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A STUDY
OF THE ARABIC TEXTS
CONTAINING MATERIAL
ON SOUTH-EAST ASIA

BY

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With 7 maps



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PREFACE

This work was first conceived while I was collecting material for the history of Arab trading in South-East Asia during the early period of Islam (A.D. 750–1000). Professor Paul Wheatley, then lecturer in Historical Geography at the University of Malaya, Singapore, hearing that I was thus engaged, asked me if I could make a complete collection of information about the Malay Peninsula found in the Arab texts and make notes on any toponyms which could be located in this area. I completed this piece of research and he published the results in the *Malayan Journal of Tropical Geography*, Vol. 9 Dec. 1956. This is incorporated in the present work with much revision and rearrangement. At the same time I continued to collect material relating to the whole of the Archipelago and the neighbouring parts of the mainland. The whole work was completed in 1956 before I left Malaya, and Dr. C. A. Gibson-Hill accepted the manuscript for a new series which he envisaged, entitled *Memoirs of the Raffles Museum*. In the series, the work was to be number six. The printing of the work was then begun, but owing to difficulties resulting from the political situation in South-East Asia and then from the untimely death of Dr. Gibson-Hill, the work never saw the light of day.

Since then, the work has been more than once revised in the light of more up to date material. In 1961 Prof. Wheatley published his "The Golden Khersonese", the Arabic part of which was mainly based on this work of which he had seen the original manuscript. However it will be seen that Prof. Wheatley and myself do not agree on the locations of places in the Malay Peninsula. Among other authors who have written relevant material which has affected the course of my revision, Dr. Wolters' "Early Indonesian commerce and the origins of Sri Vijaya" touches on the subject of the Arab texts as does the work of Dr. S. Q. Fatimi and the numerous articles of Dr. Brian Colless. On the subject of the navigational texts of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, I myself have completed a much more detailed study, which gave me new insight into the accounts of the classical texts on South-East Asia, and an interesting comparison between the account of the Malayan Peninsula in the navigational texts and Chinese sailing directions has been given by Dr. J. V. Mills in *J.M.B.R.A.S.* (1974).

When I began this work, no scholar had yet taken the texts of the Arab geographers and travellers, studied them properly with regard to South-East Asia and published an account of the work. Many scholars have used this material, but they have never attempted to examine the relative importance of each author nor the relationship of one author to another. The texts have been regarded as a block of material suitable for extracting information about the area at any time previous to the coming of Islam to the Indies. Little regard has been taken of the authenticity of the texts, the original sources and the date of the material itself. The date of the material has been assumed to be the same as that of the author in which it is found. The fact that the Arabic texts cover a period of six hundred years or more has always been disregarded and also that material has become out of date and new information has been added; the latter often reported side by side with the former. Thus Idrīsī has been quoted and his information applied to the period at which he wrote, i.e. the twelfth century, but the majority of his information on South-East Asia was three hundred years old at least by that time.

This chronological aspect has been entirely neglected, so too has the fact that the majority of the authors had little or no idea about what they were writing. One gets the impression from reading the works of European scholars of the early part of this century that all Arab writers have a perfectly clear conception of South-East Asia, but preferred to disguise their wide knowledge of the subject for the sole purpose of mystifying these very scholars.

The names of the most important European scholars who studied the Arab material in the past will be found scattered throughout this work and their books will be found in the bibliography. Gabriel Ferrand was the only man who attempted to dissect properly the Arab geographers with regard to this area. His greatest work in this field was *Relations de voyages et textes géographiques arabes, persans et turcs relatifs à l'Extrême-Orient*, published in 1913-14, which gave in two volumes French translations of all the more important texts relating to South-East Asia. It is a pity that he did not finish the third volume which was to have dealt with all the tricky problems of Malayan historical topography. In addition, he published articles on several of the most mystifying place names, but he by no means covered the entire field. He was also preoccupied with philological conceptions, and took the texts which he had so laboriously collected and examined them en bloc, sifting them for philological comparisons with Chinese and Indian sources.

I have taken the same texts as Ferrand with the addition of one or two that have been published since his day and have attempted to

extract the material of value from them. Therefore I have not presented the texts fully, but have mentioned each story or factual statement once only under the earliest text in which it occurs. Thus although a particular story may be found in one of the works of Qazwīnī, it will not be found under his name in this work, but under the *Mukhtaṣar al-'ajā'ib* for example, because this is the earliest work in which that particular story occurs in the form in which Qazwīnī used it. I have also strictly limited myself to South-East Asia, including only those places thought to be between the Andamans and Champa and Cambodia, but excluding Burma. I have ignored a vast amount of material dealing solely with India and China.

The texts have been placed in chronological order as near as it has been possible to place them, for the dating of many of them is conjectural.

After selecting the important matter from the texts, I have taken the place names individually, giving conclusions drawn from the examination of the texts. Account has been taken of similar names from the literatures of other nations and on conclusions reached by other scholars. The places chosen for special comment are first of all those which can be identified in South-East Asia or for which an identification can be suggested as possible. I have begun with the name of Zābaj, the term used in later times for the whole of the archipelago, and included in this are the other places depending on it. This is followed by five place names connected with the Malay Peninsula and mentioned by me in the article cited above, but here revised considerably. These are followed by the other places identified as being on the island of Sumatra or nearby and these are followed by the remainder including names like Andaman, Sanf and Qmār which are actually outside the orbit of the Malay world, but are important parts of the Arab conception of South-East Asia. Finally I have added in an Appendix to Part I, several seemingly fabulous places which also find their way into the Arab version of the South-East and are essential to our study. In the case of the last, I have not placed the translations of the texts with the remainder but have inserted them immediately before the notes on each individual place for this seemed the best arrangement. In view of the fact that the only detailed texts about the Spice islands are of a legendary nature and that no definite name is given to them I have included them in this Appendix.

The texts of the navigational authors of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries are completely different from those of the classical writers in both form and content. I have therefore placed them separately in

Part II. The location of many of the places in them is obvious and most of them require only short notes of explanation, rather than the long discussions attached to most places in Part I. I have therefore grouped the explanations of Part II under headings dealing with several well-defined areas and not under individual places.

The whole of the work has been prefixed by a study of the textual history. In this I have attempted to sort out the material written by the Arab writers on the Malay Archipelago and to show the relative values of the most important texts. In a way this study reflects the general history of Arab geographical literature, a subject on which not a great deal has been written. This introduction is, however, the study of a special area with its own particular problems both for the Arabs and for modern scholars and I have emphasised these in particular.

Introducing Part I is a study of the Arab conception of South-East Asia, showing the manner in which the Arabs themselves attempted to fit the place names into a whole. It is doubtful whether this sort of study should be used as an introduction or as an epilogue, for many conclusions reached in the section giving explanations for specific places have had to be taken for granted here, but at the same time the general world picture formed by any author is required before his work is studied in detail, and many confused statements appear clear when an author's conception of the Indian Ocean is known. It is probably more useful in its present form as an introduction.

For the transliteration of Arabic proper names I have used a system normally used by English speaking orientalists, but when dealing with place names, I have invented one or two rules of my own. Where Arabic letters are used to represent Malay consonants, I have transliterated them to read as such, thus *ج* is very often shown as *ng*, *ف* is often shown as *p* and not *f*. For many well-known place names I have used their modern English names when this only differs from the Arabic by an unrepresented vowel or an unusual consonant, e.g.: *فنتنج* Penang, *كلنج* Klang, and *ملاقة* Malacca instead of *Malāqa* (although I have drawn attention to the fact when the odd term *ملعة* is used). Since the work began, many of the Malaysian and Indonesian place names have changed their spellings. The Permanent Committee on Geographic names have enlightened me on some of the more recent spellings, but any that remain in their outdated forms are entirely due to my own ignorance.

I would like to express my thanks to Prof. Paul Wheatley for originally suggesting this piece of research and for much help given when we were both in Malaya, especially during the preparation of

the original article. Numerous other people have given help during the long years in which the work has remained in manuscript. Particularly I would like to mention Prof. R. B. Serjeant and Dr. Ihsan Abbas for their help with the manuscripts of the navigators, the Royal Asiatic Society for offering to publish the work, Prof. C. Beckingham for his efforts in finally getting it into print and to my wife for innumerable suggestions on the text and for much hard work on the typescript throughout the whole project.

INTRODUCTION:
A STUDY OF THE TEXTUAL HISTORY

The great difficulty which South-East Asia presented to the Arab writers was caused by its remoteness. Many of the geographers were travellers too, and in those days when the whole of the Islamic world was open for travel, nothing could be easier than wandering from one centre of learning to another, taking notes on the way. But the case of the Malayan Archipelago was different: to reach it, one had to brave a perilous voyage of many months across the ocean. Mas'ūdī is the only one who claims to have done this purely in the cause of science,¹ but his claim is extremely suspicious, so that the first and only authentic travel account that we have is the Voyage of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, which comes from the middle of the fourteenth century, well past the most flourishing period of Arab geographical literature.

The only Arabs who made the long trip to Malaya were merchants and sailors, not the sort of people who would take particular note of geographical, economic and other conditions existing in the area, unless it were something which might personally benefit them. Nevertheless, it is from these traders that the entire Arab knowledge of South-East Asian matters is derived. Fanciful material which can only be attributed to these sailors, forms the major part of Arab work on the South East, even though each Arab author has tried his best to modify it and adapt it for his purposes. In the case of the most scientific writers, the section on this area has dwindled to a few meagre facts or has been omitted altogether.

There were two methods of obtaining information from travellers, one was by actually questioning merchants and sailors in the ports, and the other was by copying extracts from already published travel works and collections of tales. Ya'qūbī states how he travelled round and jotted down notes of what the local people told him, but he does not seem to have collected much about South-East Asia.² Abū Zaid spent all his life in the port of Sirāf and obtained practically all his information in this way. Mas'ūdī did the same. Abū Zaid and Mas'ūdī compared notes and quoted each other.³ As Abū Zaid had

¹ *Murūj al-dhahab: Les prairies d'or*, t. 1, p. 5.

² *Kitāb al-buldān: De Goeje edition (B.G.A. VII) p. 232.*

³ Mas'ūdī quotes Abu Zaid and mentions him by name in the *Murūj al-dhahab*. Abū Zaid's reference is to an unknown person, but Mas'ūdī in his version of the same event claims to have seen it himself. Their relationship is discussed by Renaud in *Relation des voyages*, t. 1, pp. xvi-xxi.

access to a copy of the *Akhbār al-Šīn*, and the latter gives a prominent place to Sīrāf, it is possible that this work was also compiled at this port in a similar manner. The collections of *‘Ajā’ib* must also have been produced in this way. Buzurg ibn Shahriyār, the compiler of *‘Ajā’ib al-Hind* came from Rām Hurmuz not far from the northern end of the Persian Gulf.

Actual travellers were few and even less wrote of their experiences. Ibn Battūta is well known. Abū Dulaf’s trip to the Malay Peninsula is doubtful, and Sulaimān the merchant, who is quoted in the *Akhbār al-Šīn*, and was once thought to have been its author, may have written an account which was quoted by the compiler of the *Akhbār*, but it is more likely that his account was verbal. Among other travellers whose names are known, but whose accounts appear in the works of others, are Ibn Wahhāb, who visited China and whose story is told by Abū Zaid, and Māhān b. Baḥr al-Sīrāfī and Abū ‘Abdullāh Muḥammad b. Iṣḥāq who are quoted several times.

Apart from this, authors were reduced to copying both their predecessors and their contemporaries. Some writers give references but usually they were content to quote without any acknowledgement whatever.⁴ Passages are repeated again and again, some appearing continually for over seven hundred years. Conflicting statements derived from two distinct sources were often inserted side by side.

The Arab writers also used non-Muslim material. Nestorian Christians based in the Sassanid empire seem to have travelled to South-East Asia at an early date and their accounts, both verbal and documentary, may have been incorporated into the Arab accounts. Apart from this, non-Muslim material was mainly references from early Greek and Indian literary sources. The Indian material mostly came from works dated before the Christian era, and the Greek from the early centuries A.D.

Bīrūnī in his descriptions of India relied a great deal on Indian literary works, and he used them for his few brief comments on South-East Asia, introducing Sanskrit words, including names of regions taken from Indian sources.

Greek material first appears to any extent in connexion with South-East Asia in Idrīsī, where it gets terribly confused with material from the early descriptive geographers. A glance at Idrīsī’s world maps shows how he attempted to insert the Arab information

⁴ Idrīsī in the preface to his work gives a list of writers from whom he quoted, but he does not give references for each individual passage. Qazwīnī, Abū’l-Fidā and Yāqūt often give references for individual passages to their predecessors and the *‘Ajā’ib al-Hind* gives the names of sea captains and merchants.

into a Ptolemaic setting. Similar results are obtained in his text, which is most difficult to follow in conjunction with his map. Ibn Sa’īd and most authors of this time attempt to link up these two different conceptions with equally awkward results.

The use of scientific methods of measurement for South-East Asia was of course impossible. Presumably early navigators took some sort of latitude measurement and possibly took bearings on the stars, although the tales never mention such things. We know that the navigators of the fifteenth century used the compass and had various instruments for measuring the altitudes of the heavenly bodies.⁵ Even if such methods were used in earlier times, they were likely to be kept secret as part of the mysteries of the sailor’s trade, and not divulged to questioning scholars on land. If the sailors had charts they have not survived for the Indian Ocean and the attempts of the geographers to produce maps of the Ocean are crude efforts of no practical use to the Arabs or to the modern scholar.

The reason why Arab geographers attempted to write on South-East Asia at all when the sources at their disposal were so limited is, I suppose, a desire for completeness. This part of the world was the source of a large quantity of spices and drugs used in Arabic medicine and therefore the Arabic reading public had a certain interest in it. This is one of the reasons why the Arab geographers give such prominence to notices on drugs and spices and go to such lengths to explain countries of origin and methods of extracting and mining. Of course the fact must not be over-looked that most of the accounts were obtained from merchants and they would notice and therefore be able to relate much about this sort of thing, for spices and drugs were their main preoccupation. The interest which Arabic medicine has for the products of South-East Asia is reflected in Arab medical works, so that a small amount of geographical material can be gathered from medical authors in addition to the geographers and those historians who have introduced their works with a geographical section.

The different types of literary work in which material can therefore be traced are five, (a) travellers accounts, (b) geographical treatises, (c) sections in historical works, (d) medical works and (e) navigational works.

Travellers accounts (a) as I have stated above are the ultimate source of all the other types, except the navigational works. There are, however, different sorts of account varying from a straightforward narration of a voyage, to fanciful tales of heroism like those of Sindbād. Short stories about strange beasts and events (known as

⁵ See my *Arab navigation*, pp. 1-3; on the compass rose, pp. 295-6.

marvels, 'ajā'ib) such as were told by the sailors returned from the Far East, had a literary value and could be extremely popular amongst the less educated classes. Popular literature of this sort can include material which may be of much use and fortunately for us a collection of such stories has survived in the book known as 'Ajā'ib al-Hind. The travels of Sindbād are similar, although much altered in the present form in the collection *Alf laila wa laila*. In addition, there are two works which are of a more intellectual type, but are in essence really collections of similar tales. These are the *Akhbār al-Šin wa'l-Hind* and its complement written by Abū Zaid of Sirāf. These two works are on a par with the other *akhbār* literature; a purely Muslim historical form. Stories are strung together to form a loose historical narrative, each story preceded by the name of the narrator or sometimes a succession of them (*isnād*). The two works mentioned are formed in a similar manner, but with a geographical object rather than an historical one, and the occurrence of narrators' names is more irregular than in most historical texts. Mas'ūdī and his school of writers, who rely so much on literature of the *akhbār* type for their historical works, use these two works as a basis for their geographical matter on South-East Asia.

The remaining works which can be classified as travellers accounts are the *Risāla* of Abū Dulaf Mi'sar b. Muhallil and the *Tuḥfat al-nuẓẓār* of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, although the former is extremely suspect as regards his material on the Malayan area.

The content of the geographical literature (b) varies through the years. The early geographers like Khwārizmī and Kindī were fundamentally mathematicians and astronomers, and their work consists of translations and extracts of Ptolemy, and as such does not really concern us.

Beginning with Ibn Khurdādhbih and Marwazī in the middle of the ninth century A.D. a second type of geographical work appears. This is a descriptive geography on the postal routes of the Islamic empire, usually called *al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik*. Ibn Khurdādhbih's book of this name has survived in an abridged form and shows that a note on South-East Asia has been added for completeness. This example was followed by the other early geographers like Ibn Rusta and Ibn al-Faqīh. All these writers base their material mainly on tales of the 'ajā'ib type, but whether long and imaginary stories are given or just bare facts depends on the author and the nature of his work.

The geographers of the Balkhī-Ibn Ḥauqal type give no detail about South-East Asia at all and we receive no new information from geographical writers until the twelfth century when they began

to collate the early authors with the more scientific views of the mathematical geographers who derived their inspiration from Khwārizmī and Kindī, and ultimately from the Greeks. This collating of two conflicting systems produced the chaos which I have mentioned elsewhere.

Apart from Mas'ūdī, no historians (c) have left us any original geographical information, although a considerable number of them followed Mas'ūdī's example in prefacing their histories with geographical sections. Most of them extracted their material from contemporary geographers.

The references to South-East Asia in the works of the medical writers (d) is confined to statements about the countries of origin of numerous drugs. They are of little help. References to most of the earlier writers of this class are contained in the large works of the herbalist, Ibn al-Baiṭār (d. 1248) known as *al-Jāmi' fi adwiya al-mufradāt* and *al-Mughnī*. These are both lexicons of plants and drugs.

The navigational works (e) which survive are extremely late in date, being written in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. They are extremely important and give a vast amount of detail, but are no help in throwing light on material from the other classes of work. According to one of the navigators, Ibn Mājid, such works were produced as early as the eleventh century but they do not seem to have been utilised by the geographers.⁶

Of these various types of work the travellers accounts and the navigational works (i.e. types (a) and (e)) are by far the most important. They are the nearest we can get to original sources and might perhaps be termed primary sources, while all the others might be called secondary, for they are usually derived from the primary (type (a) only) and are only useful when quoting primary sources which are lost.

The *Akhbār al-Šin wa'l-Hind*, 'Ajā'ib al-Hind and the work of Abū Zaid must be regarded therefore as the main primary sources for the early period. They deal exclusively with Indian and Far-Eastern trade and are the only surviving Arabic works of the classical period which do so. All others are general works which contain small passages dealing with South-East Asia hidden away amongst other material.

The *Akhbār al-Šin*, the earliest Arab account which deals with South-East Asia, exists in a manuscript in the Bibliothèque Nationale (Arabs ms. 2281, ff. 2r-23v). It is anonymous and without title, and

⁶ In some places they do give place names which are now obsolete, but were used by the classical geographers. These places, therefore, can be identified easily with their aid. Examples are Fanšūr and Lāmūrī.

has been edited and published several times by French scholars since it first reached France in 1673. The authorship and title have been discussed by each editor in turn with the result that it is quoted under a host of names, the most popular version seems to have been the *Book of Sulaimān, the merchant*. Sauvaget, the most recent editor has named it *Akhbār al-Šīn wa'l-Hind*,⁷ and I have referred to it as this throughout (usually shortened to *Akhbār al-Šīn*). This work consists entirely of travellers tales, which may have been collected from travellers by the compiler or may have appeared before him in written form. According to Abū Zaid who re-edited it in the middle of the tenth century, it was originally compiled in the year A.H. 237 (=A.D. 851); but it is obviously a compilation of earlier material.

Therefore there may be no exact date for the information contained in it. Trade had been established with China certainly before 750 for other sources have brief references to it,⁸ so that these stories may come from any time between the beginning of the China trade and A.D. 851. Considering the great knowledge of China shown in this text there is remarkably little said about South-East Asia, but this may reflect the Arabs' lack of interest in this region in spite of their having to sail through it. I am inclined to think that the compiler omitted to add much that was known to the Arabs at this time. Ibn Khurdādhbih, who is almost contemporary, has several interesting things not mentioned here; and the strangely detached reference to the volcano of Zabaj shows that the author had access to some material which did not deal directly with the China route, and was not entirely ignorant of the rest of South-East Asia.⁹ It may therefore have been part of the authors plan to mention only the places on the China route, and then to pass on to a detailed description of China. Besides the brief account of this route, the Malay Archipelago is mentioned under the passage on Ceylon (Sirandīb), where expedi-

⁷ J. Sauvaget: *Akhbār al-Šīn wa'l-Hind: Relation de la Chine et de l'Inde redigée en 851*. Paris, 1948. Sauvaget gives a list of the earlier editions in his introduction.

⁸ I mean by this, Muslim trade. The shipping route between China and the Persian Gulf was well known in the days of Hīrah according to Balādhuri, and other writers. (For refs. see G. F. Hourani: *Arab seafaring*. Princeton, 1951, pp. 46-9.) Nestorian Christians also traded in the South East (Colless: *Persian merchants*, p. 14ff). Trade then declined until Abbasid times. Ibadite writings mention persons who traded with China about A.D. 750. (T. Lewicki: *Les premiers commerçants arabes en Chine*. Rocznik Orientalistyczny, v. 10, 1935, pp. 173-86.)

⁹ I have shown elsewhere (*JMBRAS*, 1957, v. 30i, pp. 14) that there seem to have been two types of trade at this time, a China route and a trade in aromatic woods with the west coasts of Sumatra and Malaya, based on Ceylon. The *Akhbār al-Šīn* concentrates on this China trade. The *'Ajā'ib al-Hind*, on the other hand deals mainly, although by no means exclusively, with the Malayan trade, which was probably more developed by this time.

tions to trade with places on the west coast of Sumatra are described. In spite of the briefness of this source, it is one of the main Arab references to South-East Asia and is quoted continually until as late as the sixteenth century A.D.

The date of Ibn Khurdādhbih's *al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik* is not certain, but it comes from approximately the same time as the previous work. De Goeje¹⁰ says that Ibn Khurdādhbih originally wrote his work in A.H. 232 (A.D. 846-7) and rewrote it in 272 (885-6). In any case the versions which have come down to us are in an abridged form, for other authors quote him giving a more complete text. An example is Idrisi's passages relating to South-East Asia, which obviously follow Ibn Khurdādhbih closely, although Idrisi does not mention him by name.¹¹ Ibn Khurdādhbih does not mention sources. He might have possessed documentary evidence, Muslim or non-Muslim, but if not, his material was presumably taken from traders, but we do not know whether he visited ports himself. His work is extremely important for material on South-East Asia, partly on account of its early date and partly because of the straightforward way in which the information is presented. It occurs in the section headed *Tariq min jānib Fāris ilā'l-Mashriq*, "the Route from the Persian coast to the East"; the route being measured off in days and the stopping places described with any other places worth mentioning in the neighbourhood. The *Akhbār al-Šīn* also measures distances between places in days, and it is most unfortunate that the figures given by these two texts do not agree, nor can they be made to agree by any stretch of the imagination. Nevertheless these two works together form the core around which other Arab geographers worked when dealing with South-East Asia, and must also form the basis for modern scholars when attempting to understand their conception of South-East Asia. If the routes of these two texts could be charted and their place names located specifically, then the rest of the Arab material would fall into place with little trouble (cf. Fig. 2).

Among the geographers of the tenth century are Ya'qūbī, Ibn al-Faqīh and Ibn Rusta. Most of the references to South-East Asia in Ya'qūbī's work, *Kitāb al-buldān*, are found in quotations dotted about in the Encyclopaedia of Nuwairī, *Nihāyat al-Arab fī funūn al-adab*.¹² They are limited to notes on the relative excellence of the

¹⁰ *Kitāb al-masālik wa'l-mamālik*; see Bibliography for De Goeje's edition. His dating of the text is found on p. xx. The text was also edited and translated by C. Barbier de Maynard in *Journal Asiatique*, 6 série, t. 5, 1865.

¹¹ That is for this passage. Idrisi does mention Ibn Khurdādhbih as one of his sources in his preface.

¹² See the Bibliography for full details of the editions of these texts.

products of various parts of South-East Asia. His love of accuracy led him to omit all the more fanciful stories used by his contemporaries. His *History*, contains a short reference to the divisions of the Indian Ocean but nothing else.

Ibn al-Faqīh in his *Kitāb al-buldān*, follows closely the account of the *Akhbār al-Šin*. The text is not exactly the same and is slightly more readable. It is possible that Ibn al-Faqīh had access to an earlier copy of the *Akhbār al-Šin* than the one which has survived, or perhaps both used identical sources. In addition he adds matter from Ibn Khurdādhbih. The author of the *Fihrist*¹³ accuses Ibn al-Faqīh of incorporating the work of Jaihānī and Muqaddasī states that he used Jāhīz. De Goeje¹⁴ when editing the work of Ibn al-Faqīh doubts the copying of the work of Jaihānī on chronological grounds, but considers the use of Jāhīz more likely. In any case Ibn al-Faqīh adds little to our facts on South-East Asia. His comments are not terribly important and are mainly of the 'ajā'ib type. But this does bring up the question of how much of the material in later authors is derived from lost works like those of Jaihānī and Jāhīz.

The contribution of Ibn Rusta to our knowledge of the East Indies is even smaller than that of Ibn al-Faqīh. In his work *al-A'laq al-nafisa*, written a little later than Ibn al-Faqīh's *Kitāb al-buldān*, we have brief quotations from the *Akhbār al-Šin* and from Ibn Khurdādhbih. The extra material, although often parallel to the information given by Ibn al-Faqīh, is more to the point with less of the fabulous tales of the latter. It is likely that this material is from the complete Ibn Khurdādhbih.

Besides editing the *Akhbār al-Šin* Abū Zaid of Sirāf wrote a second part (*al-kitāb al-thānī min Akhbār al-Šin wa'l-Hind*) to bring the material up to date, and to add things which he thought ought to be included. After the first part of the *Akhbār al-Šin* this is the most important of our sources. Abū Zaid's information is entirely original in as much as it had not been published before. All of it must have been obtained at first hand from travellers in his native town of Sirāf, which was the main port of the time for Far-Eastern trade. He only adds one name to the list of places mentioned by the *Akhbār al-Šin*,¹⁵ but fills out the details of each place and is especially valuable for the historical aspect and lists of products. He has a complete section on Zābaj, the great empire of South-East Asia under the heading *Dhikr madīnat al-Zābaj*, in which he gives

¹³ Ibn al-Nadīm: *Fihrist*, p. 154.

¹⁴ *Kitāb al-Buldān*. Leyden, 1885, p. xi.

¹⁵ This, however, is an important place; سرڤة, the Arab equivalent of Sri Vijaya, the capital of the Sailendra kings of Sumatra.

a long account of the attack of its ruler (Maharāja) on the kingdom of Cambodia (Qmār). Abū Zaid met Mas'ūdī in Basra and their works have much in common. Mas'ūdī quotes the long passage from Abū Zaid about the Maharāja's attack on Cambodia.

Mas'ūdī in his introduction to his *Murūj al-dhahab* claims to have visited China, Champa and Zābaj. Most of his material on South-East Asia can be traced to other sources, so this statement has to be regarded with suspicion. Besides quoting Abū Zaid he incorporates much of the material of the earlier *Akhbār al-Šin*. He also has much original information of a serious nature which was probably acquired by interviewing traders and sailors in the ports he visited. But this is not the sort of material one would expect from the reports of a careful observer on the spot, as he intends us to imagine. Mas'ūdī's *Kitāb al-tanbih wa'l-ishrāf* adds nothing about the Indies.

A most important work comes down to us from the end of the tenth century A.D. This is the collection of tales on Indian Ocean trade known as the 'Ajā'ib al-Hind, compiled by Buzurg b. Shahriyār of Rāmhurmuz. The tales, like all literature of the 'ajā'ib type, are popular in appeal, but do give a vast amount of local detail to the South-East Asian scene. Quite a few of the tales deal with China trade routes but a large number deal with the expeditions to the west coasts of Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula. They give us a clear picture of the activities of the Persian Gulf traders in that area even if they do not leave much idea of the geographical setting. This text becomes a mine of information for later writers.

In the Bibliothèque Nationale, there are several manuscripts of a work known as the *Mukhtaṣar al-'ajā'ib*, which has been attributed both to Mas'ūdī, and to a later writer known as Ibrāhīm b. Wāṣif Shāh.¹⁶ The text is a compilation from three sources; the 'Ajā'ib al-Hind of Buzurg, the works of Mas'ūdī and a book called the *Legends of Egypt*. The material on South-East Asia contained in it comes from the first two works. But I have noticed passages from Ibn Khurdādhbih in this text and in one case it gives a more acceptable rendering than De Goeje's edition of the former work.¹⁷ It is most likely that through this work Buzurg's material reached Qazwīn and thence the later descriptive geographers.

It was in the middle of the tenth century that Abū Dulaf Mi'sar b. Muhalhil made his travels. He journeyed to China from the West by land and returned by sea, calling at the ports of Kalāh and Qāqulla

¹⁶ Translated by Baron Carra de Vaux in t. xxvi of *Actes de la Société philologique*, Paris, 1898. The work was attributed to Ibn Wāṣif Shāh by M. C. F. Seybold (*Orientalistische Literatur-Zeitung*, 1st year, no. 5, May 1898, pp. 146-50).

¹⁷ See p. 141.

on the Malay Peninsula. Later in life he wrote his two *risāla*, the first of which included his journey to these two ports. This is now lost but quotations from it appear in many of the later writers, the fullest account being given by Yāqūt in his *Muʿjam al-buldān* under the heading of *Šīn* (China). This is the first account we possess written in the form of a travel narrative, but whether the journey was actually made or not is a matter of doubt. The information given by Abū Dulaf is extremely original; his description of Kalāh being unlike anything else we have been given up to this time. The description of Qāqulla, which he calls Jājulla (Gāgulla) is the only one we have. His material has a decidedly Chinese bias and I am of the opinion that he did not actually visit the South-East, but made notes after interviewing Chinese traders during his stay in China.

In a similar class to the work of Buzurg are the voyages of Sindbād, which appear in *Alf laila wa laila*.¹⁸ Whether extracts from genuine voyages have found their way into these stories is a matter of doubt, but the stories are certainly partly based upon 'ajā'ib passages relating to South-East Asia, which might be dated anywhere from the eighth to the tenth centuries.

By the end of the tenth century, Arab knowledge of South-East Asia had passed its zenith. All the more original sources are earlier than this date, and the works which follow consist mainly of extracts and quotations from earlier authors. What little new material comes down to us from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries, clearly refers to an earlier period, and may have been extracted from works now lost, like the full text of Ibn Khurdādhbih, or the work of Jaihānī. Idrīsī certainly refers to both of these.

This falling off of source material is most likely a reflection of a decline in trade with the Far East. The port of Sirāf on the coast of the Persian Gulf fell into decay about this time and the power of the Abbasids in Mesopotamia was well on the wane. Another reason may have been a decline in the intellectual activity of the Arab geographers. The literary style of the geographical treatise becomes stereotyped especially during the twelfth and the thirteenth centuries; geographers become mere copyists and little research work seems to have been done. It is not until the reorganisation of the sea trade by the Mongols and the coming of Islam to Indonesia, that the Muslim West shows any new interest in South-East Asia; even

¹⁸ The different editions vary considerably. Ferrand used passages relative to the Far East from Langlès translation in Savary's *Grammaire de la langue arabe*. Paris, 1813; and I have used this except for a passage from the recent Beirut edition. I have also consulted Cheikho's edition of Beirut, 1909 and a Cairo edition of unknown but fairly recent date. Not all the passages can be found in Burton's translation.

then, the works of this later period are never incorporated into geographical texts.

During the tenth century the classical school of Balkhī, which also includes the geographers Iṣṭakhrī, Ibn Ḥauqal and Muqaddasī, paid very little attention to the non-Muslim parts of the world or to legendary "marvel" stories. Hence there is nothing in these authors to claim our attention. It is perhaps rather unfortunate that they ignored the area with which we are dealing, for these four writers were among the most important in Arab geographical literature, and had a great influence on the form and style of the later geographers. The *Hudūd al-ʿĀlām*, a Persian geography which comes from the eleventh century, is a successor of this Balkhī school, although it does include material on South-East Asia.

Bīrūnī, who writes during the early part of the eleventh century, is one of the few authors who occur in the unproductive century before Idrīsī. Unfortunately his great interest in matters Indian is limited to North India. Southern India and the Indianised parts of the South-East are barely mentioned in his works, but references can be found in the *Kitāb al-Taʿshīm*, *Qānūn al-Masʿūdī*, and the *Taʾriḫ al-Hind*.

Sharaf al-Zamān Ṭāhir Marwazī, who also lived in the eleventh century and wrote a book entitled *Ṭabāʾir al-ḥayawān*, has some interesting references for he copies the lost work of Jaihānī, who in turn copied Ibn Khurdādhbih. His passages in all cases resemble Ibn Khurdādhbih, but are much fuller.

Idrīsī, in the *Nuzhat al-mushtāq*, quotes a list of his sources, which include Masʿūdī, Jaihānī, Ibn Khurdādhbih, Yaʿqūbī and Qudāma,¹⁹ so that there is at least one lost source here, and two more of which we have not the full text. Traces of these authors appear in both his maps and text. There is a general resemblance between his work and those of Kharāqī and the *Hudūd al-ʿĀlām* which might be traced to Jaihānī. Ibn Ḥauqal and Khwārizmī are also apparent and whole passages of his text come from Ibn Khurdādhbih. He is perhaps the earliest author to try and insert the writings of these early descriptive geographers in detail into a map, but he actually adds nothing to our topographical knowledge of the Archipelago and only fills in a little detail when he quotes the lost texts.

Ibn Saʿīd, who wrote during the latter part of the thirteenth century, on the other hand, adds a considerable amount to our knowledge. Thus he is one of the most important sources for South-East Asian material, although he does not excel as a geographer. The

¹⁹ *Kitāb al-Kharāj*. The extant parts (edited by De Goeje in B. G. A. VI, Leyden, 1889) do not mention South-East Asia at all.

extra information given by him seems quite up to date and this may be due to his association with the court of the Mongol Khan, Hulagu. He may therefore have been conversant with material obtained from sailors of the newly founded port of Hormuz. Ibn Sa'īd must certainly have been acquainted with Idrīsī, but he did not follow him blindly in his Far-Eastern section. Ibn Sa'īd's description of South-East Asia becomes the standard one for later writers and is copied by Dimashqī, Abu'l-Fidā and Ibn Iyās among others.

From the end of the twelfth and the beginning of the thirteenth centuries we have the large geographical dictionary of Yāqūt, known as the *Mu'jam al-buldān*. Yāqūt was not primarily a geographer, but a lexicographer and his work is a collection of most of the preceding authors (except Idrīsī and Ibn Sa'īd). Apart from the passage quoted from Abū Dulaf's *risāla*, mentioned above, there is little that appears for the first time. In addition, information is difficult to find, unless the Arab names of the places in the area under consideration are known beforehand. Another geographical lexicon is the *Kitāb āthār al-bilād* of Qazwīnī (1203–1283), who seems to collect some sources not utilised by Yāqūt. This work divides the world into "climates", and then lists places in alphabetical order under each climate. An abridgement of this work was issued by Bakuwī (c. 1400) under the name *Talkhīṣ al-āthār*, and there are similar works by other authors. Since all of these are compilations of early material, they are practically of no use for the study of South-East Asia, and the same applies to later writers who use a descriptive style. There is nothing new and there is a tendency for them to introduce Ptolemy especially if they had access to Ibn Sa'īd or Idrīsī. Such authors are Dimashqī (c. 1325, *Nukhbat al-dahr*), Abu'l-Fidā (1273–1331, *Taqwīm al-buldān*) Ibn Iyās (d. 1524, *Nashaq al-azhār*). Qazwīnī, in his *Kitāb 'ajā'ib al-makhlūqāt*, goes back to the fabulous tales of Buzurg and the *Mukhtaṣar al-'ajā'ib*, and he is followed by Ḥarrānī (c. 1332, *Jāmi' al-funūn*) and Ibn al-Wardī (c. 1340, *Kharīdat al-'ajā'ib*).

As has been stated above, the writers after the end of the tenth century have little of importance to offer us. They continue to copy the material of their predecessors until the versions of Ibn Khurdādhbih, Abū Zaid and the *Akhbār al-Šin* are worn completely threadbare, and introduce an equally threadbare version of Ptolemy to add to the chaos. Contemporary with these later authors, however, a new approach to the subject of the Far East was being worked out in the writings of the Persian historians at the court of the Mongol Ilkhans.

The three Persian historians who have passages on South-East Asia are Waṣṣāf (c. 1300), Rashīd al-Dīn (1247–1318) and 'Abd al-Razzāq (1413–1482). Their references to our area are each extremely short, but serve to show that the capital of Hulagu and his successors had a better idea of South-East Asia than any of the Muslims of the West since the time of Abu Zaid and Mas'ūdī. Here we meet for the first time names of places recognisable from European writings and which are in existence at the present time. In fact as far as South-East Asia is concerned, those writers might be called the first modern Muslim geographers. Waṣṣāf, the earliest of the three, mentions the attack of Kublai Khan's forces on the island of Java in A.D. 1292, which must have taken place only a few years before he wrote. Rashīd al-Dīn gives a short but accurate account of North Sumatra, mentioning several places existing today.

Ibn Baṭṭūṭa travelled from Bengal to Sumatra and other parts of the East Indies in A.D. 1346 and returned from China in the next year. His book, called *Tuḥfat al-nuẓẓār fī-gharā'ib al-amṣār wa 'ajā'ib al-asfār*, is therefore the only original work written by an Arab about this area. His text was edited by Ibn Juzayy from scraps dictated by the author and has since been through the hand of many copyists. The result produces a very curious itinerary which has confused scholars. Some believe that certain passages are out of order and some suggest that he did not travel to China at all. It is most likely that some passages are out of order or perhaps some of his original material is missing. It is unfortunate that he comes too late in history to be of any use to the Arab geographers: the few minor writers who come after him have nowhere made an attempt to incorporate his material.

At the end of the fifteenth century, we have several further texts in Arabic dealing with South-East Asia. Some of these are collected together in two manuscripts in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris (Ms. Arabe 2292 and Ms. Arabe 2559); and others were found in a manuscript preserved in Leningrad. All three manuscripts consist of a series of short tracts written by two sea captains, Aḥmad Ibn Mājid and Sulaimān al-Mahri, on navigation in general and on the Indian Ocean in particular. They have no direct effect on Arab geographical literature, nor are they based on anything except the personal experience of the authors in these seas, and other works of similar nature. How long the Arabs had been writing this sort of pilot-guide is not known, for this is a specialized field and literature of this type has a limited public. Ibn Mājid names three of his predecessors who date back to the beginning of the twelfth century and mentions one travel narrative from the beginning of the eleventh

century.²⁰ Had such works been used by the earlier geographers then we might now know an enormous amount about the East Indies in early times. As it is, the earliest of these guides is only contemporary with the first European voyages in the Indian Ocean. These writers mention only one or two of the place names appearing in the classical works, but contain a wealth of new material and compare favourably with similar works of the same date by the Portuguese and other European travellers. These new names can easily be identified and are often the same as modern ones. Latitudes are given as stellar altitudes and compass bearings which can be used to produce a map of the Archipelago far superior to contemporary European maps (cf. Fig. 6). Of course the information they give is entirely topographical (actually hydrographical), there are no accounts of towns or peoples or economic conditions. The texts contain three types of description: the first giving latitudes of places and their compass bearings from each other, with occasional brief descriptions; the second giving sailing directions for a particular route, mentioning depths, directions and other information thought necessary for the successful completion of the journey, while the third gives a brief list of places having the same latitude.

The earlier of the two writers, Ahmad ibn Mājid, is supposed to be the pilot who brought Vasco da Gama from Malindi to India. His work, *Hāwiyat al-ikhtiṣār fī 'ilm al-biḥār* dated A.H. 866 (A.D. 1462), is written in simple poetry in the *rajaz* metre, like so many elementary textbooks in Arabic, for the benefit of those who have to remember it. It is rather sketchy, and contradictory statements often make it ambiguous. A second work included in the same manuscript is called *al-Fawā'id fī uṣūl 'ilm al-baḥr wa'l-qawā'id*. This is written in prose, is more detailed, and has many scattered references to the Malay Archipelago. In addition one of the three poems appearing in the Leningrad manuscript which were published by Shumovsky in 1957 is called the "Malaccan poem" (*al-Mal'aqiya*) and gives details of the voyage from Calicut to Malacca.²¹

The second author, Sulaimān b. Ahmad al-Mahrī, has two works which give detailed accounts of navigation in the Archipelago. One of these is dated A.H. 917 (A.D. 1511) and their titles are *al-'Umdat al-mahrīya fī ḍabṭ 'ilm al-baḥriya* and *Kitāb al-minhaj al-fākhir fī 'ilm al-baḥr al-zākhir*. Both cover the same ground but the second is

²⁰ *Instructions nautiques* v. 1, f. 4r. al-Mu'allim Khawāshir b. Yūsuf b. Ṣalāh al-Arikī who travelled in the year A.H. 400 (1009/1010). The three important writers were Muḥammad b. Shādhān, Sahl b. Abbān and Laith b. Kahlān (f. 3v). For a translation of this part of this text see my *Arab navigation* pp. 71–2.

²¹ *Tri neizvestnie lotzii Akhmada ibn Madjida*. Moskva, 1957, plates ff. 97v–104r.

more detailed. These are much more comprehensive works than those of Ibn Mājid and far more useful. The work of Sulaimān al-Mahrī was translated into Turkish in 1553 by Sidi Ali Çelebi in his work entitled *Muḥīṭ*.²²

This brings the historical account of Arab geographical activity on South-East Asia up to the period when European works began to be produced. The Portuguese at this time put an end for several centuries to Middle Eastern commerce with the East and the Muslim world did not again begin to interest itself in geographical matters until the eighteenth century when, with the coming of printing, European works were first translated and read in the Ottoman empire.

Having dealt with the material at our disposal, it is useful to see how this material limits our understanding of what the Arabs really knew about South-East Asia. In the first place the amount of geographical literature which has survived to the present time is an extremely small portion of the total output of the Arab geographers. Many works must have been lost without a trace. Material may have been extracted from some of them and included in extant works without any acknowledgement, but we cannot know all that they originally contained. There may have been works written solely about the Indies, including even first hand travel accounts. It is possible that there was another collection of 'ajā'ib or *akhbār* even earlier than the *Akhbār al-Ṣīn* for Ibn Khurdādhbih and his immediate successors have a considerable number of standardised stories which do not appear in this but might have come from such a work. Then there are many works which we know existed from bibliographical references to them in extant works. Such were the works of Marwazī and Jaihānī entitled *al-masālik wa'l-mamālik*. The latter appears to have been very important and was quoted a great deal, but there must have been much from such authors that was never quoted at all. Ibn Khurdādhbih raises another problem, for although we have a copy of his *Kitāb al-masālik wa'l-mamālik*, he is referred to by many authors who quote passages which are not found in this copy. Does this extra material come from a full edition of this book

²² L. Bonelli: *Del Muḥīṭ o "Descrizione dei mari delle Indie" dell'ammiraglio turco Sidi 'Alī detto Kiātīb-i-Rūm*, in *Rendiconti della R. Acad. dei Lincei. Classe di scienze morali, storiche e filologiche*, serie 5, v. 3 (1894), pp. 751–77; M. Bittner: *Die topographischen Capitel des indischen Seespiegels Muḥīṭ*; maps by W. Tomaschek. Vienna, 1897. The section on South-East Asia is also translated into French by Ferrand in his *Relations de voyages*, pp. 484–541. His translation is taken from the English translation by Hammer-Purgstall in "Extracts from the Muḥīṭ, that is the Ocean, a Turkish work on navigation in the Indian seas", *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, v. 3–8, 1834–8.

or does it come from other works, which we know he has written? Idrīsī (on Jāba) quotes a passage without acknowledgement from Ibn Khurdādhbih's book, which is very obscure in our text of the original. Idrīsī's text not only clarifies this obscure passage but adds an enormous amount of detail in between the bare sentences of our version of Ibn Khurdādhbih, which could only have come from a complete version of the same source. How much have we lost through not having a complete original of Ibn Khurdādhbih?

The works which have come down to us have survived the centuries only through numerous editions and after much copying, so that by reading a text we do not necessarily understand what the author intended. Thus we have to suffer the abridgements and glosses of the editors, who may have collated several manuscripts and preserved the wrong reading or may have even reformed the text from quotations in other authors. In addition we are left with all the errors caused by the faulty work of some copyist ignorant of the content of the work. The Arabic script is particularly receptive to copyists errors, especially in the spellings of foreign place names. How many times do the words قمرؤن *qamrūn* and فنجب *fanjab* appear in matter on South-East Asia, because the copyist has failed to read the original properly, and has inserted these well-known names, because the form in the text looked vaguely like them. The copyists too play havoc with figures. The circumferences and lengths of various "islands" in the Malay Archipelago vary enormously among authors in spite of the facts that the texts themselves are the same word for word. Directions too seem to be difficult for copyists. Ibn Khurdādhbih says Bālūs is "to the left" of Kalāh, but the version which has reached us in the *Mukhtaṣar al-'ajā'ib* says, "to the right".

A manuscript which has managed to survive to the present day also leaves its problems. Foreign place names if not given the wrong diacritical points by some copyist, will usually be found unpointed. Although this does not seem a great difficulty in itself, for it leaves the scholar considerable scope for his initiative, it becomes difficult when one realises how the form of a Malay or Indian name reached the ears or eyes of an intellectual sitting in Baghdad. There are certain sounds which appear in Malay or Javanese which do not occur in Arabic (i.e. hard *g*, *p*, *ch*, *ng* and *ny*) and some which do not occur in Persian (*w*, *ng*, *ny*) and there are other sounds in Indian dialects. Arabs who are philologically inclined might produce a fixed system for rendering these sounds into Arabic script, but the fact must not be overlooked that these names were brought back from the Far East by sailors, many of them illiterate. No rules or

regulations can be applied to their method of pronouncing place names, and there is always the possibility that the names they applied to places may not even have been place names at all. The language of sailors has never been extremely precise, certainly not the foundation on which to build philological theories.

Finally it is necessary to mention what sort of information about South-East Asia can be obtained from the Arab sources. The most important thing that we can learn from these texts is a knowledge of the topography of South-East Asia, although the knowledge of the Arabs themselves was very limited in this field.

In Arab geographical literature we get three different conceptions of the topography of South-East Asia originating from three completely different historical periods. These are: (a) a Ptolemaic conception based entirely on the maps of Ptolemy, having transliterations and sometimes translations of the Greek place names, the original date of which was approximately the second century A.D.;²³ (b) a Classical Arab conception which is contemporary with the early geographical texts, i.e. the eighth to the tenth centuries A.D.; and (c) a modern conception which begins to appear in the later writers from the court of the Ilkhans, but is fully developed in the works of the navigational authors.

It is the second conception which is studied in Part I and is important because it covers a period when the Arab texts are virtually the only source for the period in question and it is a conception unique to the Arab literary texts. There are however a few contemporary Chinese and Indian sources which can be used for the comparison of obscure place names.

In these Arab literary texts, topographical detail is a secondary matter and never clearly explained. The main point of a traveller's tale was not to describe the topography but to tell an 'ajiba, i.e. marvel or to explain the origin of some product known to his readers. The place where a product is obtained or where a "marvel" occurs is sometimes but by no means always stated and there is often ambiguity as to whether the name given is that of a place, a king, or even the name of a product.²⁴ Sometimes a series of place names is given, which can give a clue to their interrelationship. Useful are stories of shipwreck for they often give a fragment of a

²³ The Khwārizmī conception of South-East Asia has been described by Hans Mžik in *Paraogeographische Elementen in den Berichten der arabischen Geographen über Südostasien*, Beiträge zur historischer Geographie, Kultur-Geographie, Ethnographie und Kartographie, vornehmlich des Orients. Leipzig-Wien, 1929, p. 172-202.

²⁴ Among others, Jāba is the name of a king and an island; Harang (or Harij) said to be the title of a governor, after whom an island is called. Some authors get terribly mixed up over كلاء and Kalāhi tin كلامي, and Qal'a قلعة and Qal'i tin القلي.

voyage with a series of names and approximate distances. Two examples occur in the *'Ajā'ib al-Hind*; one shipwreck gives a sea journey, Qāqulla–Armanān–Badfārkalā–Kalāh; another a land journey from Fansūr to Lāmūrī.

But most helpful are the routes of Ibn Khurdādhbih and the *Akhbār al-Šin*. They are the two earliest texts to survive and both give a clear route between India and China, through the Straits of Malacca. The great difficulty is that the times given by these two sources between the same two places do not bear any comparison. This is to be expected, for several different types of sailing vessel must have been employed for the trade between India and China, and their rates of sailing must have varied considerably. Weather conditions too must have played a considerable part. These two texts use the term "days" almost as a measurement of distance, other geographers use parasangs, *zām* or *majrā*.²⁵

The Arab geographers never seem to use points of the compass, only rarely talking of north and south. They sometimes use the terms "to the right" and "to the left", but whether these mean to the south and north respectively, or merely to the left or right of the route seems to depend on the context. Actually, to the left does mean to the north when one sails eastward.

The sizes of places are often given but when most places are termed "islands" (*jazā'ir*) including some, easily located, which are obviously not, it is difficult to apply this information usefully.

The use of the term "*jazīra*" for island or peninsula has probably caused more muddle than anything. Idrīsī in his world map has shown all the *jazā'ir* of the early texts as shapeless islands. Actually a "*jazīra*" in South-East Asia seems to be some place where a trader arrived by sea and left by sea, and is often equivalent to "riverside town" or "seaport".

The addition of Ptolemaic material to that of the early descriptive geographers has made it completely impossible to locate place names which appear after the eleventh century. The world is divided horizontally into "climates". The material concerning South-East Asia falls mainly into the first and third climates. Latitudes and

²⁵ A *zām* is a watch at sea. The fifteenth-century navigators make it clear that it represents three hours and hence when used of distance is (a) the distance sailed in three hours or (b) the equivalent of the distance sailed due north to raise the Pole Star one unit of arc known as a *zām* of which there were 1792 in a circle (360°). cf. p. 190. Presumably (b) took three hours to accomplish. The *majrā* was never mentioned as a distance by the navigators but is reckoned in classical texts (Dozy quoting Ibn Jubair) to represent one day's sailing. *Marḥala* is a camel stage hence one day's journey on land. A parasang (*Pers. farsakh*) was approximately $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles. See also my *Arab navigation*, pp. 299, 314.

longitudes are used by many of the later geographers, but these are all arbitrarily given, except to names of Greek origin. But even in the latter case no two geographers agree, and most measurements are far removed from the values given to them by Ptolemy. Places can only be located by some other means, such as trying to find some philological connexion with a modern place name. Another pitfall is Ptolemy's extension of the African coast towards China. This brings the countries called by the Arabs, al-Zābaj (الزباج, East Indies) and al-Zanj (الزنج, East Africa) into close proximity, causing hopeless confusion.

Economic geography is the subject most fully dealt with by the Arabs for it was for economic reasons that they sailed to the East. Products of places are always mentioned; in fact, products are sometimes mentioned without their place of origin. Material on these articles of commerce can be of importance for solving topographical problems. Sometimes a product will have several varieties, each coming from a different region. Thus we have *Qāqullī* and *Qmāri* aloeswood, *Fanšūrī* camphor and *Qala'i* tin (in one case Kalāhī). Methods of extraction and mining are often given in detail. Places used as general markets and methods of buying and selling from the natives are mentioned and occasionally rates of exchange.

Other subjects which are touched on in the texts are natural history, ethnology and the social customs of the peoples. Plants and trees may be mentioned in connexion with commerce or merely as "marvels", strange things which are not seen in the civilised world. Similarly with animals: elephants are used as beasts of burden, while exotic varieties of monkeys and birds are mentioned for story value.

The customs of the people are often mentioned, their dress, food and religion, but opinions are often contradictory. Most races are cannibals according to some authors, but according to others they may be cultured and living in organised townships. The Malay habit of piracy is described several times.

Historical material rarely comes into the picture for the time factor does not seem to have been at all important for the geographers. They do not even consider the age of their sources.²⁶ One or two events have crept into the more original of the texts; Abū Zaid and Mas'ūdī are the most important for history. Abū Zaid states that one of his aims is to bring the *Akhbār al-Šin* up to date, hence one might expect to find things which happened between the dates of the two works. Thus we have the account of the fall of Canton (A.D.

²⁶ Yāqūt mentions out of date material. "As for the country of Malak, I have met no one who has seen it, but I read about it in an old book". *Mu'jam al-buldān*. Wüstenfeld edition, t. 3, p. 445.

878) and its effect on the Arab trade in the Far East, and also the long account of the Maharāja's attack on the king of Cambodia.

Kings are often mentioned and the type of government, and also political dependency of one state on another. This often helps to locate some place when we can obtain confirmation from some outside source. Such cases may help to reveal the date of our original source.

The texts with one exception agree that South-East Asia comes under the cultural influence of India. The exception is Abū Dulaf, who shows China predominating and whom as I have stated above, I suspect of obtaining his information from Chinese sources.

There is no biographical material at all, except the account of the Maharāja's attack on Cambodia, and the material about Balhara, a king (actually the title of a king) of India. Only once is the proper name of a king given.²⁷

Besides the literary works the Arabs have left to posterity an odd assortment of maps. I have already commented several times on the uselessness of Arab maps with regard to the topography of South-East Asia. They have a certain influence on the texts of later writers and I have dealt with those which are important at a later stage.²⁸

The history of South-East Asia during the Hindu period is extremely confused, and very little information can be obtained from local sources. For Sumatra there are no local sources, except a few scattered ruins and inscriptions. The Arabs were known to have been one of the main races who visited South-East Asia for trading purposes, and being a race with an extremely rich literature, it is only to be expected that there must be many references in it to this area. It is valuable, therefore, to study these references and compare them with Indian and Chinese sources. The majority of Indian literary works come from a much earlier period, so that contemporary Indian sources are almost limited to those few inscriptions. The Chinese have copious references to South-East Asia, but scholars disagree about the date that the Chinese first sailed so far south and many of their references like those of the Arabs may be taken from traders visiting the Chinese ports. Some of their informants may even have been Arabs.

In addition these references from the geographers fill a gap in the history of world trade. As most of them are derived from reports of

²⁷ Sri Nātā Kalah, King of Zābaj (q.v.) in the '*Ajā'ib al-Hind*.

²⁸ In *Mappae Arabicae*, Miller's identifications are all his own. He does not seem to have studied the texts to any great extent and he completely ignores the works of other scholars on this area.

the traders themselves, they are full of commercial interest, and are therefore extremely important from this point of view. They also cover the centuries preceding the coming of Islam to South-East Asia, and may shed light on the causes which led to this event.

Among the failings of the Arab geographical texts, the most important is either the refusal or the inability of the geographers to look for new and up to date source material, and the continued repetition of their predecessors. The introduction of the extremely out of date Greek material was really their undoing, and the constant mixing up of the African Zanj with the Asian Zābaj was one of the reasons for the uselessness of the maps and the terrible muddle into which the later geographers entangled themselves. The usefulness of the text is also limited for modern scholars by the state in which manuscripts have reached us due to constant re-copying and re-editing, and the awkwardness of the Arabic script for reproducing foreign names, especially when submitted to the hands of numerous copyists.

Offsetting these limitations is the fact that there are one or two very detailed and useful texts. The *Akhbār al-Šin wa'l-Hind*, and especially its second part, the addition of Abū Zaid, are both detailed serious works dealing specifically with the area concerned and both are collected from almost contemporary sources giving fairly up to date accounts. Mas'ūdī too, has much contemporary material and much that is useful, while the '*Ajā'ib al-Hind* with its mass of colourful tales is extremely valuable for filling in the details. We must also be grateful that the Arab geographers thought the material on South-East Asia worthy of inclusion in their works. They have left us an important legacy which well bears comparison with the works of other nations living much closer to the area concerned and which helps to cover a period in history when there is little else in the way of sources.