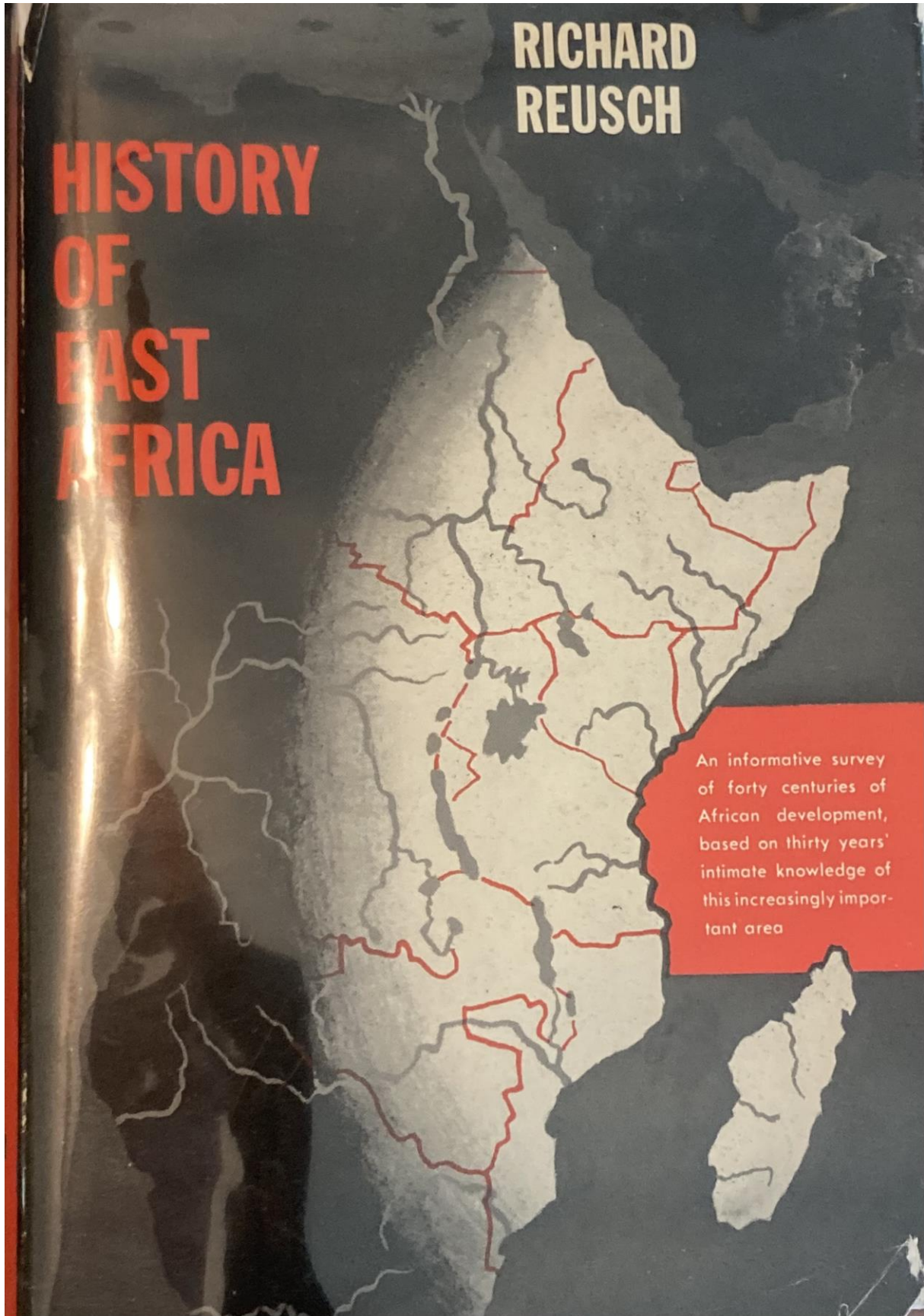


**RICHARD  
REUSCH**

**HISTORY  
OF  
EAST  
AFRICA**

An informative survey  
of forty centuries of  
African development,  
based on thirty years'  
intimate knowledge of  
this increasingly impor-  
tant area



## Information and evidence from Arabian and other geographers and travellers of the Muhammedan time.

In the first place must be mentioned the Greek monk Cosmas Indicopleustes<sup>1)</sup>, who was living a short time before Muhammed. Born in the great commercial city of Alexandria (Egypt) in the 6<sup>th</sup> century A. D., he spent most of his life in Egypt. Originally a rich merchant, he visited on his journeys the Red Sea and the Western part of the Indian Ocean, i. e. the Arabian Sea. Because of his journey to India he received the surname Indicopleustes. Among other countries he visited Abyssinia and the islands of Socotra, close to Cape Guardafui. In 548 he became a monk of the Sinai monastery, where he wrote his "Topographia Christiana". In this work he relates among other things that he saw in Adulis (the present Zula), in Abyssinia, a marble throne, which had two inscriptions. He copied them. The first relates the stories of the achievements and military successes of the Egyptian King, Ptolemy Euergetes, and the second reports the heroic deeds of a certain Axumite ruler.

At the beginning of our era the kingdom of Axum arose in Abyssinia. One of its rulers, Zoscales by name, is mentioned also in the Periplus. We do not possess an authentic chronicle of this kingdom, but, as far as I know, Littmann and Dittenberger collected, translated and published a great number of Axumite inscriptions. They give us an insight into the history of the Axumite dynasty. Among other documents we have a copy of a letter, written by the Byzantine Emperor Constantius to the Axumite King, Aeizanes, in 356 A. D. This King and his successors assumed the title "Kings of the Axumites, Himyarites, of Raidan, of the Habaschet (= Ethiopians) and of the Sabaeans", which indicates that they had made extensive conquests in Southern Arabia. But most of the conquered countries were lost again around 378-380 A. D.

One of the inscriptions mentions a successful military expedition along the Atbara river, an Eastern tributary of the Nile, up to the ancient Meroe on the Nile. A fragment of this inscription was, by the way, found in Meroe itself. In the 6<sup>th</sup> century A. D. the Axumite King Kaleb (the Greeks and Arabs called him El-Esbaha) sent an army to Southern Arabia under Abraha, who overthrew the Jewish-Himya-

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ritic state of Dhu Nowas. In the 7<sup>th</sup> century the Axumite King, Abraha, gave refuge to the then oppressed followers of Muhammed in Mecca.

There exist quite a number of coins of this dynasty. Until the 7<sup>th</sup> century they bear Greek inscriptions, afterwards in the ancient Ethiopian or Gees language. Often the names of the Kings, on these coins, are spelled so differently in Gees from the same names, written in Greek in the fragments of chronicles, that only with the greatest difficulty can one recognize that the same person is meant. This is especially true of the names, written in Gees on the coins and in Arabic in the chronicles.

Some Arabian historians mention this Axumite dynasty in their works. One of them mentions a war between an Axumite King and Nubia in 687 A. D.<sup>2)</sup> Another mentions a letter of an Axumite King to King George of Nubia, written just at the beginning of the time, when the Jewish Princess Judith began to claim the throne of Axum and to kill the members of the Royal house. Only one boy escaped to Shoa and became later King there. This letter could only have been written between 978 and 1003 A. D.<sup>3)</sup>

All Abyssinian chronicles and traditions, as far as I know, state that the Axumite dynasty descended from Menelik I, the Ibn el-Hakim of the Arabian writers, the son of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. Because it was a Christian house, the Jewess Judith tried to annihilate it. After her death her house was superseded by the Christian house Zagué, which ruled until 1268. In this year the last King of that house abdicated in favour of the Solomonic dynasty, i. e. of Yekuno Amlak, King of Shoa, and the hereditary dynasty became again the reigning house of Abyssinia.

Cosmas Indicopleustes apparently knew the history of the Axumite kingdom. His copy of the second inscription on the marble throne relates that in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century A. D. the King of Adulis conquered a number of countries in Arabia and in East Africa, reaching even the "Ocean of Zingion" (= Indian Ocean)<sup>4)</sup>. Dark recollections of this expedition we find in the East African legend about King Menelik I, who supposedly died on the top of Mt. Kilimanjaro<sup>5)</sup>. According to the Abyssinian tradition the King of Axum died in the land of Zingion.

This name we find for the first time in the works of the Alexandrian geographer Ptolemy<sup>6)</sup>. He mentions a "Zingis akra" and a

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"Zengisa akra". This new name for the East African coast seems to have supplanted the older name Azania. Since the 9<sup>th</sup> century A. D. the Arabian geographers and travellers use it almost exclusively instead of the more ancient name of Azania. Its meaning, origin and use will be explained later. Cosmas Indicopleustes uses it, because it was already generally used in his time.

Apart from his information we find from the 8<sup>th</sup> century on numerous references regarding East Africa in the works of the great Arabian geographers. All of them call the coast of East Africa "Zeng" (pronounced Zendsh or Zenj). Zeng is a corruption of the Greek Zingion.

From the old Arabian period we possess a great number of references in the books of the Arabian geographers and travellers, and in chronicles written in Arabic<sup>7)</sup> and preserved partly complete, partly in fragments. The latter can easily be augmented with the help of local traditions, old ballads, poems, songs, inscriptions on ruins and graves, with the help of coins, ancient buildings, tools, implements, utensils etc. Especially the local traditions, ballads and old songs are of great value, because they not only augment, complete and explain the fragmentary chronicles, but also fill the gaps in the history, left by them.

Since it is impossible to quote all the references of the Arabian geographers and travellers, - this would fill a volume of its own, - I shall cite only the most important ones. They are the following:

1) Among the oldest is the book "Kitāb al-masālik wal-mamālik" of Ibn Khordazbeh, written toward the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> century A. D.<sup>8)</sup> The author was the Postmaster-General of Media. His Khalif, al-Mutamid, ordered him to write "a book about the roads and the provinces" of his empire, which should bring in an abbreviated and concise form all known geographical material. The author used Government files, the existing (later lost) geographical works and collected the verbal reports of seamen and travellers. He worked almost 40 years, completing his work in 885-6.

It was intended to become a manual for the state-officials. East Africa is mentioned only incidentally. The author describes Aden as one of the main harbours of the Indian Ocean, adding that it has neither corn-fields nor herds of domestic animals, but plenty of amber, aloe-wood, musk and different commodities from Sind, i. e. the Indus-delta, India and China, as well as from Zeng, Abyssinia, Persia, Basra, Djida, Suez etc. The Sea, which washes the shores of Aden, is the "great Eastern Sea". It produces "very fine amber and washes

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the shores of Persia, Abyssinia and Zeng". Among other things he mentions that "from Zeng comes the itch"...

2) Then comes "The book of the Lands" by Ibn al-Fakih, which is lost, except for an extract from it by an unknown geographer<sup>9)</sup>. In this extract is mentioned that "in Zeng the itch is very common, the inhabitants are gay and always in good humor, that they use a lot of strong intoxicating coco-nut wine and that there is an abundance of a certain fish, who comes during the spawning time even into the Tigris river". About his life very little is known.

The author even tries to define the distance from the Persian Gulf to the land of Zeng, comparing it with other distances well known to his readers. He mentions the monsoon, which helps the seamen to sail to Zeng. About the "Sea of Zeng" he writes that "it is very deep, has constantly huge waves produced by permanently blowing strong winds". He mentions, besides, some religious customs of the Zeng-people and one of their Deities. The book was written during the first half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century. The geographer Kazwini seems to have known and used it.

3) A contemporary of Ibn al-Fakih was Ibn Roste<sup>10)</sup>, about whom very little is known. He also wrote a geographical book. He admits that he read and used the book of Ibn Khordazbeh, from which he borrowed, for example, the story of "the itch in the land of Zeng". In describing the "Sea of Zeng" he mentions as its Northern boundary the Gulf of Aden and as its Southern boundary the land of Zeng. He knows the country to the South of Cape Guardafui, calls it "Barbaria" and reports that it was inhabited "by some Zeng tribes". With these Zeng tribes he apparently means some Hamitic tribes inhabiting this land in his days.

4) A little later, namely in 951, Istakhrī<sup>11)</sup> wrote his "Kitāb al-masālik wal-mamālik" (= the book of roads and provinces), which was the first Arabic book supplied with cartographs. It has 19 maps. On the first we find a very crude presentation of the coast of East Africa, and that in a North-Southern direction. About Zeng he reports: "It is a land of a tremendous extension, which borders in the North upon Abyssinia and is situated opposite to Yemen, Fars, Kirman and India". His book seems to be a recast of the geography of Abu Zaid ul-Balkhī, known as Kitāb ul-Ashkāl, also called Suwar ul-Akālīm.

5) In 977 Ibn Haukal<sup>12)</sup> wrote a geography. About him we know that he was originally a travelling merchant of Baghdad, who started

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his extensive journeys in 943. His book seems to be a corrected and enlarged edition of Istahri's work. There is scarcely anything new in it. De Goeje, who translated his book in 1873, is of the opinion that in 921 Abu Zaid ul-Balkhi prepared a number of maps and supplied them with short explanations. Istahri incorporated this work into his book in 951, without mentioning the name of the author, added new material and enlarged certain descriptions. Ibn Haukal, in his turn, corrected some mistakes of his friend, re-wrote several chapters and edited his book in 977.

6) During the first half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century appeared the book "Aḡaib al-Hind"<sup>19</sup>, which contains many seamen's stories and narratives. Among other things it relates that "the Sea of Berbera is 700 Parasangs (= 2100 miles) long, that one has to cross it on the way to the land of Zeng and that opposite the coast of Zeng there are many islands, which have rivers with water-falls". . .

7) In the 10<sup>th</sup> century appeared also the writings of Masudi<sup>14</sup>, the greatest Arabian traveller of this century, who died in 956. His real name was Abu-l-Hasan Ali ibn Husain ibn Ali ul-Masudi. One of the greatest Arabian historians and geographers, he was born towards the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> century in Baghdad. He travelled through Persia, Kerman, Multan, Mansura, Palestine, Syria, Egypt and Oman, and visited Ceylon, India, East Africa, Madagascar etc. In Palestine the town of Tiberias seems to have made a deep impression upon him. He describes thoroughly the remnants of the large Christian Church there. In 943 he visited Antioch and two years later we find him in Damascus, where he stayed for some time. The last ten years of his life he spent in Syria and in Egypt.

Belonging to the Muhammedan sect of Mutazilites, he was somewhat freer in his views and associated with Persians, Jews, Indians and Christians, from all of whom he collected information. He even used a chronicle, written by a Christian Bishop. His sect, the Mutazilites, deny the corporeity, but not the personality of God, deny the Predestination and the pre-existence of the Koran; and do not mind associating with people of other religions and creeds<sup>18</sup>.

Masudi wrote a work of 30 volumes, called "The Great Book about the past times" (Kitāb akhbār uz-Zamān<sup>19</sup>). This title could be best translated as Annals. Beside this and at the same time, he wrote also a smaller work with the title "Kitāb ul-Ausat". In 947 he wrote his third, and perhaps most famous of all his books, "The mines of

gold and precious stones" (Murūğ adh-dhab wa Ma'ādin al-Ġawāhīr<sup>21</sup>), in which he condensed the contents of his two other works.

He studied all existing geographical works of his time and used them for his books, preserving and handing down to posterity numerous fragments of books later lost. He examined their statements, comparing them with his own experiences, and corrected many of them in his writings. The land and people of Zeng he describes very thoroughly. Even in one of his latest and largest works (Kitāb at-Tanbih wal-Ishrāf) he mentions Zeng several times<sup>18</sup>.

He provides the following information about Zeng: a) The land of Zeng has many islands. b) The Nile-sources collect their water from the extensive Mountains of the Moon<sup>19</sup>. These mountains begin in the land of Zeng and extend as far as Sofalat ez-Zeng to the latitude of the island of Kanbalu, which is inhabited by Muslims. The country drained by the Nile extends to the North as far as the lands of Berbera and Hafuni. c) The actual land of Zeng lies on the other side (South) of the Equator and extends (inland) to the Mountains of the Moon, where the Nile-sources are. d) About the Gulf of Aden he writes ("The mines of gold and precious stones", I, 230-231) that it extends up to Berbera, which is a part of Zeng, and to Abyssinia. There it goes over into the Sea of Zeng. In this sea is the island of Kanbalu, often visited by Arabian seamen. The Sea of Zeng extends as far as Sofala and Wakwak. e) He knew about the dangers of this sea and the monsoon. f) In the same book (III, 6-7) he writes: "The Sea of Zeng extends as far as Sofala and Wakwak, and washes the shores of Zeng, a land having plenty of gold and other wondrous things . . . The abode of its people extends from the river, which is a tributary of the Upper Nile, to the region of Sofala and Wakwak, and it has valleys, mountains, plains and even sand-deserts" . . .

In spite of his Arabic style, which makes it somewhat difficult for us to understand the meaning of his description, Masudi gives a detailed picture of the land of Zeng. I shall try to translate his remarks into modern English. - a) The land of Zeng has many islands belonging to it, as Pate, the Lamu archipelago, Tumbatu, Pemba, Zanzibar, Mafia, the islands of Comoro, Aldabra, Cosmoledo, Madagascar etc. b) The sources of the Nile (Semliki and Kagera) collect their water from the Mountains of the Moon, i. e. from the Western mountains (Ruwenzori, the Virunga volcanoes etc.). They begin in the land of Zeng (Ruwenzori and Virunga) and extend (the ranges along

Lake Tanganyika, Rungwe, the Livingstone range and its continuation to Zambezi) as far as Sofala on the mainland and Kanbalu (= Madagascar) in the Ocean. Kanbalu is inhabited by Muhammedans. The country drained by the Nile, i. e. the Bahr-el-Ghazal and Sobat districts, extends to the North as far as Berbera or Eastern Abyssinia and Hafuni (Northern Somaliland). c) The actual land of Zeng lies South of the Equator and extends from the Ocean to the Ruwenzori region, where the Nile sources, Semliki and Kagera, are . . . d) The Gulf of Aden borders on Somaliland, Eastern Abyssinia and Eritrea. Somaliland is a part of Zeng. The Gulf of Aden goes over into the Sea of Zeng (= Indian Ocean), which has many islands as Kanbalu (= Madagascar), often visited by the Arabs. The Sea of Zeng extends as far as Sofala and Wakwak, i. e. the mouth of Zambezi river. e) This Ocean is often rough and dangerous. The monsoon controls the trade there. The land itself has plenty of gold and other wondrous things, i. e. animals, vegetation, people etc. . . Its present population, the Bantu, extends from the great Eastern tributary of the Nile (Sobat) to the Zambezi river . . .

All this is absolutely correct! Masudi knew the land of Zeng indeed. It embraced Somaliland, Kenya, Tanganyika and most of Mozambique, very possibly Uganda and Nyasaland and, probably, Eastern Rhodesia. Knowing most of these countries, I can state that they fit into the description of Masudi better than any other land. There are huge plains, many mighty mountains, big valleys and even small sand-deserts . . .

8) In the 12<sup>th</sup> century Idrisi<sup>20</sup>, a man of a Princely house (1099 to 1154), was writing his works. His real name was Abu Abdallah Muhammed ibn Muhammed ibn Abdallah ibn Idris ash-Sherif al-Idrisi, but he is generally known as Idrisi. One of the most outstanding geographers of the world and the most famous among the Arabian ones, he prepared for King Roger II of Sicily a celestial sphere of silver and a silver map of the whole inhabited world of his time.

His great-grandfather was a member of a Royal family in North-West Africa, which was for a time in possession of the Khalifate-throne. He himself was the ruler of Malaga in Spain. After his death in 1055 it was conquered by the Kings of Grenada and incorporated into their state. The Princely Idrisi family went to Ceuta (Morocco), where one of their liberated slaves was at that time Governor. Here Idrisi was born in 1099. He studied at Cordoba, in those days the most outstanding Uni-

versity of the world. Afterwards he visited Lisbon (Portugal) and the Andalusian mines. A little later we find him again in Morocco.

In 1117 he visited Ephesus, the cave of the Seven Sleepers, and made extensive journeys in Asia Minor. It can be assumed that he visited also Southern France and England. The Norman King of Sicily, Roger II (1101-1154), invited him to his capital as Court-Geographer. As such Idrisi worked from 1125 to 1150. Roger II requested him to prepare "a detailed description of the inhabited world". He accepted this commission. The King and Idrisi sent emissaries to the various countries to obtain information. This information Idrisi utilized afterwards in his writings.

In 1154 he finished his great geographical work, generally known as "Kitāb Roğēr" or as "Al-Roğāri" (= the book of Roger)<sup>21</sup>. Besides this work he wrote "The Book of the Kingdoms", often quoted by Abulfida. It was dedicated to William II (1154-1166), the successor of Roger II. This book is unfortunately lost. It appears that Idrisi knew the writings of Ptolemy, the Alexandrian geographer and astronomer of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B. C., of Masudi and of all his geographical predecessors, for he refers to them repeatedly. But he must have had many other sources of information, especially about the African coast-lands. His world-map is, in spite of many errors, perhaps the most outstanding among the works of the Arabian geographers of the Middle Ages.

Summing up what he knew about West and East Africa, we get the following picture: 1) He knew well the coast of West Africa to the delta of the Niger, knew this river and its course. 2) He knew the coast of North Africa very well. 3) He knew the land of Zeng, gives a detailed description of the towns and harbours of East Africa down to Mombasa and a less detailed one from Mombasa to Sofala, which is sometimes a bit obscure.

9) In the 13<sup>th</sup> century the famous Yaquṭ wrote his geographical articles about East Africa in his "Geographical Encyclopaedia" (actually: Dictionary)<sup>22</sup>. Yaquṭ ibn Abdallah ur-Rumi was born in 1179 of Greek parentage in the Byzantine empire. As a boy he was sold into slavery. For years he was the house-slave of a rich merchant in Hamath. His master liked the gifted boy, who became a Muhammedan, and trained him to be a merchant's clerk. Commissioned by his master, Yaquṭ visited several times the countries around the Persian Gulf. After the death of his master, now a free man, he became a bookseller

and as such travelled through Persia, Egypt, Balkh and visited Merv (in Russian Turkestan), Mosul and Aleppo (Syria). From 1222 on he stayed at Mosul, where he composed his Geography, completing it in 1224. In 1227 he moved to Alexandria (Egypt) and from there to Aleppo, where he died in 1229.

In his famous work "Mu' ġam ul-Buldān", in which he mentions the whole geographical literature in alphabetical order, correctly vocalizes all Arabic names and spells all foreign names painfully correctly, he gives information about East Africa<sup>23</sup>). Besides this excellent work he wrote numerous other books such as, for example, the above mentioned Geographical Dictionary<sup>24</sup>), often called "Mushtarik", the "Dictionary of learned men"<sup>25</sup>) (Mu' ġam ul-Udabā') etc.

In his "Geographical Dictionary" (I, p. 21) he mentions the "Sea of Berbera", which extends from Aden to Sofalat ez-Zeng. In the same work (pp. 501-2) he defines the position of the countries of Zeng as "to the South of the Equator, under the Kanopus". About Zeng he writes: "Many islands are there, large and broad ones, with forests and bushland; but they have no fruit-trees, only ebony, sandal-wood and reeds (bamboo?). Plenty of amber is found on their shores; it is found only here. The people of Zeng are living very modestly. Somebody, who visited these countries, told me that one can see the Polar-star of the South high up in the sky almost as high as the Kanopus. But never can they see the sign of the Ram and not everywhere the Pole star of the North or the constellation of the Great Bear (= Dipper)<sup>26</sup>)".

He describes a certain celestial phenomenon with the following words: "The people of Zeng can see in the sky something which has the dimensions of the moon and resembles a veil or a small cloud; it never disappears nor does it move from its place. I asked several people about it, and all of them confirmed this information fully. They told me even the name of it, but I have forgotten it. Yet even they could not explain what it is. The land of Zeng borders in the North on Berbera, which extends up to Aden, but the Sea of Zeng joins the Ocean"... Devis<sup>27</sup>) translates tāqatun with fenêtre ronde and explains this phenomenon as a nebula, identifying it with the two Magellanic clouds, i. e. with two conspicuous nebulous appearances near the South Pole. Whether he is right or wrong, I am not able to say.

10) To the same century belongs Qazwini<sup>28</sup>), whose most famous works are "The Monuments of the countries" and "The Marvels of

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13) The next to be mentioned is Ibn Khaldun<sup>29</sup>), the great historian. He wrote a number of excellent historical works, in which he brings geographical information from the works of his predecessors as, for example, in his "History of the Berbers". His books are widely known in Oriental countries and have been translated into many European languages, but their geographical is not as great as their historical value.

14) As the last must be mentioned the greatest Arabian traveller Abu Abdullah Muhammed Ibn Batuta (1304-78), generally known by his surname Ibn Batuta<sup>30</sup>). Born in Tangier, Morocco, he travelled from 1325 until 1355. He visited Palestine, Syria, Egypt, Persia, Arabia, was three times in Mecca and Medina, went to Aden, Somaliland, the coasts of Kenya and Tanganyika, down to Kilwa, later to Oman, the Turkish states and the coasts of the Black Sea. He travelled through the country of the Volga-Tartars in the present Russia and of the Bulgars, then living in the province of Kazan (Russia). Still later he was in Constantinople, Greece, Khiwa and Bukhara (Russian Turkestan), and went from there to Afghanistan. After staying in Kabul for some time, he crossed the wild and high Hindu-Kush, went to India, travelled through Northern India and became for several years Grand-Qadi (= Supreme Judge) of Delhi. Having resigned from this high Muhammedan office, he went to China, where he travelled extensively, visited Calcuta on his way back, crossed South India, Ceylon, Sumatra, Java and several other East Indian islands, and went to Oman and Persia. From there he went through Baghdad, the Palmyra desert and Damascus to Jerusalem and Cairo, and sailed to Sardinia. Then he was in Fez, Morocco, travelled extensively in Spain and Algeria, crossed the Sahara desert down to Timbuktu and Gogo, and, after 27-28 years of travelling in almost every known country of the world, he went again to Tangier.

Complying with the wish of the Sultan, he dictated in Tangier his travelling adventures to Muhammed ibn Djuza'iy. This work was completed in Arabic in 1355. For a long time unknown in Europe, fragments of it appeared there during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. From then on his work became more and more known; extracts from it were continuously published. Ibn Batuta died in Tangier at the age of 73 in 1378.

He gives plenty of information about the towns, harbours, customs, manners and rites of the Zeng people of East Africa. He mentions

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the Creation<sup>31</sup>). He mentions Zeng, but brings very little new information about it, except in two places. In book two (II, 12) he writes: "Abyssinia is a large country; to the North of it is the Gulf of Berbera, to the South and East it borders with Zeng, and in the West of it is the land El-Bedja" (an Arabian tribe of the Eastern Sudan) ... In II, 14 he defines the boundaries of Zeng with the words: "The length of the land of Zeng equals a journey of two months (1400-1500 miles); in the North it extends to the principality of Yemen, in the South it borders on deserts, in the East on Nubia and in the West on Abyssinia". One can see that he mixed up the directions of the compass and was poorly informed about the land of Zeng.

11) Then comes the celebrated Abu-l-Fida Ismail ibn Ali Imad-ud-Din, in short Abulfida (1273-1331). Born in Damascus, where his father fled during the invasion of the Mongols, he was a descendant of Eyub (Ajub), the father of the famous Saladin of the crusades, a contemporary of Richard the Lion-hearted. As a young man he took part in the siege of Tripolis in Syria. Akko and Kalat ar-Rum, joined the army of the Mameluke-Sultan, Malik al-Nasir, in 1298 and later became Governor of Hama (1310). In 1312 he received the rank al-Malik us-Salikh (= Prince) and became the feudal ruler of a principality. In 1320 he received a still higher title of Malik ul-Muayyad. He ruled his principality with prudence and energy until his death in 1331.

He patronized scientists and produced himself several outstanding geographical and historical works<sup>32</sup>). Of special interest for this book is his geographical work, in which he mentions a great number of East African towns and harbours, and gives their longitudes and latitudes. Complaining that the information is so scanty for the size of the countries and the multitude of the tribes, he defines the extension of the Gulf of Berbera and of the land of Zeng, considering the present British Somaliland and parts of the Eastern Sudan as belonging to Zeng.

12) The geographers of the following period were absolutely dependent on their predecessors and have produced confusion with their incorrect copying of the previous works, contributing nothing new. One could mention Dimishqi<sup>33</sup>), whose Cosmography is a compilation of information collected by his predecessors. The same can be said about Ibn al-Wardi<sup>34</sup>), whose best work "Kharidat al-Aġaib" is a cleverly compiled Cosmography.

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Maqdishu (Mogadishu) on the Somali-coast, Mombasa in Kenya, Kilwa in Tanganyika and a number of smaller towns. About Mogadishu, which he visited in 1331/2, he writes: "One can reach it from Zaila in 14 days. It is governed by a ruler, whom the inhabitants call 'the Sheikh'. Under him is a city-council, consisting of Sherifs (Noblemen), lawyers and Qadis (Judges). They pronounce judgement, but one can appeal to the Sheikh-Sultan" ...

About Mombasa he relates: "It is situated on an island and has no hinterland. There are plenty of bananas, citrons and other fruits. The staple food of the inhabitants consists of bananas and fish. The inhabitants are Shafiis; they are pious, decent and virtuous. Their mosques are only of wood, but solidly built. At the entrance of every one are two wells, 1-2 yards deep, from which water is drawn with the help of wooden vessels fastened to a thin handle, one yard long. The ground around the wells and mosques is well levelled. Everybody who wants to enter first washes his feet at the well, because all people walk barefoot" (II, pp. 191-2).

His information concerning Kilwa is: "Kulwa is a large city on the coast. The majority of the inhabitants are Zeng. They are black and tattooed like the Limiin in Ganada. It is one of the prettiest and most well-built of all the cities. The houses are wooden, covered with D's. There is plenty of rain. The inhabitants are waging holy war against the unbelievers, the Zeng of a neighbouring country. Their outstanding virtues are piety and submission to Allah. They belong to the Shafiitic rite of the Islam. The Sultan of Kulwa makes constant invasions into the land of Zeng, attacks them and takes one-fifth of the war-booty, which part he dedicates to Allah according to the prescription of the Koran. The name of the reigning Sultan is Abu-l-Mozaffer Hasan with the surname Abu-l-Mawahib" (II, 192-3).

The above-mentioned Arabian travellers, geographers and historians are only the outstanding ones from among a great number of other Arabian writers who knew and mentioned Zeng. The majority of them just mention Zeng without giving any disclosures about the land and its population.

Summing up all that the Arabian travellers and scientists reported about East Africa, we obtain the following picture: Zeng is the collective name for all the countries called to-day East Africa, i. e. for British and Italian Somaliland, Kenya Colony, Tanganyika and the major part of Mozambique. As the Southern boundary are mentioned

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Sofala and Wakwak; as the Northern, some (Masudi) take the sources of Webbi Shebeli and Juba in Southern Abyssinia, others (Abulfida), Berbera and Zeila.

Berbera, a town in British Somaliland, was founded by the Ptolemaeans, who ruled over Egypt from 323 until 30 B. C. Most probably it was founded by Ptolemy Philadelphus (309-246 B. C.), who used to send expeditions to the Sudan and the coasts of the Red Sea "to capture rare wild animals and to bring them to his capital Alexandria". . . . The town got its name because it was founded "in the land of the Barbarians". For a time it had a Greko-Egyptian colony and an Egyptian garrison. Later, during the decline of the Ptolemaic kingdom, the Arabs captured and incorporated it into their principality of Adal. The land received its name from the harbour, probably soon after the foundation of the town. The name Wakwak was most certainly derived from Wakwaw or Makwaw, the name of an indigenous tribe living there since ancient times.

F. Richardson Cana<sup>31</sup>) assumes that Zeila was originally an Arabian principality, founded in the 7<sup>th</sup> century A. D. by Koreishites coming from Yemen. Whether it is an originally Koreishitic foundation or more ancient is difficult to say. There seems to have been a settlement before the Koreish came; yet an old, well-preserved, tradition connects it with the Koreishites. It relates that after the battle of Khoraiiba large numbers of Koreishites emigrated from Mecca, via Yemen, to Somaliland (656-657 A. D.). This battle is often called "the battle of the Camel", because "the Mother of the Faithful", Muhammed's favourite wife Aisha, personally directed the operations from her camel-litter<sup>32</sup>). She lost the battle to the Khalif Ali.

Another tradition, also widely spread, relates that this immigration of the Koreishites and the foundation of Zeila took place immediately after the invasion of the Axumite King, Kaleb or El-Esbaha, into Yemen in 525-6 A. D.

It is not impossible that both traditions are true: There might have been two immigrations of the Koreish to Zeila, one in 525-6 and the other in 656-7 A. D. It is easy to understand that the proud Koreish, friends and adherents of the murdered third Khalif Othman, did not want to bow to the rule of Ali. They grouped around Aisha and rebelled. After Ali's victory they emigrated to Zeila, where they had friends and, maybe, relatives. There they established an independent principality. A similar occurrence we have in Muhammed's life-time. When he

established his theocratic state, the adherents of Museilama, a religious reformer during the childhood of Muhammed, emigrated from Mecca to West Africa, where they established their own principality, existing until to-day<sup>33</sup>).

The state of Zeila was always distinguished from the land of Berbera, because it was inhabited and ruled by Arabs, whereas the land of Berbera was dominated by the Chiefs of the wild barbarian tribes living there. During the 13<sup>th</sup> century the rulers of Zeila conquered the land of Berbera and moved their residency to Adal. The Sultans of Adal captured the town of Berbera and incorporated it into their state.

The above-mentioned Arabian travellers and geographers report furthermore that the vessels of the South Arabian states, following an ancient practice, went to East Africa to purchase gold, ivory, skins, hides, slaves, different kinds of wood, incense etc. . . .

On the long stretch of coast, to the South of Zeila, existed many settlements, in which Arabian traders, merchants, agents and hunters were living under their own rulers. A great number of adventurers, as well as many who fled from their revengeful countrymen, dwelt in these settlements. Already during the first century of our era there might have been a mixed population, since the Arabs freely intermarried with native women. The language of this mixed population has developed under strong Arabic influence. The same can be said about the religion of this mixed coastal population, Islam, and that mostly in its Shafiitic form, because most of the Arabs there were Shafiites.

They have enriched the coastal native language with a considerable number of Arabic words and phrases. Many of these words were later Bantunized. Because this mixed population and language spread rapidly over the coast and inland-countries this language became gradually the language of trade and later the lingua franca of East Africa as far as Uganda and the Eastern Congo.

The originally small principalities, which sprang up from these early Arabian settlements, later became larger states either through merging or by conquest. The most powerful of them was the sultanate of the Shirazi dynasty with the capital of Kilwa. It is also known under the name of Zeng-Empire (pronounced as Zendj or Zendsh). This latter name will be used in this book, since the name Shirazi-sultanate is misleading due to the fact that branches of this dynasty ruled over other Sultanates (Mombasa etc.). The Zeng-Empire was overthrown by the Portuguese, who were succeeded by the Zanzibar sultanate.

Except for a few notes about the form of Government of these states, something of their historical background and a few names, the writings of the above mentioned geographers and travellers contain very little concerning these principalities. But we have other, more complete, records, namely Arabian chronicles of these states, ancient ballads and songs, local traditions, ruins of palaces, fortifications, mosques, towns, graves and coins with their inscriptions.

Since more details about these chronicles will be mentioned later, I shall only enumerate them here. They are: a) The Arabic chronicle of Kilwa, b) the Arabic chronicle of Mombasa, c) the Arabic chronicle of Pate, d) the Arabic chronicle of Malindi, e) the Arabic chronicle of Barawa and f) the Vumba Kuu chronicle, partly in Arabic, partly in archaic Kiswahili. Only two of them are more or less intact; of the others we possess only fragments. The same is true as far as the archaic ballads, songs traditions and tales in Arabic and Kiswahili are concerned. But the local traditions are very numerous and detailed.

From the historical point of view the most important traditions are: 1) that about the immigration of the Koreishites and the establishment of the state of Zeila in British Somaliland; 2) the ancient Swahili tradition, which reports the arrival of the Wa-Shami or Ma-Shami (= Syrians, since Sham is Syria), who immigrated before the "Arabian Vikings" and the Shirazi dynasty, founded a state and ruled over a part of the East African coast; 3) the archaic Swahili tradition relating the story of the arrival of the Arabian Prince, Malik bin Muriani, the founder of a town and principality. 4) Then comes the tradition about the Vikings Sulaiman and Said, two Arabian sheikhs, who founded a state at Pate (Patta), an island close to the Kenya coast; 5) the important "Ammu Zaid tradition" concerning the foundation and development of a larger Arabian state on the Benadir coast (Italian Somaliland); 6) then the important tradition about "the Seven Brethren from El-Hasa", who came from Arabia, founded a powerful state with the towns of Mogadishu, Barawa, Merka etc. and islamized a large part of the East African coast. It exists partly in Arabic, but mostly in Kiswahili. 7) The most important (in Kiswahili) is, of course, that which concerns the immigration of the Shirazi dynasty, foundation of the powerful Zeng-Empire, the building of Kilwa, Mombasa, Malindi etc. and the history of the rulers of this large Empire.

The number of local traditions is legion. I would like to mention only the historically most important of them: a) the local Kilwa tra-

ditions, mainly in Kiswahili; b) the local Mombasa traditions (in Kiswahili); c) the Lamu traditions with plenty of historical material; d) the Malindi traditions with valuable material about the Portuguese time; e) those of Vumba Kuu, which partly replace the mostly lost Vumba chronicle; f) the numerous Zanzibar traditions with plenty of historical material about the Shirazi period, the Portuguese time and the Zanzibar period; they give practically the whole history of Zanzibar and of its ruling house, the Al-Bu-Said dynasty. g) Then there are the Pemba and Tumbatu traditions, corresponding with those of Zanzibar and supplementing those of Mombasa; h) the traditions concerning the invasion of the cannibalistic Wazimba, who came from southern Africa, sacked Mombasa, destroyed Gedi and were forced back after a fierce battle at the gates of Malindi; i) and the Mazrui traditions, relating the history of the Mazrui rulers of Mombasa.

Some traditions are put in the form of ballads and songs, but the majority are just prosaic narratives. - These old chronicles, together with the traditions, completed by ballads, ancient songs, the evidence of ruins, coins and discoveries of various kinds, supplemented by the contemporary information in the writings of the Greek, Arabian, Persian and Chinese travellers and geographers, give us a continuous, if only general, picture of the historical development of the coastlands of East Africa. The history of these countries extends over a period of at least 3000 years and begins at a time when the present Bantu population had not yet taken possession of the ancient land of Zeng.

In the history of the land of Zeng we must distinguish two main periods, an older and a more recent. The older began during the flourishing time of the South Arabian states and continued until 1500 A. D., when the Portuguese overthrew the Zeng-Empire. It can be divided into three sub-periods: 1) the time of purely commercial trade; 2) the time of the Arabian Vikings, and 3) the time of the Zeng-Empire proper. The more recent period lasted from 1500 until the first world war and can be divided in two sub-periods, namely 1) the Portuguese time (until the Oman Arabs came) and 2) the Oman-Zanzibar period, which lasts until now.