian poets boasted of this after the coming of Islam, and one of them recited the following verses:

*We have made the pilgrimage to the Sacred House since ancient days,  
Unloading our baggage, secure in that valley.  
Sasan son of Babak travelled until  
He reached the Ancient House, in order to uphold religion.  
He circumambulated the House and murmured at a well  
Belonging to Isma`il, a well that quenches the thirsty.*

575. The Persians used to offer gifts of money and jewels to the Ka`ba in early times. Sasan son of Babak once presented two golden gazelles, jewels, swords and much gold. All of this was buried in Zamzam. Some writers of history and biography state that these presents were offered to the tribe of Jurhum when Jurhum lived in Mecca. But Jurhum was not a wealthy tribe to which such gifts could be offered, so they may have been offered to other tribes, and God knows best. We will mention in later sections of this work what `Abd al-Muttalib did with these swords and the other objects deposited in Zamzam.

All these genealogies are in dispute as regards their origins and offshoots. We have mentioned some highlights of this subject which a person of discernment will find, when examining them, to suffice him from scrutinizing these genealogies in any great detail.

## Chapter 24

### **An account of Sasanid kings, that is to say Second Persians, their conduct and a brief history of them**

576. As already mentioned in the preceding section, the first of the line with whom Sasanid kings were linked was Ardashir son of Babak Shah son of Sasan son of Babak son of Sasan son of Bahafaridun son of Dara son of Sasan son of Bahman son of Isfandiyar son of Bistasif son of Luhrasif, as we have already cited regarding the genealogy of Luhrasif. It is also said that he is Ardashir son of Babak son of Sasan the Younger son of Babak son of Sasan son of Babak son of Mihrmas son of Sasan son of Bahman son of Isfandiyar son of Bistasif son of Luhrasif. There is no disagreement among them that Ardashir is descended from Manushihr.

577. When Ardashir became king, after having killed Ardawan, subjugated the independent kings and placed the crown on his head, the following words from his speech have been memorized: “God be thanked for singling us out with His blessings, for enfolding us with His benefits and apportionments, for vanquishing the lands for us and for causing the subjects to obey us. We praise Him with the praises of one who recognizes the worth of what He has granted him, and thank Him with the thanks of one who is aware of what He conferred upon him and privileged him. We shall diligently act to establish justice, multiply good works, implement virtuous policies, build up the land, show mercy to the subjects, develop the provinces of the realm, and repair any damages that have befallen them in former days. O people, let your minds be at ease, for I shall dispense justice widely to include both the powerful and the weak, the low-born and the noble. I shall turn justice into a praiseworthy custom and a law to be followed. You shall witness [reading *satarawna*] in our conduct what you will praise us for, and our deeds shall bear out our words. Peace upon you.”

578. Al-Mas`udi said: Ardashir son of Babak was the first to set up classes of courtiers, a practice imitated by later kings and caliphs. He believed that this was a sound policy and one which strengthened the structure of power. His courtiers were divided into three categories. The first were army commanders and sons of kings. They would sit to the right of the king at a distance of ten *dhira`*s. These were the king's intimates, companions and interlocutors from among the noble and wise. The second sat at a distance of ten *dhira`*s from the first. They were the elite among governors and former regional kings who resided at the royal gate as also the *Isbahbadhiyya* who in his own days were given rule over regions. The third, sitting also at a distance of ten *dhira`*s from the second, were the court jesters, the lazy and unemployed, and the humorous. However, this third class included none who had disreputable origins, or were of low esteem, or were missing a bodily part, or were too tall or too short, or were hunchbacked, or were accused of homosexual inclinations, or children of craftsmen who practiced despised crafts like weavers or blood-letters, even if, for instance, such a person could foretell the future or knew all the sciences.

579. Ardashir used to say: "Nothing is more harmful to the soul of a king or a ruler or one possessed of genuine knowledge than to keep the company of a fool or be intimate with an immoral person. Just as the soul can improve itself by being intimate with an honorable, educated, and noble person, so it can become corrupt if intimate with a vile person, to the point where such intimacy can impair the soul, do away with its virtues, and divert it from its praiseworthy and noble qualities. Just as the wind, when passing by some sweet-smelling object, carries with it a sweet odor which revives the soul and senses, so too when it passes by malodorous objects, for it carries a stench with it that pains the soul and does terrible harm to what is precious in it. Corruption is quicker to damage the soul than virtue to reform it, for to destroy is quicker than to build. A wise person would soon discover that intimacy with a disreputable person for one month can corrupt his mind for ages."

580. Ardashir used to say: “A king must dispense justice abundantly. Justice is the sum-total of all virtues. It is the most impregnable barrier against the dissolution and corruption of royal authority. The first sign of decay in a kingdom is the absence of justice. When the banners of injustice start to wave in some country, this must be fought by the eagles of justice and be made to retreat. No one who keeps the intimate company of kings is more fit to be possessed, at once, of excellent virtues, superior education, charming tales and remarkable anecdotes than his drinking companion. In fact, to the noble character of a king he must join the humility of a servant; to the asceticism of a hermit he must join the toughness of the man of courage; to the dignity of old men he must join the humorous talk of the young. He needs every one of these qualities in case it is not possible for other qualities to be attainable. He must have vigor of intellect to the point where he can communicate to his master’s mind while drinking with him what he has grasped by experience of the master’s character. He must be able to detect from his master’s looks and gestures that which helps him to overcome his base desires. He cannot be a fit drinking companion unless he possesses good looks and manliness. Good looks mean his clothes should be clean, he should have a pleasing smell and have an eloquent tongue. Manliness means he should be shy when showing pleasure at some act of kindness, be dignified when seated, and have a cheerful face but without being ridiculous. His manliness is not complete until he finds diversion from pleasures.”

581. Ardashir then arranged the social classes, organizing them into seven categories: first, the viziers; then the *Mubidhan* or chief judge, entrusted with religious affairs. He is the chief of *harabidha*, or priests, throughout the kingdom as also of all judges and others who execute the laws. The *isbahbadhs*, or royal deputies, were four in number: the first in Khurasan, the second in the west, the third in the south and the fourth in the north. These four were entrusted with governing the realm, whereby each was given authority over one

part of the kingdom and each ruled over one quarter of the realm. Each of these had his own *marzuban*, who were deputies of the above four. Ardashir arranged these four classes, granting royal authority to each man of power and the right to offer counsel when dealing with the ebb and flow of governmental affairs. He then arranged the classes of singers and entertainers and other musical professions.

582. Other monarchs who came after him maintained this structure until the reign of Bahram Jur. This king preserved the classes of the nobility, the sons of kings, the fire temple priests, the hermits and ascetics, the religious scholars and those who engaged in philosophical pursuits. However, he changed the classes of singers, elevating those in the middle class to the upper class and those in the lower class to the middle class. He changed their classes according to his own enjoyment of a particular entertainer and perverted Ardashir's ordering of the class of entertainers. Later kings followed his example until the coming of Kisra Anushirwan who restored the class of singers to what it had been in the days of Ardashir.

583. All Persian kings from the days of Ardashir were veiled from their drinking companions. Thus between the king and the first classes was a distance of twenty *dhira`s* since the curtain veiling the king was placed at ten *dhira`s* and the curtain from the first class was also at ten *dhira`s*. The official responsible for each curtain was a son of a Persian knight (*asawira*) and was called *Khuram Bash*. When he died another educated son of a knight would replace him and be called by that name. This is a common title of all who occupy that rank and stand in that place. The title itself means "Be cheerful and merry". When the king sat to receive his drinking companions for a bout of drinking, this *Khuram Bash* would order a man to climb to the highest point in the royal hall, raise his voice and chant in a sharp tone that can be heard by all in the assembly: "O tongue, guard your tip for you are now in the company of the king." He then descends. This was their custom whenever the king sat down

to partake of entertainments and pleasures. The drinking companions would then occupy their designated places, speaking softly and displaying no gesture until the person in charge of the curtain rises up and announces: "You there, so-and-so, sing, or you there, so-and-so, play on such an instrument in such a mode," meaning modes of music. The early Umayyads also did not appear in the open before their drinking companions, as also the early Abbasid caliphs.

584. Ardashir created agricultural regions and built cities. He left a Testament (*`Ahd*) which circulates widely among people today. When fourteen years---some say fifteen---had elapsed from his reign, his realm had become well ordered and kings had come to obey him because of his might, he became indifferent to the world. Its defects became obvious to him, such as its vain temptations, its finite character, its short duration, and its swift treachery to those who put their trust, or feel secure, in it. The world then appeared to him to be seductive, full of mischief, duplicitous, transitory and evanescent. If, to a human being, one aspect of it appeared to be delectable and sweet, another aspect would soon become bitter and poisonous. He observed how kings who had come before him had built cities and fortresses, led great armies, were more powerful militarily than him and had tougher and better prepared soldiers, yet were all turned into dust and lay beneath the earth. So he resolved to resign from his throne, abandon it and attach himself to fire temples where in calm solitude he could worship the All-Merciful. So he appointed his son Sabur as his successor and crowned him with his own crown, having recognized him as the most self-restrained, the most learned, the most courageous and most powerful of his sons. Ardashir thereafter lived as an ascetic and in solitude with his god in fire temples for a year, though some say for a month and others say more.

585. Ardashir had spent twelve years fighting the independent kings. With some he made a treaty whereby that king would submit to him for fear of his might. Others resisted him so he would march against them and destroy them. The last

of them to be killed near the Sawad region of Iraq was a Nabat king called Baba son of Bardina, master of the Palace of Ibn Hubaira, and also king Ardawan. That day, Ardashir was called *Shahanshah*, meaning king of kings. The mother of the Great Sasan was a slave girl from the Israelites who was the daughter of Sanal. There are reports about Ardashir at the beginning of his reign having to do with his encounter with an ascetic called Tansar, who was a Platonist in outlook and a follower of Socrates and Plato. We have omitted mention of these reports here, having set them forth in detail in our *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat* along with Ardashir's biography, conquests and death.

586. Ardashir has a book called *Karnamij* which mentions his history, wars, travels on earth and conduct. The following advice has been preserved of Ardashir's testament to his son Sabur when he crowned him in his place: "My son, religion and kingship are brothers. Neither can do without the other. Religion is the foundation of kingship and kingship is its protector. What has no foundation will fall into ruin and what has no protector will be lost."

587. The following has been preserved from a letter addressed by Ardashir to some particular classes of subjects and governors: "From Ardashir Bahman, king of kings, to state secretaries who administer the government, to religious jurists who uphold religion, to the knights who guard us in times of war, to ploughmen who build up the land, Peace be upon you. We are in good health, God be thanked. We have removed taxes from our subjects because of our kindness and mercy. We address the following testament to you so keep it in mind: Do not harbor grudges against one another for the enemy will soon attack you; do not indulge in hoarding for famine will overtake you all; give shelter to passers by and you will receive shelter in the hereafter; marry those close to you in kinship because this draws you closer to compassion and affinity; do not trust this world for it never lasts for anyone; do not let it sadden you for nothing happens except with God's will; and yet do not reject the world since the hereafter can only be gained through it."

588. To some of his governors Ardashir wrote: “It has reached me that you prefer gentleness to ruthlessness, affection to awe, cowardice to daring. Let your acts begin by being tough and end by being gentle. Let no heart be free from awe of you, but do not empty your heart from affection. What I say here need not be difficult for you to grasp for these two moods are close to one another.”

589. Ardashir was followed by his son Sabur who reigned for thirty-three years. He waged war against many kings of the world, developed agricultural districts, and built cities that bore his name just as districts and cities bore his father’s name. The Arabs call him “Sabur of the Armies”. In his days, Mani appeared and preached about the two gods. Sabur abandoned Magianism and took up the religion of Mani which preached light and abandoned darkness. He later returned to Magianism, and Mani fled to India for reasons that forced him to do so which we have mentioned in our previous works.

590. The king of the Romans wrote to Sabur as follows: “Greetings. News has reached me of your policies with respect to your army, your firm control of your possessions, and the security of your subjects, all of which is the result of your wise management. I wish to follow in your footsteps and pursue your policies.”

Sabur wrote back: “I achieved this by following eight courses of action: I never treated lightly any order I gave or any prohibition; I never failed to fulfill a promise or a threat; I waged war to gain power and not as a sport; I won the hearts of people through their trust but not through cruelty, and their fear but without causing hatred. I punished for the sake of a crime committed but not out of anger. I made prosperity general and deducted the surplus.”

591. It is said that Sabur wrote to one of his governors: “If you appoint some one to perform a task for you, be generous in paying him his wages, strengthen him through virtuous helpers, and grant him freedom to act. By being generous you limit his greed; by giving him helpers, you strengthen him against criminals; by granting him freedom of action you make him fear the consequences. Then reveal to him fully the purpose behind your appointment of

him so that he can keep this constantly in view and memorize his assignment. If he succeeds in what you assigned to him your purpose is accomplished and you are bound to increase his reward. If he goes against what you commanded, your argument against him is irrefutable and you are free to punish him. Peace.”

592. The testament of Sabur son of Ardashir to his son Hurmuz and to later kings ran as follows: “Let your sublime virtues match the sublimity of your ambitions, your exalted generosity match your exalted endeavors, and the result of your ventures match the result of your efforts.”

593. It is said that the reign of Sabur lasted thirty-one years and one half year and eighteen days. Following him was his son Hurmuz, surnamed the “Hero”, who reigned for one year; some say twenty-two months. He built the city known as Ram Hurmuz in the Ahwaz countryside. To one of his governors he wrote: “ To fortify the frontiers, you must lead armies and manage the affairs of state and of the provinces, for only a man who possesses five qualities is fit to undertake that task: sound judgment which enables him to ascertain the true sources of the news that reach him; prudence that prevents him from plunging heedlessly into any crisis except when the right opportunity clearly presents itself; a courage which is not diminished by misfortunes and repeated calamities; a credible seriousness when issuing a promise or a threat, and one that people can be sure will be implemented; and a generosity which makes it easy for him to collect money lawfully.”

594. Following him was Bahram son of Hurmuz who reigned for three years. He waged war against the kings of the east. It is related that Mani son of Fatak, the disciple of Qardun, came to Bahram and expounded to him the religion of Dualism. Bahram pretended to accept his proposal and tricked him into summoning his missionaries who had dispersed in various countries calling on people to embrace Dualism. Once assembled, he killed Mani and his chief followers. In the days of this Mani the name *Zanadiqa* [Crypto-Manichean] first appeared from which the term *Zandaqa* was derived. This is so because when

Zaradusht son of Isbitman appeared among the Persians, as already related regarding his genealogy, and brought them the book known as *Basta* in the ancient Persian language, he further produced a commentary on it called *Zand*. This in turn was followed by a commentary on the commentary called *Barzand*. All this has already been set forth above. The *Zand* was in fact an interpretation of the earlier revelation. Whoever introduced anything into their revealed law which contradicted the revelation, i.e. the *Basta*, and relied instead on the interpretation, which is the *Zand*, would be described as a *Zandi*. They would describe him as one who followed the interpretation which conflicts with the revelation and who abandoned the literal meaning found in revelation. When the Arabs appeared on the scene, they took that term from the Persians and Arabized it into *Zindiq*. Thus, the Dualists are the *Zanadiqa*. But the term\* was also applied to anyone who believed in the pre-eternity of the world and rejected the creation of the world.

595. He was followed by Bahram son of Bahram, who reigned for seventeen years; other dates are also given. From his early days as king he turned wholly towards revelry, pleasure, hunting and picnics, caring nothing for his kingdom or the affairs of his subjects. He distributed agricultural estates as fiefs among his intimates or whoever attached himself to him among his servants and courtiers. The estates fell into ruin and were emptied of those who tended them while the estate holders resided in the prosperous estates. Thus, cultivated land diminished except for the estates granted as fiefs, from whose holders no tax was gathered because they were in collusion with the king's viziers and intimates. The viziers had been entrusted with the running of the kingdom. So the country declined, cultivated land shrank, the treasuries were depleted, and the strong elements among the military became weak while the weak elements perished.

596. One day he rode out to one of his recreational parks where he hunted. Riding towards al-Mada'in he was overtaken by night. The moon was full. A

stray thought occurred to him, so he summoned the *Mubidh*, who was in his entourage. The king began to converse with him and to ask him about the history of his ancestors. As they travelled, they arrived at a ruined site which was once a very famous agricultural estate that had fallen into ruin during his reign. There was no human there and nothing but owls, one screeching and another answering it amidst the ruins. The king said to the *Mubidh*: “Do you suppose that any human being has been granted the knowledge to understand the language of owls screeching in this quiet night?” The *Mubidh* responded: “O king, I have been privileged by God to understand it.” The king pressed him for an explanation and the *Mubidh* insisted he spoke the truth. “Tell me, then,” said the king, “What is this bird saying and what is the other answering him?” The *Mubidh* said: “One is a male owl and the other is a female. He is saying to her: ‘Let me enjoy intimacy with you so that we produce progeny who glorify God and so that we leave behind descendants in this world who will repeatedly call upon God to have mercy on our souls.’ The female owl answered him, ‘What you ask me to do is the greatest of good fortune and the most bounteous of destinies in this world and the next. However, I must state certain conditions which, if you comply with them, I will respond to your call.’ The male asked, ‘What are these conditions?’ She responded, ‘The first of these is that, if I surrender myself to you and respond to your desire, you are to give me as a fief twenty ruined villages from among the ones formerly most prosperous that fell into ruin in the days of this fortunate king.’ The king said, ‘So what did the male say in response?’ The *Mubidh* answered, ‘The male said: If the reign of this fortunate king lasts any longer, I shall grant you a thousand ruined villages, but what will you do with them?’ She responded, ‘When we come together our progeny will grow and multiply. To each of our children we will give a ruined village as a fief.’ The male said, ‘This is the easiest request you have made to me and the easiest thing you can ask of me. I have already given you my word and am fully ready to implement it, so fulfil your part of the bargain.’”

597. When the king heard this from the *Mubidh*, it affected him deeply. He was roused from his slumber and thought about what had been said to him. At once he dismounted, as did the people with him, and he took the *Mubidh* aside and said to him, “You who guards the religion, gives counsel to the king and reminds him of what he has neglected and ruined of the affairs of his kingdom and his subjects, tell me, what is this speech you have addressed to me? You have agitated in me what once was dormant and made me aware of what I have neglected.” The *Mubidh* answered, “It was by chance that I encountered the king of happy fortune at a moment of good fortune for his subjects and his realm, and was thus able to make of my words a parable and a reminder, through the tongue of the bird, when the king asked me his question.” The king said, “O good counselor, reveal to me the purpose behind this parable and the meaning you intended. What is meant by it and how will it end?” The *Mubidh* answered, “O king of happy fortune, kingship cannot attain greatness except by following the religious law, worshipping God, obeying him and acting in accordance with his commands and prohibitions. Religious law cannot be properly instituted except through kingship. Kingship cannot attain greatness except through men. Men cannot be sustained except through wealth. Wealth cannot be attained except through prosperity. Prosperity cannot be attained except through justice, and justice is the scales instituted among mankind and placed there by God, who has appointed the king as its guardian.”

598. The king said: “You have spoken the truth. Explain clearly to me what you have in mind and do so unambiguously.” The *Mubidh* answered: “I will do so, O king. You turned to the estates, and expropriated them from their owners and tillers, who are the main taxpayers and from whom wealth is primarily derived. You then distributed them as fiefs to courtiers, royal servants, the idle and others. These people were quick to help themselves to the revenues, seeking fast profit, neglected the upkeep of the land, were heedless as to consequences, and totally ignored the good of the estates. They were exempt from paying taxes

because of their closeness to the king. Great harm befell the tax-payers and caretakers of estates who were left behind, so they abandoned their lands and homes and sought refuge with the lords of prosperous estates. Affluence declined, the estates fell into ruin, wealth decreased, soldiers and subjects perished and nearby kings and nations coveted the Persian realm once they realized that the resources which normally support a kingdom had dried up.”

599. When the king heard what the *Mubidhan* had to say, he stayed where he was for three days, summoned his viziers, state secretaries and heads of government bureaus, and ordered the decrees granting fiefs to be presented to him. The estates granted to the elite and courtiers were stripped from them and restored to their original owners who were made responsible for their earlier taxes and were ordered to rebuild the land. The weak among them grew strong again, the land prospered and became fertile, wealth increased in the hands of tax-gatherers, the soldiery grew strong again, the enemy’s designs were frustrated and the frontier posts were reinforced. The king then took it upon himself to attend personally and at all times to the affairs of state and to be fully apprized of the circumstances of the elite and commoners. Thus, his reign grew in strength and his realm became well ordered to the point where his days were called feast-days because of the prosperity and good deeds that all people experienced, and because of widespread justice.

600. Following him was Bahram son of Bahram son of Bahram, who ruled for four years and four months before he died. Following him was Narsi son of king Bahram son of Bahram the Hero, who reigned for seven years---some say seven and a half. He was followed by Hurmuz son of Narsi son of Bahram, according to the genealogy already cited, who reigned for seven years and five months. Abu `Ubaida Ma`mar ibn al-Muthanna related on the authority of `Umar Kisra that all the Sasanid kings we have so far mentioned down to this king, that is, Hurmuz son of Narsi, resided in Jundaisabur, in the territory of Khuzistan. Ya`qub ibn al-Laith al-Saffar\* had wanted to reside in Jundaisabur, emulating

the ancient Sasanid kings until he died there. Later in this book we shall make mention of the caliph al-Mu`tamid and how he resided in that city and died there.

601. Following Hurmuz son of Narsi was his son Sabur son of Hurmuz, surnamed Sabur “of the Shoulders”. He reigned for seventy-two years until his death. His father had designated him as his successor while still in his mother’s womb. Meanwhile, the Arabs had overwhelmed the Sawad of Iraq and the Persian viziers took over the running of affairs. The most courageous Arab tribe that overpowered Iraq was the progeny of Iyad ibn Nizar ; they were called *Tabaq* because they had overcome (*atbaqa*) that land. Their king at the time was al-Harith ibn al-Agharr al-Iyadi. When Sabur was sixteen years old he mobilized his knights to ride out and entrap the Arabs. The tribe of Iyad used to spend summer in al-Jazira and winter in Iraq. In the army of Sabur there was a man from Iyad called Laqit who wrote to his tribe to warn them and to inform them of those marching against them, doing so in the following verses:

*Laqit sends peace in this letter*

*To the tribe of Iyad in al-Jazira.*

*A lion is about to pounce on you suddenly,*

*So do not feel secure as you tend your sheep.*

*Seventy thousand of them are advancing upon you,*

*Driving forth [reading yajurruna] their battalions, like locusts,*

*Mounted on horses that shall attack you [reading sata'tikumu].*

*Near is the moment when you will be destroyed*

*Like the destruction of `Ad\*.*

602. Iyad took no notice of his letter though their enemy kept raiding Iraq and attacking the Sawad. When finally their enemy was mobilized and ready to attack, Laqit sent another letter telling them that the enemy were now fully mobilized and on the march towards them, expressing himself also in verses, which begin as follows:

*O abode of `Abla, your remembrance fills me with anguish;  
 You have stirred up in me anxieties, sorrows and pain.  
 Tell Iyad and spread the news to their leaders:  
 My view, if I am not disobeyed, is that the matter has become obvious.  
 God damn you! Do you not fear a people marching upon you [reading mashu]  
 Like locusts crawling speedily?  
 If their horde were to smash into  
 The highest peaks of Mount Thahlan\*, these peaks would fracture.  
 So entrust leadership, may you prosper,  
 To one who is valorous, and experienced in affairs of war.*

603. Sabur then fell upon them and slaughtered most of them, and only a few of them were able to escape to the land of the Byzantines. He then dislocated the shoulders of the Arabs and was thus called Sabur of the Shoulders. Mu`awiya ibn Abi Sufyan\* had corresponded with the Tamim tribe in Iraq urging them to rebel against `Ali ibn Abi Talib\*. When `Ali heard of this, he, and in one of his assemblies where he spoke at length,

*quoted the following verses:  
 A clan that thinks virtue is vice,  
 Or thinks treachery is a wise policy,  
 Is on the verge of destruction,  
 As Sabur destroyed Iyad in the Sawad.*

During his march, Sabur arrived at the land of Bahrain, then inhabited by the Tamim tribe, so he proceeded to slaughter them. The Tamim escaped, their chief at the time being `Amr ibn Tamim ibn Murr, who was then three hundred years old. He used to be hung up in a basket specially made for him on a column of their temple. They wanted to take him away with them but he refused, insisting on their leaving him behind in their land, saying: "I am about to die, today or tomorrow, and not much of a lifespan remains to me. Perhaps God will save you, through me, from the ravages of this king who has been

given power over the Arabs.” So they left him where he was. The cavalry of Sabur arrived the next morning and found that the population had fled but saw a basket hanging from a tree. `Amr heard the neighing of horses and their trampling, and men muttering, so he cried out in a weak voice. They then seized him and took him to Sabur.

604. When placed before him, Sabur noted the clear signs of old age and decrepitude upon him and said: “Who are you, O mortal old man?” He answered: “My name is `Amr ibn Tamim ibn Murr, and I have reached the age that you can see. The people have fled from you because of your slaughter and cruel punishments, but I have preferred to die by your hands so that the remainder of my people might live. It may be that God, lord of the heavens and the earth, might bring them relief at your hands and dissuade you from your intention to slaughter them. I shall now, with your permission, ask you a question.” Sabur said: “Speak and we shall listen.” `Amr asked: “What is it that drives you to kill your subjects and the Arab notables?” Sabur responded: “I kill them because of the evil they committed in my country and against the people of my kingdom.” `Amr said: “They did so when you were not yet in charge of your people but when you reached maturity they [Arabs] stopped their evil from awe of you.” Sabur answered: “I kill them because we Persian kings find in our learned traditions and in the histories of our ancestors that the Arabs will in future overcome us and conquer our realm.” `Amr asked: “Is this something you know for certain or just speculation?” “It is indeed something I know for certain and is inevitable,” said Sabur. `Amr said: “If you know this for certain, why then do you act so unjustly towards the Arabs? I swear to God, if you were to spare the lives of all Arabs and be good to them, they would reciprocate your decent behavior by being kind to your people when they overwhelm your state. If your own days were to last until then, they would reward you when they attain power over you by sparing you and your people. If the matter is truly as you say it is, this would be a more prudent policy and be more beneficial in its

consequences. If it is false, why this rush to commit evil by slaughtering your subjects?” Sabur answered: “It is all true and power shall pass to you. Your view is the right one. You have been sincere in your speech and counsel.” Sabur then sent out a town crier to proclaim amnesty and security and stop the bloodshed and the killing. It is said that `Amr lived on for eighty more years though some say less. God knows best.

605. Sabur then marched on al-Sham, conquering cities and killing many Byzantines. He was minded to enter Byzantine territory in disguise in order to learn about their affairs and customs, so he donned a disguise and travelled to Constantinople. There, he found a banquet in progress held by Caesar in which both elite and commoners participated, so he went in among them and sat at a table. Caesar had previously commanded a painter to go to Sabur’s camp and paint his picture. When the painter brought back his painting, Caesar ordered it to be carved onto the gold and silver drinking utensils. A person seated at the same table as Sabur picked up a goblet, looked at the image on it as Sabur sat facing him, and was struck by how closely the two images resembled each other. So he went to the king and told him, and the king commanded him to be brought into his presence. When he asked him who he was, Sabur answered: “I am a knight of Sabur who merited punishment for something I committed and this led me to enter your land.” They did not believe him and brought him to be executed so he confessed his true identity.

606. Sabur was placed inside the skin of a cow. Caesar then marched with his army until he reached the middle of Iraq, conquering cities, raiding and lopping off the tops of palm trees, until he reached the city of Jundaisabur [Jundishapur]. The Persian notables had fortified themselves in that city. Caesar camped outside it and the Byzantines celebrated one of their feast-days that night, getting ready to conquer the city the following morning. Those guarding Sabur neglected to do so and became drunk. Near Sabur was a group of Persian prisoners, whom he addressed, urging them to untie one another and to pour oil

on him from skins found nearby. They did so, the leather in which he was wrapped grew soft and he was able to slip out. He then came to the city on whose walls guards were set in rotation. He spoke to them and they recognized him and pulled him up by ropes to them. He then opened the weapon depots and led them out distributing them along certain dispositions of the [Byzantine] army. Meanwhile the Byzantines were totally oblivious and felt secure. When the *nawaqis* (hand bells) were sounded, the army was attacked and the Byzantines were defeated. Caesar was then led in as a prisoner. Sabur spared his life and attached him to his other men who had escaped the slaughter. Caesar then planted olive trees in Iraq to compensate for the palms he had earlier destroyed. The olive was not then known in Iraq. He also built the *shadhrawan* of the city of Tustar on its river, the *shadhrawan* being a great dike, and a lock made of stone, iron and lead. He further rebuilt what he had destroyed. All this is told in histories at length, but too long to mention here. Caesar then departed for the land of the Byzantines.

607. It is related in some histories that Sabur cut Caesar up and severed the tendons of his heels or cauterized them, and that the Byzantines do not sever the tendons of their beasts of burden nor wear sandals with heels. Concerning this matter, al-Harith ibn Janada known as al-Hurmuzan wrote the following verses:

*They [Persians] ruled over all peoples everywhere,  
They severed the tendons of Hercules\* in the Sawad.  
They killed Abu Qabus\* by force,  
And they recaptured the plains from Iyad.*

608. Regarding the actions of Sabur and how he exposed himself to danger by entering the land of his enemy as a spy, an early Persian poet composed the following verses:

*Sabur was the most distinguished of his royal line;  
Selected from that line, he came to lose his freedom.  
When in the land of the Byzantines he roamed as a spy,*

*Circling around death [reading hawm al-maniyyati], avoiding the guile of cunning men.*

*They took him prisoner. It was an odd stumble for him to commit,*

*A mistake by one who did not make mistakes.*

*The Byzantine king now devastated the land of Iraq,*

*Wreaking terror and havoc.*

*He [Sabur] jabbered to the Persians at the gates and they rallied to him,*

*Like lions calling to one another in a thicket.*

*With the sword he cut off the Byzantine presence and they were eradicated,*

*How excellent you are among those who exact revenge!*

*Here they were, planting olive trees to compensate for the palm trees*

*They had lopped off or cut with a saw.*

609. Thereafter, Sabur invaded the lands of al-Jazira, Amid and other Byzantine territories, transferring many of their populations and settling them in the lands of al-Sus, Tustar and other cities in the Ahwaz countryside. There, they multiplied and settled the land. From that time on, the Tustar silk brocade (*dibaj*) and other kinds of silk were manufactured in Tustar while silk fabric was produced in al-Sus and curtains and mattresses were made in the territory of Nisibin, which are still on sale today. Sasanian kings before Sabur and many earlier kings among First Persians used to reside in Ctesiphon, west of al-Mada'in in Iraq. Sabur resided on the eastern side of al-Mada'in and there he built the Monument (*Iwan*) known until today as Iwan Kisra. Abarwiz son of Hurmuz had built certain segments of that Iwan.

610. The caliph Harun al-Rashid was once camped on the banks of the Tigris, near the Iwan. He heard one servant behind his tent saying to another: "The fellow who built this monument is a cursed son of so-and- so. He wanted to climb upon it in order to reach heaven." Al-Rashid ordered a chamberlain to flog him a hundred lashes, saying to those in attendance: "Royalty establishes kinship and thus all kings are brothers. Self-respect impels me to discipline him

in order to protect royalty from insult and to emphasize what kings owe to one another.” It is related of the caliph al-Rashid after the downfall of the Barmakids\* that he sent a message to Yahya ibn Khalid ibn Barmak, then in jail, asking for his advice as to the tearing down of the Iwan. Yahya sent back a message: “Do not do it.” The caliph said to his courtiers: “Magianism is still in his heart of hearts, as also his sympathy for it and his desire not to destroy its monuments.” So the caliph ordered them to begin its destruction. Soon, however, he found that he needed a vast amount of money to do so, too large to estimate, and ordered the work of destruction to cease. Once again he wrote to Yahya to inform him of what had happened and Yahya answered by advising him to spend whatever monies were needed to tear it down, urging him strongly to do so. Al-Rashid was surprised by this contradictory advice as between his first and second response and sent a message asking him to explain himself. Yahya answered him as follows: “Yes, indeed. My first advice was based on my desire to immortalize the nation of Islam and to exalt its reputation. Thus, whoever comes in later centuries from among diverse nations and sees this vast monument would say to himself that a nation which had conquered another that had built such a monument, erased its vestiges and overpowered its realm must clearly be a great and mighty and invincible nation. My second advice proceeded from the fact that, when informed that the work of destruction had commenced then could no longer be completed, I wanted to avoid ascribing impotence to the nation of Islam so that whoever comes in later times might say that this nation was unable to tear down what the Persians had built.” When al-Rashid heard that explanation he said: “God damn him! I never heard him say anything but the truth.” He then abandoned its destruction.

611. Sabur was the one who built the city of Nisabur [Nishapur] in Khurasan as well as other cities in Persia and Iraq. Reigning after Sabur son of Hurmuz was his brother Ardashir son of Hurmuz, who reigned for four years before he was deposed. Then came Sabur son of Sabur for five years---plus four months, it is

said. He waged many wars against the tribe of Iyad ibn Nizar and other Arabs. A poet from Iyad composed the following verses about him:

*In spite of Sabur son of Sabur, the tents of Iyad  
Are now teeming with horses and camels.*

It is also reported that this verse was recited by some individuals who had escaped to Byzantine territory when Sabur of the Shoulders had decimated their tribe, as mentioned above. These individuals later returned to their homeland and joined the tribe of Rabi`a from the progeny of Bakr ibn Wa'il. Rabi`a had come to dominate the Sawad and raided the realm of Sabur son of Sabur, so the Iyad poet recited the verse quoted above when they were part of Rabi`a. Other versions of this narrative exist but God knows the truth.

612. Sabur was followed by Bahram son of Sabur who reigned for ten, some say eleven, years. He was followed by Yazdjird son of Sabur, known as "the Sinner", who reigned for twenty-one years, five months and eighteen days until his death. Another version has twenty-two years less two months. He was followed by Bahram son of Yazdjird, known as Bahram Jur, who reigned for twenty-three years. He became king at age twenty. He and his horse sank in a pool of mud when out hunting. The Persians were deeply distressed because his justice had spread widely as also his generosity, his mercy towards his subjects and his orderly reign. In his days, Khaqan, king of the Turks, had marched on Sughd and sent out raids into his realm. It is reported that he arrived in the territory of Rayy. Bahram mobilized his army and turned away from the main road with a detachment of his troops until he fell upon Khaqan and his soldiers and killed him, and carried his head with him back to Iraq. The kings of the earth were in awe of him, and Caesar made peace with him and paid him tribute. Before that, Bahram had entered India in disguise to spy out their state of affairs. He attached himself to Shabrama, an Indian king, and performed exceedingly well in one of that king's wars where he made him overcome his

enemy. The king gave him his daughter in marriage under the impression that he was a Persian knight.

613. Bahram had been raised with the Arabs in al-Hira\* and could recite Arabic poetry and speak all languages. On his ring was inscribed the phrase “Through great deeds great achievements are won.” Stories are told of how he obtained kingship after his father, and how he seized the crown as well as the camel placed between two lions, together with other stories and exploits too numerous to be mentioned here. Thus, tales are told as to why he was called Bahram Jur and what innovations he introduced in his days into archery by studying both the inner and outer parts of the bow. All these stories have been related in our two books *Akhbar al-Zaman* and *al-Awsat*. In these two works, we mentioned what Persians and Turks have said about the structure of the bow and the way it is constructed according to the four humors, like those of a human being, and what they related regarding styles of aiming in archery.

614. The following verses are preserved from among what Bahram Jur recited when he captured and killed Khaqan:

*I said to him when I scattered his troops:*

*It is as though you have never heard of the exploits of Bahram.*

*I am the guardian of the whole Persian realm,*

*And no realm can prosper without a guardian.*

He also recited:

*People of all lands have come to know*

*That they are now my slaves.*

*I overcame their kings and subjugated those among them*

*Who were mighty, lordly and obeyed.*

*Here are their lions, crouching down in fear,*

*And lions are terrified of me.*

*If some king of the earth whispered against me,*

*I would muster against him battalions and armies.*

*He would then submit to me or else I would drive him out,  
Wailing in chains and shackles.*

He has many poems in Arabic and Persian which we have chosen not to quote here, aiming for brevity and concision.

615. He was succeeded by Yazdajird son of Bahram who reigned for nineteen years—some say eighteen years, four months and eighteen days. He had built a wall of brick and mud in the region of al-Bab wa'l Abwab, as mentioned earlier in this book when speaking about al-Bab wa'l Abwab and the Caucasus Mountain.

616. Yazdajird summoned a wise man of that age who lived in a distant region of his kingdom, seeking to be improved by his moral teachings and to benefit from his advice in order to perfect his rule over his subjects. The king asked him: "O wise man, what is good government?" The man answered: "Kindness to subjects, taking what is due from them without causing them hardship, winning their friendship through acting justly, making the roads safe and protecting the wronged from the wrongdoer." The king asked: "How does a king become good?" "Through his viziers and helpers. If these are upright, he becomes a good king. If corrupt, he becomes corrupt." Yazdajird asked: "People have discussed at length the causes of civil strife. Tell me: what gives rise to it and enflames it, and what pacifies and prevents it?" "It is enflamed by spite and caused by a general state of unruliness. This state is engendered in particular by an atmosphere of disdain, is fortified by tongues expressing freely what is in hearts, an anxiety that overrides all else, expectations that cannot easily be fulfilled, and a happy sleep followed by waking up to a dispossessed reality. What pacifies civil strife is the readiness to face its dangers before they occur, to prefer serious action to the temptations of levity, and to act decisively both when angry and when contented."

617. He was succeeded by Hurmuz son of Yazdajird. His brother Fairuz challenged his authority then killed him and took over power; he is Fairuz son

of Yazdajird son of Bahram. Fairuz reigned for twenty-seven years until he was killed by Akhshunwaz, king of the Hayatila [Hephthalites] in the city of Marwarrudh, in Khurasan. The Hephthalites are the Sughd who live between Bukhara and Samarqand. Fairuz was succeeded by Balash son of king Fairuz who reigned for four years. He was followed by Qubadh son of Fairuz in whose days there appeared Mazdak the heretic, after whom Mazdakism is named. Stories are told about him and Qubadh and about the laws and tricks he innovated and practiced on the commoners until he was killed by Anushirwan during his reign. Qubadh reigned for forty-three years before he died. He was followed by his son Anushirwan son of Qubadh son of Fairuz who reigned for forty-eight years--- some say forty-seven years and eight months.

618. Qubadh had been deposed and a brother called Jamasb was installed in his place for about two years, due to some incident related to Mazdak and his followers. Anushirwan went to seek the aid of Zarmihr son of Sukhra until Qubadh was restored to the throne. A long story is told about these events.

When Anushirwan ascended the throne he executed Mazdak followed by eighty thousand of his followers. This took place between Jazir and al-Nahrawan in the land of Iraq and that day Anushirwan acquired his name which means “a new reign”. He then rallied his subjects to the Magian religion and forbade them to engage in arguments and disputations about religions.

619. He then marched towards al-Bab wa'l Abwab and the Caucasus Mountain because of raids conducted by kings of that region against his realm. He built the wall in the sea on the skins of cows bloated with rocks, iron and lead. As the wall rose, the skins sank until they rested on the sea-bed while the wall itself rose above the water. Men with daggers and knives then dived into the sea and split the skins so the wall was firmly entrenched on the sea-bed and above the earth. That wall is still there today, i.e. in the year 332. The part of the wall in the sea is called “al-Qaid” [barrier] and prevents enemy ships from approaching. He then extended the wall onto the mainland between the Caucasus Mountain

and the sea, and placed gates in it facing the infidels, and made the wall to extend further into the mountain, as we already mentioned when we spoke about the Caucasus and the Bab. Reports exist of Anushirwan and his dealings with the Khazar kings until he was able to build the wall. It is said that he did so through instilling fear among the nations in that region until they submitted to him.

620. Anushirwan then headed to Iraq. There, he received ambassadors of various kings with their gifts, and delegations from diverse kingdoms. Among those who came to him was an ambassador of the Byzantine Caesar bearing gifts and presents. The ambassador looked at the Iwan and admired its construction but noticed a warp in its floor area and said: “The courtyard should have been square in shape”. He was told: “An old woman had a house where you see a deflection. Anushirwan asked her gently to sell her house, offering her a tempting price, but she refused to sell so he did not force her, and that warp remained as you see it.” The Byzantine said: “That warp is actually prettier than a straight line.”

621. Anushirwan travelled throughout his land and realm, fortifying construction works, building castles and forts, and mobilizing soldiers. He then deceived Caesar, marched to al-Jazira, conquered its cities and reached the Euphrates and crossed into al-Sham. There he conquered its cities among which were Aleppo, Qinnasrin, Homs and Apamia, which is between Antioch and Homs. He went on to Antioch, where a nephew of Caesar was residing, and besieged then captured it. He also captured a major city with dense habitations and marvelous construction located on the seashore of Antioch. Its traces and ruins can still be seen to the present day and was called Saluqiya [Seleucia by the Sea]. He proceeded to conquer cities in al-Sham and the Byzantine lands, carrying off precious stones and wealth as booty, shedding blood and sending out military expeditions until Caesar sued for peace and offered him tribute and taxes. Anushirwan agreed, and transported from al-Sham marble and all sorts of

mosaics and colored stones. Mosaics are a substance that is cooked from glass and gaily-colored stones which are then used to cover surfaces on the ground and on buildings, appearing like gems. Some of it resembles transparent silver bowls. All this he carried to Iraq where he built a city in the vicinity of al-Mada'in which he called Rumiya, constructing it inside the walls by using the kinds of stones we mentioned, in imitation of Antioch and other cities in al-Sham. That city had a mud wall which now lies in ruin and is still known by the name indicated above.

622. The Khaqan of the Turks gave him his daughter and niece in marriage and the kings of India and Sind, of north and south, and of all kingdoms made peace with him. Gifts were conveyed to him and delegations would visit him fearing his aggression, his numerous troops, his wide realm, his past aggression against kings and the kings he slaughtered, together with his respect for justice. The king of China wrote the following to him: "From Faghfur, king of China, owner of the jeweled palace where two rivers run irrigating aloes and camphor, whose scent can be smelled at a distance of two *farsakhs*; who is served by the daughters of a thousand kings; whose stables contain a thousand white elephants, to his brother Kisra Anushirwan." He sent him a present of a mounted knight made of pearls set in order. The eyes of the rider and horse were made of red rubies while his sword's hilt was made of emerald arrayed with jewels. He also presented him with a gilded silken robe on which was a picture of the king sitting in his royal chamber in all his finery and with the crown on his head. Behind him stood his servants carrying whisks. The picture was embroidered in gold while the hem of the robe was in lapis lazuli. This was placed in a golden basket and carried by a slave woman hidden beneath her long hair and glowing with beauty. Other presents were also offered from among the wondrous products imported from China and such as are given by kings to their peers.

623. The king of India wrote to him: “From the king of India and the greatest of eastern leaders, lord of the golden palace and gates of ruby and pearl, to his brother the king of Persia, lord of crown and banner, Kisra Anushirwan.” He sent him a present of one thousand *mann* of Indian aloes wood which melts in the fire like wax and can be stamped like wax so that the inscription on it can be clearly made out. He also presented him with a bowl made of red carnelian a *shibr* in width and filled with pearls; ten *mann* of camphor the size of pistachio or even bigger; and a slave woman seven *shibrs* tall whose eyelashes reached down to her cheeks and between whose eyelids shone a glow like lightening, so white were her eyeballs. Her skin was pure, her proportions were perfect, her frame was most shapely, her eyebrows were arched and her braids dragged behind her. He also sent him a rug made of snake-skin smoother than silk and prettier than embroidered fabric. The Indian king’s letter was enclosed in the bark of a tree known as *kadhi* and written in red gold. This tree grows in India and China and is a strange kind of plant, beautiful in color and sweetly scented. Its bark is thinner than Chinese paper and is used for correspondence between the kings of China and India.

624. While in his camp fighting some enemy, Anushirwan received a letter from the king of Tibet that ran as follows: “From Khaqan, king of Tubbatan and eastern lands adjacent to China and India, to his brother of praiseworthy conduct and power, king of the middle kingdom at the center of the seven climes.” He presented him with wondrous gifts such as are brought from Tibet, including one hundred Tibetan cuirasses, one hundred pieces of metal caparisons, one hundred golden Tibetan shields and four thousand *mann* of musk from his own treasuries and in the musk bags of its gazelles.

625. Anushirwan had marched beyond the Balkh river, ending up in Khuttalan where he killed Akhshunwaz, king of the Hephthalites, in revenge for his grandfather Fairuz. He overran his kingdom and added it to his realm. From India he had received the book called *Kalila wa Dimna*\*, the game of chess and

the black dye known as Indian dye. This is the dye whose black color glows in the visible roots of hair when dyed with it, and does not fade at all. It is reported that Hisham ibn `Abd al-Malik\* used that dye.

626. Anushirwan had a huge table made of gold and studded with jewels. On its sides was written: “May the food be wholesome to one who eats lawfully and who gives the needy what remains of the food. What you eat when craving for it you have eaten well; what you eat when you do not crave it has eaten you.” He had four rings: one for the land tax whose stone was carnelian on which was inscribed the word “Justice”; one ring for the royal estates whose stone was turquoise and inscribed “Prosperity”; one for military aid whose stone was dark ruby and inscribed “Caution”; and one for the postal service whose stone was a fiery red ruby inscribed “Loyalty”.

627. Anushirwan instituted the land-tax system in Iraq, imposing on each *jarib*\* of wheat and barley in the Sawad\* one *dirham*, on rice half and two-thirds, on every four Persian palm trees one *dirham*, on every six *daqal* palm trees one *dirham*, on every six olive stumps one *dirham*, on vineyards eight *dirhams*, and on every green field seven *dirhams*. These are seven kinds of agricultural produce; the rest he left untaxed, since they were common to both humans and beasts. Anushirwan used to be called “Kisra the Beneficent” and poets have mentioned him in their verse. Thus `Adiyy ibn Zayd al-`Ibadi composed the following lines:

*Where now is Anushirwan, best of kings,  
And where before him is Sabur?  
Death was not in awe of him,  
So kingship left him and his gate is abandoned.  
When they departed they became like dry leaves  
Scattered by the east and west winds.*

628. One day Anushirwan sat and received wise men to benefit from their wisdom. When seated in their proper order in his assembly, he asked them:

“Give me some wise advice of benefit to me personally and to my subjects.” Each sage then delivered his ready-to-hand opinion while Anushirwan bent his head in thought as each of them spoke. It was finally the turn of Buzurjmihir son of al-Bakhtakan who said: “O king, I will summarize my advice under twelve headings.” The king said: “Let’s hear them.” Buzurjmihir said: “First is fear of God in moments of craving, desire, fear, anger and caprice, so when any of these states occur, direct them towards God and not towards people; second is truthfulness in word, and fulfillment of promises, conditions, covenants and pacts; third is consulting with scholars in affairs of state; fourth is honoring scholars, the nobility, frontier guards, army commanders, secretaries of state and dependents, according to their ranks; fifth is to investigate the judiciary and the governors and to hold them to a fair accounting by rewarding the virtuous and punishing the culprits; sixth is to investigate the conditions of people in prison by reviewing their cases from time to time so that the criminals are kept in chains and the innocent are released; seventh, the upkeep of highways and people’s markets, prices and trading practices; eighth, disciplining the subjects properly for offenses committed and executing punishments; ninth, keeping weapons and all other implements of war in a state of readiness; tenth, honoring family, children and kin and finding out what is to their benefit; eleventh, placing spies on frontier posts to know what needs to be feared and take the necessary steps before aggression occurs; twelfth, investigating viziers and other officials and replacing those who are dishonest or infirm.” Anushirwan ordered these words to be written down in gold and said: “These words summarize all royal policies.”

629. Among the wise words of Anushirwan that have been preserved are the following. He was once asked: “What is the greatest of all treasures in value and the most useful in times of need?” He responded: “A good deed done to a free man and a knowledge transmitted to posterity.” Anushirwan was asked: “Who among people is longest lived?” He answered: “He whose knowledge is great

and those who come after him are educated by that knowledge, or else one who does virtuous deeds so that his progeny feels honored by him.” It was Anushirwan who said: “Doing favors is fecund, and rendering thanks is a thing that multiplies. He who does a favor causes the man who thanks him to render him proper thanks.” He also said: “Do not count misers among the trustworthy nor the deceitful among the free.” To Buzurjmihir he once said: “Whichever of my children is fit to be king you must support his candidature and clearly specify him.” Buzurjmihir answered: “I do not know your children but I will describe to you those who are fit to be kings: those who rise highest in achievement; those who most seek to be educated; those who feel most sympathy for their subjects; those who are most merciful to them; those who are kindest to kin, and those who are furthest from injustice. He who possesses these qualities is most fit to be king.”

630. Al-Mas`udi said: In my book called *al-Zulaf*, I listed the qualities which entitle one to assume kingship, together with what old Persian sages and Greek philosophers have said about this subject, such as Plato and what he mentioned in his book *al-Siyasa al-Madaniyya* [The Political Regime] as also the views of thinkers who came after him. It is reported that Buzurjmihir said: “I once observed in Anushirwan two contradictory qualities the like of which I never saw in him before. One day he sat to receive the people and a close kinsman of his approached. His vizier waved him away so Anushirwan ordered the vizier removed from office and not be admitted to his presence for one whole year. This is because he had overstepped the rank assigned to him and elevated himself above others in the assembly. On another occasion, we were closeted with him discussing some secret affair of state. Behind his throne stood his servants chatting to one another. Their voices then rose to the point where we could no longer pursue our discussion. I raised with him the contrast between the two occasions and he said: ‘This is no cause for surprise. We are kings over our subjects and our servants are kings over our lives. When we are all alone,

they have power over us and we have no way of protecting ourselves from them.””

631. Anushirwan used to say: “Kingship thrives through soldiers, soldiers through wealth, wealth through the land-tax, the land-tax through prosperity, prosperity through justice, justice through good state officials, and good state officials through good viziers. But the most important thing of all is for the king to control his personal inclinations and be able to discipline his soul in order to govern it and not allow it to govern him.” He used to say: “The welfare of the subjects is more cause for victory than numerous soldiers, and the justice of a king is of greater benefit than general prosperity.” He also said: “The days of joy pass like the blink of an eye; the days of sorrow last for what seems like months.” Al-Mas`udi said: Many commendable reports and anecdotes are told about Anushirwan which we have related in our previous works, as also his conduct during his extensive travels, the cities and forts he built, and his stationing of warriors on frontier posts.

632. His son, Hurmuz son of Anushirwan son of Qubadh, succeeded him. His mother, Faqum, was daughter of Khaqan, king of the Turks, though others claim that she was the daughter of a Khazar king who lived beyond al-Bab wa'l Abwab. He reigned for twelve years. He was prejudiced against the elite and inclined towards the commoners, whom he brought close to him, preferring the company of the urban rabble (*rubaidiyya*) and the lowest classes of commoners and urging them to harass the nobility. It is claimed that during his reign he killed thirteen thousand well-known members of the Persian elite. When eleven years of his reign had elapsed, his royal authority began to crumble and its foundations to collapse. His enemies advanced against him and rebellions increased. He had abolished the laws of the *Mubidhan*, thereby transgressing religion and customary practice and had changed the laws and abolished taxes. Among those marching against him was Shabah son of Shab, a great Turkish

monarch leading four hundred thousand troops, who camped in the vicinity of Herat, Badghis and Bushanj, in the land of Khurasan.

633. From the borders of his realm there marched against him leaders (*tarakhina*)\* of the Khazar in a great army. They conducted cavalry raids in territories near that region while their kings in the Caucasus region made peace with one another and forgave their mutual blood-feuds. A Byzantine general [*batriq*, i.e. patricius] leading eighty thousand troops marched into lands neighboring al-Jazira, while a mighty Arab army from the tribes of Qahtan and Ma`add from the vicinity of Yemen marched against him, led by al-`Abbas, known as the “Squint-eyed”, and `Amr known as the “Broad-mouthed”.

Hurmuz was deeply dismayed and summoned the chief *Mubidhan* and other wise counselors whom he had disregarded, and consulted them. They came to the conclusion that the best course of action was to make peace with three of the enemies and to mollify them, but to face Shabah son of Shab. To fight him, Hurmuz appointed Bahram Jubin, governor of al-Rayy.\* Bahram was a descendant of Jubin son of Milad, from the progeny of Anush known as the Archer (*al-Ram*). He led an army of twelve thousand while Shabah had four hundred thousand. Many battles and a lot of correspondence took place between them, where promises, threats and war stratagems were practiced, until Bahram managed to kill him, slaughter his army and capture his treasuries and wealth, sending Shaba’s head to Hurmuz. Shaba’s son, Barmuda, had taken refuge from Bahram in a fortress, where Bahram now besieged him. Barmuda then agreed to accept the verdict of Hurmuz and went to him while Bahram carried away a vast booty. This included what he had captured from Shabah and what Shabah had plundered from other kings, such as the treasuries of money and jewels belonging to Farasiyab, which he in turn had plundered from Siyawakhsh; as also what the Turks held in their hands of the treasures left behind by Luhrasf, the Turkish king, which he in turn had plundered from the treasuries of Bustasf in the city of Balkh, together with the treasuries of earlier Turkish kings.

634. When all these treasures described above of money and jewels and other booty were brought back by Bahram, a vizier of Hurmuz, called Arikhsis the Khuzi, grew envious of Bahram when he observed how pleased Hurmuz was with all the treasures Bahram had brought him. He said: "How great is this horse which has stumbled in this manner!" He falsely accused Bahram to the king of having kept to himself most of the money, jewels and booty, and incited him against Bahram. Bahram denied the charge against him. He then clandestinely minted *dirhams* on which was inscribed the name of Kisra Arawiz and secretly sent tradesmen to spend them at the gate of Hurmuz. People began to use these dirhams and they circulated widely. When Hurmuz heard of it, he had no doubt that his son Arawiz was behind the minting and was seeking to usurp kingship, so he was about to move against him, being certain it was his doing and unaware that this was a trick practiced by Bahram.

635. When Arawiz noted that his father's attitude to him had changed, he fled to Adharbaijan, Armenia, al-Ran and Bailaqan. Hurmuz imprisoned the two maternal uncles of Arawiz, Bistam and Bindawayh. They used trickery to escape from prison and a great part of the army joined them. They then entered upon Hurmuz and blinded him. When Arawiz heard of this, he returned to his father and informed him that he was innocent of the charge of minting the coins but that he had fled fearing for his life. Hurmuz proceeded to hand the monarchy to him. When Bahram Jubin heard of this, he led his army toward the royal gate and the capital city, but Arawiz marched out to face him and they met at the river bank near Nahrawan, with the river between them. The two armies faced each other and there was a long interval of shooting arrows and exchanging insults followed by a battle in which Arawiz was defeated when his followers abandoned him, preferring Bahram. Beneath Arawiz was his famous horse called Shabdaz. This is the horse depicted on a mountain in the territory of Qarmasin in the district of Dinawar in Mah al-Kufa, where there are also pictures of Arawiz and others. This locality is one of the wonders of the

world and its marvelous images are carved into the rock. Persians and Arabs both mention the horse Shabdaz in their poetry. Arawiz was one day riding on Shabdaz when its bridle broke. He summoned the man in charge of his saddles and reins and was about to cut his head off because he had not taken proper care of the bridle. The man said: "O king, if you kill me nothing will remain to secure and fasten the king of mankind and the king of horses." Arawiz forgave and rewarded him.

636. During the battle, and when that horse became exhausted and fell behind, Arawiz asked al-Nu`man to give him his horse called al-Yahmum, but al-Nu`man refused and fled on that horse himself. When Hassan ibn Hanzala ibn Hayya al-Ta'i saw Arawiz treacherously abandoned by his men and near death, he gave him his own horse called al-Dubaib saying to him: "O king, escape on my horse, for your life is of greater value to people than mine." Arawiz gave him his horse Shabdaz and Hassan escaped upon it with the others. Arawiz then rode to his father who rewarded Hassan and recognized the favor he had done. Regarding this incident Hassan ibn Hanzala al-Ta'i recited the following verses:

*I gave Kisra what he wanted and was not about*

*To leave him stumbling on foot among the horses.*

*I granted him Dubaib as a mount just as*

*Caparisoned horses of Turks and Kabul appeared on the scene.*

637. When Arawiz in defeat rode to his father Hurmuz, the latter advised him to seek refuge with Caesar and call on him for help, saying that when kings are called upon for help in similar situations they respond. All this is recorded at length in conversations between father and son. Arawiz, together with his two uncles Bistam and Bindawayh and some intimates, headed towards Caesar. He crossed the Tigris and destroyed the bridge fearing Bahram's cavalry.

Observing as he marched that his two uncles had fallen behind, he grew suspicious about them and the party with him who had joined them. When he

asked them about this, they said: “We cannot be sure that Bahram will not enter upon Hurmuz your father and place the crown of royalty on his head even though blind, thus becoming *Framdhar*—which means Commander of Commanders; The Byzantines call this rank *Domestikos*---- Bahram would then write to Caesar as if from Hurmuz your father as follows: ‘My son Arawiz with a band who joined him have rebelled against me and blinded me, so imprison them and send them back to me.’ Caesar would then send us back and Bahram would kill us. Hence we must return and kill your father.” He pleaded with them not to do so, and it is said that he absolved himself from their intended crime.

638. The two uncles then hurried back at once with those who had hastily joined them to al-Mada’in, arriving within a few miles of it. They entered upon Hurmuz, choked him to death and rejoined Arawiz. Bahram’s cavalry pursued them and there were skirmishes between them at certain localities. But they managed to escape the cavalry and Arawiz resumed his journey. Regarding Hurmuz, Waraqa ibn Nawfal\* recited the following verses:

*None of his treasures were of any use to Hurmuz:*

*‘Ad had sought eternity but failed to achieve it.*

*Nor did Solomon achieve it,*

*He who commanded the winds, the jinn and humans*

*With post-horses running between them.*

639. When Bahram Jubin heard about the murder of Hurmuz, he hastened to al-Mada’in and assumed the throne. Arawiz meanwhile had reached al-Raha where he camped and wrote to Maurice, the Byzantine king, sending ahead his uncle Bistam and a band with him as messenger, and asking him for aid against his enemy. He sent him assurances about the wealth he was ready to grant him, assured him that he would treat Byzantine soldiers well, and that he was ready to pay blood-money to any of his soldiers who were killed, and gave him other assurances. He also sent him numerous gifts, including one hundred youths,

children of Turkish grandees, of great beauty and perfect form, with earrings of gold studded with pearls and rubies. He also sent him a table made of amber, three *dhira`*s in width, and resting on three legs of gold studded with diverse jewels. One leg was in the form of an arm and paw of a lion, the other the leg of a mountain goat with its hoof, the third the leg of a falcon with its claws. In the center of the table was a bowl of superb Yemeni onyx, a *shibr* in width, filled with red rubies, and a gold basket with one hundred pearls, each weighing a *mithqal*, of the finest quality.

640. Maurice, the Byzantine king, then sent him two thousand dinars and one hundred thousand horsemen. With this, he sent one thousand garments of embroidered silk from the royal treasury, stitched in red gold and other colors. He also sent one hundred and twenty slave women, daughters of the kings of Burjan, Galicians, Slavs and Washkansh\* and other nations near the Byzantine realm. On their heads they carried garlands of jewels. He also married Arawiz to his daughter Maria and sent her along with her brother Tidos. The Byzantine king then imposed a number of conditions on Arawiz, including his abandonment of al-Sham and Egypt, territories once conquered by Anushirwan, and a promise not to invade them, and Arawiz accepted all these conditions.

641. The kings of Persia would marry into all neighboring nations but did not give their daughters in marriage because they considered themselves free and valiant. The Persians have much to say on this subject, just like Quraish who abandoned normal practice and declared themselves to be exceedingly pious (*hums*). They would stand at Muzdalifa on the great day of the pilgrimage and say: "We are the *hums*." The Prophet once said to the Ansar: "I am a man exceedingly pious (*ahmasi*)."

642. When Arawiz had obtained all the treasures mentioned above, he headed to Adharbaijan where the army there rallied to him as also many other troops and nations. When Bahram Jubin heard about his intentions, he marched against him with the troops that were with him and the two armies clashed. Bahram was

defeated and fled with a few followers to the frontiers of Khurasan from where he corresponded with Khaqan, king of the Turks. Khaqan granted him safe-conduct so Bahram headed towards his realm with a few followers and his sister Kurdiyya. She was Bahram's equal in courage and horsemanship and he often relied on her in his wars.

643. Meanwhile Kiswa Abrawiz headed for his capital and ordered that money, mounts and garments be given to the Byzantine soldiers, rewarding them for their assistance to him. He then sent Maurice two million dinars, coupling this with numerous gifts and a great wealth of gold and silver items. He fulfilled all his promises to him and all the conditions he had imposed on himself. Abrawiz then plotted to kill Bahram in Turkish territory and he was assassinated there by guile. It is said that his head was, through trickery, removed by a Persian merchant from the sarcophagus in which the Turkish king had buried him and carried to Abrawiz. The head was then placed on the gate of Abrawiz in the central square of his palace. Meanwhile, Kurdiyya left the land of the Turks with the remainder of Bahram's followers and stories exist about her and the son of Khaqan on her journey. Abrawiz wrote to her asking her to kill his uncle Bistam, governor of Dailam and Khurasan, and she did so. He had killed his other uncle in revenge for the killing of his father Hurmuz. Kurdiyya then came to Abrawiz and he married her.

644. The Persians have a book devoted to the history of Bahram Jubin which records his wily schemes when he arrived in the land of the Turks, and how he saved the life of the daughter of the Turkish king from an animal called the *Sim`*, which is like a huge goat. While she was out on a stroll in the open air, that animal had snatched her from amidst her slave girls and carried her upwards. The book also tells the story of Bahram's life from its beginning until his assassination, and records his genealogy.

645. The vizier of Abrawiz who had most influence over him and managed his affairs was a Persian sage called Buzurjmihir son of al-Bakhtakan. When

thirteen years had elapsed of his reign, Abruwiz accused Buzurjmihir of partiality towards some heretics among the Dualists and ordered him to be imprisoned, writing to him as follows:

“The fruits of your learning and the conclusions of your reason renders you liable to execution and subject to punishment.” Buzurjmihir answered: “When I enjoyed good fortune, I benefited from the fruits of my reason. But now when I no longer enjoy good fortune, I might benefit from the fruits of patience.

Though I have lost much good, I am relieved of much evil.” Abruwiz was swayed against Buzurjmihir, so he summoned him to his presence and ordered his nose and mouth to be broken. Buzurjmihir said: “I deserve a punishment far worse than this.” Abruwiz said: “Why do you say this, you deviant enemy of God?” Buzurjmihir responded: “Because I used to describe you to both elite and commoners, ascribing qualities to you that you do not possess, striving to endear you to their hearts, and praising your good actions in a manner you do not deserve. Listen to me, you worst of kings in his soul, most devious in deed, and most repellent in company: do you intend to kill me on mere suspicion, to which you resort in order to deny the certain knowledge you have of me as an upholder of religious law? Who can possibly expect justice from you, or trust your word and feel secure from you?” Abruwiz was enraged and ordered his head cut off. There are many stories that circulate widely among people regarding Buzurjmihir’s judgments, wise words, sermons and ascetic homilies.

646. Abruwiz later regretted his execution and sorrowed for him. He then summoned Khabraris, the second vizier, who was lower in rank than Buzurjmihir. When he saw the dead body of Buzurjmihir, he expressed his sorrow and realized that he himself would not escape. So he spoke harshly to Abruwiz who ordered him killed, and he was drowned in the Tigris. When Abruwiz lost these two men of ability and skill in managing the affairs of state, he began to disregard the principles of justice and the clear path of truth, turning instead to injustice and violence against the elite and the commoners in a

manner they had never been accustomed to before, and committed evil deeds they had never experienced.

647. A Byzantine *patricius* called Fukas [Phocas] then rebelled with his followers against Maurice, king of the Byzantines, who was father-in-law of Abruwiz and his supporter. The rebels killed Maurice and crowned Fukas king. When the news reached Abruwiz, he was enraged at his father-in-law's murder and sent armies against the Byzantines. There follows a history too long to relate here. Abruwiz then ordered Shahrbaraz, governor of the west, to join the war against the Byzantines. Shahrbaraz reached Antioch and there ensued many events and letters exchanged between him, the Byzantine king and Abruwiz, and many war stratagems were practiced. Eventually, the Byzantine king came out to fight Shahrbaraz and sent his treasuries ahead in a thousand ships. A storm drove these treasures to the coast of Antioch and they were captured by Shahrbaraz who sent them on to Abruwiz. These were called the "storm treasures". Eventually relations worsened between Abruwiz and Shahrbaraz, who began to draw close to the Byzantine king. Shahrbaraz then sent the Byzantine king to Iraq where he ended up in al-Nahrawan. Abruwiz managed through trickery to send the Byzantine king certain messages delivered by Christian bishops who lived under his protection, and he was induced to return to Constantinople. He further succeeded in undermining relations between the Byzantines and Shahrbaraz. All these events and more we have recorded in our book *al-Awsat*.

648. It was during the reign of Abruwiz that the battle of Dhi Qar\* took place. This was the battle of which our Prophet said: "This is the first battle in which the Arabs gained the upper hand against the Persians and their victory was due to me." The battle took place forty years after the birth of the Prophet, and while he was still in Mecca though after his ministry had begun. Some say the battle took place after his emigration to Medina while others claim it took place four months after the Battle of Badr\*, when the Prophet was then in Medina. The

battle of Dhi Qar took place between the tribe of Bakr ibn Wa'il and the *Hurmuzan*, a courtier of Abrawiz. We have already related all these events clearly and in detail in our book *al-Awsat*, so there is no need to repeat them here.

649. During the reign of Abrawiz, certain events and omens took place which prefigured the appearance of Muhammad's prophetic ministry and the announcement of his revelation. Abrawiz sent `Abd al-Masih ibn Buqaila the Ghassanid to the soothsayer Satih and told him about the dream of the *Mubidhan*, the trembling of the Iwan and other events, as also what happened to Lake Sawa.

650. Abrawiz had nine rings that had to do with royal government. The first was one whose stone was red ruby on which was inscribed the image of the king and around it were written his royal attributes. The ring itself was made of diamond. With this ring were stamped letters and registers. The second had a stone made of carnelian inscribed with the words "Khurasan Kharah," whose ring was made of gold. With it were stamped official memoranda. The third ring had an onyx stone on which was carved a galloping horseman. The ring itself was made of gold and inscribed with the word "Speed," and was used to stamp postal replies. The fourth ring had a stone of reddish ruby inscribed with the words "With wealth happiness is gained". The ring itself was golden and was used to stamp acts of forgiveness and letters containing royal pardons granted to rebels and criminals. The fifth ring had a stone of *bahraman* ruby, of the prettiest, purest and most expensive red, inscribed with the words *khurra* and *khurram*, meaning joy and happiness. The ring itself was made of both pearls and diamonds, and was used to stamp the treasury of jewels, the royal money treasury and the vaults containing ornaments. The sixth ring had a carved eagle and was used to stamp letters addressed to foreign kings. Its stone was made of Chinese iron. The seventh ring had a carving of flies and was used to stamp food, medications and perfumes. Its stone was made of *bazahr* [bezoar stone]. The eighth ring had

a stone of silver beads on which was carved a hog's head and was used to stamp the necks of those ordered to be executed and letters that had to do with the shedding of blood. The ninth was an iron ring which the king wore when entering the bath or *abzan* [toilet?].

651. In his stables were found fifty thousand mounts, with golden saddles studded with jewels and pearls for some of his own horses. Also in his stables were a thousand elephants, some of which were of a white color and whiter than snow. Some were twelve *dhira`* in height, a rare height for war elephants, since most elephants are nine to ten *dhira`* in height. Indian kings pay excessively high prices for great and tall elephants. Some wild elephants in the land of the Zanj may be much taller, and by several *dhira`s*, than what we described, judging by their horns, called tusks, which are imported. Some of these tusks weigh one hundred and fifty to two hundred *manns*. A *mann* equals two Baghdadi *ratls*.\* The size of the tusk is proportional to the size of the elephant.

652. Arawiz once rode out on a feast-day where his armies and their equipment and weapons were paraded before him, including a parade of one thousand elephants. Surrounding the king were fifty thousand horsemen, not including infantry. When the elephants saw him, they bowed down and only raised their heads again and spread their trunks when pulled out by crossiers and when their minders spoke to them in an Indian tongue. When Arawiz saw this, he regretted the fact that Indians were specially possessed of the advantage of managing elephants, saying: "If only the elephant had been Persian rather than Indian! Look at these elephants and compare them to other animals and how superior to them they are in understanding and conduct!" The Indians pride themselves on their elephants, their great size, their understanding, their obedience, their aptitude for being trained, their grasp of orders and their distinguishing between kings and others, whereas other beasts of burden understand nothing of all this and cannot distinguish between two objects. In later sections of this work some chapters will be devoted to elephants and to

what Indians and others have said about them, and how they prefer them to all other beasts of burden.

653. The reign of Arawiz lasted thirty-eight years before he was deposed, blinded and killed. He had a wife called Shirin, a woman celebrated for her beauty. His son Qubadh, known as Shirawaih, succeeded him. He had arrested his father, acted criminally against him and killed him. The Persians call this monarch “The Unjust”. In his days a plague broke out in Iraq and other districts of Babylon in which hundreds of thousands perished. The highest estimate claims that half the population perished and the lowest estimate says one third. Shirawaih reigned for a year and a half---some say less. Kisra Arawiz and his son Shirawaih have a strange history and there exists a correspondence between them related in our earlier works.

654. After Shirawaih came a son of his called Ardashir who assumed kingship when seven years old. From Antioch in al-Sham there marched against him the above-mentioned Shahrbaraz, governor of the west, who had played a role with Arawiz and the Byzantines, and who then killed the child king. He had reigned for five months. Shahrbaraz took over the crown for about twenty days---some say two months and others give other figures. A daughter of Kisra Arawiz, called Azarmidukht, assassinated him. Succeeding him was Kisra son of Qubadh son of Arawiz who had been residing in a Turkish region. He journeyed towards the capital but was killed on his way: his reign is counted as lasting three months. Succeeding him was Buran, daughter of Kisra Arawiz, who reigned for a year and a half. She was succeeded by a member of the royal house from the progeny of Sabur son of Yazdajird “the Sinner” and called Firuz Jushnanda, who reigned for two months.

655. He was followed by a daughter of Kisra Arawiz called Azarmidukht who reigned for a year and four months, followed by Farrukhzad Khusru son of Kisra Arawiz, a child, who reigned for a month—some say a few months. He was followed by Yazdajird son of Shahriar son of Kisra Arawiz son of

Hurmuz son of Anushirwan son of Qubadh son of Firuz son of Bahram son of Yazdajird son of Sabur son of Hurmuz son of Sabur son of Ardashir son of Babik son of Sasan. He was the last Sasanid king. His reign, until he was killed at Marw in Khurasan, lasted twenty years. This took place when seven and a half years had elapsed of the caliphate of `Uthman ibn `Affan, namely the year 31[651-2] after the Hijrah. But other versions are also given about the length of his reign and his murder.

656. Most experts on Persian history and affairs assert that the total number of kings of the Sasanid line, from Ardashir son of Babik to Yazdajird son of Shahriar, both men and women, was thirty: two women and twenty-eight men. I found in some work of history that the total number of Sasanid kings was thirty-two and that the number of early kings, who are First Persians, from Kayumarth to Darius son of Darius, was nineteen, among whom there was one woman, Humaya daughter of Bahman, Farasiyab the Turk, and seventeen other kings. The number of kings of independent principalities (*Muluk al-Tawa'if*), mentioned above, who reigned from the killing of Darius son of Darius until the coming of Ardashir son of Babik, was eleven. These were the kings of al-Shiz and al-Ran, and for their sake all the kings of separate principalities were called Ashghan. Hence, the total number of kings from Kayumarth son of Adam, the first Adamic king according to the Persians, until Yazdajird son of Shahriar son of Kisra, is sixty, including three women. The total number of years of their reigns is four thousand, four hundred and fifty years.

657. It is said that the total number of kings from Kayumarth to Yazdajird is eighty. I have also found that some historians and other writers concerned with histories and biographies claim that Persian history until the Hijra lasted three thousand, six hundred and ninety years, divided as follows:

From Kayumarth to the passing of the kingdom to Manushihr: 1922 years.

From Manushihr to Zaradisht: 583 years.

From Zaradisht to Alexander: 258 years.

Alexander ruled for six years.

From Alexander to Ardashir: 517 years.

From Ardashir to the Hijra: 404 years.

658. Later in this book we will give a brief account of the history of the world, and of its prophets and kings, in a separate chapter devoted to this theme and in its appropriate place in this work. However, we will not include a narrative about the Hijra, the caliphate of Abu Bakr and later caliphs and kings of the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties, because we have devoted a separate chapter in this work to that subject, i.e. a chapter which follows the end of Umayyad and Abbasid history, which we have called the “second historical narrative.”

659. The Persians, until God revealed the religion of Islam, and from the beginning of time were of four kinds. The first are called Khudakhan, i.e. the masters, as in such phrases as “master of the goods” or “master of the house.” These stretch from Kayumarth to Afridun. These are followed by the Kiyan which last down to Darius son of Darius. Then come the Ashghan, the kings of independent principalities, which appear after Alexander, as already mentioned in the chapter on the kings of independent principalities. Finally came the Sasanids, who are Second Persians.

660. In his book on Persian history which he related from `Umar Kisra, Abu `Ubaida Ma`mar ibn al-Muthanna states that the Persians, early and late, are of four classes. The first is from Kayumarth to Kursasb or Kursasf; the second from Kiqawus son of Kaiqubad to Alexander, the last of whom was Darius; the third were the Ashghan or kings of independent principalities; the fourth which he called the kings of unity were the Sasanids. These last he lists in order as follows: the first was Ardashir son of Babik, then Sabur son of Ardashir, Hurmuz son of Sabur, Bahram son of Sabur, Bahram son of Bahram, Narsi son of Sabur, Hurmuz son of Narsi son of Sabur, Sabur son of Hurmuz, Ardashir son of Hurmuz, Sabur son of Ardashir, Sabur son of Sabur, Bahram son of Sabur, Yazdajird son of Bahram, Bahram son of Yazdajird, Firuz son of

Yazdajird, Balash son of Yazdajird, Qubadh son of Firuz, Anushirwan, Hurmuz, Abrawiz, Shirwaih, Ardashir, Shahrbaraz, Buran, Kisra son of Qubadh, Firuz, Jushnanda, Azarmidukht, Farrukhzad Khusru and Yazdajird. We cited their names though we have already mentioned them earlier because of divergences and contradictions in the versions and histories regarding their number and names, so we listed the different accounts given by historians.

661. In our previous works, we dealt at length with the histories of Persian kings and their conduct, covenants, correspondence, testimonials, and speeches from the throne, as also their epistles and all other major events of their times, together with their agricultural schemes, the cities they built and other such topics. In this work, we simply mention summaries of their histories and lists of their kings, with a few reports about some of them. In our work *Akhbar al-Zaman* we related the speeches of the four classes of kings, what each king had dug by way of canals and what cities each had individually built, the views and judgments of kings and many of their verdicts regarding elites and commoners. We also mentioned the genealogies of the royal knights and who commanded the cavalry of each king in wartime, together with the genealogies of their wise men and ascetics who were renowned in their times, as also the genealogies of the *marzubans*. We also mentioned the progeny of the four classes mentioned above, the branches of their genealogies and the dispersal of their descendants.

662. In that work, we also described the three families honored by Kisra above all others in the Sawad of Iraq. They are well known in the Sawad until today. We further mentioned the nobility of the Sawad below the first three, known as *Shaharija* whom Iraj had elevated and made into the Sawad's nobility. The next class after the *Shaharija* are the *dihqans*, who are the progeny of Wahkart son of Farwak son of Siamuk son of Narsi son of Kayumarth the king. Wahkart's son had ten sons and the progeny of these ten are the *dihqans*, Wahkart having been the first to assume the dignity of *dihqan*. The *dihqans* are divided into five classes and their garments differed in accordance with their rank. Yazdajird, the

last of the Sasanid kings, was killed at age thirty-five, as already mentioned, leaving behind him two males, Bahram and Firuz, and three females, Adrak, Shahrbanu and Mardawand. Most of his descendants live in Marw and most descendants of royal princes and of the four classes reside until today in the Sawad of Iraq, where they study their genealogies and preserve their lines of descent just like the Arabs of Qahtan and Nizar. Scholars do not dispute any of the information given above.

663. Al-Mas`udi said: Now that we have narrated a summary history of the Persians and their classes, let us turn to the kings of the Greeks to give a summary of their history and the disputes that have arisen regarding the origins of their genealogies, to be narrated in summary form. God grants success.

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