

## Ibn Baṭṭūṭa’s “Prayer of Damascus:” A window on to Damascus in the hell of the Black Death<sup>1</sup> (Part 1)<sup>2</sup>

Claudia Maria Tresso

Ibn Baṭṭūṭa’s famous *Rihla* [(Chronicle of) *Travels*] is probably the only work of medieval travel literature whose protagonist claims to have personally witnessed the plague pandemic known as the Black Death, which ravaged the Mediterranean world between 1347 and 1350 (and continued in subsequent waves). The passages describing the scourge include the story of a rogatory – and inter-religious prayer held in Damascus in July 1348. This is probably the most often mentioned passage of the *Rihla*, the most quoted in the studies on the Black Death in the Middle East, as well in those on relations between religious groups in the Mamluk empire. Nevertheless, to this day it has not yet been the subject of in-depth analysis. This article is an endeavour to contribute to both the studies on Ibn Baṭṭūṭa’s *Rihla* and the Black Death by analysing the story of the Damascus prayer in its historical context and literary aspects, i.e., by answering the questions: how does the story fit into the climate of the pandemic in general and into Ibn Baṭṭūṭa’s *Rihla* in particular? What are its lexical and narrative characteristics? Moving from the story to the narrated event leads to the question on relations between the different religious groups that took part in the rite. Moreover, how did Islamic scholars interpret the prayer gathering? Since the *Rihla* is not a chronicle but a narrative work, another question arises: to what extent is its information reliable? The answer will be found by comparing it with the main Middle Eastern Arabic sources of the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, which are mostly Chronicle texts. The concluding paragraph investigates whether the story of the Damascus prayer derives from Ibn Baṭṭūṭa’s personal testimony, as he claims in the *Rihla*, or whether he (or the editor of the work, Ibn Juzayy) might have taken the information from other sources.

---

<sup>1</sup> For their generous and authoritative comments I would like to thank the first readers of this article, Michelguglielmo Torri and Luca Badini Confalonieri, and all those who have given me useful advice and information for my research: in particular Abdelouadoud el-Omrani, Abdulaziz al-Musallam, Adel Jabbar, Anna Unali, Ermis Segatti, Ignazio De Francesco, Joan Rundo, Luca Patrizi, Maria Prisley, Narcyz Klimas, Rosanna Nardi, Samia Ben Amor, Yosef Koby and the anonymous reviewers who gave me valuable suggestions to improve my work.

<sup>2</sup> Part 2 will be published in *Kervan* 25/2.

**Keywords:** Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, Ibn Juzayy, Arabic Travel Literature, Epidemics, Black Death in the Middle East, Medieval Pandemic, *Dhimmī* in the Mamluk Sultanate, Medieval Arabic Chronicles.

*Wa-khaffafa Allāhu Taʿālā ʿanhum*<sup>3</sup>

## 1. Introduction<sup>4</sup>

In Ibn Baṭṭūṭa’s *Riḥla* [(Chronicle of) *Travels*],<sup>5</sup> there are twelve allusions to the Black Death on nine separate occasions: most are short references about the number of victims and some personal notes, but there is a particular passage worthy of mention. Under the arrows of the plague, Ibn Baṭṭūṭa (henceforth: IB) tells one of the most beautiful and moving stories in his work, describing a rogatory – and inter-religious – prayer gathering held in Damascus in July 1348, just before the number of victims reached its peak. Even though this story is often quoted in its entirety in numerous anthologies and essays,<sup>6</sup> it has not yet been studied in terms of its literary aspects and its constellation of religious, cultural and historical references which were well known both to the author of the work and his audience, made up of a small circle of 14<sup>th</sup> -15<sup>th</sup> century enlightened citizens (including some women), most of them Muslim Arabs. These cosmopolitan and highly cultured people would exchange ideas and attend, or even take part in the many debates that an epochal event like the Black Death necessarily raised. They were able to read the story by IB understanding its meaning on several levels as well as its narrative style, which is a feat mostly impossible for readers – even Arab readers – today. This article aims to fill this gap by first analysing the literary aspects of the story: the words, the style, and the

---

<sup>3</sup> “And God Most High lightened their affliction” (from the *Riḥla* of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, al-Tāzī 1997, vol. 1: 325-326; Gibb 1958, vol. 1: 143-144 [EP 228-229]).

<sup>4</sup> For transliteration from Arabic, a simplified system has been chosen which favours the diagrams rather than diacritical signs, so that *t* = *th*, *h* = *kh*, *ḍ* = *dh*, *š* = *sh* and *ǰ* = *gh*. The letter *ǧīm* is transcribed *j*, while *ʿayn* is written with an apostrophe open to the right [ʿ] and *hamza* to the left [ʾ] – but the latter is not recorded at the beginning of the word. The *tāʾ marbūṭa* is transcribed with *t* if the word is the first term in an *iḍāfa* (construct state), but it is not if the word is in pausal form.

<sup>5</sup> As we will see later, we do not know exactly how the protagonist and narrator of the *Riḥla* (Ibn Baṭṭūṭa) and its editor (Ibn Juzayy) collaborated on the work, but as the travelogue is known as ‘the *Riḥla* of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa,’ in this article I will use “Ibn Baṭṭūṭa” [henceforth IB] to indicate both the traveller protagonist of the work and its author(s).

<sup>6</sup> See, among others, Sticker (1908, 1: 46), Dols (1974b: 280), Melhaoui (1997: 111-112), Congourdeau and Melhaoui (2001: 121-122), Jacquart (2006: 237-238), Rosenwein (2010: 484), Borsch and Sabraa (2017: 84-85), Fiorentini (2020: 57), Mirza (2020a; 2020b).

narrator's ability to communicate with his audience and arouse their emotions. Then, two questions that have not yet been investigated will be answered: is the information in the text (i.e., the rite itself and the number of victims of the pandemic in Damascus and Cairo) true? And was IB really an eyewitness of this event, as he claims in the *Rihla*?

In order to highlight the multifaceted interest of the story, the article is divided into two parts (one on the narration and one on the event) and 11 Sections.

In the first part the outbreak of the great pandemic takes into account the studies that have been made (and those still to be made) on its arrival in the Mediterranean basin, focusing on the Arab area and in particular the Mamluk empire. This is where the Damascus prayer gathering took place and it is the area for which most sources and opportunities for further research exist (Section 2). The attention then shifts to IB's *Rihla*, especially to the final part when the pandemic is mentioned (Section 3). The historical/literary introduction to the story (Section 4) concludes with the Arabic text of the *Editio Princeps* by Defremery and Sanguinetti and its English translation by Hamilton Gibb (and Charles Beckingham) (Section 5).<sup>7</sup> Both the analysis of the narration and that of the lexicon (Section 6) confirm that the piece is one of the most admirable in the *Rihla*: each element has a strong emotional influence on the reader and the story proves to be a true gem of medieval Arabic literature.

In the second part, the analysis moves from the formal aspect to the content, i.e. from the narration to the event. After a concise analysis of relations between the different religious groups during the Pandemic, both in the Mamluk Muslim area and in European Christian countries (Section 7), an examination of the main medieval Middle Eastern sources (mostly texts of Chronicles) gives credence as to why some Muslim scholars describe this event as a “memorable” one (Section 8). Those same sources and others also make it possible to verify the reliability of the information related in the story (Section 9) and to place the prayer gathering of Damascus within a set of similar rites that took place not just in Damascus but also in Cairo: a city which, as IB reports, was far more devastated than Damascus by the pandemic (Section 10). The article concludes by proposing a reading of the story that takes into account the debate – which has always existed and is now more heated than ever – on the credibility of IB as a reliable witness to many of the events described in the *Rihla* (Section 11). Many

---

<sup>7</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, the passages from the work of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa quoted in this article are taken from the Arabic version edited by al-Tāzī (1997; from now on, in the notes, al-Tāzī), and from the English translation by Gibb and Beckingham (1958-2000) – from now on, in the notes, Gibb (vol. I-III) and Gibb and Beckingham (vol. IV). Both these editions follow the 1853-1858 Defremery and Sanguinetti *Editio Princeps* [EP], respect its division of the text into four volumes (plus one volume of indexes) and show the corresponding page number of this *Editio* in the margin, which in the notes of this article is quoted in square brackets.

questions have been raised as to whether IB really was an eyewitness to them and we will see that scholars have demonstrated a series of borrowings and adaptations from other sources. With regard to this episode too, an attempt will be made to answer the question of whether IB reports, as he claims, his own testimony of this event, or whether he and/or the editor of the *Rihla*, Ibn Juzayy, could have borrowed the story of the prayer gathering from other sources.

Whether or not IB was in Damascus on that day, this article intends to show that this story is worthy of interest both for its pleasing form and its many cultural, religious and social references, which make it a window on to Damascus trapped in the hell of the Black Death.

## 2. The Great Plague: the genesis of the “Black Death”

The subject of epidemics suddenly gained prominence at the beginning of 2020, when Europe recorded its first cases of COVID-19, a highly infectious respiratory disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus.<sup>8</sup> The epidemic, according to current information, originated between summer and winter 2019 in central China in Wuhan, the capital of the province of Hubei. It spread with incredible speed to all continents, so much so that on 11 March 2020 it was described by the World Health Organization as a “pandemic.”<sup>9</sup> To date, the disease continues to devastate those countries most affected by a growing number of infections and deaths.

From the very beginning, much has been said about the rapidity of the virus propagation, underlining the correlation between this and the prevailing increase in interconnection between the different countries of our planet. As is well known, however, interrelations between peoples are not a characteristic of our times, but have been a constant in the history of the world since ancient times. Civilizations have evolved in this way, precisely, through the continuous circulation of people, goods, customs, experiences and information, including health, which in turn has given rise to an infinite series of phenomena of contamination and reciprocal contagion.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> The name SARS-CoV-2 was assigned to this new type of coronavirus (literally “crown-shaped virus”) on 11 February 2020 by the World Health Organization. COVID-19 is instead the name of the respiratory disease caused by this virus and is formed by the acronym, based on the English language, of Co (Corona), Vi (Virus) and D (Disease), i.e., “Coronavirus Disease”, followed by the number “19” which indicates the year of identification of the virus.

<sup>9</sup> The spread of COVID-19 was declared a “pandemic” when the disease had already affected 114 countries, infecting over 118,000 people and causing over 4,000 deaths. See “Q&A on coronaviruses (COVID-19)”, in *Who.int, World Health Organization* (accessed March 11, 2020).

<sup>10</sup> This is, in short, the starting point of the field of studies known as *World History*, which in contemporary times counts among its most important exponents authors such as Spengler (1918-1922), Toynbee (1934-1961), Quigley (1961), McNeill (1963), Mann (1986-2012), Abu-Lughod (1989), Bulliet (1994), Manning (2003), Bayly (2004), Marks (2007), Dunn and Mitchell (2000)

In short, humanity has always exchanged among other things, viruses and bacilli, capable of causing deadly epidemics. The worst of these epidemic diseases, as far as we know, is the plague. Among the many plague pandemics to have occurred in history, the most virulent and destructive one which upset the demographic and economic balance in Europe, North Africa and the Middle East, is surely the one which, much later than its onset, was to become known as the “Black Death.”<sup>11</sup>

After it appeared around 1330 in an unspecified area of the Mongolian steppe in Central Asia,<sup>12</sup> where it was endemic among the rodent population,<sup>13</sup> it is likely that the epidemic then spread along the caravan routes known as the “Silk Road” in the period of the commonly referred to as *Mongolian pax*, which facilitated the connections between the four khanates dominating Eurasia from west to east, from the Black Sea to the Yellow Sea.<sup>14</sup> Following these routes, the plague probably soon crossed the Gobi desert, passing north of the Caspian Sea and, skirting the course of the Volga and the shores of the Sea of Azov, it reached the Crimean peninsula and arrived in Caffa (today’s Feodosia), as attested,

---

and Fauvelle-Aymar (2013). With reference to the Islamic area, see Hodgson (1974) and Voll (1994), and specifically for Ibn Baṭṭūṭa’s Travels see Dunn (1986) which is quoted several times in this article.

<sup>11</sup> The expression “Black Death” (for which see below), which was not in use in either European or Middle Eastern sources at the time of the pandemic, is now being criticised by some for its anachronism (e.g., Lindemann 2006: 600), but it is used in this article to point out unambiguously the great wave of plague that devastated the Middle East, North Africa and Europe in 1347-1350.

<sup>12</sup> On the place of origin of the Black Death there is an unresolved controversy, for which see Varlik (2015: 94-96, “Controversy over the Origins of the ‘Oriental Plague’”). This is probably the area stretching from the north-western shores of the Caspian Sea to southern Russia (where a plague epidemic is attested in 1346-1347). See Norris (1977: 1 and *passim*, who extends the area southwards to Iraq); Dols (1979: 170-171, esp. note 17); Benedictow (2004: 35-36, “The territorial origin of plague and of the Black Death”); Borsch (2014: 5-6 and *passim*).

<sup>13</sup> It is only at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, after identifying the plague bacillus (*Yersinia pestis*), that scientists discovered that the best vehicle for transmitting the plague to man is a type of flea called *Xenopsylla cheopis*, which coexists with infected rats. The discovery, which occurred in 1898, was made by the French doctor and biologist Paul-Louis Simond and confirmed by the observations of the Japanese doctor Ogata Masanori. For the history of these discoveries, the scepticism with which they were received and the discussions that followed, see Carmichael (2009: 70-71).

<sup>14</sup> For the tortuous – and difficult to reconstruct – path of the Black Death, which probably did not follow a single route but expanded in different directions both by sea and by land, and for the subsequent waves of the pandemic, see Dols (1977: 35-67) and Varlik (2015, esp. 97-107, “The Initial Spread of the Black Death”). For the influence of the Mongolian Empire on the world’s ecological and epidemiological balances and its effect on changing disease balances, see McNeill (1976: 141-184). The same author supports the hypothesis that the bacillus of the Black Death would have reached Central Asia through the Mongols, whose “movements across previously isolating distances in all probability brought the bacillus *Yersinia pestis* to the rodents of the Eurasian steppe for the first time” (McNeill 1976: 143). Norris (1977: 11-13) disputes that the plague originated in Central Asia, and according to some Byzantine sources contemporary to the Black Death, proposes that the epidemic originated in southern Russia and then spread from there to the north passing from one family of rodents to another, reaching European Russia – from where it would later arrive in Europe and Middle East.

in 1346.<sup>15</sup> Regarding the spread of the Black Death in India and China, which is also attested in some Arabic sources,<sup>16</sup> the hypothesis has been strongly questioned, or even excluded.<sup>17</sup>

In the port of Caffa, at the time a colony of the Republic of Genoa, there were hundreds of commercial ships,<sup>18</sup> all destined for the main Mediterranean ports; the bacillus was given an excellent means of transport. In a flash, the plague erupted into the Mediterranean devastating in the North the whole of Europe (where it reached Greenland), in the South, Egypt, the Maghreb and Central Africa, and in the East the Near and Middle East<sup>19</sup> (but it probably also arrived in Iraq and Syria from Tabriz).<sup>20</sup> Within three years the pandemic caused unprecedented devastation and, according to the most reliable estimates, it killed at least one third of the population of the Mediterranean.<sup>21</sup> It returned

---

<sup>15</sup> It is interesting to note the story that the plague may have arrived in Caffa with what is referred to as “the first biological war” of mankind: in 1346, in fact, the Khan of the Golden Horde besieged the city, but was soon forced to retreat because the plague had struck his army and men died by the dozens. According to Gabriele de Mussis’s report, before leaving the Khan would have given orders to catapult a large number of infected corpses inside the walls: certainly, without imagining that he would have caused a series of contagions that would have brought the plague to all the Mediterranean countries (Wheelis 2002; Benedictow 2004: 51-53; Varlik 2015: 99-100).

<sup>16</sup> See among others al-Maqrīzī (1971, vol. 4: 81-82; cf. Ibn Taghrī Birdī 1979, vol. 10: 197, who quotes him); Ibn al-Wardī (1997, vol. 2: 339).

<sup>17</sup> See among others Biraben (1975: 49-50); Dols (1977: 38-43); Norris (1977: 3-6); Benedictow (2004: 40-4), who says that in the second millennium CE neither China nor India seem to have been affected by the plague until the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The most recent and radical criticism of the presence of the Black Death in India and China is due to Sussman (2011).

<sup>18</sup> IB also reports the Genoese presence in Caffa and the many ships moored in its port. He claims having spent a couple of days there in 1332 and describes it as “a great city along the sea coast inhabited by Christians, most of them Genoese”, in whose port he counted “about two hundred vessels, both ships of war and trading vessels, small and large, for it is one of the world’s celebrated ports”. (al-Tāzī II: 216-217; Gibb II: 470-471 [EP 357-358]).

<sup>19</sup> For the arrival of the plague in the Arab area (first of all in the Egyptian port of Alexandria, where it probably appeared in the early autumn 1347) see, among others, Shrewsbury (1970: 151); Ashtor (1976: 301-302); Dols (1977: 59-60); Benedictow (2004: 62-63); Borsch and Sabraa (2017: 68-70). In Europe too, the plague arrived by sea: first of all in Italy, where it appeared in the port of Messina in September 1347. In November of the same year the plague arrived in France, where it landed at the port of Marseille. In the first months of 1348 it arrived in the Balearic Islands and from there reached Spain in May, hitting Barcelona and Valencia first. Then, from the coastal areas it penetrated the continent and burst into France, Spain, England, Switzerland, Germany, Flanders, Poland, Russia and Scandinavia (Biraben 1975: 74-81; Brossollet 1984: 54; Cosmacini 2006: 30-31).

<sup>20</sup> The plague probably arrived in Iraq from the Caucasus at the end of 1347 (Benedictow 2004: 64-65; Varlik 2015: 102-103).

<sup>21</sup> According to the most recent studies, in Europe the Black Death killed an average of 70-80% of those who fell ill (Aberth 2011: 59). Historians of the time say – and subsequent studies mostly confirm – that more than a third of the inhabitants died in the affected areas, that is at least 20 million people, with many more victims in urban than in rural areas (cf. the detailed analysis of Biraben 1975: 176-184 and Benedictow 2004: 245-386, “Mortality in the Black Death”). See also, among others, Onion (1980: 131); Brossollet (1984: 53); Cosmacini (2006: 20). In order to realise the impact that the Black Death had on European demography, consider that the approximately 60 million victims of World War II, including those of the Holocausts, made up 5% of the population (Bergdolt 1994: 6-7). With respect to the Middle East, the most recent studies estimate that the Black Death killed 42% of the population (Borsch and Sabraa 2017: 84, see also Borsch 2014). It should be noted that the only surveys

periodically, though with less virulence, in a series of waves which persisted for about a century and a half, and remained in Europe until the 17<sup>th</sup> century and in Egypt until the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>22</sup>

Only long afterwards, as already mentioned, was this pandemic called the Black Death (or Black Plague) in several languages, including Arabic (*al-mawt/al-ṭāʿūn al-aswad*).<sup>23</sup> This is an expression of uncertain origin, which does not appear in the texts of contemporary chroniclers and probably dates back to Latin, since from the first century BCE authors such as Tibullus and Horace had used the expression *Atra Mors* [Black Death]<sup>24</sup> to designate serious pandemics.<sup>25</sup> The Latin expression is however used in the 12<sup>th</sup> century by the French physician Gilles de Corbeil, in reference to a *febris pestilentialis* [pestilential fever]<sup>26</sup> and much later, in the Scandinavian and German region, it was to be used with

---

previously carried out on the subject were those of Dols (1977: 193-223), which estimated a number of victims ranging from one third to half of the population. On the pathogenesis of *Yersinia pestis*, its exceptional virulence and its ability to subvert the human immune system, see among others Demeure *et al.* (2019: 361-363).

<sup>22</sup> In Europe, where successive waves were less frequent and less devastating than in the Middle East, the demographic decline caused by the disease came to an end in the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century (Shoshan 1981: 387) – but recent genetic analyses have shown that the bacillus that caused the Black Death was present at least until the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Seifert *et al.* 2016) and plague epidemics are however attested until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> (Biraben 1975: 118-129, 184-190 and 375-449 [appendix 4]). In the Middle East, however, the successive waves were so violent and so numerous that their cumulative effect was a higher number of deaths than in the three years of the Black Death (Dols 1977: 4). For the plague waves in the Middle East see Dols (1977: 193-235 and 305-314) and Dols (1981), dedicated to this topic. On the depopulation of the Middle East, and of Egypt in particular, see Ayalon (1985); Borsch (2014); Varlik (2015: 118-125). It has to be considered that depopulation was not only due to the plague, but also to a whole series of serious problems derived from the economy, such as the sudden collapse of wheat exports which caused a very serious impoverishment of the countryside, with the consequent tendency to migrate towards urban areas and the considerable decrease of marriages (and therefore births), see Dols (1977: 231-235). In Egypt, the last significant wave was recorded in Alexandria in 1835 and the end of the plague was certainly favoured by the end of the Mamluk dominion (which after the advent of the Ottomans was no longer formal but still substantial), overthrown by Napoleon in 1798. In fact, it severed Egypt's links with the areas of Central Asia from which the Mamluks – and the bacilli – came (McNeill 1976: 175-176 and 301-302, note 68; Shoshan 1981: 387; Borsch and Sabraa 2017: 63-64). In Europe, too, it has recently been shown that the bacilli of the subsequent waves following the Black Death did not come from permanent reservoirs formed as a result of the pandemic, but arrived in European ports from Asia at intervals of 15 years (Schmid *et al.* 2015).

<sup>23</sup> From a search on the Google search engine conducted on 01.03.2021, there were about 455,000 results for the Arabic expression *al-mawt al-aswad* “the Black Death”, while for *al-ṭāʿūn al-aswad* “the Black Plague” there were 81,000, followed by *al-ṭāʿūn al-ʿaẓīm* “the Enormous Plague, 13,900”. In English, *the Black Death* (6,240,000) is undoubtedly more widely used than *the Black Plague* (2,070,000) – not to mention other expressions, such as *the Pestilence* or *the Great Mortality*.

<sup>24</sup> The adjective *āter* (fem. *atra*), which is synonymous with *niger* “black” but more than that it recalls an idea of terror, misfortune and death, is often used by Lucretius, Virgil and Seneca in the description of various epidemic diseases (Calonghi 1969: 282b; Ernout and Meillet 2001 [1932]: 53b-54a). For a more detailed analysis and citations of the sources, see D'Irsay (1926, esp. 331-332).

<sup>25</sup> In the 11<sup>th</sup> century, the Andalusian polymath Ibn Sīnā [Avicenna] also uses the adjective *aswad* [black] to indicate the worst kind of plague [ṭāʿūn] “that nobody survives” [*lā yaflitu minhu aḥad*] (Ibn Sīnā 1999, vol. 3: 165).

<sup>26</sup> De Corbeil (1907), quoted in D'Irsay (1926: 328-329).

specific reference to the great medieval plague pandemic. From this area it was to gradually enter other European languages as a calque: *Svarti Dauði* in Icelandic, *Sorte Dod* in Danish and *Schwarzer Tod* in German. The first occurrence in English [*Black Death*] seems to be from 1755.<sup>27</sup> According to some, the spread of this expression was also due to the harmful prognosis of the disease (D’Irsay 1926: 329) and the fact that, at an advanced stage, large dark spots of a haemorrhagic nature could appear under the skin (Hecker 1846: 2; Conrad 1982: 294).

Even today, scholars of various disciplines continue to study the plague, the Black Death in particular,<sup>28</sup> focusing on its various aspects not only in Europe but also in the Middle East, to which this article refers.<sup>29</sup> The aim of this paper is to contribute to these studies by examining the story of an event that occurred in Damascus in July 1348, as discovered in one of the most famous travelogues in history. It was recounted by the Moroccan Muḥammad Ibn Baṭṭūṭa and edited by the Andalusian Ibn Juzayy al-Kalbī, but is known in both Arabic and English as *Riḥlat Ibn Baṭṭūṭa*, *The Riḥla [Travels] of IB*.<sup>30</sup> From a literary point of view, the story of this event is among the most remarkable of the work, and the presence of contemporary Arabic sources makes it possible to establish the reliability of the events it reports and place it in the context of the most deadly pandemic to have ever occurred in the Middle East.

---

<sup>27</sup> On this date, the expression is attested in a text translated from Danish by Andreas Berthelson (see *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v., where the expression is said to have been “modelled on a Danish lexical item”).

<sup>28</sup> “Black Death Studies is in excellent health”, as Stearns wrote just over ten years ago, suggesting that the considerable interest in these studies was partly due to the epidemics that had struck the planet in the previous 30 years: AIDS, Ebola, Avian Influenza and Swine Influenza (Stearns 2009: 1). Since then, many other studies and research related to the Black Death have been conducted in various fields of science and history – and in the ensuing 11 years humanity has had to deal with three other major epidemics: SARS (2003), MERS (2012) and COVID-19 (2020). For an idea of the number of existing studies on the Black Death, the bibliography in one of the most important texts on the subject, by Jean-Noel Biraben, occupies about a quarter of the work (Biraben 1976, vol. 2: 186-413) – and the text dates back over 50 years.

<sup>29</sup> The first studies on the Black Death in Europe are by Hecker, in 1832. As for the other Mediterranean areas affected by the scourge, the first essay on the plague in the Middle East is by Von Kremer, in 1880, and it is essentially based on the work of Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (15<sup>th</sup> century). However, in 1976 McNeill complained about “a troublesome void” for plague investigations in countries outside Europe (McNeill 1976: 174-175). The following year Dols made a major contribution to plague studies in the Middle East with *The Black Death in the Middle East* – other studies have followed – but such studies on China and India are so far scarce. This scarcity is underlined by Sussman 2011, who analyses the Delhi Sultanate for India and the Yuan Dynasty for China. For the history of the first studies on Black Death in the Middle East, see Dols (1977: 27, note 47) and Conrad (1981).

<sup>30</sup> Their full name is Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Lawātī al-Ṭanjī (known as Ibn Baṭṭūṭa) and Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Juzayy al-Kalbī (known as al-Juzayy).



### 3. The Black Death in Ibn Baṭṭūṭa's *Riḥla*

Almost all the information we have about IB and his travels is taken from the *Riḥla*.<sup>31</sup> From it, we know that he was born in Tangier in 703/1304 and left his country in 725/1325 with the declared intention of making the Pilgrimage to the holy places of Islam (Mecca and Medina). In reality, he began a 29-year journey that, according to the *Riḥla*, would take him across most of the then-known world.<sup>32</sup>

The book tells the story of IB who starting from the far west, the Maghreb, reached all the limits of the Islamic region. To the south, he travelled as far as present-day Tanzania, to the north to present-day Volgograd, and to the east to the coast of Guandong, on the Formosa Strait. He travelled far and wide in the Middle East,<sup>33</sup> made his Pilgrimage to Mecca at least four times, got to know the infancy of

---

<sup>31</sup> IB's existence is nevertheless proven by the (little) information on him given by three of his contemporary authors: the Algerian Ibn Khaldūn (1858, vol. 1: 327-329); the Egyptian Ibn Ḥajar (1993b, vol. 3: 480-481) the Andalusian Ibn al-Khaṭīb (1863: 9). However, scholar have often note that no source from the countries IB claims to have visited reports his presence (see among others Gibb 2004 [1929]: 9; Monteil 1979: XII-XIII).

<sup>32</sup> The following is a compendium of IB's adventures as related by the *Riḥla*, in order to introduce the work and to situate the Damascus Prayer in the story it tells. In the *Riḥla*, IB states several times that everything he reports is derived from his personal testimony or from trustworthy oral and written sources. But the sources are very rarely declared and as already mentioned many authoritative studies have demonstrated and/or hypothesised that IB and/or Ibn Juzayy borrowed and adapted passages from other sources in several parts of the work, so that today it is impossible to believe that the whole *Riḥla* is a faithful account of IB's personal adventures. This topic is not the focus of this article, but in the conclusive paragraph, the story of the Damascus prayer will also be considered from this point of view. In the following notes there are references to the main studies, criticisms and annotations that scholars have made on this subject (for other accounts of these studies see, among others, Dunn 1986: 313-316; Euben 2006: 63-85; Elger 2010). As the *Riḥla* also presents many internal chronological problems, the notes also give an account of scholars' attempts to reformulate the chronology of IB's travels in accordance with the itineraries, the travelling time required and the proven dates of some events. On the questions of chronology in the *Riḥla*, see esp. Husain (1976 [1953]: liv-lxxi); the in-depth (and never completed) study by Hrbek (1962); Gibb's notes to his 1958-1971 edition of the *Riḥla*; Dunn (1986, esp. 132-133, note 2); Allouche (1990); Elad (1987: 256-257); Waines (2010: 10-11).

<sup>33</sup> A number of possible and/or proven parts borrowed from other sources have been found in several passages of IB's *Riḥla* relating to the Middle East (Egypt, Mecca and Medina, Syria, Palestine, Lebanon and Iraq). First of all, and especially for Damascus, from the *Riḥla* of Ibn Jubayr: see Defremery and Sanguinetti who first noted this in their "Préface" to IB's *Riḥla* EP (Monteil 1979: XXXII); Wright, who confirmed their annotation when he translated Ibn Jubayr's *Riḥla* into English (Wright 1907 [1852]: 17); Gibb (2004 [1929]: 11-12). In more recent times, Mattock offers a systematic comparison concluding that one-seventh of IB's *Riḥla* is borrowed more or less directly from three-sevenths of Ibn Jubayr's work (Mattock 1981: 211, see also Mattock 2008 [1965-1966]); Netton speaks of "plagiarism" (Netton 1984: 132, note 6). Another source has been identified in the *al-Riḥla al-maghribiyya* of Muḥammad al-ʿAbdari (Hoenerback 1940, who translated it into German, quoted by Elad 1987: 259 and *passim*); Elad offers a detailed comparison between IB's and al-ʿAbdari's *Riḥla* and concludes: "If we put aside those parts of the description of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa's travels in Palestine which were borrowed from al-ʿAbdari, we are left with no more than two or three unconnected sentences, hanging in mid-air" (Elad 1987: 266; see also Elger 2010). Borrowing has been suggested from the works of Shams al-Dīn al-Dimashqī and al-Muqaddasī (Elad 1987: 262-263 and 270, note 43); al-Qazwīnī (Elad 1987: 78 and *passim*) and al-ʿUmari (Elger 2010: 73-75 and *passim*). In his detailed comparison of IB's *Riḥla* with other sources, Elger also suggests some borrowing from Ibn Ḥawqal's map for IB's itinerary in the Arabian Peninsula (Elger 2010: 84).

the Ottoman Empire<sup>34</sup> and entered Christian territory by visiting Constantinople.<sup>35</sup> In 1333, he reached India and settled in the Islamic Sultanate of Delhi, where for eight (or perhaps nine) years<sup>36</sup> he held the prestigious role of *qāḍī* [judge] in the service of the prodigal tyrant Muḥammad Ibn Tughluq. From there, he was appointed ambassador to Canton, a large port which at the time was home to a large colony of Muslim merchants.<sup>37</sup> This time the journey, by sea, ended with a shipwreck and, forced to change plans, IB stayed for (perhaps) a year and a half in the Maldives, a tropical paradise converted to

---

<sup>34</sup> Defremery and Sanguinetti first noted in their “Préface” some similarities between IB’s journey in Anatolia and both the encyclopaedic work *Masālik al-abṣār fī mamālik al-amṣār*, by the historian Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-ʿUmarī [Chihāb el-dīn Aou’l’abbās Ahmed], and the descriptions by the geographer Abū al-Fidā [Abou’lféda] (Monteil 1979: XII-XIII). The journey was judged impossible for reasons of chronology and itineraries by Hrbek (1962: 468-469). Other more recent studies suggest that parts could have been borrowed from the work of al-ʿUmarī (Elger 2010: 75-78, who identifies this work as IB’s “favorite source,” Elger 2010: 79). From Anatolia, IB claims having travelled to Bulghār following the course of the Volga. But given the itinerary of more than 1,000 km which he claims to have traveled in ten days, it is impossible to believe that he actually made this journey. The first to raise doubts was Markwart in 1924 (cited by Hrbek 1962:472, note 86, 799 and *passim*), but it was Janicsek who stated that this journey was a “fabrication”, and suggested some borrowing from the *Risāla* of Ibn Faḍlān and the *Kitāb Masālik al-Mamālik* of al-Iṣṭakhrī or its re-edition by Ibn Ḥawqal (Janicsek 1929: 794-796). See also, among others, Janssens (1948: 101); Hrbek (1962: 471-473); Elad (1987: 257); Elger (2010: 71, note 2, who also suggests some borrowing from al-Gharnāṭī’s travelogue).

<sup>35</sup> Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (1372-1449) reports that according to the Andalusian *qāḍī* al-Balfiqī (1264-1366) who met IB in Granada, the latter used to tell very strange and exaggerated stories about his journey to Constantinople (Ibn Ḥajar 1993b, vol. 3: 480-481; see also above). In modern times, IB’s journey to the byzantine capital has been questioned by Wittek, who described it as “unbelievable” and at times “fanciful” (Wittek 1938: 371-372) and suggested that there could be some borrowing from some unidentified Tatar sources (Wittek 1949: 856). Janssens stated that although many studies on Byzantium cite IB’s *Rihla* as a source, it must be acknowledged that the circumstances of this journey are “suspicious” (Janssens 1948: 103). Micheau has noted that the narrative “is marred by contradictions and obscurities” (Micheau 1987: 56). Cfr. also Elad (1987: 268, note 17), and Conermann (1993), quoted by Trausch (2010: 140, note 4).

<sup>36</sup> Ibn Khaldūn reports that IB used to tell stories at the court of Fez about his Indian journey and some of his audience considered them too exaggerated to be credible (Ibn Khaldūn 1858, vol. 1: 328). Trausch had raised doubts on IB’s journey and stay in India by offering a comparison between the chapter on the history of the Delhi sultanate in the *Rihla* and the chronicle by the indian historian Ḍiyāʿ al-Dīn Baranī, that shows some possible “extraction” of information from the latter. Trausch also quotes Spies, who “pointed out the parallels between IB’s and al-ʿUmarī Indian passages” (Spies 1943: 8-9, “Übereinstimmungen zwischen Ibn Baṭṭūṭa und al-ʿUmarī;” see also Tresso 2021b) and Conermann, who gives a list of IB’s possible sources for India (Conermann 1993: 14; cf. Trausch 2010: 141, note 11 and 142, note 17). Some suspicious similarities have also been identified between IB’s itinerary in Malabar and al-Idrīsī’s map (Elger 2010: 85).

<sup>37</sup> There is evidence of the presence of an Arab-Persian colony of merchants and sailors in Canton since the beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> century (Israeli 2000: 5-6 and *passim*. See also Yule 1994 [1916]: 174, note 2; Gabrieli 1975: 17; M. Hartmann in in *EF*, s.v. *al-Ṣīn*).

Islam by Maghrebi settlers.<sup>38</sup> In 1345-1346 he left for Ceylon and after a brief stop in the region of Ma<sup>ʿ</sup>bar,<sup>39</sup> he proceeded to Sri Lanka, Bengal, Malaysia, Indonesia and China.<sup>40</sup>

Continuing his journey, IB returned west, travelled across India and in 1348 reached the Middle East at the time of the Black Death. He despatched several reports on its devastation and begged for divine mercy for dead friends he had hoped to see again. He made his last Pilgrimage to Mecca and once in Cairo he decided to return home. But the plague had preceded him to Morocco and claimed the life of his mother just before his arrival. By 1349 he arrived unscathed in his homeland and shortly afterwards left for Andalusia, where the Black Death had just killed King Alfonso XI of Castile. He then returned to Morocco and immediately continued south, reaching the Mali-Niger area.<sup>41</sup> It was not until early 1354, having returned from this last journey and settled in Fez, that IB really put an end to his wanderings. During his travels, he claimed having crossed the equivalent of 44 modern states, covering about 120,000 kilometres. This record makes him, as he probably hoped, the protagonist of the longest journey described in medieval literature.<sup>42</sup>

---

<sup>38</sup> IB's account of the Maldives is still considered one of the first descriptions of these Islands, but Janssen has noted that some information could have been taken from the works of al-Mas<sup>ʿ</sup>ūdī, al-Bīrūnī and al-Idrīsī (Janssens 1948: 108-109). For the sources that first mention the Maldives and give some information about them, see Gray (1994 [1890]).

<sup>39</sup> Ma<sup>ʿ</sup>bar “ford, crossing place” was the name used by medieval Arab geographers to indicate the eastern coastal area of Deccan, and corresponds broadly to what is now called Coromandel (Yule 1861, vol. II: 268, note 1).

<sup>40</sup> Many authors have raised doubts and reservations about IB's journey to Indochina and China (see Ferrand 1914, vol. II: 433; Janssen 1948: 101-102; Elad 1987: 268, note 17). Other studies are quoted in Dunn (1986: 262, note 20). In recent times, it has been suggested an “assemblage” of oral and written sources (Fauvelle-Aymar and Hirsch 2003: 85-94) and that IB and/or Ibn Juzayy might have borrowed information from both al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Umarī's *Masālik al-abṣār* (Elger 2010: 79-81) and Marco Polo's *Milione* (Elger 2010: 7, where the author notes that the borrowing from the venetian traveller could concern not just information, but also some narrative techniques, including the two-author text). See also Almonte (2016), where the author examines the place names of the Chinese localities given by IB and reports several theories of both Western and Chinese scholars on the topic.

<sup>41</sup> The reason that prompted IB to go to Mali (an order from the Sultan or a personal interest?) is a *vexata quaestio*, for which see Dunn (1986: 308, note 7). It has been noted that the data provided by IB on this area have made it possible to locate the Mali empire, which was at its most prosperous in the 14<sup>th</sup> century (Gabrieli 1975: 91), although in some cases suspicious similarities with the works of al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Umarī have been identified (Levtzion and Hopkins 1981: 280-281, Fauvelle-Aymar and Hirsch 2003: 83, 102 and passim. These latter also suggest that IB might have taken information from merchants and courtiers he met in a city in the Sahel).

<sup>42</sup> “I have indeed – praise be to God – attained my desire in this world, which was to travel through the earth, and I have attained in this respect what no other person has attained to my knowledge”, IB replies in a smug tone to a saintly man of Abadan, in present-day south-western Iran, who wishes him to fulfil his wishes (al-Tāzī II: 17; Gibb II: 282 [EP 20]). There are several hypotheses on how many kilometres, according to the *Rihla*, he travelled: Husain (1976 [1953]: liii) hypothesises 124,200; Dunn (1986: 3) calculates 117,000; Yule (1994 [1916]: 55) suggests more than 120,000 – not counting the trips IB made during his stay in India.

A few years later, on the order of the Marinid Sultan Abū ʿInān,<sup>43</sup> IB dictated the diary of his journey and the court scribe, Ibn Juzayy – who was judged more able than him to guarantee a good literary portrayal of his fascinating stories – edited it.<sup>44</sup> As the text says, IB finished dictating his memories on 3 *Dhū al-Ḥijja* 756 (13 December 1355), while Ibn Juzayy’s final editing of the work ended in *Ṣafar* of the year 757 (February 1356). The text came to light with the pompous title *Tuḥfat al-nazzār fī gharāʾib al-amṣār wa-ʿajāʾib al-asfār* (“A Gift to Those Who Contemplate the Wonders of Cities and the Marvels of Travelling”) – but it is known as *Riḥla* “(Chronicle of) Travels.”<sup>45</sup>

Ibn Juzayy, who was born in Granada in 721/1321, probably died less than one year later, in 758/1357. As for IB, the few reports we have were provided by an Egyptian chronicler of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, according to whom he retired to a provincial town (*bi-baʿḍ al-bilād*) and held the position of *qāḍī* until his death, which probably occurred in 770/1368-1369,<sup>46</sup> when he was 64 years old. In Tangier it is still possible to visit the tomb – a very modest one – that is said to be his.<sup>47</sup>

---

<sup>43</sup> Abū ʿInān Fāris (1349-1359) was the 11<sup>th</sup> sultan of the Marinid dynasty, which ruled much of present-day Morocco from 1258 to 1465, extending its rule for short periods over parts of North Africa (present-day Algeria and Tunisia) and Andalusia.

<sup>44</sup> In his Introduction to IB’s *Travels*, Ibn Juzayy reports that the Sultan assigned him the task of “giving care to the pruning and polishing of its language” (al-Tāzī I: 152; Gibb I: 6 [EP 10]). According to Ibn Ḥajar, Ibn al-Khaṭīb reported that the Sultan ordered IB to write his travelogue [*amarahu bi-tadwīn riḥlatihi*] and Ibn Marzūq stated that on the Sultan’s order Ibn Juzayy verified and edit it [*ḥaqqāqa wa-ḥarrara*]. In the same passage, Ibn al-Khaṭīb also reports that IB “had a modest share of science” [*kāna mushārik fī shayʿ yasīru*] (Ibn Ḥajar 1993b, vol. 3: 480-481).

<sup>45</sup> Al-Tāzī (IV: 280); Gibb and Beckingham (IV: 977 [EP 448-449]). If Ibn Juzayy’s information is true, it took IB one, one and half year to dictate his memories and it only took him two or three months to write the definitive text of the *Riḥla*. Comparing the time required for the editing of the work in other languages, it should be noted that the accurate English edition by Gibb bears the date 1958 for vol. I, 1962 for vol. II and 1971 for vol. III. In the same year, unfortunately, Gibb died and Beckingham, who published vol. IV in 1994, completed his work. A separate index to the four volumes (vol. V) was edited by Bivar in 2000 “in affectionate memory of Charles Beckingham”, who died in 1998.

<sup>46</sup> The chronicler is the already mentioned Ibn Ḥajar, who in his famous *al-Durar al-kāmina*, a sort of “Who’s Who” about the most notable men and women of the 14<sup>th</sup> century CE, reports that according to Ibn Marzūq, IB “stayed (alive) until 770”, which corresponds to the period between 16 August 1368 and 7 July 1369 CE (Ibn Ḥajar 1993b, vol. 3: 481). However, the date of IB’s death is a controversial question: De Slane suggested that IB died in 779/1377-1378 (De Slane 1843: 183) while André Miguel says in 770/1368-9 or 779/1377 (EI2, s.v. Ibn Baṭṭūṭa), but neither cites his sources. According to the Chinese Li Guangbin, who translated the *Riḥla* into Chinese, he died in 1378 (Guangbin 2009: 1, cited by Almonte 2014: 34, note 7, who however does not cite Guangbin’s sources).

<sup>47</sup> However, it seems that this is not his real burial place: according to a letter from the Andalusian polymath Ibn al-Khaṭīb to IB himself, al-Tāzī hypothesises that IB spent the last years of his life in the city of Anfa, where he was buried. But this city was razed to the ground in the 15<sup>th</sup> century by the Portuguese and the present city of Casablanca was founded on its ruins (al-Tāzī I: 81).

Their work circulated for several centuries, especially in the form of manuscript *compendia*, in North Africa and the Middle East,<sup>48</sup> although scholars do not seem to have cited it as a reliable source (Dunn 1986: 317).<sup>49</sup> In Europe, the first translation in Latin of some extracts from one of these *compendia* was published at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century by the German Johann Kosegarten; a few years later the Englishman Samuel Lee translated another one in English in its entirety.<sup>50</sup> At some time during the French occupation of Algeria, five long manuscripts were found. Given to the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, between 1853 and 1858, Charles Defremery and Beniamino R. Sanguinetti used them to edit and translate into French the currently most complete version of the work, which has a detailed critical apparatus with notes and variations.<sup>51</sup> Almost all the editions and translations of the *Rihla* of IB currently available are based on this text, which is considered the *Editio Princeps* of the work.<sup>52</sup>

The *Rihla* of IB is probably the only travelogue by someone who claims to have journeyed to – and stayed – in places affected by the Black Death during the epidemic.<sup>53</sup> In 749/1348-1349, having preceded

<sup>48</sup> IB's *Rihla* seems to be first documented in the Middle East at the end of the 16th century (al-Tāzī I: 63). As far as I know, the first Arabic source to mention it is the famous work on the history of Andalusia *Nafh al-tīb min ghusn al-Andalus al-raṭīb* by al-Maqqarī (1577-1632), who twice quotes Ibn Juzayy as the *murattib* [arranger] of the *Rihla* of IB (al-Maqqarī 1875, I: 96 and 109).

<sup>49</sup> Waines (2010: 6) notes that given the presence of dozens of more or less complete manuscripts of the *Rihla* found in the Maghreb and Egypt (see note 51), at least in this area IB's travelogue must have enjoyed a certain popularity, but we do not have information about this. Also with regard to the subject of this paper, as we will see, no post-pandemic Arab author writing about the Black Death, quotes IB's *Rihla* among his sources.

<sup>50</sup> Kosegarten (1818) and Lee (1829). The manuscripts were purchased in the Middle East by two famous travellers: the German Ulrich J. Seetzen (1767-1811) and the Swiss Johann Burckhardt (1784-1817).

<sup>51</sup> Two of these manuscripts represent the most complete version of the work that has emerged so far: which is why Renan said that "these manuscripts are undoubtedly the most precious literary spoils that the conquest of Algeria produced and will produce" (Renan 1994 [1853]: 29). A list of 30 manuscripts of IB's *Travels*, including photographs and a brief description of them, can be found in al-Tāzī (I: 15-74). The Japanese scholar Hikoichi Yajima, who edited an 8 vols. version of the *Rihla* in Japanese (1996-2002), has collected 29 manuscripts, but I could not verify this information given by Kosugi 2019: 106. For the history of IB's text in Europe, see Defremery (1994 [1848]: 1-3); Janssens (1948: 7-10); Defremery and Sanguinetti's "Préface" in Monteil (1979: XIII-XXVI); al-Tāzī (1997: 97-108); Ibrahimovich (1999: 41-46); Waines (2010: 6-8).

<sup>52</sup> IB's *Travels* have so far been translated into about 15 languages and published in many different editions, the most popular of which (in European languages) are listed in the *Bibliography*. Books, essays, articles, films, songs, coins, stamps, etc. have all been dedicated to the life and work of IB. The airport of Tangier bears his name, as does one of the craters of the Moon. Moreover, dozens of exhibitions have been staged about his travels: the most recent, at the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg (2015), has the title of the *Rihla*: "A Gift to Contemporators."

<sup>53</sup> As for Arab travellers, I do not know of any other reports: it is true that the Andalusian Ibn al-Khaṭīb (14<sup>th</sup> century) mentions IB as "one of the great travellers" who related news of the plague, suggesting that he has heard or read other reports, but IB is the only one he cites (Ibn al-Khaṭīb 1863: 8-9). As for travellers from other areas, the only one I am aware of is the Italian Franciscan friar Niccolò da Poggibonsi, who travelled throughout the Middle East between March 1346 and December 1350, but who does not mention the epidemic in his memoirs (Da Poggibonsi 1881. See also Golubovich 1927, vol. 5: 1-12, who gives a detailed summary of them, and Dols 1977: 57-58, note 80).

the plague in Aleppo, he claimed to have witnessed it in Damascus, Gaza, Jerusalem, Alexandria and Cairo. It was perhaps also because of the desolation of this part of the journey, strewn with the dead and with cities debilitated, that when he arrived in the Egyptian capital IB decided that it was time to return home, and in doing so came encountered the plague once again, in Tunis, Morocco and Andalusia. A few years later, he began to dictate his travelogue. Whether this last journey of the *Riḥla* is true or not, IB and Ibn Juzayy had certainly experienced life during the plague and heard a lot of information about it: their memories were contemporary, their emotions vibrant, which served to increase the authenticity of the event.

#### 4. The prayer of Damascus in the *Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa*

The *Riḥla* recounts that ten months after leaving Tangier, in January 1326, IB arrived in Egypt (at that time the heart of Islamic civilization and the centre of trade between the Mediterranean and the East) and felt predestined to make his great journey.<sup>54</sup> Therefore, when a setback prevented him from embarking from the Egyptian Red Sea coast to reach the Hijaz (the area of the Arabian Peninsula where Mecca and Medina are located) he decided to head north to join the Pilgrimage caravan that was to leave from Damascus. He took the opportunity to visit Palestine and Syria (*al-Shām*) which at the time, like Egypt, were under Mamluk rule. According to his own reports, IB arrived in Damascus on 9 *Ramaḍān* 726 (9 August 1326)<sup>55</sup> and left with the caravan for Mecca “when the new moon of *Shawwāl* appeared” (1 September).<sup>56</sup>

---

<sup>54</sup> While affirming from the very beginning his willingness to set out on the pilgrimage to Mecca and visit the holy places of Islam (“[I was] swayed by an overmastering impulse within me and a desire long-cherished in my bosom to visit these illustrious sanctuaries,” *al-Tāzī* (I: 152); *Gibb* (I: 8 [EP 12-13]), Alexandria is where IB attributes the first “prediction” of his destiny to travel the world, when the pious *imām* Burhān al-Dīn foreshadows his journey to India, the Sind and China (*al-Tāzī* I: 186; *Gibb* I: 23-24 [EP 38]). A little further on, in a *zāwiya* [monastery, convent] not far from Alexandria, he reports of a dream that the local *shaykh* interprets by predicting the itinerary that he will actually follow: “You shall make the Pilgrimage (to Mecca) and visit (the tomb of) the Prophet (at al-Madīna), and you shall travel through the lands of al-Yaman and al-ʿIraq, the land of the Turks, and the land of India” (*al-Tāzī* I: 194; *Gibb* I: 31-32 [EP 52-53]).

<sup>55</sup> *Al-Tāzī* (I: 297); *Gibb* (I: 117-118 [EP 187]). IB reports that in the Syrian capital he heard a speech by the Damascene jurist and theologian Ibn Taymīya (1263-1328). In reality, however, from July of that year Ibn Taymīya was in Damascus, but was detained in the Citadel prison, where he remained until his death (26 September 1328). These considerations pose a number of problems of chronology and reliability of the narrated events, for which see, among others, Hrbek (1962: 421-430, esp. 42); Allouche (1990: 284-290).

<sup>56</sup> *Al-Tāzī* (I: 343); *Gibb* (I: 158 [EP 254]). The caravan of Damascus collected pilgrims from Syria, Anatolia and from the Iraq area, thus gathering several thousand people (in 1279, it seems there were 40,000 pilgrims; see Peters 1994: 172). The journey, which was very hard because most of it was through the desert, was not without danger and was made in about 20 stages

In accordance with the pattern, albeit flexible, adopted in the *Rihla* for the description of the most important cities in the Arabic region,<sup>57</sup> the long chapter on Damascus<sup>58</sup> begins with some verses of poetry dedicated to the city. This is followed by the description of the main mosques (first of all the Great Umayyad Mosque), the list of local religious authorities (*imām*, professors, teachers and *qāḍī*), the madrasas, the city gates and its most important mausoleums and sanctuaries. The last of these is the Mosque al-Aqdām (“of the Feet”) – also known as al-Qadam (“of the Foot”) – which has survived to this day in the southern part of Damascus and which owes its name to some footprints initially attributed to Moses and now to the Prophet, miraculously imprinted on a rock that was alleged to have been brought there from Basra.<sup>59</sup>

At this point the description of Damascus is interrupted to introduce one of the most moving and dramatic stories of the work, that recounts an event – a rogatory and inter-religious prayer gathering – which took place in this mosque 22 years later. In 1348, at the time of the Black Death, IB returned to Damascus and it was then, in an accursed month of July, in a city terrified by the pandemic, that he claims to have witnessed the plea of the Damascenes, turning to God to save them from the scourge. That day, everyone was at al-Aqdām Mosque, and everyone had fasted for three days: the young and the old, men and women, notables and ordinary people, Muslims, Jews and Christians. Each one with their own Holy Book in their hand and terror in their heart. All come together to beseech, to pray, to implore, to invoke... And the Most High, according to IB, “lightened their affliction.”

Thus, after the long “sequence shot” over the city, where as always in IB’s *Rihla* – and in many other works of Arabic travel literature – the artistic and architectural dimension intersects with the religious, with social life and traditions, Damascus reveals its powerful spiritual side. This spiritual side

---

(Loiseau 2014: 68; al-Rashed 2014: 29). The date of IB’s departure from Damascus has been questioned by Allouche in his analysis on IB’s journey from Damascus to Mecca (Allouche 1990: 290-293).

<sup>57</sup> In the 1920s Janicsek proposed a fixed scheme according to which IB would describe the cities, consisting of a sequence “description – list of fruits and typical products – news about local customs – history of famous people – one or two anecdotes”. In the same article, however, the author himself acknowledged that there are many exceptions (Janicsek 1929: 792). In recent times the issue has been taken up by Fauvelle-Aymar and Hirsch, who propose a “descriptive plot” consisting of a fixed sequence and a series of possible variants, and apply it to IB’s travels in China, East Africa and Mali (Fauvelle-Aymar and Hirsch 2003, esp. 97-100). See also Trausch, who suggests “the same pattern” in IB’s accounts of his Indian experiences and in Lebanon (Trausch 2010: 162-163, note 141).

<sup>58</sup> Al-Tāzī (I: 297-337); Gibb (I: 117-157 [EP 188-254]). As we have seen, scholars have shown that most of IB’s description of Damascus is taken from the *Rihla* of Ibn Jubayr (see note 33).

<sup>59</sup> IB states that the tomb of Moses was located in the same Mosque (al-Tāzī I: 325; Gibb I: 142-143 [EP 227]), and the same information is found in Ibn Jubayr (n. d., 229), who states that there were nine footprints) and Ibn ṢAsākir (1995, vol. 2: 239; (cited by Talmon-Heller 2007: 55, note 139). For al-Aqdām/al-Qadam Mosque see also Anabsi (2008: 67-68); Patrizi (2011: 86-87).

does not manifest itself in the elegant architectural masterpiece of the Great Mosque, but in a suburban sanctuary “rich in *Baraka*,”<sup>60</sup> which owes its name to a relic venerated even before the advent of Islam because it was said to be of Moses, the prophet who spoke “face to face” to God and who is the most quoted in the three Abrahamic scriptures.<sup>61</sup>

The emotional impact of the story is accentuated by the fact that it represents the only case of protracted narrative, the only “flash forward” present in the *Rihla*. So, if it is true that throughout the whole work IB shows an “endearing tendency to bare himself,”<sup>62</sup> it should be noted that when talking about al-Aqdām Mosque he really seems unable to avoid forcefully entering the scene. The narrator neglects not only the description of the place but also the chronological layout, and associates the mosque with one of the most exciting scenes he is describing – and which, in due course, he was to again relive.<sup>63</sup>

Following this digression, the narration resumes with a chapter on the surroundings of Damascus, one on the customs of its inhabitants and another in which IB enumerates the *ijāza* “diplomas” of study he obtained from the local *shaykh*. Possibly, having returned with his memories to the emotional situation that he was to experience 20 years later, in listing these diplomas, he became confused and mentioned some that he probably obtained during his first stay.<sup>64</sup>

## 5. Arabic text with translation

**حكاية**  
شاهدت أيام الطاعون الأعظم بدمشق في أواخر شهر ربيع سنة تسع  
وأربعين من تعظيم أهل دمشق لهذا المسجد ما يعجب منه، وهو أن ملك

---

<sup>60</sup> *Baraka* (“blessing”) is a term that refers to complex semantic fields and frequently appears in IB’s *Rihla*. From the original meaning of “grace, blessing” it came to indicate – especially in North Africa – a “beneficial force” granted by God to people, objects or places that can in turn transmit or emanate it. For the devotional practices widespread in medieval times to acquire the *baraka*, see Meri 1999 and for *Baraka* in IB’s *Rihla* see Wha (1991, quoted in Euben 2006: 228) and Methal (2012: 10).

<sup>61</sup> For the many vestiges and holy places of Jews and Christians that Muslims “adopted” in Syria, see Talmon-Heller (2007: 187-189).

<sup>62</sup> Mackintosh-Smith (2001: 10). Cf. Trausch (2010: 140), who states that “it is the author himself who acts as a central part of the story”. Some have come to ascribe to IB “a breaking autobiographical tendency to which everything is subordinate” (Gabrieli 1961: XIV).

<sup>63</sup> Al-Tāzī (IV: 179); Gibb and Beckingham (IV: 918 [EP 320]). This is one of the very rare occasions in the *Rihla* where the description of an event is repeated.

<sup>64</sup> This is Beckingham’s hypothesis (Gibb and Beckingham IV: 917, note 38), after Gibb had already noticed that IB claims to have obtained as many as 14 *ijāza* in a single month (Gibb I: 157, note 338). See also Dunn (1986: 61).



الأمراء نائب السلطان أرغون شاه أمر مناديا ينادي بدمشق أن يصوم الناس ثلاثة أيام، ولا يطبخ أحد بالسوق ما يؤكل نهارًا، وأكثر الناس بها إنما يأكلون الطعام الذي يصنع بالسوق، فصام الناس ثلاثة أيام متوالية كان آخرها يوم الخميس. ثم اجتمع الأمراء والشرفاء والقضاة والفقهاء وسائر الطبقات على اختلافها في الجامع، حتى غص بهم، وباتوا ليلة الجمعة ما بين مصلٍ وذاكرٍ وداعٍ، ثم صلوا الصبح، وخرجوا جميعا على أقدامهم، وبأيديهم المصاحف، والأمراء حفاة وخرج جميع أهل البلد ذكورا وإناثا، صغارا وكبارًا وخرج اليهود بتوراتهم، والنصارى بإنجيلهم، ومعهم النساء والولدان، وجميعهم باكون متضرعون إلى الله بكتبه وأنبيائه، وقصدوا مسجد الأقدام وأقاموا به في تضرعهم ودعائهم إلى قرب الزوال، وعادوا إلى البلد، وصلوا الجمعة. وخفف الله تعالى عنهم فأنتهى عدد الموتى إلى ألفين في اليوم الواحد - وقد انتهى عددهم بالقاهرة ومصر إلى أربعة وعشرين ألفا في اليوم الواحد. وبالباب الشرقي منارة بيضاء يقال إنها التي ينزل عيسى عليه السلام عندها حسبما ورد في صحيح مسلم. (Al-Tāzī 1997 I: 325-326).

#### Anecdote

“I witnessed at the time of the Great Plague at Damascus in the latter part of the month of Second Rabīʿ of the year 49 (July 1348), a remarkable instance of the veneration of the people of Damascus for this mosque.<sup>65</sup> Arghūn-Shāh,<sup>66</sup> king of the amīrs and the Sultan’s viceroy, ordered a crier to proclaim through Damascus that the people should fast for three days and that no one should cook in the bazaar during the daytime anything to be eaten (for most of the people there eat no food but what has been prepared in the bazaar).<sup>67</sup> So the people fasted for three successive days, the last of which was a Thursday. At the end of this period, the amīrs, sharīfs, qāḍīs, doctors of the Law,<sup>68</sup> and all other classes of the people in their several degrees, assembled in the Great Mosque, until it was filled to

<sup>65</sup> Al-Aqdām Mosque, which IB has just described.

<sup>66</sup> Sayf al-Dīn Arghūn Shāh al-Nāṣirī (d. 1349), whose presence in Damascus as lieutenant of the Mamluk Sultan al-Malik al-Nāṣir Ibn Qalāwūn is attested by chroniclers (see among others Ibn Kathīr 2010, vol. 16: 341; Ibn Iyās 1984, vol. 1: 534-535).

<sup>67</sup> On the ancient Middle Eastern habit of buying cooked food at markets, see among others Scarcia Amoretti (2001: 207 and note).

<sup>68</sup> Emir (*amīr*) is a title which properly indicates a “prince” or a “commander,” but in the Mamluk administrative and military organisation was applied to dignitaries of various grades and categories. *Sharīf* designates the direct descendants of the Prophet, who still today form a prestigious aristocracy and can therefore be equated with “nobles.” Finally, *qāḍī* is a “judge” of the Islamic court appointed by the central power, with the power to issue sentences and impose their execution in religious, civil and criminal matters.

overflowing with them, and spent the Thursday night there in prayers, liturgies, and supplications. Then, after performing the dawn prayer (on the Friday morning), they all went out together on foot carrying Qur’āns in their hands – the amīrs too barefooted. The entire population of the city joined in the exodus, male and female, small and large; the Jews went out with their book of the Law (*Tawrāt*) and the Christians with Gospel, their women and children with them; the whole concourse of them in tears and humble supplications, imploring the favour of God through His Books and His Prophets. They made their way to the Mosque of the Footprints (*al-Aqdām*) and remained there in supplication and invocation until near midday, then returned to the city and held the Friday service. God Most High lightened their affliction; the number of deaths in a single day reached a maximum of two thousand, whereas the number rose in Cairo and Old Cairo<sup>69</sup> to twenty-four thousand in a day.

At the East Gate of Damascus is a white minaret, said to be that upon which Jesus (on him be peace) will descend, as is stated in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim” (Gibb I: 143-144 [EP 228-229]).

## 6. “The words to say it:” analysis of the lexicon

As far as the lexicon is concerned, the presence of an interesting *hapax* may be noticed: *ṭāʿūn*, “plague.” The story of the prayer gathering of Damascus is indeed the only occasion in the *Riḥla* where the plague is called *ṭāʿūn*, which is the specific Arabic term for the disease. At all other times, the pandemic is called *wabāʿ*<sup>70</sup> that more properly means “epidemic” in general,<sup>70</sup> but which, in this part of the *Riḥla*, is always used, with the definite article, to designate the Black Death: *al-wabāʿ*<sup>71</sup>, “the epidemic.”<sup>71</sup> On this single occasion, moreover, the name of the epidemic is qualified by an adjective to the highest degree, the elative: *al-ṭāʿūn al-aʿẓam*, “the biggest/greatest plague.”<sup>72</sup>

---

<sup>69</sup> At that time, the term *Miṣr* (here translated as “Old Cairo”) designated both Egypt and the ancient capital *Fuṣṭāṭ*, founded in 642 by General ʿAmrū Ibn al-ʿĀṣ on the site of the ancient Roman fortress of Babylon, near Memphis, which the Arabs conquered in 639 and where they built a *miṣr*, a “fortified camp”. Cairo (*al-Qāhira*, “the Victorious”) was, on the other hand, the new city that the Fatimids started building in 969 to the northeast of the ancient nucleus of *Fuṣṭāṭ*, which was progressively incorporated into the new – and increasingly larger – capital. Today, the term *Miṣr* refers to Egypt, but in Cairo, the district of *Miṣr al-qādima* (“Old Miṣr”) still keeps its old name.

<sup>70</sup> Al-Nawawī (1929: 204). For a more in-depth analysis of Arabic terminology on the plague see Dols (1977: 315-319; Appendix 2, “The Arabic Terminology for Plague”) and Conrad (1982), who examines the use of both terms since the early times of Islam. Other annotations can be found in Ayalon (1946: 67) and Sublet (1971). For this and other aspects of the narration of the Black Death in IB’s *Riḥla*, see Tresso (2021a).

<sup>71</sup> In the *Riḥla*, the word *wabāʿ*<sup>71</sup> is also used to designate three epidemics in India and this led some scholars to assume that they were plague. However, recent studies have established that it is not until the 17<sup>th</sup> century that the disease is first substantiated in the sub-continent (on this misunderstanding see Tresso 2021b).

<sup>72</sup> Neither Gibb nor any of the translators into the European languages maintain the adjective in the elative degree (Defremery and Sanguinetti in Yerasimos (1997, vol. I: 234-235, *la grande peste*); Charles-Dominique (1995: 458-459, *la grande peste*); Fanjul and Arbós (1993: 193-194, *la gran peste*); Tresso (2006: 114, *la grande peste*). However, it should be noted that in none of these

The words used in the text are also important insofar as they continually repeat and underline the theme of the story. In this article the etymology or the use of each of them will not be analysed, but it should be noted that in the central passage, consisting of 58 Arabic words, there are nine verbal forms concerning the act of “praying.” *Muṣallin*, *dhākir* and *dāʿin* are participles and although each conveys a different shade of meaning, they can all be translated as “prayer”. *Taḍarraʿa* (“to implore”) is a verb and *taḍarruʿ* and *duʿāʿ*, which correspond to “imploing” and “supplication,” are verbal nouns such as *taʿzīm*, “veneration,” and *ṣalāt*, which appears twice and designates “prayer:” primarily the canonical one. The same terms are widely used in the texts of medieval Arabic chronicles to describe this and other rogatory rites that took place during the Black Death. However, unlike almost all other Arab chronicles, the use of the verb *dhakara* which refers to *dhikr*, the prayer of the Sufis – an environment to which IB was particularly attracted, should be noted.<sup>73</sup>

As is well known, repetition is a founding feature of Arabic aesthetics – not only literary – but in this case it is evident that it is used both to involve readers by allowing them to enter the climate of anguish and terror in which the ritual took place and to fully describe the power of the prayer which, according to the epilogue proposed in the story, was accepted by the Most High. Last but not least, the intensity of the prayer is amplified as a whole by the explicit presence of women, children and, above all, the faithful of other religions, Jews and Christians, and their sacred texts, which are mentioned only on this occasion in the *Riḥla*.<sup>74</sup>

---

languages the use of an elative adjective to designate the plague is attested. Arabic sources designate the pandemic in different ways: as for the authors cited in this article, note *al-ṭāʿūn al-ʿaẓīm* (“the Enormous Plague,” Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba 1994, vol. 1: 541); *al-fanāʿ al-kabīr/al-ʿaẓīm* (“the Great/Enormous Destruction,” al-Maqrīzī 1971, vol. 4: 85; Ibn Iyās 1984, vol. 1: 523; Ibn Ḥabīb al-Ḥalabī, fol. 1); *al-ṭāʿūn/al-wabāʿ al-ʿām* (“the Universal Plague/Epidemic,” al-Sakhāwī 1992, vol. 1: 97); *al-ṭāʿūn al-jārif* (“the Overwhelming Plague,” Ibn Khaldūn 1970: 55 and al-Nawawī 1929: 105, where the author explains that he uses this adjective for the large number of deaths). For other expressions used in medieval Arabic sources to designate the Black Death, see Dols (1974a: 443, note 2) and Dols (1977: 5, note 5).

<sup>73</sup> For *dhikr*, see below. On IB and his relationship with Sufis, see Gibb (2004 [1929]: 33-39); Dunn (1986: 20-23); Manduchi (2000), in particular the chapter with the captivating title “Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, the *lay* Sufi” (108-122); Methal (2012: 5). Almost all the chroniclers considered in this article refer to this and other prayers for the plague as *duʿāʿ* [supplication]: only Ibn Iyās (1984, vol. 1: 531) uses the verb *dhakara* in his description of a similar rogatory prayer (*duʿāʿ*) held in Cairo during the Black Death.

<sup>74</sup> Actually, the Gospel is also mentioned in Constantinople, in the only part of the *Riḥla* which takes place in a non-Islamic region, when IB claims to have entered a monastery and seen a young man sitting in a pulpit, “reading the Gospel in the most beautiful voice that I have ever heard” (al-Tāzī II: 256; Gibb II: 511-512 [EP 439]). On the Tōrāh, the Psalms and the Gospels, which the Quran considers books revealed by God to the prophets Moses, David and Jesus (Qur 5, 43 and *passim*), see among others Adang (1996).

## References<sup>75</sup>

### Dictionaries

- Calonghi, Ferruccio. 1969. *Dizionario latino-italiano. Terza edizione interamente rifusa ed aggiornata del Dizionario Georges-Calonghi*. Torino: Rosenberg & Sellier.
- Ernout, Alfred and Alfred Meillet. 2001 [1932]. *Dictionnaire Étymologique de la Langue Latine*. Paris: Klincksieck. <https://archive.org/details/DictionnaireEtymologiqueDeLaLangueLatine> (last access 01.03.2021).

### Ibn Baṭṭūṭa’s Travels editions in Arabic and European languages

- al-Tāzī, ‘Abd al-Hādī (ed.). 1417/1997. *Riḥlat Ibn Baṭṭūṭa*. 4 vols. and Indexes (vol. 5). al-Ribāṭ [Rabat]: Maṭbū‘āt Akādīmīya al-Mamlīka al-Maghribīya. <https://books.rafed.net/> (last access 01.03.2021).
- Charles-Dominique, Paule (ed. and transl.). 1995. “Ibn Baṭṭūṭa. Voyages et périple”. In: *Voyageurs arabes. Ibn Faḍlān, Ibn Jubayr, Ibn Baṭṭūṭa et un auteur anonyme*, 369-1050. Paris: Gallimard.
- Defremery, Charles-Dominique (ed. and transl. anthology). 1848. *Voyages d’Ibn Batoutah dans la Perse et dans l’Asie Centrale. Extraits de l’original arabe, traduits et accompagnés de notes*. Paris: Thunot. Now in Sezgin 1994, vol. 181: 1-165.
- Defremery, Charles-Dominique and Beniamino R. Sanguinetti (Arabic text with transl.). 1853-1858. *Voyages d’Ibn Batoutah*. 4 vols. Paris: Imprimerie impériale.
- De Slane, Mac Guckin (ed. and transl. anthology). 1843. “Voyage dans le Soudan par Ibn Batouta.” *Journal Asiatique*, 4th series, vol. 1: 181-240.
- Fanjul, Serafín and Federico Arbós (ed. and transl.). 1993 [1987]. *A través del Islam*. Madrid: Alianza Editorial.
- Gibb, Hamilton A. R. (ed. and transl.). 2004 [1929]. *Ibn Battuta: Travels in Asia and Africa, 1325-54*. Delhi: Low Price Publication.
- Gibb, Hamilton A. R. (ed. and transl.). 1958-1971. *The travels of Ibn Battuta, A.D. 1325-1354*, vols. I-III. 1994. Gibb, Hamilton and Charles F. Beckingham (ed. and transl.), vol. IV. 2000. Bivar, Adrian David Hugh (ed.), vol. V (Indexes to vols. I-IV). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (for the Hakluyt Society).
- Kosegarten, Joannes G. L. (Arabic text with transl.). 1818. *De Mohammede ebn Batuta Arabe tingitano ejusque itineribus*. Iena: Officina Libraria Croekeriana.
- Lee, Samuel (ed. and transl.). 1829. *The Travels of Ibn Battuta*. London: J. Murray; Parbury, Allen & Co.; and Howell & Stewart for the Oriental Translation Committee.

---

<sup>75</sup> EI<sup>2</sup> (*Encyclopedia of Islām*, 2nd edition) and *Oxford Dictionary of English* 2011 (<https://www.oed.com>) have been consulted and sometimes quoted in the notes, but are not listed in the Bibliography.

- <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.286321/page/n249/mode/2up>  
(last access 01.03.2021). Lee did not edit the Arabic text, but the manuscript by the copist Faḥ Allāh al-Baylūnī could be found at  
[https://www.alukah.net/manu/files/manuscript\\_2852/elmktot.pdf](https://www.alukah.net/manu/files/manuscript_2852/elmktot.pdf) (last access 01.03.2021).
- Monteil, Vincent (ed.), Charles-Dominique Defremery and Beniamino R. Sanguinetti (transl.). 1979. *Voyages d'Ibn Baṭṭūṭa*. 4 vols. Paris: Editions Anthropos.
- Tresso, Claudia M. (ed. and transl.). 2006. *Ibn Baṭṭūṭa. I viaggi*. Torino: Einaudi.
- Yerasimos, Stéphane (ed.), Charles-Dominique Defremery and Beniamino R. Sanguinetti (transl.). 1997 [1982]. *Ibn Baṭṭūṭa. Voyages*. 3 vols. Paris: La Découverte.
- Yule, Henry (ed. and transl.) and Henri Cordier (ed.). 1916. "Ibn Batuta's Travels in Bengal and China", *Cathay and the way thither, being a collection of medieval notices of China*, vol. IV: 1-166. London: Hakluyt Society. Now in Sezgin 1994, vol. 183: 51-220.

#### Medieval Arabic sources<sup>76</sup>

- Ibn ʿAsākir, ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥasan (499/1105-571/1175). 1995-2001. *Taʾrīkh madīnat Dimashq* (ed. ʿUmar al ʿUmrāwī and ʿAlī Shīrī). 80 vols. Bayrūt [Beirut]: Dār al-Fikr.  
<https://archive.org/details/TarikhDimashq> (last access 01.03.2021).
- Ibn Ḥabīb al-Ḥalabī, Badr al-Dīn al-Ḥasan (710/1310-778/1377). *Durrat al-aslāk fī dawlat al-atrāk* (manuscript). Maktabat Āyā Ṣūfīya.  
[https://www.alukah.net/manu/files/manuscript\\_4705/makhtot.pdf](https://www.alukah.net/manu/files/manuscript_4705/makhtot.pdf) (last access 01.03.2021).
- Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, Shihāb al-Dīn (773/1372-852/1449). 1993a. *Badhl al-māʿūn fī faḍl al-ṭāʿūn* (ed. Abū Ibrāhīm Kīlānī). Al-Qāhira [Cairo]: Dār al-kutub al-athārīya.  
<https://archive.org/details/bathl.al.maoun> (last access 01.03.2021).<sup>77</sup>
- Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, Shihāb al-Dīn. 1993b. *Al-durar al-kāmina fī aʿyān al-miʿa al-thāmina* (ed. Sālim al-Krankuwī). 4 vols. and Appendix. Bayrūt [Beirut]: Dār al-Jīl.  
<https://archive.org/details/ar106biog06> (last access 01.03.2021).
- Ibn Iyās al-Ḥanafī, Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn Muḥammad (852/1448-930/1524). 1984. *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr fī waqāʾiʿ al-duhūr* (ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafā). 5 vols. Al-Qāhira [Cairo]: al-Hayʾa al-miṣriya al-ʿamma li-l-kitāb.  
<https://archive.org/details/0017749> (last access 01.03.2021).

<sup>76</sup> The alphabetical order takes into account the name by which the author is known, which appears before the comma. For information on the manuscripts of many of the cited works see Dols (1977: 320-335, Appendix III, "The Arabic Manuscript Sources for the History of Plague from the Black Death to the Nineteenth Century").

<sup>77</sup> Ibn Ḥajar's work was analysed by Sublet 1971 (see also Dols 1977: 110-121). Dols 1974b: 374 defines it as "perhaps the most comprehensive and best-known plague treatise in the later Middle Ages", and it is a summa on the behaviour of a good (educated) Muslim of the 15<sup>th</sup> century during an epidemic.

- Ibn Jubayr, Abī al-Ḥusayn Muḥammad (540/1145-614/1217). *Rihla* (ed. ṢAbd al-Ḥamīd M. Ḥanafī). n. d. Bayrūt [Beirut]: Dār wa-maktabat al-Hilāl.  
[https://archive.org/details/wal\\_201510\\_201510/mode/2up](https://archive.org/details/wal_201510_201510/mode/2up) (last access 01.03.2021).<sup>78</sup>
- Ibn Khaldūn, Walī al-Dīn ṢAbd al-Raḥmān (732/1332-808/1406). 1858. *Muqaddima. Prologomènes d’Ebn-Khaldoun. Texte arabe* (ed. Étienne M. Quatremère). 3 vols. Paris: Duprat.  
<https://archive.org/details/prologomnesde01abda> (last access 01.03.2021).
- Ibn Khaldūn, Walī al-Dīn ṢAbd al-Raḥmān. 1970. *Al-taʿrīf* (ed. Muḥammad ibn Tāwīt al-Ṭanjī). Al-Qāhira [Cairo]: Maṭbaʿa lajnat al-taʿlīf wa-l-tarjama.  
<https://archive.org/details/al.taarif.b.ibn.khaldoun/page/n1/mode/2up> (last access 01.03.2021).
- Ibn Kathīr, Ismāʿīl ibn ṢUmar (700/1301-774/1373). 2010. *Al-bidāya wa-l-nihāya (Taʿrīkh Ibn Kathīr)* (ed. Muḥī al-Dīn Matū). 20 vols. Bayrūt [Beirut]: Dār Ibn Kathīr.  
<https://archive.org/details/bidayawnihaya> (last access 01.03.2021).<sup>79</sup>
- Ibn al-Khaṭīb, Muḥammad ibn ṢAbdallāh Lisān al-Dīn (713/1313-776/1374). 1863. *Muqniʿat al-sāʿil ʿan al-marād al-hāʾil*. In: “Ibnul-khatibs Bericht über die Pest” (ed. and transl. into German by Marcus Joseph Müller). *Sitzungsberichte der Königlich Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften 2*: 1-34.  
[https://www.zobodat.at/pdf/Sitz-Ber-Akad-Muenchen-phil-phil-Kl\\_1863-2\\_0001-0034.pdf](https://www.zobodat.at/pdf/Sitz-Ber-Akad-Muenchen-phil-phil-Kl_1863-2_0001-0034.pdf) (last access 01.03.2021).
- Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba, Taqī al-Dīn (779/1377-851/1448). 1994. *Taʿrīkh Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba* (ed. Adnān Darwīsh). 4 vols. Dimashq [Damascus]: Institut Français de Damas. <https://archive.org/details/12zip387> (last access 01.03.2021).
- Ibn Sīnā [Avicenna], Abū ṢAlī al-Ḥusayn (370/980-427/1037). 1999. *Al-qānūn fī al-ṭibb* (ed. Muḥammad ṢAlī Bayḍūn). 3 vols. Bayrūt [Beirut]: Dār al-kutub al-ʿilmīya.  
[https://archive.org/details/diwan\\_20171002\\_1644/](https://archive.org/details/diwan_20171002_1644/) (last access 01.03.2021).
- Ibn Taghrī Birdī, Jamāl al-Dīn Yūsuf (813/1411-874/1470). 1979. *Al-nujūm al-zāhira fī akhbār mulūk Miṣr wa-l-Qāhira* (ed. Muḥammad Khafājī). 16 vols. Al-Qāhira [Cairo]: Maṭābiʿ al-hayʿa al-miṣriya al-ʿamma li-l-kitāb. <https://archive.org/details/FP159836> (last access 01.03.2021).<sup>80</sup>
- Ibn al-Wardī, Zayn al-Dīn (691/1292-749/1349). 1997. *Taʿrīkh Ibn al-Wardī* (ed. Muḥammad ṢAbd al-Qādir). 2 vols. Bayrūt [Beirut]: Dār al-kutub al-ʿilmīya.  
[https://archive.org/details/hamlaenglish\\_gmail\\_20180324\\_1853](https://archive.org/details/hamlaenglish_gmail_20180324_1853) (last access 01.03.2021).
- al-Maqrīzī, Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad (766/1364-845/1442). 1971. *Al-sulūk li-maʿrifat duwal al-mulūk* (ed. Muḥammad ṢAbd al-Qādir ṢAṭā). 4 vols. Bayrūt [Beirut]: Dār al-kutub al-ʿilmīya.

---

<sup>78</sup> The *Rihla* of Ibn Jubayr has been translated into English by Broadhurst (1952).

<sup>79</sup> Wiet 1962 translated Ibn Kathīr’s narration of the plague into French. Some passages translated into English can also be found in Aberth (2005: 112-114).

<sup>80</sup> The part of Ibn Taghrī Birdī’s work related to the Black Death is quoted from the chronicle of al-Maqrīzī.

<https://archive.org/details/0071581> (last access 01.03.2021).<sup>81</sup>

Muslim, Abū al-Ḥusayn ibn al-Ḥajjāj (206/815-261/875). 2014. *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (ed. Markaz al-Buḥūth wa-taqniyat al-maʿlūmāt). 7 vols. al-Qāhira [Cairo] and Bayrūt [Beirut]: Dār al-Tāṣīl.

al-Nawawī, Abū Zakariyyā Muḥyī al-Dīn (631/1234-676/1278). 1929. “*Bāb al-ṭāʿūn wa-al-ṭayra wa-l-kihāna wa-naḥwahā*”. In *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Laṭīf). 18 vols. Al-Qāhira [Cairo]: al-Maṭbaʿa al-miṣrīya bi-l-Azhar, vol. 14: 204-213.

[https://archive.org/details/FP48131/00\\_48131](https://archive.org/details/FP48131/00_48131) (last access 01.03.2021).

al-Sakhāwī, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad (830/1427-902/1497). 1992. *Al-dhayl al-tāmm ʿalā duwal al-Islām* (ed. Ḥasan Ismāʿīl Marwa and Maḥmūd al-Arnāʿūt). 3 vols. Bayrūt [Beirut]: Dār Ibn al-ʿImād li-l-nashr wa-l-tawzīʿ. <https://archive.org/details/2584zip200> (last access 01.03.2021).

### Books and Articles

Aberth, John. 2005. *The Black Death: The Great Mortality of 1348-1350. A Brief History with Documents*. Bedford: St. Martin's.

Aberth, John. 2011. *Plagues in World History*. Lanham (Maryland): Rowman & Littlefield.

Abu-Lughod, Janet L. 1989. *Before European Hegemony. The World System A.D. 1250-1350*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Allouche, Adel. 1990. “A Study of Ibn Baṭṭūṭah's Account of his 726/1326 Journey through Sirya and Arabia”. *Journal of Semitic Studies* 35/2, 283-299. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jss/XXXV.2.283> (last access 01.03.2021).

Almonte, Victoria. 2014. “Ibn Battuta e il viaggio in Cina del Nord”. *Atti del XIV Convegno AISC, Procida, 19-21 settembre 2013*, edited by Paola Paderni, 33-62. Napoli: Il Torcoliere. [https://www.academia.edu/8423893/Ibn\\_Battuta\\_and\\_his\\_journey\\_in\\_North\\_China](https://www.academia.edu/8423893/Ibn_Battuta_and_his_journey_in_North_China) (last access 01.03.2021).

Almonte Victoria. 2016. “Identification of Some Toponyms: Ibn Battuta in China.” *Rivista degli Studi Orientali* 88: 313-332. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24754122> (last access 01.03.2021).

Anabsi, Ghalib. 2008. “Popular Beliefs as Reflected in ‘Merits of Palestine and Syria’ (*Faḍāʿil al-Shām*) Literature: Pilgrimage Ceremonies and Customs in the Mamluk and Ottoman Periods”. *Journal of Islamic Studies* 19/1: 59-70. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jis/etm057> (last access 01.03.2021).

Ashtor, Eliahu. 1976. *A Social and Economic History of the Near East in the Middle Ages*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Ayalon (Neustadt), David. 1946. “The Plague and its Effects upon the Mamlūk Army.” *Journal of the*

---

<sup>81</sup> Al-Maqrīzī's text on the Black Death is translated into French in Wiet 1962. The appeal of al-Maqrīzī is probably due to the name of a neighbourhood in Baalbek, Lebanon, where his ancestors lived (Mallett 2014: 162). For his work see Mujani and Yaakub 2013 and Dols (1977: 7-8), who defines it as “the most important (though not contemporary) historical text dealing with the Black Death in Egypt and Syria”.

- Royal Asiatic Society* 78/1-2: 67-73. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0035869X00099986>.
- Ayalon (Neustadt), David. 1985. "Regarding Population Estimates in the Countries of Medieval Islam." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 1: 1-19. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3631861> (last access 01.03.2021).
- Bayly, Christopher A. 2004. *The Birth of the Modern World 1780-1914. Global Connections and Comparisons*. Oxford: Blackwell Pub.
- Benedictow, Ole Jørgen. 2004. *The Black Death 1346-1353: The Complete History*. Woodbridge: Boydell Press.
- Bergdolt, Klaus. 1994. *Der Schwarze Tod in Europa. Die Große Pest und das Ende des Millelaters*. München: Beck.
- Biraben, Jean-Noël. 1975. *Les hommes et la peste en France et dans les pays européens et méditerranéens. Tome I: La peste dans l'histoire*. Paris/Le Haye : Mouton.
- Biraben, Jean-Noël. 1976. *Les hommes et la peste en France et dans les pays européens et méditerranéens. Tome II: Les hommes face à la peste*. Paris/Le Haye : Mouton.
- Borsch, Stuart. 2014. "Plague Depopulation and Irrigation Decay in Medieval Egypt". *The Medieval Globe* 1/1, art. 7. <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/tmg/vol1/iss1/7> (last access 01.03.2021).
- Borsch, Stuart and Tarek Sabraa. 2017. "Refugees of the Black Death: Quantifying Rural Migration for Plague and Other Environmental Disasters Death". *Annales de démographie historique* 2: 63-93. <https://doi.org/10.3917/adh.134.0063> (last access 01.03.2021).
- Broadhurst, Ronald J. C. 1952 (ed. and transl.). *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr*. London: Jonathan Cape.
- Brossollet, Jacqueline. 1984. "Quelques aspects religieux de la grande peste du XIVe siècle". *Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses* 1: 53-66. [https://www.persee.fr/doc/rhpr\\_0035-2403\\_1984\\_num\\_64\\_1\\_4749](https://www.persee.fr/doc/rhpr_0035-2403_1984_num_64_1_4749) (last access 01.03.2021).
- Bulliet, Richard W. 1994. *The View from the Edge*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Carmichael, Ann G. 2009. "Plague, Historical". In: *Encyclopaedia of Microbiology*. Third Edition, edited by Moselio Schaechter, 58-72. Oxford: Elsevier. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-012373944-5.00311-4> (last access 01.03.2021).
- Conermann, Stephan. 1993. *Die Beschreibung Indiens in der "Rihla" des Ibn Battūta. Aspekte einer herrschaftssoziologischen Einordnung des Delhi-Sultanates unter Muḥammad Ibn Tuḡluq*. Berlin: Klaus Schwarz.
- Conrad, Lawrence I. 1981. "Arabic Plague Chronologies and Treatises: Social and Historical Factors in the Formation of a Literary Genre". *Studia Islamica* 54: 51-93. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1595381> (last access 01.03.2021).
- Conrad, Lawrence I. 1982. "Tāḥūn and Wabāʿ. Conceptions of Plague and Pestilence in Early Islam". *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 25/3: 268-307. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3632188> (last access 01.03.2021).
- Congourdeau, Marie-Hélène and Mohammed Melhaoui. 2001. "La perception de la peste en pays chrétien byzantin et musulman". *Revue des études byzantines* 59: 95-124.



- <https://doi.org/10.3406/rebyz.2001.2238> (last access 01.03.2021).
- Cosmacini, Giorgio. 2006. *Le spade di Damocle: paure e malattie nella storia*. Roma-Bari: Laterza.
- Da Poggibonsi, fra Niccolò. 1881. *Libro d'Oltramare*, ed. by Alberto Bacchi della Lega. Bologna: Romagnoli.
- De Corbeil, Gilles. 1907. *Egidii Corboliensis Viaticus de signis et symptomatibus aegritudium*, ed. by Valentin Rose. Lipsiae: Teubneri.
- <https://archive.org/details/egidiicorbolien02rosegoog/page/n4/mode/2up>  
(last access 01.03.2021)
- D'Irsay, Stephen. 1926. "Notes to the Origin of the Expression 'Atra Mors'". *Isis* 8/2: 328-332.  
<https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/358397> (last access 01.03.2021).
- Dols, Michael Walters. 1974a. "Ibn al-Wardi's *Risalah al-naba' 'an al-wabā'*. A Translation of a Major Source for the History of the Black Death in the Middle East". In: *Near Eastern Numismatics Iconography, Epigraphy and History: Studies in Honor of George C. Miles*, edited by Diecran K. Kouymjian, 443-455. Bayrūt [Beirut]: American University.
- Dols, Michael Walters. 1974b. "The Comparative Communal Responses to the Black Death in Muslim and Christian Societies". *Viator. Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 5: 269-287.  
<https://doi.org/10.1484/J.VIATOR.2.301626> (last access 01.03.2021).
- Dols, Michael Walters. 1977. *The Black Death in the Middle East*. Princeton (NY): Princeton University Press.
- Dols, Michael Walters. 1979. "The Second Plague Pandemic and Its Recurrences in the Middle East: 1347-1894". *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 22/2: 162-189.  
<https://doi.org/10.2307/3631953> (last access 01.03.2021).
- Dols, Michael Walters. 1981. "The General mortality of the Black Death in the Mamluk Empire". In: *The Islamic Middle East, 700-1900: Studies in Economic and Social History*, edited by Abraham Labe Udovitch, 397-428. Princeton (NY): Darwin Press.
- Dunn, Ross E. 1986. *The Adventures of Ibn Battuta: A Muslim Traveller of the 14<sup>th</sup> Century*. London and Sydney: Croom Helm.
- Dunn, Ross E. and Laura J. Mitchell. 2000. *Panorama. A World History*. 3 vols. New York: McGraw-Hill Education.
- Elad, Amikam. 1987. "The Description of the Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa in Palestine: is it Original?" *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 2: 256-272.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/25212152.pdf> (last access 01.03.2021)
- Elger, Ralf. 2010. "Lying, Forging, Plagiarism: Some Narrative Techniques in Ibn Baṭṭūṭa's Travelogue." In: *Many Ways of Speaking about the Self: Middle Eastern Ego-documents in Arabic, Persian and Turkish (14<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century)*, edited by Ralf Elger and Yavuz Köse, 71-88. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- Euben, Roxanne. 2006. *Journeys to the Other Shore*. Princeton: University Press.
- Fauvelle-Aymar, François-Xavier and Bertrand Hirsch. 2003. "Voyage aux frontières du monde. Topologie, narration et jeux de miroir dans la Rihla de Ibn Battūta." *Afrique et histoire* 1/1: 75-122.  
<https://www.cairn.info/revue-afrique-et-histoire-2003-1-page-75.htm#>

(last access 01.03.2021).

Fauvelle-Aymar, François-Xavier. 2013. *Le Rhinocéros d'or. Histoire du Moyen Age africain*. Paris: Alma Editeur.

Ferrand, Gabriel. 1913-14. *Relations de voyages et textes géographiques arabes, persans et turcs relatifs à l'Extrême Orient du VIII<sup>e</sup> au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, traduits, revus et annotés*. 2 vols. Paris: Ernest Leroux.

Fiorentini, Mario. 2020. “Caelum Pestilens. Riflessi delle pandemie antiche nel diritto romano”. In: *Virus in fabula. Diritti e Istituzioni ai tempi del covid-19*, edited by Gian Paolo Dolso, Maria Dolores Ferrara and Davide Rossi, 47-60. Trieste: Edizioni Università Trieste.

[https://www.openstarts.units.it/bitstream/10077/30883/1/4\\_covid-OpenstarTs.pdf](https://www.openstarts.units.it/bitstream/10077/30883/1/4_covid-OpenstarTs.pdf)

(last access 01.03.2021).

Gabrieli, Francesco. 1961. *I viaggi di Ibn Battuta*. Firenze: Sansoni.

Gabrieli, Francesco. 1975. *Viaggi e viaggiatori arabi*. Firenze: Sansoni.

Golubovich, Girolamo. 1906-1927. *Biblioteca bio-bibliografica della Terra Santa e dell'Oriente francescano. Croniche o Annali di Terra Santa del P. Pietro Verniero di Montepeloso de' Frati Minori*. 5 vols. Firenze: Quaracchi.

Guangbin, Li. 2009. *Yi Ben Baitutai Zhongguo Ji xing kao*. Pechino: Haiyang Chubanshe.

Gray, Albert (ed.). 1890. “Early notices of the Maldives”. In: *The Voyage of François Pyrard of Laval to the East Indies, the Maldives, the Moluccas and Brazil*, edited by Albert Gray and Harry Charles Bell, vol. 2/2: 423-492. London: Hakluyt Society. Now in Sezgin 1994, vol. 183: 221-292.

Hecker, Justus Friedrich Carl. 1832. *Der Schwarze Tod im vierzehnten Jahrhundert*. Berlin: Verlag von Friedr. Aug. Herbig. [https://archive.org/details/bub\\_gb\\_8YpNAAAACAAJ/page/n3/mode/2up](https://archive.org/details/bub_gb_8YpNAAAACAAJ/page/n3/mode/2up)

(last access 01.03.2021).

Hecker, Justus Friedrich Carl. 1846 [1835]. *The Epidemics of the Middle Ages*. London: George Woodfall and Son. <https://archive.org/details/epidemicsofmiddl00unse/page/380/mode/2up>

(last access 01.03.2021).

Hodgson, Marshall G. S. 1974. *The Venture of Islam. Conscience and History in a World Civilization*. 3 vols. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Hrbek, Ivan. 1962. “The Chronology of Ibn Battuta’s Travels”. *Archiv Orientalní* 30: 409-486.

Husain, Mahdi. 1976 [1953]. *The Rehla of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa (India, Maldiv Islands and Ceylon)*. Baroda: Oriental Institute. <https://archive.org/details/TheRehlaOfIbnBattuta> (last access 01.03.2021).

Ibrahimovich, Ibrahimov N. 1999. *The Travels of Ibn Battuta to Central-Asia*. Reading: Ithaca Press (Garnet).

Jacquart, Danielle. 2006. “La perception par les contemporains de la peste de 1348”. *Cahiers de la Villa Kérylos* 17: 237-247. [www.persee.fr/doc/keryl\\_1275-6229\\_2006\\_act\\_17\\_1\\_1129](http://www.persee.fr/doc/keryl_1275-6229_2006_act_17_1_1129)

(last access 01.03.2021).

Janicsek, Stephen. 1929. “Ibn Baṭṭūṭa’s Journey to Bulghār: Is it a Fabrication?”. *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 4: 791-800. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25194001> (last access 01.03.2021).

- Janssens, Herman F. 1948. *Ibn Batouta, "le Voyageur de l'Islam" (1304-1369)*. Bruxelles: Office de Publicité.
- Levtzion, Nehemia (ed.) and J. F. P. Hopkins (ed. and transl.). 1981. *Corpus of Early Arabic Sources for West African History*. Cambridge: University Press.
- Kosugi, Yasushi. 2019. "Ibn Battuta and His Journeys to the Border Regions: New Studies on Rihla Ibn Battuta", *Journal of the Asia-Japan Research Institute of Ritsumeikan University* 1: 106-109. (last access 01.03.2021).
- Lindemann, Mary. 2006. "The Black Death 1346-1353: The Complete History, by Ole J. Benedictow". *Renaissance Quarterly* 59/2: 599-601. <https://doi.org/10.1353/ren.2008.0304> (last access 01.03.2021).
- Loiseau, Julien. 2014. "Routes et histoire: le Hajj dans l'islam classique". In: *Hajj. Le pèlerinage à La Mecque*, edited by Omar Saghi and Fahad Abdul Kareem, 65-75. Paris: Snoeck.
- Mackintosh-Smith, Tim. 2001. *Travels with a Tangerine: A Journey in the Footnotes of Ibn Battutah*. London: John Murray.
- Manduchi, Patrizia. 2000. *Da Tangeri a La Mecca passando per la Cina*. Cagliari: CUEC.
- Mann, Michael. 1986-2012. *The Sources of Social Power*. 4 vols. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Manning, Patrick. 2003. *Navigating World History: Historians Create a Global Past*. New York: Macmillan.
- Marks, Robert B. 2007. *The Origins of the Modern World. A Global and Environmental Narrative from the Fifteenth to the Twenty-first Century*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Mattock, John Nicholas. 1981. "Ibn Baṭṭūṭa's use of Ibn Jubayr's Rihla". In: *Proceedings of the Ninth Congress of the Union Européenne des Arabisants et Islamisants (Amsterdam, 1978)*, edited by Rudolph Peters, 209-218. Leiden: Brill.
- Mattock, John Nicholas. 2008 [1965-1966]. "The Travel Writings of Ibn Jubayr and Ibn Baṭṭūṭa." In: *Islamic and Middle Eastern Geographers and Travellers: Critical Concepts in Islamic Thought*, edited by Ian R. Netton, vol. 2: 83-88. London: Routledge
- McNeill, William. 1963. *The Rise of the West. A History of the Human Community*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. <https://archive.org/details/riseofwesthistor00mcne> (last access: 01.03.2021).
- McNeill, William Hardy. 1976. *Plagues and Peoples*. New York: Anchor Press.
- Melhaoui, Mohammed. 1997. "Processions en islam occidental médiéval au temps de la calamité: sécheresse et peste". *Sources, travaux historiques* 51-52: 105-113.
- Meri, Yousef. 1999. "Aspect of Baraka (Blessing) and Ritual Devotion Among Medieval Muslims and Jews". *Medieval Encounters: Jewish, Christian and Muslim Culture in Confluence and Dialogue* 5/1: 46-69. <https://doi.org/10.1163/157006799X00259> (last access 01.03.2021).
- Methal, Mohammed-Marzouk. 2012. "Knowledge, Culture and Positionality: Analysis of Three Medieval Muslim Travel Accounts". *Cross-Cultural Communication* 8/6: 1-10. <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/coc/article/view/j.ccc.1923670020120806.1455> (last access 01.03.2021).
- Micheau, Françoise. 1987. "Ibn Baṭṭūṭa à Constantinople la Grande". *Médiévales* 12: 55-65.

- [www.jstor.org/stable/43026492](http://www.jstor.org/stable/43026492) (last access 01.03.2021).
- Mirza, Younous. 2020a. “‘It was a Memorable Day’, How the Black Death United the Population of Medieval Damascus”. *Maydan*, march 30.  
<https://themaydan.com/2020/03/it-was-a-memorable-day-how-the-black-death-united-the-population-of-medieval-damascus/> (last access 01.03.2021).
- Mirza, Younous. 2020b. “‘It was a Memorable Day’, Plague Gatherings and their Critics”. *Islamic Law Blog*, 18 May. <https://islamiclaw.blog/2020/05/18/younus-y-mirza/> (last access 01.03.2021).
- Netton, Ian Richard. 1984. “Myth, Miracle and Magic in the Riḥla of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa”. *Journal of Semitic Studies* 29/1: 131-140.
- Neustadt, David. v. Ayalon David.
- Norris, John. 1977. “East or West? The Geographic Origin of the Black Death”. *Bulletin of History of Medicine* 51: 1-24. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44450388> (last access 01.03.2021).
- Patrizi, Luca. 2011. “Impronte, ritratti e reliquie di profeti nell’Islām”. In: *Sacre impronte e oggetti “non fatti da mano d’uomo” nelle religioni*, edited by Adele Monaci Castagno, 81-94. Torino: Dell’Orso.
- Peters, Francis Edward. 1994. *The Hajj. The Muslim Pilgrimage to Mecca and the Holy Places*. Princeton (NY): Princeton University Press.
- Quigley, Carrol. 1961. *The Evolution of Civilisations*. New York: Macmillan.
- al-Rashed, Saad ibn Abdelaziz. 2014. “Les chemins de La Mecque, Introduction historique”. In: *Hajj. Le pèlerinage à La Mecque*, edited by Omar Saghi and Fahad Abdul Kareem, 21-37. Paris: Snoeck.
- Renan, Ernest. 1853. “Voyages d’Ibn Batoutah”. *Journal des débats politiques et littéraires* (14.12.1853): 2-3. Now in Sezgin 1994, vol. 182: 27-39.
- Rosenwein, Barbara H. (ed.). 2010. *Reading the Middle Ages. Sources from Europe, Byzantium and the Islamic World*. Toronto: University Press.
- Scarcia Amoretti, Bianca. 2001. *Un altro Medioevo. Il quotidiano nell’Islam*. Roma-Bari: Laterza.
- Schmid, Boris V., Ulf Buntgen, W. Ryan Easterday et al. 2015. “Climate-driven Introduction of the Black Death and Successive Plague Reintroductions into Europe”. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 112/10: 3020-3025.  
<https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1412887112> (last access 01.03.2021).
- Seifert, Lisa, Ingrid Wiechmann, Michaela Harbeck et al. 2016. “Genotyping *Yersinia pestis* in Historical Plague: Evidence for the Long-Term Persistence of *Y. Pestis* in Europe from the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> Century”. *PLoS ONE* 11/1. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0145194> (last access 01.03.2021).
- Sezgin, Fuat (ed.). 1994. “Studies on Ibn Baṭṭūṭa”. *Islamic Geography*, vols. 180-183. Frankfurt am Main: Johann Wolfgang Goethe University.
- Shoshan, Boaz. 1981. “Notes sur les épidémies de peste en Egypte”. *Annales de Démographie Historique* 387-404. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44384670> (last access 01.03.2021).
- Shrewsbury, John Findlay D. 1970. *A History of Bubonic Plague in the British Isles*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Spengler, Oswald. 1918. *The Decline of the West, vol. 1: Form and Actuality*. London: Allen & Unwin. <https://archive.org/details/declineofwest01spenuoft/page/n6/mode/2up> (last access: 01.03.2021).
- Spengler, Oswald. 1922. *The Decline of the West, vol. 2: Perspectives of World-History*. London: Allen & Unwin. <https://archive.org/details/declineofwest02spenuoft/page/n9/mode/2up> (last access: 01.03.2021).
- Stearns, Justin. 2009. "New Directions in the Study of Religious Responses to the Black Death." *History Compass* 7: 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1478-0542.2009.00634.x> (last access 01.03.2021).
- Sticker, George. 1908. *Abhandlungen aus der Seuchengeschichte und Seuchenlehre*. 2 vols. Giessen: Topelmann. <https://archive.org/details/abhandlungenausd01stic/page/n51/mode/2up> (last access 01.03.2021).
- Sublet, Jacqueline. 1971. "La peste prise aux rêts de la jurisprudence; le traité d'Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī sur la peste". *Studia Islamica* 33: 141-149. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1595030> (last access 01.03.2021).
- Sussman, George D. 2011. "Was the black death in India and China?". *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 85/3: 319-355. <https://doi.org/10.1353/bhm.2011.0054> (last access 01.03.2021).
- Talmon-Heller, Daniella. 2007. *Islamic Piety in Medieval Syria. Mosques, Cemeteries and Sermons Under the Zangids and Ayyubids (1146-1260)*. Leiden-Boston: Brill.
- Toynbee, Arnold J. 1934-1961. *A Study of History*. 12 vols. New York and London: Oxford University Press. <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.12118> (vol. 1, last access: 01.03.2021).
- Trausch, Ludwig M. 2010. "Rewriting Baranī? The Description of the Delhi Sultanate in the Riḥla of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa / Ibn Djuzayy and the Taʿrīkh-i Firūz Shāhī of Ḍiyāʿ al-Dīn Baranī." *Asiatische Studien Etudes Asiatiques* 64/1: 139-172. <https://doi.org/10.5167/uzh-35192> (last access 01.03.2021).
- Tresso, Claudia M. 2021a. "A two-year Journey under the Arrows of the Plague: the Black Death in Ibn Baṭṭūṭa's Travels" (submitted to *Arablit*).
- Tresso, Claudia M. 2021b. "India's Epidemics in the Riḥlah of Ibn Baṭṭūṭah: Plague, Cholera or Lexical Muddle?" (submitted to *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*).
- Varlik, Nükhet. 2015. *Plague and Empire in the Early Modern Mediterranean World. The Ottoman Experience, 1347-1600*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Voll, John O. 1994. "Islam as a Special World System". *Journal of World History* 5/2: 213-226.
- Von Kremer, Alfred. 1880. *Über die großen Seuchen des Orients. Nach arabischen Quellen*. Wien: Gerold. <https://archive.org/details/ueberdiegrossen00kremgoog> (last access 01.03.2021).
- Waines, David. 2010. *The Odyssey of Ibn Battuta: Uncommon Tales of a Medieval Adventurer*. Chicago: Tauris.
- Wha, Min Byung. 1991. "Baraka as Motif and Motive, in the Riḥla of Ibn Battuta". Ph. D. Diss. University of Utah.
- Wheelis, Mark. 2002. "Biological Warfare at the 1346 Siege of Caffa". *Historical Review* 8/9: 971-975. <https://doi.org/10.3201/eid0809.010536> (last access 01.03.2021).

- Wiet, Gaston. 1962. “La grande Peste Noire en Syrie et en Égypte”. *Études documentaires dédiées à la mémoire de Lévi-Provençal*, vol. I: 367-384. Paris : Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS).
- Wittek, Paul. 1938. “Le sultan des Rūm”. In *Mélanges E. Boisacq. Annuaire de l’Institut de Philologie et d’histoire orientales et slaves*, vol. II: 361-390.
- Wittek, Paul. 1949. “Janssens (Herman F.). Ibn Batouta, ‘Le Voyageur de l’Islam (1304-1369).’” *Revue belge de philologie et d’histoire* 27/3-4: 854-857.  
[https://www.persee.fr/doc/rbph\\_0035-0818\\_1949\\_num\\_27\\_3\\_1848\\_t1\\_0854\\_0000\\_2](https://www.persee.fr/doc/rbph_0035-0818_1949_num_27_3_1848_t1_0854_0000_2)  
(last access 01.03.2021).
- Wright, William (ed.). 1907 [1852]. *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr*. Leyden: Brill and London: Luzac.  
<https://archive.org/details/travelsofijnuba05ibnjuoft/page/n7/mode/2up>  
(last acces 01.03.2021).
- Yule, Henry. 1861. *The Book of Sir Marco Polo the Venetian*. 2 vols. London: John Murray.  
<https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.238366> (vol. I, last access 01.03.2021) and  
<https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.45710> (vol. II, last access 01.03.2021).

Claudia M. Tresso is Associate Professor of Arabic Language and Literature at the University of Turin. Her main fields of research concern Translation, Arabic Travel Literature, Teaching Arabic to non-Arabic speakers, and Graphic Arts. She was the first to translate into Italian the complete version of the *Rihla* of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa (Einaudi, Turin, 2006) and has translated several works of contemporary Arabic literature (Djebar, Habibi, Jibran, Khalifa, Mernissi, Mokeddem). Her books include a manual of contemporary Arabic language (Hoepli, Milan, 1997, 2nd revised edition 2019), a book on Arabic verbs (Hoepli 2002), an Italian-Arabic dictionary (Hoepli 2014) and an essay on contemporary graphic arts in the Mediterranean (Il Leone Verde 2020) with the Anzaar research group of which she is co-founder at the Department of Languages of the University of Turin. She can be reached at [claudia.tresso@unito.it](mailto:claudia.tresso@unito.it)