

Targumān al-aswāk. /The Interpreter of Desires./ A collection of poems of love with esoteric commentaries. Arabic text with English translation. First ed. 1911, reprint 1978.

This erotico-mystical *Diwān* had two new editions, in Cairo and Beyrouth /1966/ - not critical rather "commercial" editions.

Rasā'il Ibn 'Arabī. Based on the Compendium of the tracts in the Aasafiyah Library, Hyderabad. Edited and published by Dairatu'tu'l-Ma'arif - Osmania. Hyderabad - Deccan. 1948. /29 treat./

Reedition in Beyrouth of Rasā'il of Ibn 'Arabī on the basis of partly critical edition of Hyderabad-Deccan 1948//29 treatises or messages/, among them two more important: K. al-Isrā' and Tagallīyyāt.

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Edward Szymański

The Rise and Development of Trade Centres in the Arab-Persian Gulf

From the earliest times until nowadays the Gulf has been one of the great highways of Asiatic trade.¹ Along it passed the wares of the Far East, India and the Indonesian Islands, bound for markets in the Middle Near East, Arabia, the eastern coasts of Africa, and back flowed the merchandise of Europe, the Levant, Syria and Egypt to India and China.² Scattered references in classical authors provide occasional information on some of the Gulf sites. The region extending from the Shatt al-Arab to the straits of Hormuz, as well as the Arab side of the Gulf and its Persian side are virtually *terra incognita* both in the ancient sources and in terms of archaeological exploration. Both older and some more recent finds help compensate for the sparsity of textual evidence for the Arabian side. Some historians had believed that Phoenicians had lived in Bahrain (ancient Tylus, Niduk-ki in Accadian, and Tilmun, Dilmun or Tilvun in Assyrian) before they emigrated to the historical Phoenicia on the Levantine coast of the Mediterranean.

In ancient times, the venture was not the one of conquest and occupation of land. The natural conditions of the region did not favour the direct exploitation of existing resources which are limited and mainly useful for the inhabitants of the desert and the rare oases. The nomadic population in the region, whose prime economic activities were the pastoralism of camels, sheep and goats as well as the caravan-trade, resisted any attempts at foreign and centralised control. The study of the archaeological material and some written references indi-

cates that trade between Mesopotamia and southern parts of Iran and India flourished under the Assyrian and Babylonian dynasties and was continued very actively in the Achaemenid Empire. During the Seleucid Empire, the rulers pursued the policies of the economic expansion in the Gulf. Antiochus III visited the western shore of the Gulf, especially the important trade centres on the islands of Tylus (Bahrain) and Icarus (Failaka). The main reason and the clear aim of this visit was to establish and re-inforce commercial relations between the Seleucid world and India.³ The Seleucid Empire, which included the Iranian world, ancient Babylonia, the Phoenician towns, and the cities of Asia Minor, was as composite as the Empire of the Achaemenians. Like the Achaemenians, the Seleucid kings were faced with the fundamental task of achieving its unity. They attempted to unify such a great world in their own way, that is by pursuing the policy of fusion of races and engaging people in trade and economic cooperation.⁴

The Seleucids continued and developed the policy of urbanization begun by Alexander the Great. Many towns were built along the great military road linking Seleucia on the Tigris to Bactria, a thousand-year-old route passing through Kermanshah and Hamadan. They also founded no less than nine towns on the shore of the Persian Gulf, including Antioch in the province of Persis (Fars), the modern Bushire, which replaced an old Elamite town. They maintained a large fleet in the Persian Gulf which secured the connection with India in the east and the Red Sea in the west.

Sassanid kings did send the military expeditions to the Persian Gulf to secure their interests of the trade route by way of sea between India and the Mediterranean.⁵ As a result of the geographical position of the Sassanian Empire between China and India, the producers of silk and spices, and Rome, the largest consumer of these products, Iran acted as a transit country for the trade.

After the fall of the Sassanian Empire, the region of the Gulf was absorbed in the new world system established by the Muslims. Under the Sassanids, the economic importance of the Gulf was already very big. This was probably due to destabilization of the overland routes in the first centuries of

our era, caused at first by the Byzantine-Sassanid rivalry and later on, by Muslim conquests. The Chinese, Persian and Arab ships carried merchandise from the Far Eastern, South Asian and South-eastern Asian ports to the coasts of East Africa and to the ports of the East Ocean.⁶ To the west, they took i.a. silk and all kinds of textiles, while on their way back they carried pearls,⁷ ivory, amber, and other goods brought here from the western and northern lands.⁸

The roads during the early Abbasid Caliphate were improved and even re-built, especially after the new capital in Baghdad was constructed.⁹ Goods were carried on river boats from here down the Tigris to Basrah, the great port for the trade on the Persian Gulf. The Arab merchant Sulayman told Al-Hamadani (Ibn al-Faqih al-Hamadani) that most goods were transported on the Chinese ships from the port of Basrah and the ports on the coast of Oman. Travellers who set out to the Far East or India went by hired ships from Siraf or, according to a geographer Yaqut, from Shilav¹⁰ as well as from Yamama and from Oman.¹¹ There were many reasons why the ports of the Persian Gulf enjoyed good reputation. First, the Sea of Fars was navigable throughout the year, whereas the Indian Sea is dangerous in some seasons and the navigation can be safe on it only at a certain time. That is why many merchants from North Africa, Spain and various European countries arrived in Aden, Basrah, Yamama or Oman and sought here advice of the experienced traders, hired the best ships and best (most experienced) navigators and sailed to India, China and other ports of the Far East.

The famous Arab geographer and traveller Ibn Hawqal arrived in Basrah in 961, where he met a merchant and ship-owner, Abu Bakr Ahmad ibn Omar as-Sirafi, that is coming from Siraf. The man possessed so big and unimaginable property that Ibn Hawqal, who had visited almost the whole of the then Muslim world had never heard of such fortune. The merchant possessed enormous sums of money, armoured ships, and merchandise in warehouses (precious stones, raw materials needed for the manufacturing of various sorts of scents and perfume, spices from India, wood and ivory from the Zanj country as well as textiles and silk from China).¹² Basrah's inhabitants at that

time were mostly the Persian-speaking people. According to Ibn Hawqal, there was no other seashore or land town in which the Persians would have such pure customs and form a better society. The religious science was widespread among them. The majority confessed the religious and philosophical doctrine of the mu'tazilites.¹³ People who inhabit warmer regions prefer other doctrines, such as the one preached by Abu Ali ibn Abd al-Wahhab Jubbai; this is him they refer to and have as their guide. As regards those who live in colder regions, for example the population of Shiraz, Istakhar and Fars, they usually stick to anthropomorphic tendencies and in the legal domain they are more inclined to accept the opinions of the supporters of tradition.

In the early period of development of the Muslim empire, especially after the Umayyad dynasty came to power in Damascus, the idea was born of the building of the sea power to wage wars with the infidels. To this end, shipyards were built on the coast of the Mediterranean, in which battleships were constructed. The same shipyards built also merchant vessels used on the Mediterranean. The ports of Basrah and Oman, on the other hand, provided ships different from those known in the West, that is to say ships built wholly from pieces of wood tied with one another and fastened by wooden pegs. (They were often represented on the miniatures adorning the 12th- and 13th-century Iraqi manuscripts.)

There is more general information available that under the Abbasids, caravans connected Transoxania with China along the ancient silk route, or Chorasan with India, Azerbaijan with the countries on the Volga and the Baltic, and finally upper Mesopotamia with Trapezunt and Byzantine ports. The ships also crossed the Mediterranean, thus joining the Muslim and Christian countries. Undoubtedly, the most important fact which should be emphasized was the development of the sea relations between Iraq, India and the Far East. This development was reflected in the rich and fantastic folk literature such as, for example, the adventures of Sindbad the Sailor.

Those relations, confirmed by the existence in China from the Abbasid times of the colonies of the Muslim merchants, caused that in the 10th century people travelled to north

India choosing the sea route rather than the overland route across Iran. The main ports of those travels were Basrah and Siraf on the Persian Gulf, which was called the "Chinese Sea" by the Arab geographers, since this was the road chosen by people who went to China.¹⁴ By this route, interrupted by numerous stops in ports depending on the conditions on the sea, many products were brought from India and the Far East, including the Sunda Archipelago, where Muslim merchants began to settle at that time, too. It was not so much silk, which was much less needed in the Muslim world from the time when the raising of silkworms developed in Iran, that was at stake as ebony and various other rare varieties of wood, precious stones, ivory, amber, camphor and spices.

As has already been said, trade between the Persian Gulf and the Far East and East Africa was carried on from the earliest times. The Persian Sassanids rebuilt their factories on Pemba Island, on the Isthmus of Kra in Malay Peninsula, Canton in Kwangtung Province, on Cape Comorin (southern extremity of India) and in some ports of Tanzanian and Madagascar coasts.¹⁵

After the Persian Gulf had been conquered by the Muslims the importance of the region still increased. The changes that followed the Muslim conquests caused that the sea trade routes became far safer. The Muslims themselves, apart from former merchants converted to Islam, were not eager to undertake trade exchange for several reasons. First, they were involved in the organization of the arising new structures of the empire; second, trade interests distracted people's minds from religious matters; third, it was easier for the Muslim to obtain material means from taxes in subjugated provinces than undertake any trade risk.¹⁶ That is why the merchants in the whole region of the Persian Gulf faced better times and had better conditions of trade turnover. Conquests in Transcaucasia opened up trade routes to the north from where the following goods were brought: amber, which was used for the manufacturing of various medicines, fanciful jewelry, and served alchemists, pharmacutists and other scientists to carry out their research; honey, which was much cheaper than sugar and was used for production of luxury beverages, cakes and

sweets, as well as various exquisite dishes; wax, from which candles as well as medicines were manufactured and which was also used for conservation of food; furs and woollen products also had a considerable share in this trade.

Goods carried by land from China to the Mediterranean ports in the early Islamic period began to be transported by sea. Apart from silk and its many products, pottery (*ghadara*),¹⁷ nephrite, jasper and other minerals were exchanged. It is not known if paper was carried by sea.

Goods brought from India included mostly various cotton cloth, herbs used for the manufacturing of medicines, precious stones, steel products and other. A variety of goods were imported from the most distant countries to the capital of the Muslim empire, Baghdad.¹⁸ From the Southeast Asia, that is from Sumatra and Ceylon and other islands of the Far East, medicinal plants, spices, oils as well as dried bark and leaves of the various trees and shrubs, used for perfume products were brought. From Africa, traders brought slaves, ivory and bones of rhinoceros, gold and precious stones, many varieties of wood for furniture, construction of houses, ships, fishing boats, herbs and spices for the manufacturing of dyes, ambergris (*al-anbar*) for perfumes, as well as for pharmaceutical and household purposes.

It is interesting to note how people paid for these goods. In the most remote past, trade was carried on on an exchange basis, that is goods for goods or some goods in demand for many other goods. But it was already in the Roman period, and later in the Byzantine and Sassanid time that two metals appeared to act as currency. Those were silver and gold. In the 5th and 6th centuries in Ceylon the Sassanid silver coins and the golden Byzantine coins appeared. Monetary agreements between empires are known to have existed at that time. The East used silver to mint coins, whereas the West based its coin on gold and copper. According to the contemporary Muslim authors, silver dirhams were minted in the East, while in Syria and Egypt gold and silver dinars were used.¹⁹ It was still in the 9th century that in Baghdad at the caliph's court taxes from provinces were almost exclusively calculated in silver dirhams, but one hundred years later the golden cur-

rency in dinars was prevalent. Along with the spread of coined money, trade in kind began to decline.²⁰

As trade developed, and the risk increased during the transportation of goods and of legal tenders, merchants began to pay via letters of credit and money orders which might be called modern bills of exchange. Economic development of the Muslim empire led to the rise of financial institutions that dealt with financial turnover between merchants. Many scholars today hold that those were mediaeval banks. It seems, however, that this hypothesis is not confirmed by the realities of that time. The fact that one merchant or rich man paid the third person a certain amount of money does not prove that there were banks in the Middle Ages. Even nowadays, no unequivocal answer has been given to the religious ban on the practising of usury (*riba'*).²¹

Various goods were sent from the Persian Gulf to India, Southeast Asia and China. Glass products, sulphur and a number of handicrafts from the entire Near and Central East were the leading products sent to the East. For a long time, large numbers of horses were sent to India from the port of Siraf. Trade in horses was extremely profitable and yielded great profits to the merchants.²²

The port of Siraf, situated on the coast of Fars, opposite the island of Kish, had already been known in ancient times, but it was not until the Sassanid rule that it began to flourish. From the beginning of its existence, the port competed with an important trade town of Tawwag, situated farther north, probably at the mouth of the Shapur river. Al-Istakhri mentions this town still in the 10th century; its area and population made it rank with the big towns of the Fars.²³

In the 10th century, Siraf was among the richest towns of the world and not only in the region. This was the place of the greatest trade transactions of the contemporary world of merchants. Warehouses received products and raw materials from the most distant sites of the world. Food, ebony, ambergris, ivory, sandal wood, aloe, wax, gold, silver, steel, iron, copper, fruits, and precious stones were reloaded to ships and sent to Baghdad. From this town, diverse products were trans-

ported and shipped on large sea boats bound for African, South-Asian and Far Eastern ports.

Vessels used at that time were built in numerous shipyards on the Gulf, as well as in the ports of India and the Far East. Small boats, light and fast, served ports scattered along the Gulf's eastern and western side, as well as inland (river) ports of Iraq. Those were passenger and freight ships. Large cargo vessels sailed out into the Indian Ocean to the African and Far Eastern ports.

To send out a large cargo vessel to the sea required long-lasting and careful preparations. Goods had to be carefully packed and protected, first of all, from moisture. But the most important issue was to find a crew with several specialities. Those people had to be good navigators but their knowledge of the secrets of diving was also indispensable, as sometimes they had to caulk the leaking hull of the vessel; besides, they had to be trained in using weapons to protect the ship in case of the attack of pirates.²⁴ The captain of the ship had to take care of gathering navigation devices, such as compass, various types of lanterns, telescopes, sounders for depth measuring, maps with description of lands, peninsulas and islands, as well as detailed information on winds, monsoons and other atmospheric phenomena. Captains of big vessels had books-calendars in which monsoons, sea currents, winds and extraordinary events of the past centuries were recorded. Experienced sailors supplemented these books with their own remarks and experiences at sea. Such books were kept from the ancient times and the systematic records and atmospheric records existed in the Persian ports under the rule of the Sassanids.²⁵

It is worthwhile mentioning that the ports of the Persian Gulf at the time when the Abbasid Empire reached its peak of development might develop due to the occurrence of well-developed river navigation. The Tigris river (Ar. *Dijla*) was connected with a widespread network of the canals, which was also due to the Euphrates (Ar. *Furat*), whose water level and location were much higher. The Euphrates was navigable from Samosata (Ar. *Samsat*) to Baghdad. Thus people travelled from Damascus by water route, which was feasible thanks to the

system of canals of which the longest was 65-km long. During the decline of the Empire, especially after the Mongol invasion of 1258, this entire route was neglected and ceased to function as a communication artery.²⁶

The Mesopotamian navigation network was very important for economic life of the whole region. Fire-wood and timber from the northern woodlands, Syrian olive and products of well-developed Syrian crafts were transported down by the water of the Euphrates. To the north of Baghdad the Tigris was navigable so that the capital might be easily supplied by this route with fruits, vegetables and other raw materials needed for development of a large town. Part of the merchandise sailed farther to the south of Basrah and then to the ports of the Gulf. This was the route used by the majority of pilgrims who went to Mecca.

The inland navigation encouraged economic development of not only Iraq and Syria but also of the whole region within a radius of several hundred kilometres. The river transport was so well-developed that in the 10th century there were dozens of thousands of boats and small ships sailing on these waters. As time went by, however, flood-control on rivers and canals was abandoned, especially after heavy rainfalls and great floods that affected the region from time to time. That is why between Wasit and Basrah there spread a vast marshy area which obstructed navigation, especially when it came to be an easy hiding-place. This was used by pirates and robbers who attacked boats and travellers. The guard established to protect them was often helpless.

Ibn Hawqal, who was one of the first well-educated and versatile Arab geographers, made long travels to Africa to return to the east visiting Armenia, Harran and Azerbaijan.²⁷ Around 961 he reappeared on the Persian Gulf and undertook description of the region. He was fascinated with history, culture and economy of the Persian provinces on the Gulf. So he set out to visit the province of Fars and he described, among other things, the port of Siraf.²⁸

As I have already said the second largest town next to Shiraz was Siraf. Its houses were built from the teak wood and other varieties of wood which was imported from the Zanj

country. The town was situated on the seashore. Like in Fustat, its houses were many-storied and disorderly. The number of the inhabitants was quite large. They spent large sums of money for house construction, so large that a merchant could afford thirty thousand dinars for construction of his house, which was regarded as wastefulness but did not meet with disapproval. There were no green areas or forest (tree) plantations in the neighbourhood. Their fruits, their wealth and their easy way of living came from some brooklets which flew from the mountain dominating the town and was called Jam. Climatic conditions on top of this mountain resembled conditions in the cold mountain regions. Nevertheless, Siraf was the hottest town in the vicinity and the least cold in winter.

There lived very rich people in this town and I had met merchants who enjoyed high reputation. Its inhabitants were extremely wealthy and they gave the example of an ill person who came to write down his last will: he himself kept one third of his fortune, which accounted to one million dinars excluding his shares in various merchant companies.

Towards the end of the 10th century, Siraf began to decline which was caused, like in the case of other ports of the region, by earthquakes, especially two of them (in 976 and 978) which entailed mass population exodus. The neighbouring island of Kish took over the role of Siraf but its role was not so grand and did not achieve previous impetus. There were many reasons for that but the most important was probably the rivalry of the Chinese and Arabian sailors from the Southern Arabian and East African coasts.²⁹ Towards the close of the 10th century there also came a wave of unrest and of separatist tendencies in the Caliphate. A belligerent sect of Qarmatians threatened for a long time such a large town as Basrah was, their power extending from the coast of Oman to the Syrian desert on the Arab Peninsula. Heterogeneity of the Muslim world found its expression with great force particularly at the time of the weakening power of the Abbasid caliphs. A large empire which was built within a short time and which was cemented by religion and central power, was, however, a mosaic of peoples, races and cultures. The Arabs, who were the core of the Muslim world, came to be a minority which was still

decreasing. Upon the decline of the central power, all tribal groups began to revert to their cultural roots. The cementing role of Arabic culture which vanished in the sea of local cultures began to lose its unification significance.³⁰

In the early 11th century, the Abbasid Caliphate faced in the East the increasing number of independent small states and dynasties which not only rejected central power in Baghdad but also refused to pay tributes and taxes. This was the time when all the Muslim West was already subjugated to Baghdad, especially after the capital of the Fatimid Empire was moved to Cairo in Egypt.

Throughout the 12th and 13th centuries the whole Muslim East was continuously changing. A homogeneous Muslim world gave rise to three separate worlds. This process was speeded up by Turkic invasions and then by the Mongol invasion. In the Turkish group the Ottoman Turks arose; they established a powerful empire which lasted for centuries and threatened the Christian Europe. The Arabic group, which was ruled by the Mamelukes until the 16th century, was later subjugated by the Turks. And the Iranian group began, in the early 16th century, to reconstruct its ancient empire.³¹

The founder of the Safavi dynasty Shah Isma'il launched a campaign of conquest aspired to restore the ancient frontiers of the Sassanid Empire. He adopted the Shi'a creed, a subdivision of Islam, as the official state religion. The Safavi attempts to restore the Persian Empire coincided with the Portuguese penetration into the Persian Gulf. The aim of the Portuguese was to capture the trade of the Indies by seizing its traditional outlets, that is the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf, and the Straits of Malacca, and forcing it to flow by way of the Cape of Good Hope to the estuary of the Tagus. They blockaded direct trade between Persia and England. The Portuguese captain Alfonso d'Albuquerque attacked in 1507 the strategic port of Hormuz, seized it and transformed it into the strongest military point and watch-point for the whole Persian Gulf. The Portuguese ships and the great fortress of Hormuz dominated the entrance of the Gulf. Nobody at that time could challenge the Portuguese at sea. The Portuguese domination over this region lasted more than hundred

years and only a combined Persian and English military action did lead to the expulsion of the invaders from Hormuz.³²

On the Arabian coast of the Gulf the Portuguese possessed Sur, Muscat, Matrah, Sawhar, and Khawr Fakkan. Here they faced the resistance from the Ibadiya of Oman. They pressed the Portuguese hard, forcing them to give up their footholds on the Omani coast. Sultan ibn Sayf drove from Muscat in January 1650. This port became rapidly the greatest non-European naval power place in Eastern Arab waters. At the close of the century the Arabs expelled the Portuguese from Mombasa Kilwa and Pemba to lay the foundations of Omani rule in East Africa. But in the eighteenth century the Imamate of Ibadites lost its power not only in East Africa but also in Oman.³³ Anarchy reigned on the Gulf waters and the trade and ports did not have a good air for development.

Notes

¹ *Auszug aus der Geschichte*, Verlag Floetz, A.G., Würzburg 1976, pp.48-70.

² A.Wilson, *The Persian Gulf*, Allen and Unwin, London 1959, p.8.

³ M.Rostovtzeff, *The Social and Economic History of the Hellenistic World*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1941, Vol.II, Ch.VI.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol.II, Ch.III.

⁵ S.B.Miles, *The Countries and Tribes of the Persian Gulf*, Frank Cass and Co., London 1966, p.25 ff.

⁶ See *Hudūd al-'Ālam* (*The Regions of the World*). A Persian Geography, translated and explained by V.Minorsky with the preface by V.V.Barthold. London 1937, p.52. "Another large sea is the one called the Great Sea (Bahr al-A'am). Its eastern limit adjoins the sea (called) the Eastern Ocean, and about one-third (*miqdār-i si-yakī*) of the Equator stretches across this sea. Its northern limit starts from China (Chīn), skirts the countries of Hindūstān and Sind, and the boundaries (*hudūd*) of Kirmān, Fārs, Khūzistān and Saymara (sic). The southern limit of this sea begins at the Jabal al-Tā'in, skirts the

country (*nāhiyat*) of Zābaj and reaches that of Zangistān and Abyssinia. The western limit of this sea is a gulf which surrounds all the Arab country (*gird-i hama-yi nāhiyat-i 'Arab andar gardadh*).

This sea has five gulfs: (a) One of them begins (*bar dāradh*) from the limits of Abyssinia and stretches westward; off (*barābar*) the Sudan it is called the Barbarī Gulf. (b) Another gulf (which) adjoins it, takes a northern direction (*ba nāhiyat-i shamāl furūdh āyadh*) up to the confines (*hudūd*) of Egypt, growing till (*lā ānja-kī*) its breadth becomes one mile (*mīl*); it is called the Arabian Gulf (*khalīj-i 'Arabī*), or the Gulf of Ayla (spelt: *Īla*). or Qulzum. (c) The third gulf start (*bar giradh*) from the frontiers of Fārs and stretches in a north-western direction until the distance between it and the Gulf of Ayla amounts to 16 stages (*manzil*) on swift camels (*bar jammāza*); it is called Gulf of 'Iraq. All the Arab lands lie between these two gulfs, i.e. the Gulf of Ayla and that of 'Iraq. The fourth gulf is that of Pārs (Ar. Fārs) which starts from the limit of (*hadd*) of Pārs, where it has a small breadth, and extends to the frontiers of Sind. (e) The fifth gulf starts from the country of Hindūstān and becomes a gulf while taking a northern direction; it is called Indian Gulf (*khalīj-i hindū'ī*).

⁷ Since time immemorial the Persian Gulf (in Greek sources the Erythraean Sea) has been noted for its pearl beds, and Bahrain Island has always been famous for the best pearls. (Richard LeBaron Bowen, Jr., "The pearl fisheries of the Persian Gulf", *The Middle East Journal*, Vol.V, No.2, 1951, p.161.

⁸ A.Toussaint, *Histoire de l'Océan Indien*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris 1961, p.53 ff.

⁹ The system of roads was very carefully described by the Arab geographers such as: Abu-l-Fida, Ibn Hawqal, Ibn Khurdadbi or Al-Masudi.

¹⁰ Yāqūt, *Mu'jam al buldān*, *Yacuts Geogr. Wörterbuch* was published in Arabic by Wüstenfeld, Leipzig, 1866-1873, Vol.III pp.211-217.

¹¹ Ibn al-Faqih al-Hamadānī, *Abrégé du livre des pays*, traduit de l'arabe par Henri Masse, Institut Français de Damas, Damas 1973, pp.11-15.

¹²Ibn Hawqal, *Kitāb surat al-ard* (Configuration de la terre). Introduction et traduction, avec index par J.H. Kramers et G. Wiet, Paris 1864, pp.284-286.

¹³Al-Shahrastānī, *Al-Milal wa'l-nihal*, London 1892, p.17 and 73; A.J. Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed*, Cambridge 1932, p.53.

¹⁴M. Reinaud, *Relation des voyages faits par les Arabes et les Persans dans l'Inde et la Chine*, Paris 1845, Vols. I-II; *The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea. Travel and trade in the Indian Ocean by a merchant of the first century*. Translated from the Greek and annotated by Wilfred H. Schoff, London, Bombay and Calcutta, 1912.

¹⁵In this time in the Persian Gulf the main port was al-Ubullah, the Arab form of the Greek Apologos, dated from the Sassanian or even earlier times, but it lay on the estuary and was feverish, and the Moslems, when they founded their new city, Basrah, built this farther inland near the desert border. Al-Ubullah was to the north at the mouth of its canal, and on the Great Island. M. Reinaud, *Relation...*, op.cit., Vol. I.; C. Barbier de Meynard, *Les Prairies d'or*, Paris 1861, Vol. I, p.308.

¹⁶*The Book of the Conquests* (*Futūḥ al-Bulḍān*), written by Al-Baladhurī, and dating from the middle of the 9th century described all the conquests of the Moslems showing the state of the country when Islam first became the dominant creed. For example, the Moslems changed little or nothing in economy when they took over the Sassanian kingdom.

¹⁷Ghadara means greenish plastic clay and china. Some sources mentioned that the same were fabricated in Rayy "the famous potteries of Rayy" from Jibal provinces.

¹⁸The trade of Abbasid capital consisted of imports rather than of exports, because the origin of this city was administrative and at the beginning the caliphs even did not plan any market places. But Baghdad rapidly changed its face and became the biggest economic centre of the mediaeval world. The markets of Baghdad were noted for all kinds of curious wares brought from foreign lands and its manufactures produced many stuffs. (Al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqasīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*) (*La meilleure répartition pour la connaissance des provinces*), traduction partielle, annotée par André Miquel,

Damas 1963, p.55; Ibn al-Faqīh al-Hamadānī, op.cit., pp.235-248.

¹⁹Al-Iṣṭakhrī, *Kitāb al-masalik wa-l-manālik*, Leyden 1927, p.156 ff.; Walther Hinz, *Islamische Masse und Gewichte. Handbuch der Orientalistik*. Herausgegeben von Bertold Spuler, Leyden, E.J. Brill 1955, p.17 ff.

²⁰George Hourani, *Arab Seafaring in the Indian Ocean in Ancient and Mediaeval Times*, Beirut 1963, p.105 ff.

²¹Abd al-Razzaq al-Sanhuri and Zaki al-Badawi, "The Debate on Riba and Interest in Twentieth Century Jurisprudence, in: *Islamic Law and Finance*, edited by C. Mallat, London 1988, pp.27-45; S.M. Imamuddin, "Some aspects of Economies in Mediaeval Islam", in: *Thoughts on Islamic Banking*, Dhacca 1982, pp.175-183.

²²Aly Mazahéri, *La vie quotidienne des musulmans au Moyen Age Xe au XIIIe siècle*, Librairie Hachette, Paris 1957, p.282.

²³Al-Iṣṭakhrī, op.cit., p.106, 128, 153. "Tawwāḡ or Tawvaz was very hot and stood in a gorge of the lowlands, palm trees growing here abundantly. Tawwāḡ, which was a place of great trade, was famous for its linen stuffs, woven in diverse colours, with a gold-thread ornament."

²⁴Ibn Rusteh, *Kitāb al-a'laq an-nafisa*, Bibliotheca geographorum arabicorum, Leyden 1892, pp.168-185.

²⁵Hourani, *Arab Seafaring*, op.cit., p.151; M. Reinaud, *Relation des voyages...*, op.cit., Vol. I, XXII.

²⁶G. Le Strange, *The Land of the Eastern Caliphate. Mesopotamia, Persia and Central Asia from the Moslems to the time of Timur*, The University Press, Cambridge 1930, pp.24-70; Ibn al-Athīr, *Ibn el Athiri Chronicon quod perfectissimum inscribitur...*, éd. C.J. Tornberg, Leyden 1851-1876, 15 vols., Vol. 8.

²⁷The very informative description of the provinces of the Persian Gulf was given by the geographers and historians like Al-Iṣṭakhrī, Ibn Hawqal and Al-Muqaddasī. The first one, a native of Persepolis, gave the description of his native province, Fārs, but the second one described this province in a more detailed way. Al-Muqaddasī, their contemporary, wrote his geography on the basis of his original observations and sometimes detailed descriptions of places, manners and

historical reflections.

²⁸ Ibn Hawqal, *Kitāb...*, p.277.

²⁹ Ibn al-Faqīh, *Abrégé...*, pp.239-250.

³⁰ Janine et Dominique Sourdél, *La civilisation de l'Islam classique* (Polish Translation, Warsaw 1980, pp.245-417).

³¹ P.M.Sykes, *History of Persia*, London 1930, 2 volumes; Edward G.Brown, *A Literary History of Persia*, Cambridge 1953, Vol.IV, p.60; Arnold J.Toynbee, *A Study of History*, Oxford 1939, Vol.I, p.392 ff.

³² A.Wilson, *The Persian Gulf*, op.cit., p.85; P.M.Sykes, *History*, op.cit., Vol.2, p.180 ff.

³³ G.B.Miles, *Countries and Tribes of the Persian Gulf*, London 1919, 2 volumes; *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf. Oman and Central Arabia*, Calcutta 1908, 2 volumes.

Anna Kmietowicz

CONTRIBUTION A LA TRADUCTION DU TEXTE D'IBN FAQLĀN

De nombreux manuscrits arabes, connus depuis longtemps en Europe, maintes fois publiés et commentés, contiennent cependant encore des passages obscurs en posant quelque difficulté aux chercheurs. Parfois il s'agit de phrases entières, parfois de mots isolés, ou bien de divergences quant à l'interprétation ou à la traduction faite par les éditeurs successifs ne donnant une version définitive et sans équivoque. A la base de ces difficultés on retrouve le plus souvent l'aspect d'illisibilité du manuscrit amplifié par le caractère de l'écriture arabe, et surtout par certaines imperfections ou les différences quant au contenu de l'information ainsi que par les erreurs commises par les copistes, erreurs qui transforment ou même trahissent la pensée de l'auteur.

On retrouve de telles énigmes dans le texte du Livre d'Ibn Faqlān (manuscrit de Mechhed), édité il y a quelques années dans la série Sources arabes pour l'histoire des peuples slaves (*Źródła arabskie do dziejów Słowiańszczyzny*)¹. La solution d'une de ces énigmes reste intimement liée à la personne du professeur Andrzej Czapkiewicz. Lorsque on lui avait demandé son opinion et son aide à propos d'un passage difficile et obscure du texte, après quelques minutes de réflexion il a donné la réponse, et comme cela s'est avéré par la suite, cette réponse était en fait une vraie découverte.

Cet aspect reste toutefois immergé par la totalité du texte publié du