

61 I know of no such practice. Some Muslim pilgrims visited Jerusalem and entered the state of *ihrām*, or holy readiness, there before continuing to Mecca, although this was documented well before the life of Meshullam of Volterra. See Amikam Elad, *Medieval Jerusalem and Islamic Worship: Holy Places, Ceremonies, Pilgrimage* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), pp. 62–5.

62 Adler (ed.), *Jewish Travellers*, p. 190; Eisenstein (ed.), *Ozar Massa'oth*, p. 100.

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*Travel in the medieval Islamic world:
the importance of patronage, as illustrated
by 'Abd al-Latif al-Baghdadi (d. 629/1231)
(and other littérateurs)*

Shawkat M. Toorawa

INTRODUCTION: TRAVEL IN THE MEDIEVAL ISLAMIC WORLD

MENTION travel in the medieval Islamic world to people, and they are likely to respond with 'You mean Ibn Battutah!'.¹ They may know of Ibn Fadlan (*fl.* early fourth/tenth century), especially if they have seen what is perhaps the only Hollywood adaptation (the word is loosely applied) of a medieval Arabic text other than the *Arabian nights*.² Scholars are just as likely to name Ibn Battutah, Ibn Fadlan and also Ibn Jubayr (d. 1217). Regrettably, the fascinating and complex subject of travel in the medieval Islamic world (here the ninth to sixteenth centuries) has received very little critical and theoretical attention indeed. Scholarship has tended to be descriptive, has focused disproportionately on a handful of travellers, and has been content with the sub-division of travel into one or more of four categories: (i) scholars' travel in search of knowledge (*al-rihlah fi talab al-'ilm* – which is understood to include the travel undertaken by individuals (*muhaddith*) in order to collect traditions (*hadith*) of the Prophet Muhammad); (ii) pilgrimage to Mecca (*hajj*); (iii) travels of adventure and exploration (*rihlah*); and (iv) mercantile travel (*li al-tijarah*). Some scholars add migration and emigration (*hijrah*). This taxonomy (which could benefit from some nuancing) is useful, but it excludes a very important, widespread and, to the best of my knowledge, unstudied form of travel: namely, journeying to, with or on account of patrons.

In the preface to their thoughtful 1990 edited volume on travel, Dale Eickelman and James Piscatori opened with the most sustained (if brief) reflection to date on what travel might be and might mean for medieval Muslims:

The subject of Muslim travel is unexpectedly complex. One might assume that religious doctrine prescribes certain kinds of travel, and that the ritual movement of Muslims leads to a heightened identification with Islam and with fellow Muslims. But the chapters of this book question that conventional wisdom. In looking for the answers to the basic questions that underlie the discussion – What does travel mean to Muslims? What are its motivations? What are its effects? – we are struck by a pervasive intricacy and even ambiguity.¹

Eickelman and Piscatori enlarge the erstwhile narrow readings of the Arabic term *rihlah* (literally 'travel') to include 'travel for learning or other purposes' (emphasis mine);² and to pilgrimage and travel in search of knowledge they usefully add *ziyarah* (visits to shrines) and emigration (*hijrah*).³ But, because their focus is the travel of Muslims in particular, their purview is limited and does not include the travel by non-Muslims in Islamic lands.

In the Cambridge History of Arabic Literature, medieval travel is treated principally in a volume devoted to the 'Abbasid period, which appeared in 1990.⁴ But of J. F. P. Hopkins's twenty-seven pages on 'Geographical and navigational literature', only two are devoted to 'travellers' proper, perhaps because, as Hopkins claims, 'The medieval Muslim traveller travelled for trade or in search of learning, not to see the world'.⁵ Hopkins does, however, specifically mention the anonymous ninth-century merchant's compilation, *Akhbar al-Sin wa al-Hind* ('Accounts of China and India'), as a work on human geography; Ibn Fadlan's tenth-century account of his embassy to the Bulgars; Buzurg ibn Shahriyar's tenth-century *mirabilia* work, '*Aja'ib al-Hind* ('Wonders of India'), 'which sometimes strains credulity to breaking point'; and the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century travels of Ibn Jubayr and Ibn Battutah respectively.⁶ But he implies, by his silence about other travel and other travellers, that these are unique, and does not characterise the travels undertaken for reasons other than pilgrimage, travel in search of knowledge, and adventure.

The 1994 entry on 'Rihla' in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* defines the term as 'a journey, voyage, travel; also a travelogue' but nevertheless focuses exclusively on travel in search of knowledge and pilgrimage, and refers only to the writings of Ibn Jubayr and Ibn Battutah.⁷ No other traveller or form of travel is mentioned. This is unfortunate since the author, Ian R. Netton, as both editor of a 1993 collection and author of a 1996 volume on travel in Islam, ought to be well positioned to discuss the subject in greater depth.⁸ The *Encyclopaedia of Islam* article on 'Safar', which is defined as 'journey, travel', also from 1994, is sub-divided by the author, R. Peters, into '1. In law' and '2. In Islamic life'.⁹ Under the first heading is a brief discussion of the rules in Islamic law governing such issues as ritual prayer and ritual purity during a journey.¹⁰ The second consists in nothing but the following:

2. In Islamic life. See for this, 'Funduq' [inn]; 'Khan' [hostel]; 'Rihla' [travel]; 'Tijara' [commerce]. For envoys and ambassadors, see 'Elci' [Turkish for envoy]; 'Safir' [ambassador].¹¹ For the pilgrims to Mecca, see 'Hajj' [pilgrimage].iii.A. To the *Bibls.* of these articles, add I. R. Netton (ed.), *Golden Roads . . .*, London 1993.¹²

In his 1998 encyclopaedia entry on travel literature, C. E. Bosworth proves to be the scholar who has so far been the most explicit in identifying forms of travel and its motivations.¹³ After mentioning the embassies of Ibn Fadlan and Abu Dulaf¹⁴ as examples of travel outside the Islamic world, he writes:¹⁵ 'Within the Islamic world, however, there was much travel by pilgrims, heading for Mecca and Medina or the Shi'i shrines; by scholars seeking out famous teachers or institutions of learning; by Sufi mystics attracted by a charismatic shaykh; by religious propagandists, such as the Isma'ili ones; by officials and diplomatic envoys; but above all, by traders.'

To pilgrimage (to Mecca and shrines), travel in search of knowledge, embassy, adventure and trade, Bosworth has added the travel of religious propagandists and the travel of Sufis in search of masters.

Still, neither Bosworth nor any of the other above-named scholars of travel in medieval Islam has considered patronage.

PATRONAGE AND PATRON-MOTIVATED TRAVEL

Patronage is the support (financial and political), encouragement (moral, social and economic) and championing of an individual or group engaged in an activity without which they would otherwise have difficulty performing that activity.¹⁶ Patronage in the classical and medieval Islamic world, though well documented, has not been studied in any detail.¹⁷ The earliest form of patronage appears to have been that of the poets of pre-Islamic Arabia by their respective tribes. By extolling the tribe's successes in battle and the valour, virtues and virility of its heroes, living and fallen, a poet acquired prestige and often great fame. In addition, the poet was called upon to declaim satires of the tribe's enemies, often in public poetry contests. And yet it was the activities of poets who composed under quite different circumstances, the tribally unaffiliated, wandering (*su'luk*) poets, and those individuals attached to the north Arabian vassal courts of Byzantium and Sasanid Persia, who in fact presaged the system of patronage that would rapidly supplant the tribal one. As Islam spread, centres of cultural patronage sprang up all over the Islamic world. In addition to the court of the caliph, senior officials, regional governors and wealthy notables granted patronage. To these patrons gravitated itinerant litterateurs and scholars who composed poems and works, often for the highest bidders and often in response to the egotistic needs of a given patron. The sources describe in great detail the soirées held in

the homes of these patrons; some, such as the courtier 'Ali ibn Yahya Ibn al-Munajjim (d. 889), were writers and scholars of distinction themselves.

By surrounding themselves with men of letters and learning, patrons conferred prestige on themselves and demonstrated their discernment, refinement and devotion to literature and scholarship. For patrons who were unlearned or even illiterate, patronage was a way of offsetting (or deflecting attention from) that apparent deficiency. Thus, the Turkish prince Bakjam (d. 941) patronised the courtier, anthologist and chess master Abu Bakr al-Suli (d. c. 945) when the 'Abbasid caliph al-Muttaqi (d. 944) abruptly terminated his patronage averring that the only companion he needed henceforth was the Qur'an.

Patronage could extend to entire groups, for instance, the support that the caliph al-Ma'mun (d. 833) gave to the Mu'tazili rationalists, or the support that the minister Ibn Hubayrah (d. c. 1165) gave to the entire Hanbali guild of law. The Saljuq sultan Malik Shah (d. 1092) supported astronomers, Sufi orders and colleges of law; in his patronage of the latter, he was rivalled by his own chief minister, Nizam al-Mulk (d. 1092). Patronage did not only come from officials: the bon vivants 'Abd Allah ibn Ja'far and Ibn Abi 'Atiq supported musicians in eighth-century Medina. Individuals, merchants and landowners were often the source of support for religious scholars, and in particular for mosques (especially through the institution of the eleemosynary *waqf*). And ordinary folk patronised prayer leaders and preachers through small gifts and stipends.

But it was the patronage of the very wealthy that motivated travel. It was the lure of someone such as Harun al-Rashid (d. 809) in Baghdad, Sayf al-Dawlah (d. 967) in Aleppo, Ibn al-'Amid (d. 990) in Shiraz, Saladin (d. 1193) in Jerusalem, that made men travel considerable distances. They not only sought out these patrons, but often also travelled with them, from one regional or seasonal court to another, on military campaigns, on diplomatic missions and in flight from enemies and aggressors.

The poet Abu Tammam (d. 845) converted, and left his Christian family in Syria for Cairo, where he studied poetry.¹⁹ He returned to Syria around 829, a few years later, and was patronised by the caliph al-Mu'tasim (d. 842) and other senior officials in Baghdad. Abu Tammam also travelled to many regional courts including ones in Armenia and Nishapur. Unhappy with his takings (and the weather!) in Nishapur, Abu Tammam decided to return to Syria. During his journey home, he was snowed-in in Hamadhan. There, relying on the library of a friend, he composed his celebrated anthology, *al-Hamasah* ('Bravery') while he waited for conditions to clear. The last few years of his life Abu Tammam spent as postmaster of Mosul, a position obtained for him by the secretary al-Hasan ibn Wahb. Abu Tammam's younger Kufan contemporary Muslim ibn al-Walid (d. 823) was similarly

made a postmaster in the East, in Jurjan, by a benevolent secretary of the Caliph al-Ma'mun (d. 833) after his many years at Harun al-Rashid's court in Baghdad. Another contemporary of Abu Tammam, the Baghdadi musician Ziryab (d. 845), travelled west to North Africa and was then invited to Cordoba by its ruler. During his time there he would play a major role in the articulation and elaboration of a new Andalusian culture.

The poet al-Mutanabbi (d. 965) travelled often and for many reasons. He was born in Kufa, and spent several years as a lad among the Bedouin of Lower Iraq and a few years in Baghdad before leaving for Syria in 930. He spent three years there as an itinerant panegyrist before being arrested and imprisoned for brigandage. He was released in 937 and, continuing his search for patronage, attached himself to various minor officials. When Sayf al-Dawlah took Aleppo, al-Mutanabbi fled to Damascus by way of Tripoli, but when Sayf al-Dawlah took Antioch in 948, al-Mutanabbi celebrated this in a poem, and was consequently retained by the prince at his brilliant court. This not only meant livelihood for almost a decade, but required that the poet (as was the custom) often accompany the ruler on his military campaigns.²⁰ Having made a number of enemies (including Sayf al-Dawlah himself), al-Mutanabbi fled in 957 to the court of Kafur in Egypt. Here too relations between poet and patron quickly soured and al-Mutanabbi fled once again, to Kufa. A year later he was in Baghdad but was forced by the situation created by his rivals to return to Kufa. He was then invited by Ibn al-'Amid to his court in Arrajan, and by 'Adud al-Dawlah (d. 983) to his court in Shiraz. A longing for Iraq and Syria saw al-Mutanabbi on the move again but he was ambushed and killed on his journey home.

The royal poet Abu Firas was a cousin of Sayf al-Dawlah's and a bitter rival of al-Mutanabbi's. He travelled to Manbij when he was appointed governor there and was also twice taken captive by the Byzantines, once in 959 when he managed to escape, and once from 962 to 966 in Byzantium itself. That stay inspired his so-called 'Rumiyyat' poems. Another companion of Sayf al-Dawlah was the author Abu Bakr al-Khwarizmi (d. 993), who was born in Khwarazm, in the extreme east of the Islamic Empire (present-day Uzbekistan), and who travelled extensively. In addition to the court in Aleppo, he attended the court of al-Sahib ibn 'Abbad (d. 995) in Rayy as well as other courts in Iran, including Nishapur, where he settled and died.

The prose stylist al-Tawhidi (d. 1023) aspired to the patronage of Ibn al-'Amid and al-Sahib ibn 'Abbad. His difficult personality ended his brief associations with them and he returned to Baghdad, but not without having acquired material for his works, including his celebrated *Akhlaq al-wazirayn* ('The faults of the two viziers'). The philosopher and historian Miskawayh (d. 1030) was tutored, and then worked as tutor, at the Buyid dynasty's courts in his native Iran – Shiraz, Rayy, Isfahan, Hamadhan. He later joined

the court of 'Adud al-Dawlah in Baghdad. When the ruler died and Miskawayh's fortunes changed, he returned to Iran. Like al-Tawhidi's, his works reveal his wide travel and exposure to patrons and their courts.

Al-Biruni (d. c. 1050) was born in Khwarazm, where he served local rulers in the capital Kath, and also served in Jurjan, until circumstances forced him to leave. He went to the court of Mahmud of Ghazna (in south-eastern Afghanistan), where he was retained and where he earned his reputation as the one of the world's great scientists. At about the same time, al-Khatib al-Baghdadi (d. 1071), the famous historian of Baghdad, travelled extensively in search of *hadith* before returning to his home town and embarking on a very successful teaching and preaching career. But this was not the only form of travel al-Khatib al-Baghdadi was to undertake. Like so many other Muslim scholars, he went on a *rihlah*, leaving Baghdad in 1053 and travelling to Syria and Mecca, before returning in 1055. The timing of this pilgrimage may have been connected to animosity he experienced in Baghdad. That was certainly the reason for his flight in 1060 for Damascus, which he had to flee in turn eight years later. He did return to Baghdad, where he died.

The Hebrew poet Moses ibn Ezra (d. 1135) was forced to flee Granada when he found himself penniless after the fall of Islamic Spain to the North African Muslim Almoravids, who had grown impatient with their Spanish Muslim allies. He went to the Christian north, where he wrote poems to his friends complaining about his exile. Al-Mu'tamid ibn 'Abbad (d. 1095), the ruler-poet of Seville who was exiled by the Almoravids to Aghmat, also composed poetry (regarded as his finest), in which he describes his captivity and imprisonment. And the Granadan poet and jurist al-Ilbiri (d. 1067) wrote a famous lament about the destruction of a retreat near Elvira where he was exiled. The popular poet and goliard Ibn Quzman (d. 1160) was patronised by the princes of Cordoba until its fall to the Almoravids. He then travelled to Seville and Granada for supplementary patronage. Hazim al-Qartajanni (d. 1285) was a polymath who studied in Murcia, Granada and Seville before emigrating to Marrakesh when Cordoba fell in 1236 to the Christians of northern Spain during the Reconquista, and then again to Tunis in 1242.

Just as a number of poets fled the Almoravids, the blind poet al-Husri (d. 1095) fled Qayrawan to escape another group, the invading Banu Hilal.²¹ In 1057 he went to Ceuta, then on to Islamic Spain, where he was poet to a number of rulers. He returned to North Africa after a series of personal tragedies, settling in Tangiers in 1090. For his part, Ibn al-'Adim (d. 1262), who served as a judge in Aleppo, was forced to flee to Cairo in 1260 when the westward-moving Mongols invaded the Levant. (Baghdad had fallen to them in 1258.)

'Umarah al-Yamani (d. 1174) was born in coastal Yemen and visited Aden as a trader. There he met travelling *da'is* or Fatimid propagandists from

Egypt. In 1155 he was made emissary to the Shi'ite Fatimids (909–1171) in Cairo. After the fall of the Fatimids to the Ayyubids (1171–1250), 'Umarah was briefly a poet to the new Ayyubid ruler, Saladin, until the latter had him executed for his alleged sympathy for the fallen Fatimids. The great sufi thinker Ibn al-'Arabi (d. 1240) was born in Murcia but left Islamic Spain in the late twelfth century and travelled widely, to regions including Syria and Anatolia, in search of teachers and knowledge, but also sometimes fleeing persecution. In Egypt, for instance, he was nearly put to death for heresy. Maimonides (Musa ibn Maymun, d. 1204) fled Cordoba for Fez with his family when the new Muslim rulers outlawed Judaism. In 1165 the family fled again, to Palestine, then to Alexandria and Cairo. After two decades in private medical practice, Maimonides became court physician to a number of Ayyubid officials and royals.

It is clear from the above sampling of travelling individuals that the world of medieval Islam occasioned and facilitated multiple forms of travel; it should be equally clear that patronage was a very significant motivator of travel. But the importance and impact of patron-motivated travel can be demonstrated by looking at the travels of the polymath 'Abd al-Latif al-Baghdadi: all his *early* travels are all in search of knowledge, instruction, teachers and books; and all his *later* travels are all motivated by, or at the behest of, patrons.

'ABD AL-LATIF'S EARLY SCHOLARLY TRAVEL

Most of the information we have about the life and travels of 'Abd al-Latif comes from selections of his autobiography preserved in the biographical notice devoted to him by his younger contemporary Ibn Abi Usaybi'ah (d. 1270) in his biographical dictionary of physicians, '*Uyun al-anba' fi tabaqat al-atibba'* ('Sources of information on the classes of physicians').²²

'Abd al-Latif was raised in the company of eminent scholars in Baghdad.²³ He studied *hadith*, disputation and dialectic, grammar and calligraphy, and he memorised the Quran and key scholarly texts. When he was an adolescent his father took him to Kamal al-Din al-Anbari (d. 1181) but, 'Abd al-Latif writes, 'I couldn't understand one bit of his continuous and considerable jabbering, even though his students seemed pleased enough with it.'²⁴ Al-Anbari referred 'Abd al-Latif for a time to his disciple, al-Wajih al-Wasiti (d. 1215), whom he found to be kind and knowledgeable and whom he eventually 'surpassed in both memorisation and comprehension'.²⁵ 'Abd al-Latif memorised over 130 works with al-Wasiti and al-Anbari, often on his way home from lectures or on his way to the mosque.

After al-Anbari died in 1181, 'Abd al-Latif devoted himself to the study of the so-called foreign sciences. 'Abd al-Latif studied medicine with the son of

Ibn Tilmidh, from whom he says he learned a great deal, and alchemy with a certain 'Abd Allah Ibn Na'ili. In 1189, 'when there no longer remained in Baghdad anyone to win [his] heart or satisfy [his] desires, or to help [him] resolve what was perplexing [him]',²⁶ he went to Mosul, where he was to be disappointed by the paucity of scholars, but where he took up a teaching post at a *madrasah*, or college of law. Fortunately for him, he did find in al-Kamal ibn Yunus (d. 1242) an able mathematician and scholar of law also interested in alchemy. After a year of vigorous independent study supported by a teaching position at a college of law, 'Abd al-Latif read works by al-Ghazali (d. 1111), all the books of Ibn Sina (Avicenna, d. 1027), interpretations by Avicenna's disciple, Bahmanyar (d. 1067) and books by Jabir ibn Hayyan (d. c. 815) and Ibn Wahshiyyah (*fl.* 8th–10th century) on alchemy. 'Abd al-Latif heard about Shihab al-Din al-Suhrawardi, whom people praised very highly, and set about reading his works.

'Abd al-Latif left for Damascus in 1190, where he found a group of scholars who gathered through the patronage of Saladin. There, he debated with the grammarian al-Kindi al-Baghdadi (*fl.* late twelfth century), who was an 'intelligent, sharp-witted, and wealthy professor, with a certain amount of influence, but who was quite taken with himself and offensive to his company'.²⁷ 'Abd al-Latif worked on several of his own books, then came across his former teacher Ibn Na'ili again. 'Abd al-Latif describes their meetings as follows: 'I used to get together with him and he would ask me to describe certain procedures so that he could record them, procedures I thought contemptible and trivial... I saw through him, though.'²⁸ 'Abd al-Latif further reproached him for his misguided attention to alchemy and philosophy rather than to the Islamic and rational sciences but Ibn Na'ili persisted in his interests. This prompted them to part ways. Ibn Na'ili soon thereafter left for Acre to complain to Saladin about his detractors. 'Abd al-Latif made a similar trip, setting out for Jerusalem and Saladin's camp outside Acre, where he met the military judge Baha' al-Din Ibn Shaddad (d. 1234). Ibn Shaddad had heard of 'Abd al-Latif's fame and suggested that he call on the secretary 'Imad al-Din al-Katib, who in turn suggested a visit to al-Qadi al-Fadil. Al-Qadi al-Fadil urged 'Abd al-Latif to travel to Damascus, for which he would receive a retainer. 'Abd al-Latif insisted on Cairo: 'I said that I preferred Egypt, upon which he replied: "The sultan is anxious about the Franks' capture of Acre and the slaying of Muslims there..." "But it simply must be Egypt," I insisted, so he wrote me a short note to his agent there'.²⁹

'Abd al-Latif soon found himself on his way to Cairo, with a guaranteed stipend. He writes that he went to Cairo in order to seek out three scholars: Yasin al-Simiya'i (d. early thirteenth century), Maimonides (d. 1208) and Abu al-Qasim al-Shari'i (d. 1202). The first two were a disappointment:

As it turned out, all three came to me. Yasin I found to be absurd, a liar, and a conjuring cheat... It was said of him that he could do things even the Prophet Moses was unable to do, that he could produce minted gold whenever he wished, of any quantity he wished, and of any minting he wished, and that he could turn the waters of the Nile into a tent in which he would then sit with his friends. He was most churlish.

When Maimonides came to see me, I found him to be tremendously learned, but overcome with the love of leadership and of service to worldly lords.³⁰

In Abu al-Qasim al-Shari'i, on the other hand, 'Abd al-Latif found exactly what he was looking for and studied with him al-Farabi, the tenth-century philosopher who became known as 'the second Master' (the first being Aristotle),³¹ and the second-century Alexander Aphrodisaeus, regarded as the most authoritative commentator on Aristotle of his age.

When a truce had been negotiated with the crusaders (September 1192), 'Abd al-Latif returned to Jerusalem and then, taking with him as many books as possible, sought out Saladin, in whose company he remained, and whom he describes as 'a great sovereign, generous, affectionate, and awesome to behold, who filled the hearts of those near and far with love'.³² The thirty-dinar monthly stipend provided by Saladin was supplemented by his sons to bring the total to the extraordinary sum of 100 dinars. Makdisi writes that 'this amount, at the time, was ten times the normal monthly stipend of a college professor of law... Ten dinars is half the amount paid to a physician of the fourteenth century'.³³ 'Abd al-Latif then returned to Damascus, where he took up studies and teaching in the Umayyad Mosque. He also devoted himself to the study of the ancients, whom he read assiduously. He writes that he was thereby saved from two ruinous influences: 'My thanks to God were thus redoubled, for most intellectuals have followed the road to perdition simply through alchemy and the books of Avicenna'.³⁴ On 3 March 1193 Saladin died and Damascus came under the rule of his eldest son, al-Malik al-Afdal. Of Saladin's death, 'Abd al-Latif writes:

Saladin entered Damascus, accompanied the pilgrimage caravan out of the city to bid it farewell, returned, and contracted a fever. He was bled by a man without any skill, so his strength gave out and he died... I have never seen a ruler whose death so saddened the people. This was because he was loved by the pious and the profligate alike, by Muslim and non-Muslim.³⁵

In an earlier article, informed by Eve Sedgwick's identification of merging patterns of male friendship, mentorship, entitlement and rivalry, I argued that the language of the medieval Arabic autobiography 'reveals the closed and male homosocially desiring structure of the relationship between men and the scholarly community'.³⁶ I used 'Abd al-Latif's autograph notes to show that its language, i.e. specific expressions and turns of phrase, serves to

reinforce the male homosocial bond, a bond that is not one of brotherhood (as the pedagogical environment might suggest) but rather one of 'extreme, compulsory, and intensely volatile mastery and subordination'.³⁷

In my reading, after 'Abd al-Latif finds Abu al-Qasim al-Shari'i, who represents the fulfilment of desire, only masters *extraordinaires* will do, hence 'Abd al-Latif's recourse to sovereigns. Whether one accepts my argument or not, the fact remains that after meeting Saladin and after al-Shari'i's death, 'Abd al-Latif is no longer guided by his need for the company of masters and peers but is at the mercy, and on the payroll, of patrons.

'ABD AL-LATIF'S LATER PATRON-MOTIVATED TRAVEL

'Abd al-Latif remained with al-Malik al-Afdal in Damascus until al-Malik al-'Aziz opposed al-Afdal in 1196.³⁸ He then joined al-Malik al-'Aziz in Cairo and was paid from the treasury. During this time 'Abd al-Latif taught Islamic sciences at the al-Azhar Mosque from dawn till four o'clock. Thereafter, he went home and taught medicine, before returning at the end of the day to teach other students at the al-Azhar. His own scholarship he accomplished at night. He followed this routine until the death of al-Malik al-'Aziz in 1198, whereupon he took up residence in town, supported by stipends from Saladin's remaining sons. It was at this time that Egypt suffered a plague, which he describes in his *Kitab al-Ifadah wa al-i'tibar* ('Book of utility and reflection').³⁹ The work is extant and is divided as follows:

Book I

1. General observations about Egypt
2. The flora of Egypt
3. The fauna of Egypt
4. Description of the ancient monuments of Egypt seen by the author
5. Noteworthy peculiarities concerning the buildings and the boats observed in Egypt by the author of this work
6. Foods peculiar to Egypt

Book II

1. On the Nile: the manner in which the flooding of the river takes place and the normality of this phenomenon
2. Events of the year 597 [1200-1 CE]
3. Events of the year 598 [1201-2 CE]

'Abd al-Latif's description of the plague and its horrors, including widespread cannibalism, makes grim reading indeed. In one of the less graphic passages he writes:

In the streets, wherever one stepped, there was no place one could place one's feet or direct one's gaze without encountering a corpse, or a man in the throes of agony, or even a large number of people in this state. From Cairo alone, between one hundred and five hundred dead were collected and taken to a place where the last rites could be performed. In Old Cairo, the number of dead was incalculable. They could not be not buried, but were simply thrown outside of the town. Eventually, there were no more people to carry them off so they were left where they were, in the markets, between houses and stores, even inside the houses.⁴⁰

Saladin's brother, al-Malik al-'Adil Sayf al-Din (Latin: Saphadin, d. 1218), who had taken over the sultanate in 1200, dispersed his nephews. 'Abd al-Latif went again to Jerusalem, where he stayed for some time teaching a variety of subjects in the al-Aqsa Mosque, and where he wrote a great deal.

In 1204 he left for Damascus. He stayed in the 'Aziziyah Mosque, where he taught law and studied independently. Many students came to him, not only to study grammar, in which he had previously distinguished himself, but also to study medicine, for which he was then renowned. He next went to Aleppo (some time after February 1212), where he composed a number of works, and thence to Anatolia (after 1220), where he stayed for many years in the service of al-Malik 'Ala' al-Din Da'ud ibn Bahram (known as Dawud Shah, d. 1237), the governor of Erzinjan, to whom he dedicated a number of works. Until his defeat at the hands of 'Ala' al-Din Kay-Qubadh (d. 1246) in 1228, Dawud Shah remained 'Abd al-Latif's patron.⁴¹

'Abd al-Latif travelled widely between 18 October 1228 and 31 August 1229, performing the 'Id al-Fitr prayers (marking the end of Ramadan) in Bahnasa' a few days before reaching Aleppo, then under the governorship of the Atabeg Shihab al-Din. 'Abd al-Latif wrote many works there, and taught many students medicine and the ancient sciences; he also taught *hadith* and grammar at the Friday Mosque. 'Abd al-Latif writes of his desire to perform the *Hajj* and then to go to Damascus to settle, but he became ill, put off the *Hajj*, and decided to travel to Baghdad before going to Damascus, in order to present several of his works to the 'Abbasid caliph, al-Mustansir billah (d. 1242). 'Abd al-Latif did not reach to Damascus. He died immediately after his arrival in Baghdad, on Sunday 9 November 1231, and was buried next to his father in the Wardiyah Cemetery.

To give a better sense of the extent and the amount of travel undertaken by 'Abd al-Latif on account of his patrons and their patronage, I outline below a chronology and itinerary of his life.⁴²

March 1162

'Abd al-Latif is born in his grandfather's house on Darb al-Faludhaj, BAGHDAD, where he studies with illustrious scholars.

- after February 1189 'Abd al-Latif, 27, leaves for MOSUL to find better teachers;
- after February 1190 disappointed, he leaves one year later for DAMASCUS.
- after 6 April 1191 'Abd al-Latif, 29, goes to JERUSALEM,
- between 4 June and then to ACRE, to meet Saladin. Al-Qadi al-Fadil urges him to go to Damascus but he insists on Cairo to seek out three scholars. He reaches CAIRO and is supported by a stipend from al-Qadi al-Fadil.
- 12 July 1191
- after 13 September 1192 'Abd al-Latif, 30, goes back to JERUSALEM to see Saladin again and receives a handsome stipend from Saladin and his sons.
- c. September 1192 'Abd al-Latif returns to DAMASCUS; he teaches at the Umayyad Mosque.
- 3 March 1193 Saladin dies.
'Abd al-Latif stays in Damascus with al-Malik al-Afdal,
- 25 June 1196 until the siege of Damascus by al-Malik al-'Aziz.
- c. 13 July 1196 'Abd al-Latif, 34, joins al-Malik al-'Aziz at Marj al-Suffar, and accompanies him to CAIRO, where he teaches at al-Azhar and is supported by Saladin's sons.
- 19 November 1198 al-Malik al-'Aziz dies
(Begins work on *al-Rawanid*)
- 17 February 1200 al-Malik al-'Adil is proclaimed.
- 1201-2 Plague and inflation hit Egypt.
(Collects material for *Kitab al-Ifadah*)
- 1202-3 'Abd al-Latif, 40, goes to JERUSALEM; he teaches at the al-Aqsa Mosque.
(Composes *Fi al-Nakhl*)
- after May 1204 'Abd al-Latif, 42, returns to DAMASCUS; he lives and teaches at the 'Aziziyah.
(Writes *Fi al-Jins*)
- March 1207 (Completes revisions on the *Kitab al-Ifadah*.)
- 1210/11 (Begins *Kitab al-Mudhish fi akhbar al-hayawan*)
- February 1212 (Completes *al-Fusul*)
- March 1212 (?) 'Abd al-Latif, 50 (?), leaves for ALEPPO.
1218 (Composes *Qawanin al-balaghah*)
- August 1220 (Edits *al-Rawanid*)
(Completes *al-Radd 'ala Ibn al-Khatib fi sharhihi*)

- after 1220 'Abd al-Latif, 58, goes to ERZINJAN, where he is in the service of its ruler, the Mengüjekid 'Ala' al-Din Dawudshah.
- 1226 (Composes *Kitab Tadbir al-harb*)
- June 1228 (Composes *Fi al-Nakhl*)
(Composes *Kitab al-Hikmah al-'ala'iyyah*, dedicated to Dawudshah)
- 1228 Dawudshah is overthrown by the Rum-Saljuq sultan Kay Qubadh I ('Ala' al-Din).
- 18 October 1228 'Abd al-Latif, 66, visits ERZURUM,
- 30 December 1228 returns to ERZINJAN,
- February 1229 then goes to KAMAKH,
- April 1229 to DIVRIGI,
- June 1229 and MALATYA.
- August 1229 'Abd al-Latif, 67, leaves Erzinjan for Aleppo (governed by the Atabeg Shihab al-Din), en route performing the 'Id al-Fitr prayers in BAHNASA'.
- 23 August 1229
- 31 August 1229 'Abd al-Latif reaches ALEPPO; he teaches medicine and other sciences there.
(Completes the *Kitab al-Mudhish*)
- 'Abd al-Latif intends to perform the Hajj en route to Damascus, where he intends to settle, but instead
- before October 1231 visits HARRAN and puts off the Hajj because of deteriorating health.
- end of October 1231 He makes a detour through BAGHDAD in order to present works to the Caliph al-Mustansir billah.
- 9 November 1231 'Abd al-Latif, 69, dies and is buried next to his father in the Wardiyyah Cemetery.

The foregoing makes abundantly clear the importance of travel in the medieval Islamic world, and the role also of patronage in motivating such travel. Yet not everyone travelled. There is, alas, still no study comparing the works of scholars who stayed put, the historian of Egypt al-Kindi (d. 961) for instance, and the works of those who were peripatetic, 'Abd al-Latif al-Baghdadi for instance. Might one argue that the former's *Wulat Misr wa-qudatuha* ('The governors and judges of Egypt') 'produces a jejune and repetitive literary effect'⁴³ whereas the latter's *Kitab al-Ifadah wa al-i'tibar* ('Book of utility and reflection') is fascinating and perceptive precisely because the latter had seen

the world and the former had not?⁴⁴ If so, this calls into question Wolfhart Heinrichs's suggestion that in the case of the literary theorist 'Abd al-Qahir al-Jurjani (d. 1081), who never left his home province, 'It is not unlikely that, by foregoing the receptive mode of study with many teachers, he stimulated his own original thinking'.⁴⁵ The issue of the influence of effect of travel on literary output – both in terms of quality and in terms of quantity – as with so much else in the history of medieval Islam and medieval Arabic and Arab-Islamic literary history, remains to be investigated. We cannot properly understand a towering figure such as 'Abd al-Latif al-Baghdadi, or indeed anyone who travelled in the world of medieval Islam, without understanding the motivations for that travel.

APPENDIX

I propose the following taxonomy as a way of thinking more accurately and critically about the travel of individuals in the medieval Islamic world.

1. Religion
 - A. Pilgrimage to Mecca
 - i. annual (*Hajj*)
 - ii. year-round (*'umrah*)
 - B. Visits to shrines (*ziyarah*)
 - i. annual, on saints' birthdays (*mawlid*, *'urs*)
 - ii. year-round, to get blessings (*barakah*)
 - C. Collecting prophetic traditions (*hadith*)
2. Learning (religious and non-religious)
 - A. Travel in search of knowledge (*al-rihlah fi talab al-'ilm*)
 - i. seeking famous teachers
 - a. individuals
 - b. attached to institutions (see (ii) below)
 - ii. travel to institutions⁴⁶
 - a. mosques (*masjid*)
 - b. colleges of law (*madrasah*)
 - c. sufi retreats (*ribat*)
 - d. hospitals (*bimaristan*)
 - e. study circles (*halqah*, *majlis*)
3. Embassy
 - A. Within the Islamic world
 - B. Outside the Islamic world
 - i. to non-Muslim areas
 - ii. from non-Muslim areas

4. Trade, commerce
 - A. Over land
 - i. within the Islamic world
 - ii. outside the Islamic world
 - B. Over sea
 - i. within the Islamic world
 - ii. outside the Islamic world
5. Propaganda
 - A. Religious
 - i. missionary
 - a. Sufi
 - b. Shi'ite
 - B. Political
6. Government posting
7. Exploration
 - A. Scientific
 - i. geography
 - ii. survey
 - B. Adventure
8. Wanderlust/tourism
9. Marine/naval
 - A. Real
 - B. Imaginary
10. Forced
 - A. Exile/banishment
 - B. Flight (including *hijrah*)
 - C. Migration
 - D. Slavery
11. Warfare
12. Migration, emigration
 - A. Voluntary
 - [B. Forced: see (10) above]
13. Patronage
 - A. Travel to patron
 - B. Travel with patron

In adding to the list of forms of travel traditionally identified by scholars, I have enumerated above other forms besides patronage. I hope, however, that this article has successfully highlighted the tremendous importance of patronage in particular in motivating travel in the medieval Islamic world.

NOTES

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- 1 Ibn Battutah died in 1377. For the benefit of non-specialists: I cite (to the extent possible) primary material in English translation, and widely available English reference works, in particular Julie Scott Meisami and Paul Starkey (eds), *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, 2 vols (London and New York: Routledge, 1998) and H. A. R. Gibb et al. (eds), *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edn, 11 vols and supplements (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1954–2003); I use a simplified transliteration (see the 'Note on Arabic transliterations' on p. iv); I use only the singulars of Arabic terms; and all dates have been converted to CE.
- 2 *The 13th Warrior* (director, John McTiernan) is based on Michael Crichton, *Eaters of the Dead: The Manuscript of Ibn Fadlan Relating his Experiences with the Northmen in A.D. 922* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976), which is, as the subtitle reveals, based on the *Risalah* of Ibn Fadlan. Pending James Montgomery's forthcoming English translation, see *Voyage chez les Bulgares de la Volga*, trans. Marius Canard (Paris: Sindbad, 1988).
- 3 Dale Eickelman and James Piscatori (eds), *Muslim Travelers: Pilgrimage, Migration and the Religious Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. xii. See also Houari Touati, *Islam et voyage au Moyen Age: Histoire et anthropologie d'une pratique lettrée* (Paris: Seuil, 2000).
- 4 Eickelman and Piscatori (eds), *Muslim Travelers*, p. xii.
- 5 Emigration is discussed only as it pertains to the colonial and post-colonial period. This explains the theoretical notion they advance that 'the very idea of travel . . . cannot be separated from the anticipation of return to home' (*ibid.*, p. xiii). The concept of diaspora intersects neatly with discussions of modern Muslim emigration.
- 6 J. F. P. Hopkins, 'Geographical and navigational literature', in M. J. L. Young et al. (eds), *Religion, Learning and Science in the 'Abbasid Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 301–27, bibliography on pp. 538–9.
- 7 *Ibid.*, p. 322.
- 8 *Ibid.*
- 9 Ian R. Netton, 'Rihla', in Gibb et al. (eds), *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, viii, p. 528.
- 10 Ian R. Netton, *Golden Roads: Migration, Pilgrimage, and Travel in Medieval and Modern Islam* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1993); *idem*, *Seek Knowledge: Thought and Travel in the House of Islam* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1996). Of the three articles on medieval travel in *Golden Roads*, one is on Ibn Jubayr, one on Ibn Battutah and one on the Turkish *Seyahatname* of Evliya Çelebi. In the 'travel' section of *Seek Knowledge*, all five of the articles are about Ibn Battutah and/or Ibn Jubayr.
- 11 R. Peters, 'Safar', in Gibb et al. (eds), *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, viii, p. 764.
- 12 Cf. Ibn al-'Arabi, *Le dévoilement des effets du voyage = Kitab al-isfar 'an nata'ij al-asfar*, ed. and trans. Denis Gril (Paris: Editions de l'Éclat, 1994).
- 13 Peters, 'Safar'. Bracketed translations of the Arabic terms are mine.
- 14 C. E. Bosworth, 'Travel literature' In Meisami and Starkey (eds), *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, ii, pp. 778–80.
- 15 The travelling poet Abu Dulaf (*fl.* 10th century) was patronised by the rulers of Transoxania and Sistan and then those of Rayy and Shiraz. Both his surviving works describe his travels.
- 16 Bosworth, 'Travel literature', p. 779.
- 17 This section expands on Shawkat M. Toorawa, 'Patronage', in Meisami and Starkey (eds), *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, ii, pp. 598–9.
- 18 See J. E. Bencheikh, 'Le cénacle poétique du calife al-Mutawakkil (m. 247): Contribution à l'analyse des instances de légimitation socio-littéraires', *Bulletin d'Etudes Orientales*, 29 (1977), 33–52; *idem*, 'Les secrétaires poètes et animateurs de cénacles aux IIe et IIIe siècles de l'Hégire: Contribution à l'analyse d'une production poétique', *Journal Asiatique*, 263 (1975), 265–315; and Julie Scott Meisami, *Medieval Persian Court Poetry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).
- 19 For information about the figures discussed below, see Meisami and Starkey (eds), *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, Gibb et al. (eds), *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, and also Roger Allen, *The Arabic Literary Heritage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), *passim*.
- 20 Abu Nasr al-Farabi (Alfarabius, Avennasar, d. 950) died while accompanying his patron on a campaign. He had left Turkestan as a child, settled in Baghdad with his family and worked and taught there most of his life before accepting an invitation by Sayf al-Dawlah to join his court in Aleppo in 942.
- 21 The Banu Hilal were a tribe who moved from Arabia to Egypt after rebelling against the suzerainty of the 'Abbasid caliphate in Baghdad. They then moved on North Africa.
- 22 Ibn Abi Usaybi'ah, '*Uyun al-anba' fi tabaqat al-atibba'*', ed. Nizar Rida (Beirut: Maktabat al-Hayat, 1965), pp. 683–96; ed. Basil 'Uyun al-Sud (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1998), pp. 634–48. For a résumé of the notice, see Samuel Stern, 'A collection of treatises by 'Abd al-Latif al-Baghdadi', *Islamic Studies*, 1 (1962), 53–70; for a paraphrase, see George Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges: Institutions of Learning in Islam and the West* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981), pp. 84–8; and for a translation of the autobiographical parts, see Shawkat M. Toorawa, 'Selections from the autograph notes of 'Abd al-Latif al-Baghdadi', in Dwight F. Reynolds (ed.), *Interpreting the Self: Autobiography in the Arabic Literary Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), pp. 156–64.
- 23 On 'Abd al-Latif's teachers, see Shawkat M. Toorawa, 'The educational background of 'Abd al-Latif al-Baghdadi', *Muslim Education Quarterly*, 13:3 (1996), 35–53; revised as 'A portrait of 'Abd al-Latif al-Baghdadi through his education and instruction', in Joseph E. Lowry, Devin Stewart and Shawkat M. Toorawa (eds), *Law and Education in Medieval Islam: Studies in Memory of George Makdisi* (Oxford: Oxbow Books for the Gibb Memorial Trust, forthcoming).
- 24 Ibn Abi Usaybi'ah, '*Uyun al-anba'*', ed. Rida, p. 684; Toorawa, 'Selections', p. 158.
- 25 Ibn Abi Usaybi'ah, '*Uyun al-anba'*', ed. Rida, p. 684; Toorawa, 'Selections', p. 159.
- 26 Ibn Abi Usaybi'ah, '*Uyun al-anba'*', ed. Rida, p. 686; Toorawa, 'Selections', p. 159.
- 27 Ibn Abi Usaybi'ah, '*Uyun al-anba'*', ed. Rida, p. 686; Toorawa, 'Selections', p. 160.
- 28 Ibn Abi Usaybi'ah, '*Uyun al-anba'*', ed. Rida, p. 687; Toorawa, 'Selections', p. 160.
- 29 Ibn Abi Usaybi'ah, '*Uyun al-anba'*', ed. Rida, p. 687; Toorawa, 'Selections', p. 161.
- 30 Ibn Abi Usaybi'ah, '*Uyun al-anba'*', ed. Rida, p. 687; Toorawa, 'Selections', p. 161.
- 31 Cf. 'Abd al-Latif al-Baghdadi, *Fi 'ilm ma ba'd al-tabi'a. Maqalat al-Lami: 'Abd al-Latif al-Baghdadi Bearbeitung von Buch Lamda der aristotelischen Metaphysik*, ed. and with commentary by A. Neuwirth (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1976).

- 32 Ibn Abi Usaybi'ah, 'Uyun al-anba', ed. Rida, p. 688; Toorawa, 'Selections', p. 162.
 33 Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges*, p. 87.
 34 Ibn Abi Usaybi'ah, 'Uyun al-anba', ed. Rida, p. 688; Toorawa, 'Selections', p. 163.
 35 Ibn Abi Usaybi'ah, 'Uyun al-anba', ed. Rida, p. 688; Toorawa, 'Selections', p. 163.
 36 Shawkat M. Toorawa, 'Language and male homosocial desire in the autobiography of 'Abd al-Latif al-Baghdadi (d. 629/1231)', *Edebiyat: The Journal of Middle Eastern Literatures*, new series, 7:2 (1997), 251–65.
 37 *Ibid.*, 251–2.
 38 On Saladin and his family, see R. Stephen Humphreys, *From Saladin to the Mongols* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1977).
 39 *Kitab al-Ifadah wa al-l'tibar fi al-'unnur al-mushahadah wa al-hawadith al-mu'ayanah bi-ard Misr* ('Book of utility and reflection with reference to the observed conditions and the prescribed events in Egypt'): 'Abd al-Latif al-Baghdadi, *The Eastern Key: Kitab al-Ifadah wa l-l'tibar of 'Abd al-Latif al-Baghdadi*, trans. K. E. Zand, J. A. Videan and I. E. Videan (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1964); 'Abd al-Latif al-Baghdadi, *Relation de l'Egypte par Abd-Allatif, médecin arabe de Bagdad*, trans. M. Silvestre de Sacy (Paris: Imprimerie impériale, chez Treuttel et Würtz, 1810).
 40 'Abd al-Latif, *The Eastern Key*, p. 241 (= *Kitab al-Ifadah*, fol. 60"; trans. mine).
 41 On the Saljuqs, see Claude Cahen, *The Formation of Turkey: The Seljukid Sultanate of Rum: Eleventh to Fourteenth Century*, ed. and trans. P. M. Holt (Harlow, Essex: Pearson, 2001).
 42 Dates relating to 'Abd al-Latif's life are based on the Arabic biographical notices, principally the one in Ibn Abi Usaybi'ah, 'Uyun al-anba'. Dates relating to contact with Saladin are based on Baha' al-Din Ibn Shaddad, *The Rare and Excellent History of Saladin or al-Nawadir al-Sultaniyya wa'l-Mahasin al-Yusufiyya*, trans. D. S. Richards (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), and those relating to the Ayyubids on Humphreys, *From Saladin to the Mongols*. See also H. A. R. Gibb (ed.), *The Life of Saladin, from the Works of 'Imad ad-Din and Baha' ad-Din* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1973). (See also Shawkat M. Toorawa, 'A detailed chronology and itinerary of 'Abd al-Latif al-Baghdadi' (in preparation), which includes Hijri dates and bibliographical data.)
 43 D. S. Richards, 'al-Kindi, Abu 'Umar', in Meisami and Starkey (eds), *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, ii, p. 451.
 44 Abu 'Umar al-Kindi, *The Governors and Judges of Egypt*, trans. Rhuvon Guest (Leiden: Brill, 1912); 'Abd al-Latif al-Baghdadi, *The Eastern Key*.
 45 Wolfhart P. Heinrichs, 'Abd al-Qahir al-Irjani', in Meisami and Starkey (eds), *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, i, p. 16.
 46 Mosques (*masjid*) were, like colleges of law, eleemosynary institutions, brought into being by a *waqf* endowment. Teaching was conducted in both, as stipulated by the *waqf* deed. The *madrasah* is the precursor to the European college. Teaching was also done in hospitals, predominantly known by the Persian *bimaristan* (Arabic: *mustashfa*). The study circle, called either *halqah* ('circle') or *majlis* ('seating, session'), was held by a teacher or professor either in one of the above institutions or at his home. There is very little information on how *ribats* first developed, but it seems likely that it was for reasons of economy of scale, and also perhaps for (fortified) protection.

4

Just a bunch of dirty stories?
 Women in the 'memoirs' of
 Usamah Ibn Munqidh



Niall Christie

I have witnessed wonderful manifestations of women's zeal.'

AMONG THE MUSLIM sources for the crusades, there are few that are better known than the 'memoirs' of the *amir* Usamah ibn Murshid ibn 'Ali, better known to modern scholars as Usamah Ibn Munqidh. Usamah was originally of Bedouin origin, of the clan of Munqidh, hence the patronymic. He was born at the clan stronghold of Shayzar in north-west Syria on 4 July 1095, and lived there until about 1131, when he joined the entourage of the *atabeg* (regent) of Mosul, 'Imad al-Din Zangi (r. 1127–46). He later returned to Shayzar, but not for long. Usamah's father, Majd al-Din Murshid, was the elder brother of the head of the clan, 'Izz al-Din Sultan. Murshid had abdicated in favour of his younger sibling when the leadership of the clan passed to him in 1098, and when Murshid died in 1137 Sultan feared that Murshid's sons might try to claim the leadership, and so Sultan exiled them the following year. Usamah went to the Burid court at Damascus, where he became an associate of the *amir*, Mu'in al-Din Unur. However, by 1144 he had become embroiled in political intrigues and was soon ordered to leave by his patron. He travelled to Egypt and the Fatimid court, becoming an associate of the vizier, al-'Adil ibn al-Sallar, and remaining in the country for ten years. Once again he became embroiled in court politics, so in 1154 he returned to Damascus, where he entered the service of the Zangid sultan, Nur al-Din (r. 1146–74). Ten years later he retired to the court of the Artuqid, Qara-Arslan of Hisn Kayfa, where he collected a *diwan* (anthology of his poetry) and composed several works on poetry, rhetoric, *adab* (belles-lettres), history and religion, most of which are now lost. In the autumn of 1174 he allowed his son, Murhaf, to persuade him to join the court of Saladin (r. 1169–93),