

A Two-year Journey under the Arrows of the Black Death: The Medieval Plague Pandemic in Ibn Baṭṭūṭa's *Travels*

CLAUDIA MARIA TRESSO (Università degli Studi di Torino)

Abstract

The penultimate part of the *Rihla* [(Chronicle of) *Travels*] by Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, just before his last journey to Western Sudan, takes place between January 1348 and March 1350 and recounts his return journey to Morocco from the Middle East through North Africa—and another short tour in al-Andalus. During that time, and in all the territories Ibn Baṭṭūṭa claims to have travelled through, the deadliest pandemic of plague in human memory, the “Black Death,” was raging. In the Mediterranean area, 40–60 of the population died in the scourge, and references to the epidemic punctuate this part of the work like a tired refrain. As numerous studies have shown that the *Rihla* contains borrowings and adaptations from other sources, Ibn Baṭṭūṭa may not have actually made all the journeys he claims. However, to date no one has criticised this part of the work, nor has anyone questioned Ibn Baṭṭūṭa's journey through the Arabian area in those years. On the contrary, historians of the Black Death regard this part of the *Rihla* as having an important documentary value for the study of the scourge in the Middle East and North Africa.

In this paper I aim to reconstruct the narrative of the Black Death in Ibn Baṭṭūṭa's *Rihla* by taking from the text the seven passages in which the pandemic is mentioned, in order to answer a number of questions: to which places do these passages refer? What information does the *Rihla* give about the disease, its effects and people's reaction? Does it correspond to that provided by coeval and posterior Arab chronicles? Does it fit with the information provided by current microbiology, genetics and paleogenetics research? Since the *Rihla* is not a chronicle but a narrative work, how do Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, who dictated the travelogue, and Ibn Ġuzayy, who edited it, describe such a devastating scourge? Does his/their description differ from that of the chroniclers?

The concluding paragraph seeks an answer to two more questions: does the *Rihla* actually report Ibn Baṭṭūṭa's eyewitness experience and information he gathered in the places he claims to have been or might he and/or Ibn Ġuzayy have taken information from some other sources, without having actually been in those places? And if Ibn Baṭṭūṭa did make this journey, thus probably being the only traveller who left an account of a “two-year journey under the arrows of the Black Death,” how could he return home unscathed?

Key words: Ibn Baṭṭūṭa – Ibn Ġuzayy - Arabic Travel Literature – History of Epidemics – Black Death in the Middle East – Medieval Plague Pandemic - *ṭā'ūn* – *wabā'*.

*Wa-l-talḥīṣ anna ḡamīʿ al-ṭawāʿīn al-māḍīya bi-l-nisba
ilā hādā qītra min baḥr aw nuqta min dāʿira*¹

Introduction²

This paper considers the journey Muḥammad Ibn Baṭṭūṭa³ claims to have made in the two-year period between *Šawwāl* 748 [January 1348] and *Dū al-Ḥiġġa* 750 [March 1350].

According to his *Riḥla* [(Chronicle of) *Travels*], in the month of *Ramaḍān* 747 [January 1347] Ibn Baṭṭūṭa set out from Quilon, in the present-day state of Kerala, and embarked on the last leg of a long journey that had begun in 1325 from Tangier, his native city, and had taken him to visit most of the then known world. A year after leaving India, and while travelling towards Mecca, in *Šawwāl* 748 [January 1348] he arrived in Baghdad and from there continued westwards, passing through or staying in present-day Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, the Arab Peninsula and Egypt. In Cairo Ibn Baṭṭūṭa decided to return home and resumed his journey, crossing Libya and Algeria, pausing in Tunis, to arrive in Morocco in 750/1349. That same year, he left for a trip to al-Andalus. Six years later, after a last, seven-month journey in Western Sudan and on the orders of the Marinid sultan Abū ʿInān, he dictated his travelogue and the court scribe Ibn Ġuzayy⁴ edited it. The result of their collaboration was a *Riḥla*, a “Travel (chronicle)” that came to light in *Šafar* 757 [February 1356]. As we will see, many studies have demonstrated that the work contains information, descriptions, anecdotes and narrative methods borrowed from other sources, which are mostly not cited by Ibn Baṭṭūṭa and/or Ibn Jubayr, neither does their *Riḥla* seem to have enjoyed much fortune in the Arab-Islamic area in pre-modern times. But this has not prevented it from becoming in contemporary times, and all over the world, one of the most famous and interesting works of (not only Arabic) medieval travel literature. Although we

-
- 1 “In short, compared to this one, all the previous plagues are like a drop in the sea or a point in a circle”, IBN ABI HAĠALA, *Daʿf al-niqma*, f. 75b (see IBN HAĠAR, *Badl al-māʿūn*, 237, who quotes him).
 - 2 For their generous and authoritative comments I thank Michelguglielmo Torri and Luca Badini Confalonieri, and all those who have given me useful suggestions and indications for my research: in particular Abdulaziz al-Musallam, Elisabetta Paltrinieri, Ermis Segatti, Ignazio De Francesco, Joan Rundo, Luca Patrizi, Manuel Garcia Fernández, Milad Boutros and Paul Kozelka. I also thank the anonymous reviewers who have given me valuable advice to improve this paper, and the University of Turin’s librarians who helped me find manuscripts, articles, and books during Covid-19 pandemic.
 - 3 His full name is Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Lawāʿī al-Ṭanġī [belonging to the Berber group of Lawāta and originally from Tangier]. As for the appellation Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, it is a family name of uncertain origin: perhaps it means “son of the duckling”, from a diminutive of the Arabic *baṭṭa* [duck], used in the Maghreb as a nickname for the female name Fāṭima (F. GABRIELI 1961: IX; AL-TĀZĪ 1997, vol. I: 80). For other possible meanings see MACKINTOSH-SMITH 2001: 21-22.
 - 4 Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Ġuzayy al-Kalbī (known as al-Ġuzayy), was a versatile and appreciated scholar from an illustrious family of Granada. Born in 715/1315, he was a secretary and poet at the court of the Nasride sovereign Abū al-Ḥaġġāġ Yūsuf in Granada. In 753/1353, he moved to Fez and entered the service of the Marinid sultan Abū ʿInān with the same responsibilities. For more information about him, see COLLET 2017.

do not know how the traveler and the scribe collaborated and which of them should be considered the “true author,” their work is known, both in Arabic and in other languages, by the name of its protagonist: *Riḥlat Ibn Baṭṭūta*, the Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūta.⁵

Ibn Ġuzayy probably died in 758/1357, one year after editing the text. As for IB, he died in approximately 770/1368-1369, by then an old man, while holding the office of *qāḍī* in a town in Morocco that no longer exists.⁶

As for the text of the *Riḥla*, until modern times it does not seem to have enjoyed great success in the Arab area, where it circulated mainly in the form of manuscript compendia. In Europe, interest was aroused at the beginning of the 19th century, when the German Johann Kosegarten edited some extracts from one of these manuscripts in Arabic with a translation into Latin. A few years later the Englishman Samuel Lee translated into English another abridged manuscript by the Aleppian copyist Faḍl Allāh ibn Muḥammad al-Baylūnī (d. 1632), and some extracts from a manuscript found in Fez were translated into Portuguese by Antonio Moura.⁷ Later on, and after some other partial translations, between 1853 and 1858, Charles Defremery and Beniamino R. Sanguinetti used five Algerian manuscripts in the Bibliothèque Nationale of Paris⁸ to publish the currently most complete Arabic text of the *Riḥla* and translated it into French. This Arabic text is still considered to be the “standard” version—or *Editio Princeps*—and has been published in a large number of editions in both Arab and non-Arab countries. All the complete translations of IB’s *Riḥla* into foreign languages are also based on this edition, including the English version by Hamilton Gibb and Charles Beckingham (1958-1994), considered the most authoritative and undoubtedly the most widely circulated one in the world.⁹

From Baghdad to Tangier, in all the lands mentioned above through which he passed on his return, and then in al-Andalus, the *Riḥla* says that IB crossed the path of the most deadly plague pandemic known to mankind, the one commonly referred to as “the Black Death,” which ravaged (not only) the Mediterranean world between 747-757 (1346-

5 In this article I will use “Ibn Baṭṭūta” [henceforth IB] to indicate both the traveller protagonist of the work and its author(s). Furthermore, where not otherwise specified, when speaking of *Riḥla*, I will refer to IB’s work.

6 This is probably the city of Anfa (which was destroyed in the 15th century by the Portuguese, and upon whose ruins Casablanca was founded), as assumed by al-Tāzī on the basis of a letter from Ibn al-Ḥaṭīb to IB (AL-TĀZĪ 1997, vol. I: 81).

7 KOSEGARTEN 1818; LEE 1829; MOURA 1840. For the history of the IB’s *Riḥla* in Europe and information on the manuscripts see DEFREMERY 1994 [1848]: 1-3; JANSSENS 1948: 7-10; DEFREMERY and SANGUINETTI’s “Préface” in MONTEIL 1979, vol. I: XIII-XXVI; AL-TĀZĪ 1997: 97-108; IBRAHIMOVICH 1999: 41-46; WAINES 2010: 6-8.

8 One of these manuscripts, catalogued under number 907, appears to bear the signature of Ibn Ġuzayy (see DEFREMERY and SANGUINETTI’s “Préface” in MONTEIL 1979, vol. I: XXI).

9 In 2000, the work of Gibb, who edited vols. I-III (1958-1971) and Beckingham, who edited with him vol. IV (1994), was enriched by a fifth volume devoted to the Indices and edited by Bivar. Unless otherwise indicated, this paper refers to the Arabic text edited by Defremery and Sanguinetti (1853-1858) in the edition by ‘Abd al-Hādī al-Tāzī 1997—henceforth AL-TĀZĪ—and to its English translation by Gibb and Beckingham—henceforth GIBB (vol. I-III) and GIBB AND BECKINGHAM (vol. IV). Both these editions respect the so called *Editio Princeps* (EP) division into four volumes and show its corresponding page number in the margin, which in the notes of this article is quoted in square brackets.

1356).¹⁰ The epidemic is mentioned 12 times in seven passages, with reference to nine different places: Gaza (twice), Homs, Damascus, Jerusalem (twice), Alexandria, Cairo, the Pilgrimage route from Cairo to Mecca, Tangier and Gibraltar. The account of this journey is dotted with reports concerning mainly the number of victims, although it does not overlook mentioning the presence or end of the scourge, a religious ceremony, some of IB's personal experiences and reminiscences of some distinguished figures and acquaintances who died of the disease, including his mother.

In the *Rihla*, the narrative of such a monumental event is fragmented within the main narrative of IB's journey.¹¹ In this paper I therefore propose to reconstruct it by firstly putting the event into the context of the three plague pandemics documented in the history of the Mediterranean and the Middle East. The seven passages on the scourge in the *Rihla* will therefore be identified and extrapolated from the text in order to reconstruct and analyse IB's narration of the Black Death. The comparison of the information provided in the *Rihla* with that of the most important Arabic sources will then allow studying and examining it for its relevance and reliability and to investigate whether the narrative style of the *Rihla*, which is a literary work, differs from that of the other sources, which are mostly chronicles. This leads to two questions, for which an answer will be sought in the conclusive paragraphs. Given the number of studies that have shown that IB and/or Ibn Ġuzayy borrowed several parts of the *Rihla* from other sources, the first question is whether in this case as well he/they could have drawn information from other works without IB having been in the places he claims. Moreover, if IB actually made this journey, he is, to my knowledge, the only person who left an account of a journey where he claims to have witnessed the scourge, on the three continents then known, during the deadly period of the Black Death, travelling from one to another of the most populated (and therefore most infected) cities in the Middle East, North Africa and al-Andalus.¹² How he managed to escape unscathed is a question to which some possible answers will be proposed.

¹⁰ This article only considers the Black Death in the Arab-Islamic area where quotes from Ibn Baṭṭūta's *Rihla* are placed. As for the origin and geography of the pandemic in the world, it should be noted that after having been studied for centuries by historian, it is now the subject of in-depth microbiology and genetics studies that allow us to establish a new - and indisputable - map of Black Death history. Whereas earlier scholars limited their research to the Mediterranean basin and Western Europe (where written sources are found), the new geography of the pandemic extends from the Tibetan plateau and western China to western Eurasia—and from there to the Indian Ocean basin and most of the regions connected to it, including West and sub-Saharan Africa (GREEN 2015b, esp. 44-48; HYMES 2015; VARLIK 2015b: 160-184; GREEN 2020).

¹¹ Plague is mentioned in the following sections of IB's *Rihla*: AL-TĀZĪ I: 325-326 and IV: 179-211; GIBB I: 144 [EP 228-229] and GIBB and BECKINGHAM IV: 918-934 [EP 319-354].

¹² Not to mention another very high mortality epidemic that IB claims to have witnessed in Madurai in India a few years earlier (see above).

The three plague pandemics in the Mediterranean and the Middle East

The “plague” is already mentioned in Ancient Mediterranean sources such as the Bible,¹³ Sophocles’ *Oedipus Rex*¹⁴ and Thucydides’ *Peloponnesian War*,¹⁵ but if the terms used in these texts (Hebrew *deber*, Greek *λοιμός*) are used later to indicate this specific disease, it seems that in the above-mentioned sources they indicated other epidemic diseases less deadly than the plague, such as measles, typhoid fever, cholera and smallpox.¹⁶ In the Mediterranean area, the plague is attested in Egypt in 541 BCE in the port of Pelusium, an ancient city in the eastern Nile Delta, and we now have molecular evidence that the disease was caused by a strain of the same *Yersinia pestis* bacillus that, several centuries later, would have caused the Black Death. From Pelusium, the epidemic quickly spread westwards into the Maghreb and northwards into Spain, Gaul and the British Isles.¹⁷ At the same time it spread eastwards and affected the Byzantine Empire, raging in Palestine, Syria and the Anatolian peninsula and reaching as far as Mesopotamia, then ruled by the

-
- 13 The plague is one of the punishments that God threatens to inflict on those who do not keep His law (Lev 26: 25 and Deut 28: 21) and is one of the punishments that He proposed to King David to atone for the sin he had committed in taking the census of the people (for He alone keeps the records of the living and the dead). Choosing between three years of famine, three months of fleeing before the enemy, and three days of plague, David chose the latter. But after killing 70,000 people, the angel of the plague then stretched his hand out over Jerusalem, and “the Lord repented him of the evil and said to the angel: It is enough, stay now thine hand” (2 Sam 24: 10-16; 1 Cr. 21: 7-15).
- 14 As is well known, Sophocles’ *Oedipus Rex* (dated 430/420 BCE) takes place in Thebes during a disastrous epidemic for which the author may have been inspired by the one that was raging in Athens at the time (see note below).
- 15 This was the so-called “Plague of Athens” (probably an epidemic of typhoid fever or smallpox, see ABERTH 2010: 79), which occurred on several occasions between 430 and 426 BCE. Thucydides (c. 460-400 BCE), who was infected but survived, states that between one- and two-thirds of the population died (THUCYDIDES, *Peloponnesian War*, Book II, 136 [par. 48] and 139 [par. 53]).
- 16 MCNEILL 1976: 81 states that “epidemic diseases of the sort that attracted the attention of biblical writers were neither severe nor frequent enough to threaten the fabric of civilized society with disruption”. On epidemics included in ancient written evidence from the Mediterranean area, the Middle East and China see MCNEILL 1976: 78-140, chapter 3, “Confluence of the Civilized Disease Pools of Eurasia: 500 B.C. to A.D. 1200”; DOLS 1974c: 373, note 18) and the more recent study by ABERTH 2011, esp. 22-23. But the subject needs further studies (GREEN 2015b: 43): inter alia it should be noted that there are traces of diseases with bubonic plague symptoms in Africa long before the plague epidemic that broke out in Pelusium—as in the fragments of the texts by the Greek physician Rufus of Ephesus (born c. 70 CE), quoted by DOLS 1974c: 373, note 18 and GREEN 2015b: 41.
- 17 The presence of the plague bacillus in skeletal remains from the time of the Justinianic Plague has been documented by geneticists (see GREEN 2015b, esp. 35-45). As for its presence in Africa, historians have long wondered whether the bacillus was “indigenous” or had arrived from Asia. Until recent times it has been claimed that the Indian Ocean “it is too vast to allow easy transmission of plague until the tramp steamer” because “on long sea voyages, infected rats and people die; by the time that the ship reaches port, everyone is dead, or recoverd and thus reasonably immune” (BUELL 2012: 129; see also MCNEILL 1976: 183-184 and DOLS 1977: 43-44), but current genetics studies show that it may almost certainly have arrived in the East African region from the Indian Ocean via the Red Sea and found there local rodents and other animals that hosted arthropod vectors infected by the plague bacillus, allowing for the establishment of new foci (GREEN 2015b, esp. 45-54; see also MCCORMICK 2007: 303-305).

Sasanians. The first phase lasted until 543, but a series of successive waves persisting until the middle of the eighth century have been verified.¹⁸ Because of its particularly virulent onslaught on Constantinople (where sources speak of 40% of the population being killed), this first plague pandemic is called “Justinian’s/Justinianic,” named after the Byzantine Emperor who reigned there from 527 to 565. In Constantinople, the historian Procopius of Caesarea (c. 490-570), who witnessed the scourge, included in his *History of Wars* what transpired to be the first description of a plague epidemic.¹⁹

The three-year period of the epidemic occurred before the Islamic era, but the subsequent waves affected the Islamic Middle East from the earliest years of its formation²⁰ and are recorded together with a series of customs and theories ascribed in part to the Prophet himself and destined to become the starting point for subsequent Islamic literature on the subject. Between 6/627-628 and 131/750, at least five waves deriving from Justinian’s plague are attested to in the Middle East, leading scholars to speak of an endemic which probably formed in the most populated areas (Syria, Palestine and Iraq) that, at relatively short intervals, when the population and hygienic conditions reached critical levels, gave rise to generalised epidemic outbreaks.²¹

The second plague pandemic is now known as the “Black Death” and, according to the current hypothesis originated in the Tibetan-Qinghai Plateau, in present-day China.²² In the Mediterranean area it was first attested in Caffa in 747/1346 and broke out in 747/1347, after a long period in which there had been no very deadly outbreaks. This means that throughout the area, in both Christian and Muslim countries, not only was there no living memory of such a scourge among the people, but there was also no scientific record. Doctors relied on purely theoretical knowledge, based mostly on theories developed since Hippocrates (ca. 460-377 BCE) and Galen (ca. 129-201 CE), related to unhealthy air and environments, that were known as “miasmas.”²³ On an empirical level, popular medicine

18 A map of the waves of plague that swept the Mediterranean area between the 6th and 8th centuries has been proposed by BIRABEN and LE GOFF 1969: 1492-1493.

19 PROCOPIUS, *History of the Wars*, Book II: 451-465 [par. XXII], “*The Persian War*”. On Justinian’s plague see, among others, BIRABEN and LE GOFF 1969. See also DOLS 1974c: 371-374; DOLS 1977: 13-19 and, among the more recent works, ROSEN 2007; LITTLE 2007; SABBATANI et al. 2012a and 2012b and MORDECHAI; EISENBERG 2019.

20 Before the advent of Islam, no major epidemics were recorded in the Arabian Peninsula: Congordeau and Melhaoui attribute the cause to the hot, dry climate (CONGOURDEAU and MELHAOUI 2001: 99), but the low population density, a limited international traffic and predominantly nomadic lifestyle, which did not favour the spread of contagion, should also be taken into account.

21 SABBATANI et al. 2012b: 223. On the waves of plague that, according to the chronicles, hit the Islamic area before the Black Death, see *ibid.*: 218-219; DOLS 1974c and CONRAD 1981. See also DOLS 1974b: 275-276; MELHAOUI 2005: 46-57; KAADAN and ANGRINI 2013-2014: 108-111; BARONE 2020: 4-5.

22 For the origin of the second plague pandemic, see below, note 190. The expression “Black Death”, which was not in use in either European or Middle Eastern sources at the time of the pandemic, is now being criticised by some for its anachronism (see e.g. LINDEMANN 2006: 600), but it is used here to illustrate unambiguously the medieval plague epidemic that devastated the Mediterranean world in 1347-1353. For the origin of this expression, see D’IRSA 1926, esp. 331-332; VARLIK 2021.

23 The theory mainly accepted by doctors and scholars of the time ascribed the main responsibility for the spread of the scourge to the air and its “corruption” [miasma, from the Greek *μίασμα*], but during the Black Death, in both the Islamic and Christian areas, the debate re-emerged between this theory and the

had no remedies or lifestyle practices to propose to counter the spread of the disease. In the Arab-Islamic area, the Black Death is the first occasion in which contemporary sources describe a plague epidemic. The Andalusian scholars deal with it mainly from a medical-scientific point of view, while in the Middle East it is the accounts of chroniclers, who had gathered information about plague epidemics in the early days of Islam, and legal treatises, mostly based on the *ḥadīth*,²⁴ that establish the attitudes and rules that the faithful are invited to follow when faced with the epidemic.²⁵

The mortality caused by the Black Death is “the highest of any large-scale catastrophe known to umankind.”²⁶ It is roughly estimated that 40–60 of the population in the affected areas died,²⁷ especially in densely populated centres, depending on the environment and on the form of plague: bubonic or septicemic (caused by insects bite), pneumonic (caused by inhalation) or gastrointestinal (caused by ingestion).²⁸ According to the chronicles, in the

theory of contagion, already present in the Mediterranean since the time of the previous great epidemics. For bibliographical references on this subject see notes 171 and 174.

- 24 As for the Quranic text, it does not explicitly mention the plague either with the specific term of the disease [*tāʿūn*] or with the generic term of “epidemic” [*wabāʾ*], for which see below. In the treatises on the plague of the *ʿulamāʾ* there are only a few quotations of some verses that affirm the *qadar*, the “decree” of God on death and life, according to which men can do nothing to delay the former or lengthen the latter. See SUBLET 1971: 144-147; CONGOURDEAU and MELHAOUI 2001: 102-103. It is worth noting, however, that some scholars speak of a “possible first mention of the plague” in the cryptic verses of the Sura of the Elephant (Qur. 105, 1-5), “In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful. Seest thou not how thy Lord dealt with the Companions of the Elephant? Did He not make their treacherous plan go astray? And He sent against them Flights of Birds, Striking them with stones of baked clay. Then did He make them like an empty field of stalks and straw, (of which the corn) has been eaten up” (tr. Abdullah Yusuf Ali, see KAADAN and ANGRINI 2013-2014: 108). As for the *ḥadīth*, see below.
- 25 On Arabic sources dealing with the Black Death, see DOLS 1979: 163-165 and 320-335 (“The Arabic Manuscript Sources for the History of Plague”) and MELHAOUI 2005: 20-46 (in particular 24-33 for Middle Eastern sources, 33-41 for Andalusian ones and 41-46 for those of the Maghreb). In addition to interpretations of the *ʿulamāʾ* concerning “high” thinking, magical and superstitious practices of various kinds were also widespread during the Black Death: but the anthropological aspect remains largely uninvestigated (see however the study on popular culture in medieval Cairo by SHOSHAN 2002 and that on popular religious rites during the plague by MELHAOUI 2005: 151-162). For the medieval treatises on magic, with apotropaic formulas, propitiatory use of words and letters, etc., see DOLS 1974b: 281-282; DOLS 1977: 121-142 (“Magical Reliefs and Practices”); CONGOURDEAU and MELHAOUI 2001: 114-117.
- 26 GREEN 2015a: 9, who specifies “save for the impact of smallpox and measles on indigenous peoples in first-contact events of the early modern period”.
- 27 See BIRABEN 1975: 176-184 and BENEDICTOW 2004: 245-386 (“Mortality in the Black Death”). See also, among others, ONION 1980: 131; BROSSOLLET 1984: 53; COSMACINI 2006: 20. According to the most recent studies, in Europe the Black Death killed an average of 70-80% of those who fell ill (ABERTH 2011: 59). For plague mortality in the Middle East, see especially DOLS 1977: 193-223 and the recent studies by BORSCH 2016 (for rural areas) and BORSCH and SABRAA 2017 (for urban areas). On the pathogenesis of the plague bacillus, its exceptional virulence and its ability to subvert the human immune system, see among others DEMEURE et al. 2019: 361-363.
- 28 On the different modes of infection—and manifestation—of the plague, see ZIEGLER 2015, who has recently added the gastrointestinal plague to the three first forms (for which see, among others, BORSCH 2005: 3-4). It should be noted that IB’s *Rihla* does not describe any symptoms of the disease, in any of its forms.

Arab area the plague first arrived in Egypt, probably in the port of Alexandria, in the early autumn of 748/1347²⁹ and from there it spread to North Africa, Upper Egypt and the Middle East, where it broke out at the end of 748 [April 1348], raging until the first month (*Muharram*) of 750 [March/April 1349].³⁰ Then it reappears in a series of waves that, albeit in a less virulent form, will continue until the middle of the 19th century.³¹

Following this, the world would experience a third, horrendous plague pandemic, which probably began in the Chinese province of Yunnan in 1855, struck Hong Kong and Canton in 1894, India (Bombay, now Mumbai) in 1897 and in the first decades of the new century reached Africa, Australia, Europe, Japan, the Middle East, the Philippines and both Americas. Subsequent waves continued until the 1960s, but thanks to improved sanitary measures and most notably, in 1950, the discovery of antibiotics, they were less deadly than previous epidemics.³² During this third pandemic, scientists were able to isolate the bacillus responsible for the disease, which was named *Yersinia pestis* after the doctor Alexandre Yersin who identified it,³³ and a few years later the scientist Paul-Louis Simond identified the role of a particular species of flea, *Xenopsylla cheopis*, in its transmission.³⁴ But it would take more than a century, until 2011, for the genome of the bacillus to be reconstructed.³⁵ This made it possible not only to identify the presence of the plague bacillus, but

²⁹ See note 98.

³⁰ AL-SAHĀWĪ, *al-Dayl al-tāmm*, vol. 1: 97.

³¹ In Egypt, the last major wave occurred in Alexandria in 1835. For plague waves in the Middle East following the Black Death period see, among others, DOLS 1977: 193-235 and 305-314 and DOLS 1981; SHOSHAN 1981; SCOTT and DUNCAN 2004; VARLIK 2015: 198-200.

³² In India, where it was particularly lethal, an estimated 12 million people died in just over 20 years. For this epidemic see, among others, PERRY and FETHERSTON 1997: 36-37; CARMICHAEL 2009: 69-70; ABERTH 2011: 61-72.

³³ The plague bacterium, which is more properly termed a “coco-bacillus” because of its very short stick shape, was isolated in Hong Kong in 1894 by two scientists who independently announced it within a few days of each other: the French-Swiss physician Alexandre Yersin and the Japanese bacteriologist Kitasato Shibasaburo. In 1954 the bacillus, initially called *Pesturella pestis*, was named *Yersinia pestis* in honour of Yersin, who first established its taxonomic definition (see PERRY and FETHERSTON 1997).

³⁴ Clinically, plague is not a human disease but a zoonosis, i.e., a disease transmitted to humans primarily by contact with an animal, and for a long time this animal was thought to be the rat, but in 1898, the French physician and biologist Paul-Louis Simond demonstrated that the vector from rats to humans is the flea *Xenopsylla cheopis*, which cohabits with infected rats and can infect both human fleas and humans directly: see, among others, HINNEBUSCH et al. 2017 (on flea infection by the bacterium) and HARDY 2019 (on rats carrying fleas). Since then, scientists have identified a large number of animal and ectoparasite species involved in the chain of plague transmission in its various forms. It is necessary to take into account not only the animal species—first of all small rodent mammals (gerbils, rats and marmots)—that created microenvironments suitable for the survival of *Yersinia pestis*, but also any other species involved in the long-distance spread of the disease to humans in epidemic outbreaks because of their ectoparasites (fleas, ticks and lice) or because they were eaten (for an overview of these studies, see GREEN 2015b: 31-34). Some studies according to which the vectors of plague during the Black Death may also have been human ectoparasites, are worth noting: this would increase the responsibility of people’s movements in the spread of the disease (see DEAN et al. 2018; see also ZIEGLER 2015: 266 and 270).

³⁵ BOS et al. 2011. The identification of the genome made it possible to identify with certainty the presence of the bacillus during the Black Death and to put a definitive end to a controversy that began at the end of the last century and was conducted mainly in the first decade of the 2000s, when several

also to trace the history of its evolution.³⁶

The history of the three plague pandemics ends there, but enzootic foci of *Yersinia pestis* are still present on all the continents of the planet except Australia and Antarctica—not to mention the presence of *Yersinia pestis* in arsenals of biological weapons.³⁷ The last epidemic caused by the bacillus in Europe broke out in Marseille in 1720 and killed almost half the population. Worldwide, the last one hit Madagascar in August 2017, causing 2,417 infections and 209 deaths. As for isolated cases and small outbreaks, World Health Organisation reports 1,000 to 3,000 cases worldwide every year.

To date, scientists have not succeeded in creating a truly effective vaccine against the plague but, until one is found, the disease can be treated with massive doses of antibiotics. However, in the late 21st century some antibiotic-resistant strains of *Yersinia pestis* were found in Madagascar, and the plague has been listed as one of the re-emerging infectious diseases globally, with a potential use as biological weapon.³⁸

IB's *Rihla* in studies on the Black Death in the Arab area

For several decades now, having long been devoted almost exclusively to Christian Europe, documentary studies on the Black Death have focused on other Mediterranean areas affected by the epidemic, in particular the Arab-Islamic one (Middle East, Egypt, al-

researchers hypothesised that the Black Death could have been triggered not by this bacillus but by other pathogens. Their analysis was based on discrepancies between the characteristics of the plague and those reported on the Black Death, including the speed of the spread of the disease, its incubation period and the symptoms described in contemporary texts. The main studies in this regard include Scott and Duncan's works proposing that it was haemorrhagic fevers similar to those caused by the Ebola virus (SCOTT and DUNCAN 2001; SCOTT and DUNCAN 2004, in particular ch. 11: "The Biology of Bubonic Plague—a myth revisited", 171-184); the controversial article by COHN, 2002; SALLARES' 2007 study suggesting that it may have been typhus or meningitis. For an overview of studies on this subject, see HAENSCH et al. 2010; VARLIK 2015b: 91-94 ("Controversy over the Pathogen: *Yersinia pestis* or not?"); DEMEURE et al. 2019.

³⁶ GREEN 2015b: 31-45.

³⁷ Although plague reached Australia in 1900, there are no permanent foci of *Yersinia pestis* in the continent thanks to strict public health measures that eradicated it by the mid-1920s (CARMICHAEL 2015: 161; GREEN 2015b: 53, note 36, where the study by CURSON and MCCracken 1989 is quoted). As for biological weapon stocks, Ziegler mentions some states (Syria, Iran and North Korea) "that have known programs or have used biological or chemical weapons in the past" and noting that "*Y. pestis* can be processed into a crude weapon without sophisticated technology or expensive equipment," remembers that in 2008, "forty al-Qaeda operatives in Algeria were discovered to have died of plague, perhaps as the result of a failed experiment in biological weapons development" (ZIEGLER 2015: 265).

³⁸ GREEN 2015a: 20 states: "In terms of pathogenicity or virulence of the organism (and, probably, human susceptibility to it), the Black Death could happen all over again today, given the proper conditions". For an analysis of the plague today as a re-emerging infectious disease see, among others, ZIEGLER 2015, esp 260-264; Grácio and Grácio 2017. On the research for a possible vaccine against the plague, see DEMEURE et al. 2019: 363. The last outbreak of plague not treated with antibiotics was in 1943 in Myanmar (MCNEILL 1976: 297, n. 25).

Andalus and, to a lesser extent, the Maghreb).³⁹ For these countries, historians note the lack of public municipal or ecclesiastical documentation, similar to that which exists for Europe, and also of significant studies of material sources: archaeology, epigraphy and paleopathology.⁴⁰ However, we have seen that there are quite a number of Arabic texts (sometimes translated), both scientific and historical, from the time of the epidemic and often quoted in later works of the late 14th-15th centuries. Although the *Rihla* of IB is a literary work, it has often been cited, alone or together with these sources, by historians of the plague as direct—and therefore reliable—evidence of events.⁴¹ For example Dols, to whom we owe the first in-depth study of the Black Death in the Middle East, defines IB as a “historian”; he establishes the arrival of the plague in present-day Morocco based solely on IB’s *Rihla*,⁴² cites it as the only source for the number of victims in Homs and for the presence of the plague in Jerusalem,⁴³ and considers IB together with Ibn Abī Ḥaḡala as reliable sources for the number of victims in Damascus “where they were resident.”⁴⁴ Borsch and Sabraa rely heavily on information in the *Rihla* to calculate the number of victims not only in the Syrian capital, but also in Alexandria and Gaza.⁴⁵ Grmek compares Ibn Baṭṭūta to Thucydides and Boccaccio⁴⁶ and Melhaoui does not hesitate to point out that he is a “privileged witness to the plague pandemic in the Middle East.”⁴⁷ Finally, one of the most famous—and probably the most quoted—stories of the *Rihla*, which takes place during the Black Death and tells of a multi-religious prayer gathering held in Damascus in July 1348 to implore deliverance from the plague, should be noted.⁴⁸ Now, the same event is also reported in contemporary and later Arabic chronicles,⁴⁹ but most modern scholars who include it in their texts cite IB’s *Rihla* as a unique source.⁵⁰

39 In very recent times, Singer has made a contribution to Black Death studies in the Maghreb and suggested directions for further study, noting that “The Black Death in the Maghreb is a glaring hole in plague historiography” (SINGER 2020: 4). The fact remains that “the historical scholarship on the Black Death is largely Eurocentric” (VARLIK 2015a: 196-201) and “it is time to stop taking the urban European experience of the Black Death as the model to which all manifestations of plague must conform” (GREEN 2020: 1627).

40 STEARNS 2009: 4; BARONE 2020: 2.

41 The widespread circulation of IB’s *Rihla*, that has so far been translated into about 15 languages, should be noted, making it an accessible source for all scholars, including non-Arabs and non-Arabists, dealing with the Black Death.

42 DOLS 1977: 43 and 65.

43 *Ibid.*: 61.

44 *Ibid.*: 218.

45 BORSCH and SABRAA 2017: 68 and *passim*.

46 “The best descriptions of ancient epidemics were not written by medical professionals, but by historians and writers. We need only recall the description of the plague in Athens by Thucydides and the accounts of the Black Death by Boccaccio and Ibn Battuta”, GRMEK 1969: 1474.

47 MELHAOUI 2005: 142 and 148-149.

48 See below.

49 IBN KAṬĪR, *al-Bidāya*, vol. 16, 342; IBN ABĪ ḤAḡALA, *Daʿ al-niqma*, fol. 76a; IBN QĀDĪ ŠUHBA, *Taʾrīḥ*, vol. 1, 545-547; IBN ḤAḡAR, *Baḍl al-māʿūn*, 237-238.

50 See, among others, STICKER 1908, vol. 1, 46; MELHAOUI 1997: 111-112; CONGOURDEAU and MELHAOUI 2001: 121-122; JACQUART 2006: 237-238; ROSENWEIN 2010: 484; BORSCH and SABRAA

However, it should be noted that scholars have found—and continue to find—in the *Rihla* many problems of chronology and a series of borrowings and arrangements from other, thus questioning several parts of the journeys that IB claims to have made.⁵¹ As for this part of the *Rihla* where the plague narrative is found, so far no one has questioned it. Furthermore, IB's return home (maybe not from as far away as he claims, but presumably from the Middle East through North Africa) at that time, after an absence of 20 years, is attested by a very authoritative source such as the *Muqaddima* by the polymath Ibn Ḥaldūn (732/1332-808/1406).⁵² Last but not least, it should be noted that both IB and Ibn Ḡuzayy lived during the pandemic, so what is reported in this part of the work undoubtedly constitutes the testimony of two eyewitnesses of the scourge. Nonetheless, given the aforementioned use of the *Rihla* as a reliable source, it seems necessary to verify whether the information on the plague in the *Rihla* is confirmed by the most important Middle Eastern Arabic sources available. This will also allow investigating whether IB actually speaks of his eyewitness experience of the scourge or whether again he and/or the editor of the text, Ibn Ḡuzayy, might have taken information from other written sources—and if so, from which ones.

Epidemics and the Plague in Ibn Baṭṭūṭa's Travels

To know how many times the plague is mentioned in IB's *Rihla*, we must first find which words are used to designate it. In the oldest Arabic sources, the specific term for plague was *ṭā'ūn*,⁵³ also present in Persian but of Arabic origin,⁵⁴ which, from the verb *ṭa'ana* [= to strike a blow against someone or something], designates both the various forms of this disease and the swellings of the lymphatic glands characteristic of the form of plague which for this reason is called “bubonic.”⁵⁵ For the same disease, however, the term *wabā'* was also used, which, derived from the verb *wabi'a* [= to be contaminated, used for regions

2017: 84-85; FIORENTINI 2020: 57; PERTA 2020: 461-462. Exceptions are DOLS 1974b: 280, where the author also refers to Ibn Kathīr and Ibn Abī Ḥaḡala (and to al-Maqrīzī, although the latter does not actually refer to this event, but to a similar one that took place in Cairo) and MIRZA 2020b, where the author analyses Ibn Kathīr's text and also quotes IB's version.

51 See above, esp. notes 70 and 194.

52 Ibn Ḥaldūn was in Fez from 1354-1355 to 1362-1363 (GOUMEZIANE: 15; LACOSTE: 59 and 76). We do not know if he met IB, but he relates: “At the time of the Marinide Sultan Abū 'Inān, a sheykh from Tangier called Ibn Baṭṭūṭa returned to Morocco. Twenty years earlier, he had left for the Orient and travelled in Iraq, Yemen and India” (IBN ḤALDŪN, *Muqaddima*, vol. I: 328).

53 The scheme *fa'ūl* adopted by the name indicates its “intensive form” [*binā' al-mubālaḡa*], for which see WRIGHT 1986, I, 137b. The Arabic term also entered the Spanish language for a time in the medieval medical lexicon, where the term *taón* for “plaga” [plague] is attested (MARAVILLAS 2014: 14, note 14).

54 GRÜNBAUM and COLETTI 2006: 524a.

55 CONRAD 1982: 301. The author also offers an analysis of the term in its origins, compared to the Syriac *šar'ūṭā* and the Greek *βομβών* which, like the Arabic *ṭā'ūn*, designated both the disease and the boils it causes (*ibid.*: 305-307).

affected by an epidemic], properly indicates any epidemic disease.⁵⁶ Be that as it may, the two terms were later certainly applied incorrectly, since in the first half of the 13th century, in a meticulous historical and clinical description of the plague that he included in his commentary on Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, the Syrian al-Nawawī felt compelled to specify that *kullu ṭā'ūn wabā' wa-laysa kullu wabā' ṭā'ūnan* [= every *ṭā'ūn* is a *wabā'*, but every *wabā'* is not a *ṭā'ūn*].⁵⁷ This, however, does not prevent the two terms from being at least partially misunderstood as synonyms a few decades later in the impressive lexicographic work in 20 books, *Lisān al-'Arab* [The Language of the Arabs], completed by the Maghrebi Muḥammad ibn Manẓūr in 1290. Here, *ṭā'ūn* is first defined as *marad ma'rūf*, "known/recognisable disease" and then as *marad 'āmm, wabā'* [= generalised/spread disease, epidemic] while under *wabā'* we first find *ṭā'ūn* as a synonym and then its definition as *kull marad 'āmm* [= any generalised/spread disease].⁵⁸

The misuse of the two terms continued until the first half of the 15th century; in his *Baḍl al-mā'ūn*, the Egyptian Ibn Ḥaḡar (1372-1448) includes a paragraph entitled *Ḍikr al-bayān al-dāll 'alā anna al-ṭā'ūn ḡayr murādīf li-l-wabā'* [Probative explanation of the fact that *ṭā'ūn* is not synonymous with *wabā'*], in which he quotes al-Nawawī and suggests an explanation of the term *ṭā'ūn* as a "blow" inflicted by *ḡinn*.⁵⁹ However, the fact remains that in Arabic sources in general, from the Middle Ages up to modern times, the two terms can indicate both a serious epidemic and the plague itself (or sometimes cholera), to the extent that information can often be derived only from the possible (but very rare) presence of a description of the symptoms.⁶⁰

56 GRÜNBAUM and COLETTI 2006: 916. The term *wabā'* also designates the phenomenon of "contagion" and in some periods had been used for two different specific diseases: plague and cholera (B. SHOSHAN and D. PANZAC, in *EP*, s.v.). With reference to what has been called a "stainless medicine of ancient Hippocratic and Galenic origin" (SPEZIALE 2016: 16, note 5), the term *wabā'* designates first of all a "corruption of the air, earth or water", while *ṭā'ūn* means a "deadly disease which, as a consequence of *wabā'*, spreads among men" (CONRAD 1982: 274; see also LANE 1984, vol. 5, 1855-1856 s.v. *ṭā'ūn* and vol. 8, 2914-2915 s.v. *wabā'*). For "epidemic" in a generic sense, the term *abīdīmīyā* is also found in some medieval Arabic texts, which is an obvious borrowing from Greek (see a comparative analysis of *wabā'* and *ἐπιδημία* in MARAVILLAS 2014: 10-11). Finally, Arab chroniclers use several terms for plague such as *ṭā'n* (from the same root as *ṭā'ūn*), *mawṭān* [death, epidemic], *marad* [disease], *balā'* [misfortune, tribulation], for which we refer to NEUSTADT 1946: 67, note 2 and DOLS 1974a: 447, note 17.

57 AL-NAWAWĪ, *Bāb al-ṭā'ūn*, 204. The passage in which al-Nawawī describes in detail what a *ṭā'ūn* and a *wabā'* are, is translated into English in CONRAD 1982: 296-297.

58 IBN MANZŪR, *Lisān al-'Arab*, s.v. *ṭā'ūn* (vol. 1, 184) and *wabā'* (vol. 13, 267).

59 IBN ḤAĠAR, *Baḍl al-mā'ūn*, 49-52. Already in pre-Islamic times, it was believed that epidemics were spread by *ḡinn* with a large number of arrows that they shot at men (SUBLET 1971: 145) and several medieval texts ascribe the responsibility for the scourge to *ḡinn*: see DOLS 1974b: 282 and note; DOLS 1977: 116, note 34 and *passim*; BORSCH 2005: 4-5; BARONE 2020: 9-11; STEARNS 2020a and STEARNS 2020b.

60 "Despite the Arab treatises' assertion that "every *ṭā'ūn* is a *wabā'* but not every *wabā'* is a *ṭā'ūn*", the two terms are clearly interchangeable in Mamluk period chronicles" (SHOSHAN 1981: 389). For a more in-depth analysis of Arabic plague terminology, see CONRAD 1982. See also DOLS 1977: 315-319 (Appendix 2, "The Arabic Terminology for Plague"); AYALON 1946: 67; SUBLET 1971.

In IB's *Rihla*, the term *ṭā'ūn* appears on only one occasion in the account of the already mentioned multi-religious prayer gathering in Damascus during the Black Death, where the plague is mentioned both in the Syrian capital and Cairo. The term *wabā'* occurs 14 times: 11 of them in the Arabic area,⁶¹ where it is used in seven passages and refers to nine different places: it is always preceded by the definite article (*al-wabā'* [the plague/epidemic]) and undoubtedly refers to the plague, that thus proves to be the most cited disease in the work. The remaining three (used in two different places) are during IB's stay in India and it is not clear to which disease they refer. Some modern scholars of India have suggested it might have been the plague and thus provide valide evidence that the Black Death was present in the sub-continent before reaching the Mediterranean, but most probably IB did not speak of this specific disease.⁶²

In this paper all the references to the plague pandemic, i.e. the epidemics quoted in the Arab area, are introduced in the context of the work and commented on, then reported in the original Arabic and the English translation and compared with sources, according to the order in which they appear in the *Rihla* (only the former does not respect the chronological order that characterises the whole work). In the footnote, after each quotation, there is the translation of the Arabic term used by IB, as found in the complete versions of Defremery and Sanguinetti's *Rihla* edition in European languages.⁶³

First passage: The plague in Damascus (*Rabī' II 749 / July 1348*)

The first mention of the plague is the only one in the text where the term *ṭā'ūn* is used. The passage is placed at the beginning of the work, in 726/1326, when IB recounts having

61 In the Arabic area the term *wabā'* also appears on a twelfth occasion where it is, however, used in a very general way, in the description of the famous Cairo nilometre: "The first beginning of the Nile flood is in Ḥazīrān, that is June; and when its rise amounts to sixteen cubits, the land-tax due to the Sultan is payable in full. If it rises another cubit, there is plenty in that year, and complete well-being. But if it reaches eighteen cubits it does damage to the cultivated lands and causes an outbreak of plague [*wabā'*]" (AL-TAZI I: 208; GIBB I: 49 [EP 79]). In this case, the term *wabā'* seems to indicate an epidemic in a generic way, rather than the *plague* disease as translated by Gibb.

62 On the epidemics mentioned by IB in India and their interpretation by modern scholars of the sub-continent, see ANANDAVALI 2007: 21-23 and TRESSO 2022. The presence of the *Yersinia pestis* in medieval India was, and still is, the subject of debate. Several studies affirm that no plague epidemic is attested to in India until the 17th century (see among others MCNEILL 1976: 183-184; BENEDICTOW 2004: 40-44; ANANDAVALI 2007; SUSSMAN 2011: 335-336 and 339-341), but recent studies consider plausible the transmission of the bacillum from the Tibetan highlands to the Indian Ocean through India, whether via the Indus Valley or the Ganges (GREEN 2015b, esp. 49-51).

63 For French: DEFREMERY and SANGUINETTI (1853-1858) in the edition by YERASIMOS 1997 (henceforth YERASIMOS) and CHARLES-DOMINIQUE 1995. For Spanish: FANJUL and ARBÓS 1993 (henceforth FANJUL). For Italian: TRESSO 2006. In order not to burden the critical apparatus, these texts will henceforth be cited without the year of publication. It should be noted that among the main European languages, a complete German translation of Defremery and Sanguinetti's *Rihla* edition is missing, but a partial one (IB's travels through India and China) has been provided by VON MŽIK 1911 and al-Baylūnī's compendium of the *Rihla* has been translated into German by ELGER 2010a.

visited Damascus⁶⁴ a year after leaving Tangier, but the event took place some 20 years later, in *Rabīʿ II* 749 / July 1348, at the time of IB's second visit to the Syrian capital. The symptoms of the disease are not described, but both the use of the specific term *ṭāʿūn* and the certainty that Syria was struck by the Black Death on that date leave no doubt that it is the great medieval plague pandemic, and the word *ṭāʿūn* is translated as “plague” in all the versions of the *Rihla* considered in this study.

At that time, Damascus was enduring the ordeal of the plague that had been ravaging the Middle East for months, and one particular passage in the text—one of the most moving in the work—tells of a prayer gathering attended by the faithful of the three Abrahamic religions. Muslims, Jews and Christians gathered in the al-Aqdām mosque that can still be visited today just outside the walls of Damascus, and together they all raised their prayers to the Almighty to free them from the scourge. With slight discrepancies, the news of the event is also reported by two chroniclers who lived at the time of the events, the Syrian Ibn Kathīr (700/1301-774/1373) and the Maghrebi (resident in Damascus) Ibn Abī Ḥaḡala (725/1325-776/1375), and is quoted in the later works of the Syrian Ibn Qāḏī Šuhba (779/1377-851/1448), based on the testimony of Ibn Kathīr, and the Egyptian Ibn Ḥaḡar (773/1372-852/1449), who quotes the text of Ibn Abī Ḥaḡala.⁶⁵ The number of victims in Damascus and Cairo reported in the *Rihla*, as we will see, also agrees with the figures from other sources.⁶⁶

شاهدت أيام الطاعون الأعظم بدمشق في أواخر شهر ربيع سنة تسع وأربعين
من تعظيم أهل دمشق لهذا المسجد ما يعجب منه، وهو أن ملك الأمراء
نائب السلطان أرغون شاه أمر مناديا ينادي بدمشق أن يصوم الناس ثلاثة
أيام، ولا يطبخ أحد بالسوق ما يؤكل نهارًا، وأكثر الناس بها إنما يأكلون
الطعام الذي يصنع بالسوق، فصام الناس ثلاثة أيام متوالية كان آخرها يوم
الخميس. ثم اجتمع الأمراء والشرفاء والقضاة والفقهاء وسائر الطبقات على

⁶⁴ According to his own account, IB arrived in Damascus on 9 *Ramaḏān* 726 A. H. [9 August 1326] and from there left for Mecca with the caravan “when the new moon of *Šawwāl* appeared” (1 September 1326) (AL-TĀZĪ I: 297 and 343; GIBB I: 117-118 and 158 [EP 187 and 254]). As for the description of Damascus, substantial borrowings have been found first of all from Ibn Jubayr (which is only partially quoted as a source in the *Rihla*, see AL-TĀZĪ I: 297; GIBB I: 118-119 [EP 188-189]), and also from al-ʿUmārī and al-Dimashqī (ELAD 1987: 258-259; ELGER 2010b: 73-74; MATTOCK 1981; WAINES 2010: 13-15). Doubts about this date and some episodes reported by IB during his stay in Damascus have been raised by ALLOUCHE 1990: 290-293.

⁶⁵ IBN KATHĪR, *al-Bidāya*, vol. 16, 342; IBN ABĪ ḤAḠALA, *Dafʿ*, f. 76a; IBN QĀḌĪ ŠUHBA, *Taʿrīḥ*, vol. 1, 545-547; IBN ḤAḠAR, *Baḏl al-maʿūn*, 237-238. The prayer gathering of Damascus in Ibn Kathīr's chronicle has been analysed by MIRZA 2020a and MIRZA 2020b.

⁶⁶ For a more in-depth analysis of the Damascus prayer gathering in IB's *Rihla*, see TRESSO 2021a and TRESSO 2021b.

اختلافها في الجامع، حتى غص بهم، وباتوا ليلة الجمعة ما بين مصلي وذاكر وداع، ثم صلوا الصبح، وخرجوا جميعا على أقدامهم، وبأيديهم المصاحف، والأمراء حفاة وخرج جميع أهل البلد ذكورا وإناثا، صغارا وكبارا وخرج اليهود بتوراتهم، والنصارى بإنجيلهم، ومعهم النساء والولدان، وجميعهم باكون متضرعون إلى الله بكتبه وأنبيائه، وقصدوا مسجد الأقدام وأقاموا به في تضرعهم ودعائهم إلى قرب الزوال، وعادوا إلى البلد، وصلوا الجمعة. وخفف الله تعالى عنهم فانتهى عدد الموتى إلى ألفين في اليوم الواحد. وقد انتهى عددهم بالقاهرة ومصر إلى أربعة وعشرين ألفا في اليوم الواحد.⁶⁷

I witnessed at the time of the Great Plague at Damascus in the latter part of the month of Second Rabī^ʿ of the year 49 [July 1348], a remarkable instance of the veneration of the people of Damascus for this mosque.⁶⁸ Arghūn-Shāh, king of the amīrs and the Sultan's viceroy, ordered a crier to proclaim through Damascus that the people should fast for three days and that no one should cook in the bazaar during the daytime anything to be eaten (for most of the people there eat no food but what has been prepared in the bazaar). So the people fasted for three successive days, the last of which was a Thursday. At the end of this period the amīrs, sharīfs, qāḍīs, doctors of the Law, and all other classes of the people in their several degrees, assembled in the Great Mosque, until it was filled to overflowing with them, and spent the Thursday night there in prayers and liturgies and supplications. Then, after performing the dawn prayer [on the Friday morning], they all went out together on foot carrying Qur'āns in their hands—the amīrs too barefooted. The entire population of the city joined in the exodus, male and female, small and large; the Jews went out with their book of the Law and the Christians with Gospel, their women and children with them; the whole concourse of them in tears and humble supplications, imploring the favour of God through His Books and His Prophets. They made their way to the Mosque of the Footprints and remained there in supplication and invocation until near midday, then returned to the city and held the Friday service. God Most High lightened their affliction; the number of deaths in a single day reached a maximum of

⁶⁷ AL-TĀZĪ I: 325-326.

⁶⁸ Masġid al-Aqdām [Mosque of the Feet] or al-Qadam [of the Foot], which IB has just described.

two thousand, whereas the number rose in Cairo and Old Cairo to twenty-four thousand in a day.⁶⁹

From this moment on, the word *ṭāʿūn* no longer appears in the *Travels*. The *Rihla* reports that after leaving Damascus, IB made his first Pilgrimage to Mecca and then, heading north, visited Iraq and Persia.⁷⁰ In 1327 he returned to Mecca for a second Pilgrimage and then left again for Yemen and East Africa. He then returned to Mecca a third time in 1332 and from there continued to Anatolia, Crimea and the Russian steppe, back westwards to Constantinople and once more north to the Volga plain. From here, descending southwards through Bukhāra, Samarkand and present-day Afghanistan, IB arrived in India on the first day of *Muḥarram* 734 [12 September 1333]. A few months later he appears at the cosmopolitan court of Muḥammad ibn Tughluq, the Turkish-Afghan ruler of the Islamic sultanate of Delhi. Here he interrupts his journey and stays eight (or perhaps nine) years, serving first as *qāḍī* [judge of an Islamic court] and then as administrator of a sultan's tomb complex.⁷¹

According to the *Rihla*, in 1341–1342 the Sultan appointed him ambassador to China and entrusted him with a caravan of lavish gifts for the Emperor,⁷² but the ship on which IB was travelling sank with its precious cargo. Fearing the Sultan's wrath, IB headed for the Maldives,⁷³ which had shortly before been converted to Islam thanks to the presence of a

69 GIBB I: 143-144 [EP 228-229]. See YERASIMOS I: 234-235 = *la grande peste*; CHARLES-DOMINIQUE: 458-459 = *la grande peste*; FANJUL: 193-194 = *la gran peste*; TRESSO: 114 = *la grande peste*.

70 The following is a compendium of IB's adventures as related by the *Rihla*, in order to situate the narration of the Black Death in the story of IB's travels. In the *Rihla*, IB states several times that everything he reports is derived from his personal testimony or from trustworthy oral and written sources. However, the sources are very rarely stated and as already mentioned, many scholars have hypothesised and/or demonstrated that IB and/or Ibn Ġuzayy borrowed and adapted passages from other sources in several parts of the work, so that today it is impossible to believe that the whole *Rihla* is a faithful account of IB's personal adventures. This topic is not the focus of this article, but in the conclusive paragraph, IB's narration of the plague will also be considered from this point of view. Some references to the main studies that scholars have made on this subject will be found in the notes, but for more information see especially DUNN 1986: 313-316; ELAD 1987; FAUVELLE and HIRSCH 2003; EUBEN 2006: 63-85; ELGER 2010b; COLLET 2017; TRAUSSCH 2021. The *Rihla* also presents many internal chronological problems, some of which will be quoted in the notes: for more information see, among others, HRBEK 1962; HUSAIN 1976 [1953]: liv-lxxi; DUNN 1986, esp. 132-133, note 2; ELAD 1987: 256-257; ALLOUCHE 1990; WAINES 2010: 10-11. For both problems of borrowing and chronology, see also the notes by Gibb and Beckingham to their English edition of the *Rihla*.

71 The *Rihla* reports that IB arrived in Delhi in September 1333 and from there left for China on behalf of the Sultan on 17 *Ṣafar* 743 / 22 July 1342, but some problems of chronology and itinerary lead to the date being put back by one Hegirian year, to 2 August 1341 (CHARLES-DOMINIQUE 1995: 881, note 1). Doubts about IB's Indian stay have recently been raised by TRAUSSCH 2010, who notes some substantial borrowings from the work of the famous Indian historian Baranī.

72 Ibn Tughluq's large gift for Toghon Temur, the last Mongol emperor of the Chinese Yuan dynasty, reciprocated a large shipment of gifts the latter had sent him the year before, probably with the aim of establishing a foothold in Delhi for his "vigorous overseas trade policy", see DUNN 1986: 213-214.

73 In the text, IB says that he stayed in the Maldives for a year and a half (AL-TĀZI IV, 57; GIBB and BECKINGHAM IV, 824 [EP 113-114]), but if he really was there, he probably stayed for no more than nine months (YERASIMOS III: 223, note 171). His description of the Maldives seems to be the first detailed one we have of this tropical paradise (GRAY 1994 [1890]), although Janssens has noted that

Maghrebi commercial colony.⁷⁴ Then he visits Ceylon and probably in September/October 1344, returns to the Indian sub-continent. He next journeys to Sri Lanka, Bengal, Malaysia and Indonesia and afterwards to China, where he claims to have arrived in 1346,⁷⁵ i.e. at a time when, according to some medieval Arab chroniclers, the country was ravaged by the Black Death. One of these chroniclers, Ibn Ḥaṭīb, even states that IB himself, by then back home, told him that the plague had originated “in the lands of Cathay and China.”⁷⁶ In the *Rihla*, however, IB does not report this information, and in describing China he does not speak of any past or ongoing epidemic.⁷⁷

From the Far East, IB travels west and, after crossing India, in the month of *Šawwāl* 748 [January 1348] reaches Baghdad, where the epidemic was probably already underway, but he does not mention it.⁷⁸ He proceeds to Damascus, where the plague has not yet arrived⁷⁹

some information could have been taken from the works of al-Masʿūdī, al-Bīrūnī and al-Idrīsī (JANSSENS 1948: 108-109).

74 On the sources reporting the Islamization of the islands see GIBB and BECKINGHAM IV, 822, note 1 and 830, note 30 and BAUSANI 1983: 9. IB reports, among other things, a legend still attested to today among the local population, according to which Islam was brought to the Maldives by a pious and devout Berber man from the Maghreb, who freed the islands from the nightmare of a sea demon by reciting some verses of the Quran (AL-TĀZĪ IV, 62-63; GIBB and BECKINGHAM IV, 829-831 [EP 126-130]). The myth nevertheless testifies to “the coming and going of Muslim merchants in the Maldives from as early as Abbasid times and the incorporation of the islands into the commercial network of the western ocean” (DUNN 1986: 229-230). A commercial network connecting Africa to the East via the Indian Ocean that, as suggested by Green, was probably also used by *Yersinia pestis* to reach Africa (see before, note 17 and GREEN 2015b: 45-51).

75 According to this information, IB travelled 17-18,000 km by sea and land between the summer and early autumn of that year. This does, however, suggest some inconsistencies (DUNN 1986: 260-261).

76 Ibn al-Ḥaṭīb (14th cent.) mentions IB as one of the great travellers “worthy of credit” [*yūtaqu bihim*] who reported [*ḥaddaṭa*] news of the origin of the Black Death, said to have started in Cathay and China in 734/1333-1334, caused by the air that had become unhealthy [*fasada*] as a result of the accumulation of corpses caused by a war (IBN AL-ḤAṬĪB, *Muqniʿat al-sāʿil*, 8-9).

77 Many scholars have raised doubts and reservations about IB’s journey to China and Indochina (see DUNN 1986: 262, note 20) and in recent times some have speculated that IB may have drawn some information from Marco Polo’s work (ELGER 2010a: 231-233; ELGER 2010b: 81-83). As for the Black Death, for a long time historians have supposed that it struck China before reaching the Middle East and the Mediterranean, but in recent times different hypotheses have been formulated: while Sussman excludes the presence of *Yersinia pestis* in medieval China (SUSSMAN 2011, especially 341-355), Buell states that “possibly there were plague outbreaks in China, but China never suffered the enormous plague epidemics that the West or the Middle East experienced” (BUELL 2012: 129). For a more detailed overview of these and other hypotheses, see HYMES 2015: 287-288. In any case, as we have already seen, the current hypothesis, advanced on both epidemiological and genetic grounds, is that *Yersinia pestis* originated in the Tibetan-Qinghai Plateau, in today’s China (GREEN 2015b: 37, note 12) and scholars are calling for more studies on local sources about the Gansu corridor and East China, suggesting Mongols’ role as a human vector in bringing *Yersinia pestis* into both medieval China and some western regions (LITTLE 2007; HYMES 2015; GREEN 2020; see also MCNEILL 1976: 132-175, who first discussed the role of the Mongols in the spread of the plague). Recent studies also suggest that the Black Death had its origins in the 13th century rather than the 14th (see note 190). In fact, evidence both from Song China and Iran suggests that the plague was involved in major sieges laid by the Mongols between the 1210s and the 1250s, including the siege of Baghdad in 1258 which put an end to the Abbasid caliphate. (GREEN 2020 and GREEN 2021).

78 According to al-Maqrīzī, the plague arrived in Baghdad with the troops of the (Mongol) Chupanid

and stays there until the end of March. At the beginning of *Rabīʿ I* [June] we find him in Aleppo.

Second passage: The plague in Gaza, Homs, Damascus and Jerusalem (*Rabīʿ I – Ġumādā I 749 / June – July 1348*)

In Aleppo, IB relates that the news reached him that in Gaza *yaqaʿu al-wabāʿ*, “there is the plague.” From now until the end of the work, this word appears, as we have seen, 11 times. From the beginning, it is clear that this is not *an* epidemic, but *the* epidemic: the Black Death. Indeed, according to information from Arab chronicles, at the beginning of June, the disease had not yet reached Aleppo, but had already devastated Gaza.⁸⁰

The number of victims referred to in Gaza seems to differ from that reported by the chroniclers, but these too offer conflicting figures. In all likelihood, both the chronicles and the *Rihla* refer to the period of the peak. But while the latter states that on an unspecified day there were 1,000 deaths (later he will say 1,100), the text of the Syrian Ibn Kathīr, who lived at the time of the pandemic, reports that according to the lieutenant [*nāʾib*] of the Mamluk sultan in Gaza, from 10 *Muḥarram* to 10 *Šafar* [April 10 – May 10] there were between 13,000 and 20,000 deaths.⁸¹ The Egyptian al-Maqrīzī who wrote in the early decades of the 15th century, says that, according to the same lieutenant, more or less in the same period (2 *Muḥarram* - 4 *Šafar* [2 April - 4 May]) there were 22,000 victims.⁸² However, as has been noted, the number of deaths reported in IB’s *Rihla* may relate to the

Malik Ašrāf who besieged the city from Tabrīz in the first half of 748/1347—but due to the disease, they were soon forced to retreat (AL-MAQRĪZĪ, *al-Sulūk*, vol. 4, 82. See DOLS 1977: 45; NORRIS J. 1977: 15; BENEDICTOW 2004: 64-65; VARLIK 2015b: 102-103. For the presence of the plague in many sieges held by the Mongols, see note 77). The other sources quoted in this paper do not mention Baghdad, but since the epidemic there seems to have been attested to in 750/1349 (AL-ʿAZZĀWĪ 2004: 60, cfr. DOLS 1977: 46), the fact that IB does not mention the plague in this city could mean that the disease was already present and the epidemic broke out later, following the arrival of new bacilli from Alexandria through Syria. Be that as it may, we will see that there are other places affected by plague that IB says he visited, but where he does not mention the scourge.

- 79 AL-TĀZĪ IV: 176-178; GIBB and BECKINGHAM IV: 915-917 [EP 314-317]. On the very day of his arrival, IB learns of the death of one of his sons and that of his father: from a literary point of view, it seems almost to be a grim omen of the tragedy that was soon to strike the city.
- 80 AL-MAQRĪZĪ, *al-Sulūk*, vol. 4, 82 says that the plague arrived in Aleppo on 1 *Ġumādā I* (28 July) and so does IBN TAĠRĪ BIRDĪ, *al-Nuġūm*, vol. 10, 197, who quotes him. Ibn al-Wardī, who as a resident of Aleppo was certainly an eyewitness to the events, states that it arrived in *Raġab* (October) (IBN AL-WARDĪ, *Taʾrīḥ*, vol. 2, 340). In any case, these and other sources agree that the Black Death struck Aleppo after it had already raged in Gaza and Damascus (DOLS 1977: 61, note 94).
- 81 IBN KATHĪR, *al-Bidāya*, vol. 16, 341 (see IBN QĀDĪ ŠUHBA, *Taʾrīḥ*, vol. 1, 542, who quotes him). Ibn Kathīr gives a very approximate number: *naḥwa min biḍʿa ʿašara alfan*. The word *biḍʿ* (f. *biḍʿa*) indicates a figure between 3 and 10 (WRIGHT 1986: 237D), so that the expression corresponds to “not less than 13,000 and not more than 20,000”. BORSCH and SABRAA 2017: 70 translate “tens of thousands” and DOLS 1977: 220 proposes “more than 10,000”.
- 82 AL-MAQRĪZĪ, *al-Sulūk*, vol. 4, 82, where the author adds that the lieutenant had run away, leaving a deserted town (see also IBN TAĠRĪ BIRDĪ, *al-Nuġūm*, vol. 10, 198, who cites him).

worst day, thus conforming to those figures proposed by the chroniclers for an entire month.⁸³

The *Rihla* reports that, perhaps fearing the arrival of the plague, IB left Aleppo: he passed again through Homs, where he says “I found that the plague had already struck there” and reports that on the day of his arrival there were 300 deaths, thus giving what I found to be the only information we have on the number of the Black Death victims in this city.⁸⁴ At the end of *Rabi‘ II* (end of July) IB is back in Damascus, where the plague has preceded him. In the Syrian capital, the day after his arrival, he claims having attended the prayer gathering already mentioned in the part of the *Rihla* devoted to his first visit (August 1326). This second narration relates the essential facts of the event and is much more concise and less emotional than the first, but the number of victims is reported in both passages: 2,000 victims per day in the first telling and then later 2,400. Nor does this figure seem to correspond to that of other Arab authors, who speak of 1,000-1,200 deaths a day, but we cannot exclude that the *Rihla* refers to a different count of victims, because one of the chronicles specifies that the number of 1,000 deaths for Damascus concerns only the corpses that were brought to the Great Mosque for the funeral rites.⁸⁵

This time IB does not stay long in Damascus: he soon leaves for Jerusalem. When he arrives, probably in August 1348,⁸⁶ he reports that the plague is over. This information does not appear in other sources: among the authors considered in this study, only Ibn al-Wardī and al-Maqrīzī report that Jerusalem was struck by the scourge, but they merely mention it in a list of places affected by the pandemic, without giving any information concerning

83 BORSCH and SABRAA 2017: 70-72. In this case, Dols does not mention IB and between Ibn Kathīr and al-Maqrīzī considers the testimony of the former, who lived at the time of the pandemic, to be more reliable (DOLS 1977: 220).

84 None of the Arabic sources reviewed here mentions Homs, and among modern scholars only DOLS 1977: 61 and BORSCH and SABRAA 2017: 86 report that it was hit by the Black Death, citing IB’s *Rihla* as the only source. Borsch and Sabraa state that IB speaks of 330 (sic!) dead and estimate a total number of 12,264 victims. But it should be noted that the quotation is somewhat inaccurate: the number of victims is not correct and in the Bibliography there is the translation of al-Baylūnī’s compendium of the *Rihla* by LEE 1829, where this information does not appear.

85 IBN KATHĪR, *al-Bidāya*, vol. 16, 342 says that in *Ġumādā II* (late August-September) in the mosque they prayed almost daily for over 1,000 victims. IBN QĀDĪ ŠUHBA, *Ta’rīh*, vol. 1, 543 quotes al-Ḥusaynī who reports an increase in deaths in the months of *Raġab* and *Ša’bān* (late September-November) and then quotes the figures provided by IBN KATHĪR (*ibid.*: 545-547). For the month of *Raġab*, AL-MAQRĪZĪ, *al-Sulūk*, vol. 4, 85 speaks of 1,200 victims a day (see also IBN TAGRĪ BIRDĪ, *al-Nuġūm*, vol. 10, 207, who quotes him). As for IBN ABĪ ḤAĠĀLA, *Daḡ al-niqma*, f. 76a, he reiterates the number of 1,000 deaths per day (see IBN ḤAĠĀR, *Baḡl al-mā’ūn*, 238, who quotes him). According to the most recent studies, there were about 36,000 deaths in Damascus during the epidemic, out of a population that, based on the capacity of the city walls and the size of the houses, must not have exceeded 60,000 before the Black Death (BORSCH and SABRAA 2017: 84-85). But both the massive exodus from the countryside to the capital during the pandemic period and the large number of people living outside the walls must be taken into account, which, according to Dols’ earlier calculations, would bring the number of Damascus inhabitants to 80,180 (DOLS 1977: 203-204).

86 IB says that he was in Damascus at the end of July, when the prayer gathering took place (see above) and in Cairo in mid-October, when he learned that the *Raġab* caravan had already left (see below).

either the number of victims or the period in which the disease spread, ceased or reached its peak.⁸⁷

Finally, from a literary point of view, it should be noted that in Jerusalem we found the only personal anecdote of IB set in the pandemic. Throughout the entire *Rihla*, the description of places and events is continually interspersed with personal observations, hearsay, or the accounts of others, and IB adopts this style when speaking of another epidemic he claims having witnessed in Madurai, India. There, he says that in the town he saw nothing but “the sick or the dead,” he speaks of infected people dying within a few days, of a slave-girl and a child who, apparently healthy, leave overnight.⁸⁸ The many times he talks about the Black Death, however, IB limits himself to reporting factual information (especially the number of victims), but not anecdotal. In Jerusalem, he relates that the *ḥaṭīb* [preacher] ‘Izz al-Dīn, “a pious and generous man” who was the cousin of the grand *qāḍī* Shafiite of Cairo,⁸⁹ invited him to a reception. When the plague was raging, the *ḥaṭīb* had made a vow to give a banquet on the first day he did not have to recite the funeral oration for someone who had died of the plague. That day had finally arrived, and IB gladly accepted the invitation. In contrast to many other descriptions of feasts and convivial meals, IB does not report what was served at the banquet nor who participated, but comments only his realisation that many of the men of religion he had known in that city at the time of his first visit had died, and implores the mercy of the Most High upon them.

وفي أوائل شهر ربيع الأول عام تسعة وأربعين، بلغني الخبر في حلب أن الوباء وقع بغزة، وأنه انتهى عدد الموتى فيها إلى زائد على الألف في يوم واحد. فسافرت إلى حمص، فوجدت الوباء قد وقع بها، ومات يوم دخولي إليها نحو ثلاثمائة إنسان، ثم سافرت إلى دمشق ووصلتها يوم الخميس، وكان أهلها قد صاموا ثلاثة أيام وخرجوا يوم الجمعة إلى جامع الأقدام، حسبما ذكرناه في السفر الأول. فخفف الله الوباء عنهم، فانتهى عدد الموتى عندهم إلى الفين وأربعمائة في اليوم، ثم سافرت إلى عجلون ثم إلى بيت المقدس ووجدت الوباء قد ارتفع عنه [...].

87 IBN AL-WARDĪ, *Ta’rīḥ*, vol. 2, 339 (the same information can be found in his *Risāla* translated into English by DOLS 1974a: 448); AL-MAQRĪZĪ, *al-Sulūk*, vol. 4, 82. As for the historians of the Black Death quoted in this study, only DOLS 1977: 61 mentions Jerusalem as a city affected by the pandemic, and cites as the only source IB’s *Rihla*.

88 AL-TĀZĪ IV: 96; GIBB and BECKINGHAM IV: 863 [EP 201].

89 As IB reports in his *Rihla*, he was ‘Izz al-Dīn ibn Badr al-Dīn, who had recently succeeded his father as the Shafiite grand *qāḍī* of Cairo (AL-TĀZĪ I: 216; GIBB I: 55 [EP 88]): as Egypt is traditionally Shafiite, this role made him the most powerful grand *qāḍī* in the country.

وصنع الخطيب عز الدين يوماً دعوة، ودعاني فيمن دها إليها، فسألته عن سببها، فأخبرني أنه نذر أيام الوباء، أنه إن ارتفع ذلك، ومر عليه يوم لا يصلى فيه على ميت، صنع الدعوة. ثم قال لي: ولما كان بالأمس، لم أصل على ميت، فصنعت الدعوة التي نذرت. ووجدت من كنت أعهدده من جميع الأسيخ بالقدس قد انتقلوا إلى جوار الله تعالى رحمهم الله.⁹⁰

In the first days of the month of Rabīʿ I in the year forty-nine, news reached us in Aleppo that plague had broken out in Ghazza and that the number of dead there exceeded a thousand a day. I went to Ḥimṣ and found that the plague had already struck there; about three hundred persons died on the day of my arrival. I went to Damascus and arrived on a Thursday; the people had been fasting for three days. On Friday they went to the Mosque of the Footprints, as we have related in the first book. God alleviated their plague. The number of deaths among them had risen to two thousand four hundred a day. Then I went to ‘Ajlūn, and then to Bait al-Muqaddas [Jerusalem], where I found the plague had ceased [...]

The preacher ‘Izz al-Dīn gave a banquet one day and invited me among his guests. I asked him the reason for it. He told me that during the plague he had sworn he would give a banquet if the plague were to cease and a day were to pass during which he did not pray over a corpse. Then he said: “Yesterday I did not pray over a corpse so I arranged the banquet as I had promised.”

I found that many of the shaikhs I had met in al-Quds [Jerusalem] had departed to be with God Most High. May He have mercy on them!⁹¹

Third passage: The plague in Gaza (*Ġumādà* / 749 / August 1348)

From Jerusalem, IB says he continued his journey together with the sheikh of the Maghrebi of Jerusalem and a traditionalist from Milyāna (in present-day Algeria). Passing through Hebron, the three arrive in Gaza, where IB had already been at the beginning of his journey and which he had described as “a place of spacious dimensions and large population, with fine bazars.”⁹² This time, however, the atmosphere must be ghostly. It is perhaps no coincidence that, unlike any previous occasion on which he mentions the plague, before reporting the number of victims IB comments somewhat laconically on the state of the

⁹⁰ AL-TĀZĪ IV: 179-180.

⁹¹ GIBB and BECKINGHAM IV: 918 [EP 320-321]. See YERASIMOS III: 356-357 = *la peste*; CHARLES-DOMINIQUE: 1.000 = *la peste/l'épidémie*; FANJUL: 744-745 = *la peste*; TRESSO: 723-724 = *la peste*.

⁹² AL-TĀZĪ I: 239; GIBB I: 73 [EP 113-114].

place stating *wağadnā mu'zimahā ḥāliyan* “we found most of it deserted.”⁹³ As previously mentioned, the *qāḍī* informs him that on one day alone there were 1,100 victims.⁹⁴ It is interesting to note that IB, unlike any of the other sources, reports that three-quarters of the notables died in Gaza. It could be deduced that the incidence of mortality in the rest of the population must have been just as high, and probably higher.⁹⁵

ثم سرنا إلى غزة، فوجدنا معظمها خاليا، بالكثرة من مات بها في الوباء.
وأخبرني قاضيها أن العدول بها كانوا ثمانين، فبقي منهم الربع، وأن عدد الموتى
بها انتهى إلى ألف ومائة في اليوم. ثم سارنا في البر، فوصلت إلى دمياط.⁹⁶

Then we went to Ghazza and found most of it deserted because of the numbers that had died during the plague. The *qāḍī* told me that only a quarter of the eighty notaries there were left and that the number of deaths had risen to eleven hundred a day. We then went by land to Dimyāt.⁹⁷

Fourth passage: The plague in Alexandria and Cairo (*Ġumādā I – Ġumādā II 749 / August – September 1348*)

The *Rihla* reports that from Gaza, travelling in the opposite direction of the Black Death, we do not know whether accompanied or alone, IB crossed the Delta region and reached Alexandria, probably the first place in the Arab lands where the plague had begun.⁹⁸ The area he travelled through was one of the most scarred by the pandemic: chroniclers speak of corpses piled up in the streets and deserted towns. On the shores of Lake Burullus, between the Rosetta and Damietta branches of the Nile, fishing was suspended due to the lack of

⁹³ IB does not say, but other sources report that markets were also closed in Gaza at that time due to the epidemic (AL-MAQRĪZĪ, *al-Sulūk*, vol. 4, 82; IBN TAĠRĪ BIRDĪ, *al-Nuğūm*, vol. 10, 198, who cites him).

⁹⁴ For comparison of this figure with the texts of the chroniclers, see above. BORSCH and SABRAA 2017: 72 consider this quote more credible, however, because the figure 1,000 is too neat not to seem suspicious.

⁹⁵ Although, as noted by Borsch when talking about Black Death mortality, “the vast number of anonymous and propertyless poor were not counted” (BORSCH 2016: 130).

⁹⁶ AL-TĀZĪ IV: 180.

⁹⁷ GIBB and BECKINGHAM IV: 919 [EP 322]. See YERASIMOS III: 358 = *la peste*; CHARLES-DOMINIQUE: 1.000 = *la peste/l'épidémie*; FANJUL: 745 = *la peste*; TRESSO: 725 = *la peste*.

⁹⁸ AL-MAQRĪZĪ, *al-Sulūk*, vol. 4, 80. In fact, the chronicler states the date of the plague's arrival in Egypt without giving more information. However, in listing the places affected he mentions the port of Alexandria first, reporting how the plague arrived on board a merchant ship (probably coming from the Golden Horn) that entered the port laden with corpses and sick people, all of whom died shortly afterwards (*ibid.*: 83; see IBN TAĠRĪ BIRDĪ, *al-Nuğūm*, vol. 10, 199, who cites him). The date is also confirmed by other sources, see DOLS 1977: 57-58, note 80. For the spread of the Black Death in Egypt, see among others *ibid.*: 57-60; BENEDICTOW 2004: 62-63; BORSCH and SABRAA 2017: 68-70.

fishermen. In al-Maḥalla al-Kabīra the mortality rate was so high that the *qāḍī* could not find witnesses to validate people's final testaments.⁹⁹

At the beginning of IB's travels, al-Maḥalla was described as "a place of great importance, impressive buildings and a large population."¹⁰⁰ But this time, although he reports having passed through this and other cities of the Delta, IB makes no comment, nor does he mention any sign of the scourge. He lists only the towns he passed through and states that he arrived in Alexandria where, after reaching a peak of 1,080 deaths a day, the plague had weakened considerably. This figure is too precise to have been invented or rounded up, and in fact other chroniclers speak of 700 funeral rites celebrated on the worst days:¹⁰¹ the number reported by the *Rihla* can be explained by the fact that it also includes those who had died without funeral rites.¹⁰²

According to the *Rihla*, IB must have arrived in Alexandria in September, because he says that in July he was in Damascus and in mid-October, as we shall see, he arrives in Cairo. Again, none of the other sources substantiate IB's claim that the epidemic had begun to subside in the city. That Alexandria was devastated is not open to question, but IB does not say anything about the situation of the city or its inhabitants and heads for Cairo.

He probably arrived there in mid-October, because he subsequently says that on his arrival he learned that the traditional caravan of pilgrims starting from Cairo in the month of *Raḡab* had already set out for Mecca. That year, the departure took place around 10 October, and IB says that in the caravan there were a number of people infected by the plague. In October, therefore, the pandemic, now diminished in Alexandria, had arrived in Cairo, where we know from other sources that it had not yet reached its peak (this occurred shortly afterwards, in the months of *Ša'bān*, *Ramaḍān* and *Šawwāl* 748 [November 1348 – January 1349]).¹⁰³ It should be noted that IB speaks of a decimated population and states that "all the shaikhs" he had met there had died. This remark, together with the very high number of victims he reports (21,000 a day, although in the first account of the Damascus prayer gathering he had said 24,000), suggests that the epidemic had peaked. In all likelihood, if he really was in Cairo in those days, he is confused and actually refers to when he returned to Cairo from Mecca in April-May 1349. Nonetheless, the chronicles

99 AL-MAQRIZI, *al-Sulūk*, vol. 4, 84 (see IBN TAĠRĪ BIRDĪ, *al-Nuġūm*, vol. 10, 202, who quotes him). For mortality in the Delta region as reported in the Arab chronicles see DOLS 1977: 155-157 and BORSCH and SABRAA 2017: 73-74 and *passim*.

100 AL-TĀZĪ I: 196; GIBB I: 34 [EP 56]. The city, still an important agricultural and industrial centre in Egypt, lies some 60 km north of Cairo, halfway between Damietta and Alexandria.

101 AL-MAQRIZI, *al-Sulūk*, vol. 4, 84, which speaks of the increase in the number of victims: first a hundred, then two hundred, but during the peak there were up to 700 funerals a day (see IBN TAĠRĪ BIRDĪ, *al-Nuġūm*, vol. 10, 200, who quotes him). See also DOLS 1977: 213.

102 The credibility of the unrounded number reported by the *Rihla* about the region, lead Borsch and Sabraa to rely on this figure to establish how many people died in Alexandria during the Black Death: 50,000 victims out of 105,000 inhabitants, i.e. 48% of the population (BORSCH and SABRAA 2017: 68-70).

103 DOLS 1977: 154-155 and 213. See BENEDICTOW 2004: 62-63; BORSCH and SABRAA 2017: 68-70. As reported by al-Maqrīzī, starting from *Muharram* 749 [April 1348] the plague spreads from Alexandria to Upper Egypt and strikes Cairo at the beginning of *Raḡab* 749 / late September 1348 (DOLS 1977: 60).

confirm that during the peak there was a very high number of casualties in Cairo, although different information circulated about it: Ibn Kathīr says that “there are those who exaggerate and those who minimise: those who minimise say 11,000 and those who exaggerate say 30,000 [deaths] per day,” while al-Maqrīzī speaks of 20,000.¹⁰⁴ According to the most recent studies, however, a figure between 20,000 and 24,000 dead as reported by IB and al-Maqrīzī (which falls within the range proposed by Ibn Kathīr) would be credible if it referred not to one but to two days as well as the entire area of Cairo, i.e. both the ancient part (Fusṭāṭ) and the modern one (al-Qāhira).¹⁰⁵

ثم سافرت إلى المحلة الكبيرة، ثم إلى نحرارية، ثم إلى أبيار، ثم إلى دمنهور، ثم إلى الإسكندرية. فوجدت الوباء قد خف بها، بعد أن بلغ عدد الموتى إلى ألف وثمانين في اليوم. ثم سافرت إلى القاهرة، وبلغني أن عدد الموتى أيام الوباء انتهى فيها إلى واحد وعشرين ألفاً في اليوم. ووجدت جميع من كان بها من المشايخ الذين أعرفهم قد ماتوا، رحمهم الله تعالى.¹⁰⁶

Then I travelled to al-Maḥalla al-Kabīra, then to Naḥrariyya, then to Abyār, then to Damanhūr, and then to Alexandria. I found the plague had abated after the number of deaths had risen to a thousand and eighty a day. Then I went to Cairo and was told that during the plague the number of deaths there had risen to twenty-one thousand a day. I found that all the shaikhs I had known were dead. May God Most High have mercy upon them!¹⁰⁷

Fifth passage: The plague on the road to Mecca (Raḡab 749 / October 1348)

In Cairo IB learns that the *Raḡab* traditional caravan had left before his arrival,¹⁰⁸ having first brought the plague with them, but at the pass of Ayla¹⁰⁹ the epidemic had ceased.

¹⁰⁴ IBN KATHĪR, *al-Bidāya*, vol. 16, 10 and 342 (see AL-SAHĀWĪ, *al-Dayl al-tāmm*, vol. 1, 97, who quotes him); AL-MAQRĪZĪ, *al-Sulūk*, vol. 4, 86-87 (see IBN TAGRĪ BIRDĪ, *al-Nuḡūm*, vol. 10, 207-208, who quotes him); IBN IYĀS, *Badā'i' al-zuhūr*, vol. 1, 528.

¹⁰⁵ This is the hypothesis of BORSCH and SABRAA 2017: 80-81. It should be noted that Cairo at the time had an estimated population of between 250,000 and 500,000 (SHOSHAN 2002: 1 and 38, note 5 and 6).

¹⁰⁶ AL-TĀZĪ IV: 181.

¹⁰⁷ GIBB and BECKINGHAM IV: 919-920 [EP 323]. See YERASIMOS III: 358 = *la peste*; CHARLES-DOMINIQUE: 1.001 = *l'épidémie de peste*; FANJUL: 746 = *la epidemia*; TRESSO: 725 = *la peste*.

¹⁰⁸ The caravan left towards the middle of the month, after the important ceremonial feast of the *maḥmil* (or *maḥmal*), a kind of mobile shrine containing copies of the Koran which, hoisted on a camel, preceded the pilgrims accompanied by music and songs (GAUDEFRY-DEMOMBYNES 1923: 192-204; JOMIER 1953; SHOSHAN 2002: 70-75). On the Egyptian Pilgrimage caravan and the perilous journey of some 1,600 km to the Hijaz see, among others, LOISEAU 2014: 69-73 and AL-RASHED 2014: 28.

Perhaps reassured by this good news, IB soon leaves again, passes through Upper Egypt (probably already affected by the plague),¹¹⁰ arrives in ‘Aydhab and embarks for Jeddah. From here he continues overland to Mecca, where he claims having arrived on 22 *Ša‘bān* 749 [16 November 1348], at the time when the epidemic reached its peak in Cairo and Upper Egypt.

IB gives just a brief account of his stay in the holy city. He says that he placed himself under the protection of the Malikite *imām*,¹¹¹ that he met some sheikhs he had known from previous occasions, and that he performed both the rites of the *‘umra*, the “minor pilgrimage,” and those of the *Hağğ* [Pilgrimage], which that year took place between 27 February and 4 March 1349.¹¹² He then recounts that he left Mecca, made a brief visit to Medina to pay homage to the tomb of the Prophet and, passing again through Jerusalem and Gaza, returned to Cairo. There is no mention of the plague in this short story.

It should be noted that IB was even more laconic in his account of his previous Pilgrimage (in 1326)¹¹³ and had already provided many details about rites, places, institutions and people in his account of the first two ones (in 1327 and 1332).¹¹⁴ It is surprising, however, that despite having repeatedly mentioned the Black Death, he makes no allusion to it in Mecca. According to the chroniclers, in fact, that year the plague claimed a large number of victims among the inhabitants, the pilgrims and those who resided in the holy city for study or devotion.¹¹⁵ The *Yersinia pestis* bacillus probably arrived from Egypt and Syria in the caravans that converged on the peninsula during the

109 The Pass of Ayla is located in present-day Jordan at the north-western tip of the Gulf of Aqaba, between Mount Umm Nusayla and the sea. The other sources quoted in this article speak of the plague in Mecca, but they do not report any information on the plague among the pilgrims of the *Rağab* caravan, or when it ended at the pass of Ayla.

110 See note 103.

111 IB has already mentioned the Malikite *imām* of Mecca on the occasion of his first Pilgrimage: he was the famous Abū ‘Abd Allāh ibn Abī al-Raḥmān, called Ḥalīl (see GIBB I: 203, note 69). The Malikite *madhhab*, which has always been the most widespread in the Maghreb, was also the one followed by IB.

112 The rites of the Pilgrimage take place between the 8th and 13th days of the sacred month of *Dū al-Ḥiğga*, which is the last in the Islamic calendar, and are preceded by the *‘umra* to which IB refers (VENTURA 1999: 141-142). According to the *Rihla*, this was probably the fourth, but certainly the last Pilgrimage made by IB after those that he claims to have made in 726/1326, 727/1327 and 732/1332. As for the second, IB reports having stayed in Mecca from 1327 to 1330, and thus made two more Pilgrimages, but such a long period poses a number of dating problems that lead scholars to assume that IB stayed in Mecca only one year at that time (see GIBB II, “Appendix”, 528-537 and DUNN 1986: 132-133, note 2), or to revise the chronology of his stay in India (see HRBEK 1962: 439-486 and “Addenda”, 483-486).

113 AL-TĀZĪ II: 153-154; GIBB II: 410-411 [EP 248-249].

114 AL-TĀZĪ I: 343-411; GIBB I: 158-248 [EP 254-404] and AL-TĀZĪ II: 88-91; GIBB II: 355-359 [EP 148-155]. It has been noted that the detailed description of Mecca in IB’s first description of the city reveals several substantial borrowings from the *Rihla* of Ibn Ġubayr (see esp. MATTOCK 1981; NETTON 1986; ELGER 2010b), but this does not exclude the possibility that IB effectively went to Mecca one or more times for the Pilgrimage.

115 IBN ABĪ ḤAĞĀLA, *Daf‘ al-niqma*, f. 75a; IBN ḤAĞĀR, *Baḍl al-mā‘ūn*, 237; AL-SAHĀWĪ, *al-Ḍayl al-tāmm*, vol. 1, 97; IBN IYĀS, *Badā‘i‘ al-zuhūr*, vol. 1, 530. See also DOLS 1977: 63. According to recent studies, 2,500-3,000 people took part in the Pilgrimage that year, and some 1,500 may have died (BORSCH and SABRAA 2017: 86-87).

Pilgrimage:¹¹⁶ if IB was in Mecca, he certainly witnessed its tragic effects, and if not, he and/or Ibn Ǧuzayy would certainly have heard the news that the plague had struck the Holy City. The event, in fact, was the cause of much discussion among Muslims because, according to chroniclers, Mecca had never been hit by an epidemic since becoming the most important holy city in Islam.¹¹⁷ Extraordinary though it seems, considering the tens of thousands of people who travelled there every year, it may have been a result of the rules of ritual purity—and therefore of hygiene—which Muslim pilgrims have always scrupulously followed.¹¹⁸

That IB fails to mention the plague in Mecca is a little strange. However, it should also be noted that, as a devout Muslim, he does not rejoice in finding Medina spared from the scourge. Had Medina not escaped the Black Death unharmed, it would have been a most inauspicious event for the Muslims: not only because, like Mecca, until then the city had not experienced any epidemics, but also because the Prophet himself, according to Tradition, had stated that Medina—his beloved Ṭayba [Sweet, Pleasant]—would always remain unscathed by the plague. “There are angels guarding the entrances of Medina: neither the plague [*al-ṭāʿūn*] nor *al-Masīh* (*al-Daǧǧāl*) [the Antichrist] will be able to enter it,” said Muḥammad in a famous *ḥadīṭ* reported in the most authoritative collections.¹¹⁹ The Prophet’s saying, therefore, was confirmed to be true: not even the aggressive and contagious *Yersinia pestis* bacillus was able to reach Medina, whose reputation as a city protected from the plague is attested to by a series of testimonies stretching until the mid-nineteenth century, including in the accounts of some Western travellers.¹²⁰ But IB does not mention this: the only news of the Black Death that he reports in the holy places of Islam is that of the *Raǧab* caravan that set out from Cairo with some infected people.

116 It should be noted that most pilgrims travelled in caravans that met in major metropolises. At the time of the Mamluks, the two most important caravans were formed in Cairo (for pilgrims from Africa, especially the Maghreb) and Damascus (for those from Anatolia, Iran, Iraq and Syria), each with up to 40,000 people (see LOISEAU 2014: 68; AL-RASHED 2014: 29).

117 DOLS 1977: 63 states that “the Prophet was supposed to have promised that no disease would ever enter the holy cities of Mecca and Medina”, but does not cite the source and if, as we shall see, many *ḥadīṭ* agree with this observation with reference to Medina, I am not aware of any with reference to Mecca. The fact that Mecca was never struck by the plague is instead reported in chronicles even before the Black Death (see CONRAD 1981: 57-60 and CONRAD 1982: 286-288). See among others IBN IYĀS, *Badāʿiʿ al-zuhūr*, vol. I, 530, who, reporting the arrival of the pandemic in Mecca, said that no one had ever heard of the city being hit by the plague (*lam yusmaʿ bi-an daḥala Makka ṭāʿūn*).

118 CONRAD 1982: 286-287.

119 AL-BUḤĀRĪ, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 7, 377 [*ḥadīṭ* 5731]; MUSLIM, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 3, 621 [*ḥadīṭ* 1398]; AL-TIRMIDĪ, *Ġāmiʿ*, 734 [*ḥadīṭ* 2391 (2242)]. See SUBLET 1971: 144; DOLS 1979: 162-ss; CONRAD 1982: 284.

120 See Johann Burckhardt who, having converted to Islam, made the Pilgrimage in 1814 during a wave of plague and reports how “Medina remained free from the plague” (BURCKHARDT 1829, vol. 1, 327) and Richard Burton, who, in his account of his famous Pilgrimage in disguise in 1853, devotes several pages to the health situation in Medina and notes how “It is still the boast of Al-Madinah, that the Taun, or plague, has never passed her frontier” (BURTON 1893, vol. 1, 384). For further information on this topic, see CONRAD 1982: 284-291.

ولما وصلت القاهرة وجدت قاضي القضاة عز الدين [...] قد توجه إلى مكة في ركب عظيم يسمونه الرجبي، لسفرهم في شهر رجب. وأخبرت أن الوباء لم يزل معهم حتى وصلوا إلى عقبة أيلة، فارتفع عنهم. ثم سافرت من القاهرة، على بلاد السعيد، إلى عيذاب وركبت منها البحر فوصلت إلى جدة، ثم سافرت منها إلى مكة شرفها الله تعالى وكرمها منها فوصلت في الثاني والعشرين لشعبان سنة تسع وأربعين. [...] ثم سافرت مع الركب الشامي إلى طيبة مدينة رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم وزرت قبره المكرم المطيب.¹²¹

When I arrived in Cairo I found that the Grand Qāḍī ‘Izz al-Dīn [...] had set out for Mecca in a huge caravan called rajabī, because it leaves in the month of Rajab.¹²² I was told that the plague was among them until they reached the pass of Aila, where it ceased. I then went from Cairo to the Ṣa‘īd, to ‘Aydhab, whence I sailed to Judda, and then went to Mecca, May God Most High ennoble ad honour her! I arrived on the twenty-second of *Sha‘bān* of the year forty-nine [16 November 1348]. [...] I made the pilgrimage in that year and then left with the Syrian caravan for Ṭaiba, the city of the Prophet of God. May God bless and give him peace. I visited his noble and perfumed tomb.¹²³

Sixth passage: The plague in Cairo and Morocco (*Ṣafar* 750 / April – May 1349)

After visiting Medina, IB leaves by land for Cairo¹²⁴ and the *Rihla* reports very briefly that he passed one last time through Jerusalem, Hebron and Gaza. In 742/1341, in Delhi, he had expressed the wish to return to the holy cities of Islam¹²⁵ and after a long time he finally succeeded: he made what he claims to be his fourth (or perhaps sixth)¹²⁶ Pilgrimage to Mecca and paid a holy visit to Medina. In Cairo, the atmosphere must have been at the very

121 AL-TĀZĪ IV: 181-182.

122 The month of *Raġab* in 749 corresponds to the period from 25 September to 24 October 1348.

123 GIBB and BECKINGHAM IV: 920-921 [EP 324-325]. See YERASIMOS III: 359 = *la peste*; CHARLES-DOMINIQUE: 1.001 = *l'épidémie de peste*; FANJUL: 746 = *la epidemia*; TRESSO: 726 = *la peste*.

124 IB says that he left Mecca immediately after the Pilgrimage, which as we have seen ended on 4 March 1349, so he probably arrived and left Medina in the first half of the month.

125 AL-TĀZĪ III: 248; GIBB III: 766 [EP 447].

126 See note 112.

least desolate¹²⁷ and probably because of this, IB decides, after 24 years away from home—and having already seen 45 winters—to return home. Until then he had never spoken of his return, but on arriving in Cairo he pronounces a brief panegyric on the new Marinid Sultan of Fez, Abū ‘Inān, and concludes: “I sought to make my way to his exalted capital.” Then, without giving up the melancholic pathos that distinguishes him every time he speaks of his beloved country, he explains to the reader: “The memory of my homeland moved me, affection for my people and friends, and love for my country which for me is better than all others: *A land where charms were hung upon me, whose earth my skin first touched.*”¹²⁸

In the month of *Ṣafar* 750 [April-May 1349], according to the *Rihla*, IB boarded a small galley and sailed for Jerba, in present-day Tunisia. From there, again by sea, he went on to Gabes, Sfax and finally Tunis, where he stayed for a month. A year earlier, the city had been struck by the Black Death, and in the month of its peak, *Rabī‘ I* [June] it had probably killed between 700 and 1,000 people a day.¹²⁹ However, he mentions neither the event nor the damage it caused and although he claims having attended the sultan’s court and had long discussions with many local notables,¹³⁰ he does not mention either the pandemic or the debates it provoked in highly-educated Muslim circles.

After leaving Tunis, IB resumes his journey home and about a hundred kilometres from Fez he makes one last stop in Tāza, a small town in present-day Morocco perched on a hill where the Rif chain joins the Middle Atlas. Here the sad news reaches him that his mother has died of the plague—may God receive her in His mercy.¹³¹ As we have seen, when IB arrived in Damascus about a year earlier, he met a jurist from Tangier who told him that his

127 Cairo, brought to its knees by the Black Death, was also suffering from the severe political and administrative instability that followed the death of al-Malik al-Nāṣir ibn Qalāwūn in 1341. On the political situation in the Egyptian capital and North Africa at the time of IB’s return to his homeland, see DUNN 1986: 274-275.

128 AL-TĀZĪ IV: 184; GIBB and BECKINGHAM IV: 921 [EP 326-327].

129 In Tunis, the Black Death probably arrived from Sicily (BENEDICTOW 2004: 227; MELHAOUI 2005: 71). The number of 1,000 victims per day in the month of June 1348 is reported by Ibn Abī Dīnār (cited in DOLS 1977: 64, note 114), while Ibn Ḥātima speaks of 1,202 deaths, but does not specify either in which period or whether this figure refers to one or several days (cited in *ibid.*: 204, note 33; MELHAOUI 2005: 184-185). The plague in Tunis is also attested by Ibn Ḥaldūn, who lived there at the time of the pandemic (see below, esp. note 170).

130 The sultan in question is the Marinid Abū al-Ḥasan, who conquered Tunis in the autumn of 1347 with the ambition of bringing the Maghreb countries under his rule. Sources report that *al-tā‘ūn al-ḡārīf* [the Overwhelming Plague] appeared among the ranks of his army during a battle against a coalition of rebellious tribes that took place at Qayrawān on 8 *Muḥarram* 749 [10 April 1348] (IBN ḤALDŪN, *al-Ta‘rīf*, 27-29). Having survived, Abū al-Ḥasan reached Tunis by sea and was forced to barricade himself in the citadel, where the rebels besieged him, but in Fez they presumed that he was dead. At the beginning of 1349 his son Abū ‘Inān Fāris took over as sultan, and refusing to relinquish his position upon learning that his father was still alive, effectively usurped him. On the unification policy of North Africa by the Marinids and in particular on Abū al-Ḥasan, see DUNN 1986: 275-280.

131 BIRABEN 1975: 430 says that the plague arrived in Tangier in 1348, but does not cite his sources. DOLS 1977: 65 relies on IB’s information to establish the arrival of the plague in Morocco in 1349 and he states that “Plague overtook Tāzah in Morocco, for Ibn Baṭṭūṭah learned in 750/1349 that his mother had died there of it”. In fact, IB does not say that the plague arrived in Tāza, but that in Tāza he was told that his mother had died of the plague: nothing suggests that she did not live in Tangier, where she probably spent all her life and, as related in the *Rihla*, was buried.

father had been dead for 15 years, while his mother was still alive.¹³² But *Yersinia pestis* bacillus, probably among the ranks of the Marinid army, found its way from Tunis and/or al-Andalus to Fez and preceded IB to Tangier¹³³—thus preventing him from seeing his mother ever again.

ووصلت إلى مدينة تازي، وبه تعرفت خير موت والدي بالبواب رحمها الله
تعالى. ¹³⁴

I reached the city of Tāzā, where I learnt that my mother had died of the plague, God Most High have mercy upon her.¹³⁵

Seventh passage: The plague in Gibraltar (*Dū l-Ḥiġġa* 750 / March 1350)

The *Rihla* states that IB arrived in Fez on the last Friday of *Ša'bān* 750 [13 November 1349] and went to the palace of Sultan Abū 'Inān, who had succeeded his father earlier that year.¹³⁶ The ruler may have been absent, for IB did not meet him but he was greeted by the vizier, who gave him a number of gifts and asked him about Egypt. After that he left for Tangier.¹³⁷

Back in his hometown, IB was reunited with his family, the several friends and acquaintances he had left behind and whom he greeted again with joy. They would mostly have welcomed him with warmth and honours, but he does not speak of them, nor does he mention his home or the places to which he returned after so many years away. He only says that he visited his mother's tomb,¹³⁸ thus suggesting his affection for her. And it

132 AL-TĀZĪ IV: 177; GIBB and BECKINGHAM IV: 916 [EP 316]. See note 79.

133 For Morocco, the scholars note that “the precise impact of the Black Death cannot be assessed due to a lack of documentation” (BENHIMA 2010: 286, see also SINGER 2020: 4). Ibn Ḥātima reports that there were more than 700 victims in Tlemcen, but he does not say in which period, nor whether this figure relates to a single day (cit. in DOLS 1977: 204, note 33; MELHAOUI 2005: 184).

134 AL-TĀZĪ IV: 192.

135 GIBB and BECKINGHAM IV: 925 [EP 332]. See YERASIMOS III: 365 = *la peste*; CHARLES-DOMINIQUE: 1.004 = *la peste*; FANJUL: 749 = *la peste*; TRESSO: 729-730 = *la peste*.

136 See note 130. It should be noted that IB saw three successive rulers of the Marinid dynasty. He was born and began his journey at the time of Abū Sa'īd (1310-1331), met his son Abū al-Ḥasan (1331-1348) in Tunis and returned to Fez a year after the latter's son, Abū 'Inān (1348-1358), had been proclaimed sultan.

137 IB probably arrived in Tangier the following month, *Ramaḍān*, which began on 13 November (DUNN 1986: 288, note 20).

138 IB does not say that he visited his father's tomb, which leads Dunn to assume that his father had died elsewhere (DUNN 1986: 280). It is curious to note, however, that in the *Rihla*'s abridged version by al-Baylūnī, IB states that he went to Tangier to visit his father's grave, but does not mention his mother's (AL-BAYLŪNĪ, f. 79a). See the English translation by LEE 1829: 226 and the German one by ELGER 2010a: 168.

should be noted that for someone like the author(s) of the *Rihla*, who knew how to combine mysticism with an innate propensity for pathos, the inclusion of this visit is probably more literary device than accident. Like many other Muslim travellers, IB visited hundreds of tombs:¹³⁹ the first one he claims to have visited,¹⁴⁰ in Upper Egypt, is of the famous Sufi al-Šādīlī, one of the highest representatives of Islamic spirituality.¹⁴¹ Having returned to his place of origin—his own as well as that of his journey—the last tomb he visited was that of his mother.¹⁴²

From Tangier, IB reports that he went to Ceuta and stayed there for several months, during three of which, he says, he was ill. What this illness was, we do not know, nor do we know how he recovered. He may well have been struck by the plague and recovered from it,¹⁴³ but no one has put forward this hypothesis; given the precedents, it is likely to have been another bout of malaria.¹⁴⁴ What is certain is that after regaining his health IB sets off again and heads north to the European Muslim territories, al-Andalus. The reason for his departure is explicit: “I wanted to take part in the holy war,” he says, “and in the frontier fighting.” The infidels IB was referring to were those of the coalition led by Alfonso XI of Castile (1302-1350), who in the battle of Rio Salado (30 October 1340), inflicted a heavy defeat on the Moroccan sovereign Abū al-Ḥasan, preventing the Muslim reconquest of Tarifa¹⁴⁵ and who on 28 March 1344, after 20 months of siege, reconquered Algeciras for Christianity.¹⁴⁶ That same sovereign now laid siege to Gibraltar, in Muslim hands since 1333.¹⁴⁷

139 “IB and other [Muslim] travellers headed for tombs in the places they visited as we might head for art galleries” (MACKINTOSH-SMITH 2001: 18). The visit to the tombs [*ziyāra*] grants *baraka* [blessing] to those who perform it: it is a ritual recommended in Islam, but above all very “Moroccan” (see EICKELMANN and PISCATORI 1990: XXI).

140 The first tomb that IB mentions, in Sfax, is that of the Maliki *imām* al-Laḥmī (d. 1085), but he does not say that he visited it (AL-TĀZĪ I: 169; GIBB I: 15 [EP 23]).

141 AL-TĀZĪ I: 229-230; GIBB I: 68 [EP 109]. The tomb of al-Šādīlī is located in Ḥumaythirā and is still a place of pilgrimage today (MACKINTOSH-SMITH 2001: 126-127). As for IB’s attraction to Sufi environments, see below, note 180.

142 After his mother’s grave IB mentions the grave of a rich and famous merchant from Alexandria in Timbuktu, but does not report having visited it (AL-TĀZĪ IV: 269; GIBB and BECKINGHAM IV: 969 [EP 431]). It is probably another literary device, thus IB visits neither the first nor the last of the many tombs he mentions in his *Travels*.

143 Since, according to the most recent studies, the Black Death killed an average of 70-80% of those who fell ill in Europe, 20-30% of those infected survived (ABERTH 2011: 59), but scholars are still searching for an answer to how and why these latter did recover (for an overview of studies by both historians and immunologists see CRESPO and LAWRENZ 2015).

144 This is the hypothesis of DUNN 1986: 281, which is based on the fact that IB claims that he already had two bouts of malaria: one in the Maldives and one probably in Madurai, India. See also Tresso 2022.

145 Conquered in 711 by the Arab-Berber troops of the Umayyad governor of North Africa, Mūsā ibn Nuṣayr, Tarifa was recaptured in 1292 by the Castilian king Sancho IV.

146 Algeciras, the first Iberian city conquered by Mūsā ibn Nuṣayr’s army in 711, remained under Muslim rule for over six centuries. According to the *Rihla* IB had learned a couple of years earlier, from a Moroccan he met in Baghdad in the month of *Šawwāl* 748 [January 1348], of its recapture and the battle of Rio Salado (AL-TĀZĪ IV: 174-176; GIBB and BECKINGHAM IV: 915 [EP 313-314]).

147 Gibraltar was founded in 1160 by the Almohad ‘Abd al-Mu’min. Conquered in 1309 by Ferdinand IV of Castile, it was retaken by the Marīnid Abū al-Ḥasan in 1333. It returned definitively to Christian

So it is not difficult to imagine IB in Ceuta, the general headquarters of the Marinid fleet, feverish and weak, intent on contemplating the Rock of Gibraltar:¹⁴⁸ in Arabic *Ġabal Ṭāriq*, the “Mount of Ṭāriq,” also known as *Ġabal al-Fath*, as he calls it, “the Mount of the Conquest [of al-Andalus].”¹⁴⁹ Perhaps it was because of a vow he had made to the Most High in the days of his illness, or maybe there were calls for help from Gibraltar, volunteers were needed for the defence of the promontory, the city and its ramparts. IB, though not a man of action, but easily overcome by ardour, left for Spain. But in those very same days, the unthinkable happened: the plague struck “the Christian tyrant” in Gibraltar and on the night of 26-27 March 1350 it put an end both to his life and to the siege of the city.¹⁵⁰ IB does not judge the event¹⁵¹ but merely reports: “God took him unprepared and he died of the plague.” In reality, however, the sentence ends with a brief comment: “which he feared more than anyone else.” This detail is not found in other Muslim sources: indeed, Christian sources state the opposite. According to the chronicles of Alfonso XI’s private secretary, Fernán Sánchez de Valladolid, the King of Castile had no fear of the epidemic. On the contrary, he remained in Gibraltar and besieged it despite the high mortality rate among his troops and regardless of pressure from the Castilian nobles to desist.¹⁵² So it cannot be ruled out that the voice of the brave king, contemptuous of the epidemic, had reached IB’s ears, and that he wanted to overturn it in contempt of the “Christian tyrant” who had defeated the Muslims at Rio Salado. But it is more likely that this biting comment is due to Ibn Ġuzayy, first because at that time he was a scribe at the court of Granada, so that more than IB he could have heard this voice, and then because his father Abū al-Qāsim al-Kalbī, a panegyrist of the Emir Yusuf I of Granada, died in this very battle.¹⁵³

hands in 1492 and became part of the kingdom of Castile in 1501 (Seybold and Huici-Miranda in *EP*², s.v. *Djabal Ṭāriq*).

148 On IB’s state of mind in Ceuta see NORRIS H. 1959: 187.

149 On 30 April 711 Ṭāriq ibn Ziyād (d. 720), at that time governor of Tangier, led the Arab-Berber army that, having crossed the strait between Morocco and Spain, conquered the fortress (which was named after Ṭāriq or the conquest) and the city of Algeciras.

150 The Iberian Peninsula was hit very hard by the pandemic: the most recent studies estimate the number of victims at 50-60% of the population in the years 1348-1350 (see, among others, ABERTH 2011: 37). Alfonso XI of Castile, known as *el Justiciero* [the Avenger] because of the ferocity with which he suppressed the unrest caused by the nobles who opposed him, was the only European ruler to die of the plague during the Black Death. See FERNÁNDEZ 2015, and in particular SANJUÁN’s article on him in Muslim sources (including IB). IB’s information that the siege of Gibraltar lasted ten months is roughly confirmed by the sources, which report that Alfonso XI’s expedition began in August 1349 (JACKSON 1986: 52).

151 Only once in the entire work does IB ascribe someone’s death to some sort of divine “justice”: when in Madurai the cruel (Muslim) sultan Ġiyāṭ al-Dīn succumbs along with his wife and child in an epidemic. In that case, in fact, referring to the infamies committed by him, IB adds: “This was an abomination which I have not known of any other king. That is why God hastened his death” (AL-TĀZĪ IV: 94; GIBB and BECKINGHAM IV: 860 [EP 194]). On this episode, see TRESSO 2022.

152 ROSELL 1875: 390-391. I thank Professor Manuel Garcia Fernández of the University of Seville for pointing out this information and its source to me.

153 A. Miguel in in *EP*², s.v. *Ibn Djuzayy*.

ولنعد إلى ذكر الرحلة فنقول: ولما حصلت لي مشاهدة هذا المقام الكريم، وعمني فضل إحسانه العميم، قصدت زيارة قبر الوالدة. فوصلت إلى بلدة طنجة وزرتها، وتوجهت إلى مدينة سبتة، فأقمت بها أشهرًا وأصابني بها المرض ثلاثة أشهر، ثم عافاني الله. فأردت يكون لي حظ من الجهاد والرباط، فركبت البحر من سبتة في شطي لأهل أصيلا، فوصلت إلى بلاد الأندلس، حرسها الله تعالى، حيث الأجر موفور للساكن، والثواب مذخور للمقيم والظاعن. وكان ذلك إثر موت طاغية الروم ألفونس، وحصاره الجبل عشرة أشهر، وظنه أنه يستولي على ما بقي من بلاد الأندلس للمسلمين. فأخذه الله من حيث لم يحتسب، ومات بالوباء الذي كان أشد الناس خوفا منه.¹⁵⁴

When it happened to me to see this noble residence and I had been overwhelmed by the favours of his universal benevolence, I sought to visit my mother's grave. I reached my native town of Tangier, visited it, and went to the city of Sabta [Ceuta], where I stayed for some months. I was ill for three months. Then God cured me and I wanted to take part in the holy war and the frontier fighting. I sailed from Ceuta in a *shaṭṭī* belonging to the people of Aṣīlā [Arzila] and reached al-Andalus, God Most High guard her, where the reward of those who live there is abundant and where recompense is treasured up for those who stay or travel there. This was just after the death of the Christian tyrant Adfūnus [Alfonso]. He besieged the mountain [Gibraltar] for ten months and supposed he would get possession of all of al-Andalus that still belonged to the Muslims. God took him unprepared and he died of the plague, which he feared more than anyone else.¹⁵⁵

Epilogue

Despite the end of the siege, IB leaves Ceuta, but in Gibraltar he finds a completely different situation from the one he had imagined: the siege has been lifted and if there is an enemy to deal with, it is the plague. He realises—or someone explains to him—that his

¹⁵⁴ AL-TĀZĪ IV: 204-211.

¹⁵⁵ GIBB and BECKINGHAM IV: 934 [EP 353-354]. See YERASIMOS III: 379 = *la peste*; CHARLES-DOMINIQUE: 1.013 = *la peste*; FANJUL: 757 = *la peste*; TRESSO: 738 = *la peste*.

help is no longer needed. In any case, he tells of having visited, together with the *qādī*, the system of fortifications and the stores of war material that the Marinid rulers had set up there.¹⁵⁶ Then he sighs: “I would have liked to be one of those serving there till the end of my life.”¹⁵⁷ But he resumes his journey and heads east, where he visits Ronda, Marbella, Malaga and Granada. Then he returns to Morocco and from there makes a final journey across the Sahara from north to south until he reaches the sultanate of Mali, in the Western Sudan: we don’t know if the plague had arrived there too, but he does not say anything about it.¹⁵⁸ In 1354 he returns definitively to Fez and a year later the Sultan orders him to dictate the chronicle of his travels and the court scribe, the Andalusian Ibn Ğuzayy, to edit it. The *Rihla* sees the light in 1356: from Gibraltar onwards, there is no further mention of plague and epidemics.

The description of the Black Death in the *Rihla* of IB: Comparison with chronicles

In all the situations in which IB speaks of *tā’ūn* [plague] or *wabā’* [epidemic] in the Arab area, he undoubtedly refers to the Black Death. A comparison of the information given in the *Rihla* with the main Arab chronicles of the 14th-15th centuries confirms, on the whole, IB’s reports: although there are many discrepancies in the numbers of victims, we have seen that they can be explained by the different ways in which the deaths were counted (only the town or also the surrounding area, the number of funerals or the number of deaths, etc.). With regard to the various information in the *Rihla* which is not confirmed by other sources, it is absolutely plausible and widely cited as reliable in modern and contemporary studies on the Black Death. However, some considerations emerge from this comparison.

The first is that later authors, who did not witness the pandemic, often refer to information from works written at the time of the scourge,¹⁵⁹ but none of them quote IB’s *Rihla* or make any mention of him. Of course, it could be that they knew his work and did not consider it a reliable source, but this hypothesis is disproved by the fact that many of

156 On the complex defensive system which first the Almohads and then the Marinids of Morocco set up in Gibraltar and its region, see NORRIS H. 1959: 188-190, where the author describes the atmosphere of great participation in the defence of al-Andalus in Gibraltar at that time.

157 AL-TĀZĪ IV: 211; GIBB and BECKINGHAM IV: 935 [EP 355].

158 For IB’s journey to Sudan see the analysis by COLLET 2017, where all previous studies are cited. The plague in Africa is a topic that remains to be studied: a survey of possible sources (both internal and external) has been proposed by CHOUIN 2018 (see also GREEN 2015b: 43-45 and GREEN 2018). Chouin also examines IB’s journey to Sudan and hypothesizes that the plague had not yet spread in/near Mali in the years 1352-1353 when IB was there, because the *Rihla* does not mention the plague: “Looking at the fact that IB did mention the disease in other places [...] the absence of any mention in the southern margins of the Sahara suggests that he did not observe or hear about the disease in that part of the world”. The doubt remains, however, since we have seen that IB does not mention the scourge in some places (Mecca, Baghdad, Tunis, the Delta region) affected by the plague where he claims to have been during the pandemic.

159 Al-Maqrīzi, for example, quotes Ibn Abī Ḥaġala and Ibn Kathīr; Ibn Taġrī Birdī quotes Ibn al-Maqrīzi; Ibn Qāḍī Šuhba quotes Ibn Kathīr and al-Ḥusaynī, etc.

the figures and information provided by IB agree with those of the chroniclers who witnessed the pandemic. It should be noted that IB had already been accused of lying by some of his contemporaries, who listened to him telling the stories of his travels at the court of Fez and considered some of them exaggerated and unbelievable.¹⁶⁰ If those chroniclers writing after the epidemic were aware of this and believed it to be true, it is likely that at least some of them would have voiced their criticism—although it should be noted that in this case IB’s information is neither “exaggerated” nor “unbelievable.” Instead, it seems more probable that they knew neither the work nor its author, and that the absence of the *Rihla* among the sources on the Black Death used by Arab chroniclers after the pandemic confirms Dunn’s hypothesis that “the *Rihla* appears to have had a very modest impact on the Muslim world until modern times.”¹⁶¹ The reason for this still remains an enigma, and more research should be carried out on this subject.

The second consideration concerns the narrative style of IB when he talks of the Black Death. If we exclude the first account of the multi-religious prayer gathering in Damascus, a brief anecdote in Jerusalem (which takes place when the plague is waning) and two occasions on which he implores the mercy of the Most High on friends and relatives who died in the pandemic, IB relates the news with a neutral, detached tone, speaking little or nothing of his own—or others’—experiences of the scourge. This is a detail that clashes with the style of most of the *Rihla*, where IB shows a passionate character and an innate ability to tell his adventures involving the reader with anecdotes and stories, even at the expense of “technical” information and data. As has been noted, he often refers to the merchants and never to the goods they traded,¹⁶² and even when reporting on history, he is more concerned with the biographical or legendary events of the characters than with the chain of events: he gives detailed accounts of the lives and deaths of the protagonists, but with no intention of analysing causes and consequences.¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ Ibn Ḥaldūn quotes some of IB’s anecdotes on the sultan of Delhi (Muḥammad Ibn Tughluq) and notes that they did not seem possible in the court of Fez, where people “confabulated that he was lying” [*tanāḡā bi-takḡibihi*] (Ibn Ḥaldūn, *Muqaddima*, vol. I: 328). Ibn Ḥaḡar reports that both Ibn al-Ḥaḡīb and Ibn Marzūq related that the Andalusian *qādī* al-Balfīqī had personally heard the “strange things” [*ḡarā’ib*] IB used to tell and accused him of lying [*ramāhu bi-l-kaḡb*] (IBN ḤAḠAR, *al-Durar al-kāmīna*, vol. 3, 480-481. The passage is translated into English in GIBB I: IX-X). Ibn al-Ḥājj al-Balfīqī (1264-1366), was the teacher of important scholars as Ibn Ḥaldūn, and also of Ibn Ḡuzayy. The *Rihla* refers that IB met both him and Ibn Ḡuzayy in 1351, in a garden of Granada (AL-TĀZĪ IV: 226; GIBB and BECKINGHAM IV: 943 [EP 372]). Ibn Marzūq (c. 1311-1379) was born in Tlemcen (in present-day Algeria) and was a famous expert in Islamic law who also played an important diplomatic role as advisor and secretary of the sultan Abū ‘Inān, so he probably met IB at his court.

¹⁶¹ This is the opinion of DUNN 1986: 317. WAINES 2010: 6 notes that given the presence of a number of manuscripts of the *Rihla* found in the Maghreb and Egypt, at least in this area IB’s travelogue must have enjoyed a certain popularity, but he does not provide any proof of this. As to the circulation of IB’s *Rihla*, in the Middle East it seems to have been documented for the first time at the end of the 16th century (AL-TĀZĪ I: 63), while in Africa we know that a manuscript of the *Rihla* had been copied in *Raḡab* 1043/January 1634 in Timbuktu (COLLET 2017, who notes that the manuscript was certainly present there some time before this date).

¹⁶² DUNN 1986: 139-140.

¹⁶³ “Mentality alien to any *ῑστορία*”, as put by GABRIELI 1975: XIV.

In the majority of the cases in which he mentions the plague, however, IB merely gives the number of death with a few brief comments: he does not describe scenes of tragedy, nor does he speak of corpses and only when talking about Gaza does he say that it was “half-deserted.” Yet the chroniclers, especially those who witnessed the scourge first hand, usually unaccustomed to commenting on the dramatic nature of the news they recount, describe the apocalyptic scenes of the Black Death most disturbingly. When he talks about Damascus, Ibn Abī Ḥaḡala (who lost a son in the pandemic and died of the plague in a subsequent wave) writes: “I witnessed the terrible [*ḥāʿil*] state it was in” and concludes “In short, compared to this one, all the previous plagues [*tāʿūn*] are like a drop in the sea or a point in a circle.”¹⁶⁴ Also in Damascus, Ibn Kathīr reports that one day he saw with his own eyes such a number of coffins that the great Mosque could not accommodate all of them and the *ḥaṭīb* [preacher] had to go out and recite the funeral prayer over those that had been left outside.¹⁶⁵ Ibn al-Wardī, who died in Aleppo of the Black Death, was a poet and in the short treatise on the plague that he wrote in rhymed prose [*saḡʿ*] he compares the disease [*tāʿūn*] to a lion, a storm, a lover who kisses and embraces his victims while poisoning them.¹⁶⁶ Al-Maqrīzī, who lived a century later, reports that such an epidemic [*wabāʾ*] had never before happened and says that at the beginning of *Raḡab* 749/October 1348 there were no more places in the cemeteries of Damascus, so that a number of corpses were abandoned “in the orchards and by the roadside.” The same happened in Cairo, where dogs roamed among the corpses piled up in the streets and in the markets—which were closed due to a lack of customers and goods. After the peak, in the first days of *Dū al-qaʿda* [second half of January 1349] the city was deserted, the streets were littered with rubbish, the faces of the few passers-by were distraught [*tunakkiru wuḡūh al-nās*] and there were moans and cries from the houses. The call to prayer no longer resounded from the minarets because the plague had decimated the muezzins and most of the small mosques [*masḡid*] and monasteries [*zāwiyā*] were closed. In the countryside there were no longer any farmers to cultivate the land and almost all the fishermen were dead.¹⁶⁷ Ibn Qādī Šuhba, a contemporary of al-Maqrīzī, recalls a witness who, having survived the scourge, repeated: “Before ʿ49 [1348], we did not know what the plague [*tāʿūn*] was.”¹⁶⁸ Even in the first half of the 16th century, Ibn Iyās still comments on the plague [*tāʿūn*] by saying *kāna fanāʿan ʿazīman* [it was an enormous destruction].¹⁶⁹ The polymath Ibn Ḥaldūn, who was not a

164 IBN ABĪ ḤAḒALA, *Dafʿ al-niqma*, f. 75b (see IBN ḤAḒAR, *Badl al-māʿūn*, 237, who quotes him).

165 IBN KATHĪR, *al-Bidāya*, vol. 16, 343. For an in-depth analysis of Ibn Kathīr’s report on the Black Death see MIRZA 2020a, who notes that “Throughout Ibn Kathīr’s description he constantly invokes the Qur’anic phrase (Qur. 2: 156) ‘To God we belong, and to Him we return’ [*Innā li-llāh wa-innā ilayHi rāḡiʿūn*] which is typically said after a death or great calamity”.

166 IBN AL-WARDĪ, *Taʿrīḥ*, vol. 2, 339.

167 AL-MAQRĪZĪ, *al-Sulūk*, vol. 4, 81 and 84-88 (see IBN TAḒRĪ BIRDĪ, *al-Nuḡūm*, vol. 10, 195 and 202-207, who quotes him).

168 IBN QĀDĪ ŠUHBA, *Taʿrīḥ*, vol. 1, 541.

169 IBN IYĀS, *Badāʿiʿ al-zuhūr*, vol 1, 523.

chronicler but when an adolescent, in Tunis, lost both his parents to the pandemic, states that as a result of the plague “the entire inhabited world changed.”¹⁷⁰

Besides not speaking of the signs of the epidemic either in the cities where he resides or in the countryside he passes through, IB does not mention the debate of the time on how a good Muslim should interpret the scourge and how he should behave. Without investigating such a vast and complex subject, which does not appear in the *Rihla*, it should be noted that, based on a number of *ḥadīṭ*, the debate started from three fundamental principles. 1. The plague is a mercy and the Muslim who dies from it is a martyr who will be welcomed into Paradise; 2. A Muslim must neither enter nor flee from a region struck by the plague; 3. There is no contagion in the plague because the disease comes directly from God.¹⁷¹ The varying opinions expressed by the scholars together with people’s own behaviour did not always fall within these guidelines. Regarding the first point, there were those who did not regard the plague as a mercy but as God’s punishment for man’s bad behaviour, so that many rites and prayers gatherings took place, such as that of Damascus, by which the faithful begged God asking Him to ward off the scourge and/or for His forgiveness.¹⁷² As for the second, it should be noted that during the Black Death there was a continuous exodus from the countryside to the cities, even when it was known that in urban centres the epidemic was at its height.¹⁷³ Finally, in both Christian and Muslim societies, (some) men of science noticed that those who came into contact with infected people almost always fell ill, and developed a series of theories based on the concept of contagion.¹⁷⁴ However, IB

170 “... in the middle of the eighth [fourteenth] century, civilization both in the East and the West was visited by the destructive plague [*al-ṭāʾūn al-ġārif*] which devastated nations and caused populations to vanish. It swallowed up many of the good things of civilization and wiped them out. It overtook the dynasties at the time of their senility, when they had reached the limit of their duration. It lessened their power and curtailed their influence. It weakened their authority. Their situation approached the point of annihilation and dissolution. Civilization decreased with the decrease of mankind. Cities and buildings were laid waste, roads and way signs were obliterated, settlements and mansions became empty, dynasties and tribes grew weak. The entire inhabited world changed [*tabaddala al-sākin/al-masākin*].” (IBN ḤALDŪN, trans. ROSENTHAL, vol. I: 64; Arabic text by QUATREMÈRE, vol. I: 51-52). On Ibn Ḥaldūn’s narration of the Black Death see, among others, CONGOURDEAU and MELHAOUI 2001: 109, 111 and *passim*; MARAVILLAS 2014: 4-5; SINGER 2020: 121-122.

171 DOLS 1977: 109. On this subject see SUBLET 1971; DOLS 1974c: 377-378; DOLS 1977: 84-142, 291-293 and *passim*; CONRAD 1998; CONGOURDEAU and MELHAOUI 2001; MELHAOUI 2005; STEARNS 2007; SABBATANI et al. 2012b: 226-229; *passim*; BARONE 2020 and STEARNS 2020a; STEARNS 2020b, who actualize his extensive studies by examining the issue in the time of Covid-19 pandemic.

172 For prayer gatherings during the Black Death see SUBLET 1971: 147-149; DOLS 1997: 246-252; STEARNS 2009: 4-5; MIRZA 2020a; MIRZA 2020b; TRESSO 2021a; TRESSO 2021b.

173 See, among other chroniclers, al-Maqrīzī who repeats it on several occasions (AL-MAQRĪZĪ, *al-Sulūk*, vol. 4, 84, 89, 90 and *passim*) and for modern scholars see DOLS 1977: 154-168. Migration from the rural areas to the cities during epidemics had already been noted by Thucydides, who reported: “The crowding of the people out of the country into the city aggravated the misery; and the newly-arrived suffered most. For, having no houses of their own, but inhabiting in the height of summer stifling huts, the mortality among them was dreadful, and they perished in wild disorder” (THUCYDIDES, *Peloponnesian War*, Book II, 138-139 [par. 52]).

174 Of significance is the work of the Andalusian Ibn al-Ḥaṭīb (713/1313-776/1374), who on the basis of his own empirical experience supported the transmissibility of the plague—but in order not to violate Islamic dogma that considers God to be the primary cause of all effects, stated that the disease is

does not mention these topics in the *Rihla*. He does not speak of “martyrs” when referring to victims of the Black Death, nor declare the scourge as a punishment from the Most High.¹⁷⁵ He unhesitatingly travels to places affected by the scourge, and never appears interested in how and why the plague is transmitted. Of course, scientific or religious debates on such matters concerned only small circles of intellectuals and men of religion, but as always in his *Travels*, it is precisely these circles that IB claims he frequented during the pandemic: in Damascus where he claims to have stayed in the summer of 1348, in Mecca from November 1348 to the beginning of March 1349, and at the court of Tunis for a month just before returning home.¹⁷⁶ And in the *Rihla* there are numerous episodes which describe theological disputes.¹⁷⁷ As for the editor (or co-author) of the *Rihla*, Ibn Ġuzayy, who was court scribe first in Granada and then in Fez, he too had certainly listened to, attended and taken part in debates on information and issues about the pandemic.

In short, the narrative of the Black Death in IB’s *Rihla* reads like a “casualty bulletin,” of the kind being broadcast on the news today, in the time of Covid-19. Yet, in the remainder of the *Rihla* there is not much information of this kind, since although describing many battles and various massacres (past or present), only on two occasions does it report the number of deaths.¹⁷⁸ Of course, even bulletins can be very incisive,¹⁷⁹ but the reasons for this change in style are difficult to identify, and a careful investigation of the still unpublished manuscripts of the *Rihla* may yet provide some explanation.¹⁸⁰ It may be,

contagious by the will of the Most High, and not by its nature. On the theory of contagion at the time of the Black Death, and particularly in the Muslim area, in addition to the works cited in note 171 see DOLS 1974b: 269-287; 295-299; CONRAD 1982: 268-307 and CONRAD and WUJASTYK 2000; AKASOY 2007: 387-410; STEARNS 2009, STEARNS 2011; REICH 2012; SPEZIALE 2016; BUZZARD 2017; BUTT 2018.

- 175 In India, IB ascribes the death of Ġiyāt al-Dīn during the above mentioned Madurai epidemic to a divine punishment (see note 151), but this does not mean that he interprets the disease as a punishment from the Most High against an entire people.
- 176 Alongside these debates, much remains to be investigated about reactions to the Black Death in popular culture and rituals (Sufism circles and personalities, preachers’ sermons, religious celebrations of various kinds, etc.). See the above-mentioned work by SHOSHAN 2002, on popular culture in Cairo in the medieval period.
- 177 In Yemen, for example, we read about the debate between a Sunni holy man of Zabīd and a group of Zaydite Shiites on the *qadar*, the decision, the “decree” with which God intervenes in the creation of the universe (Qur. 41, 12) and of all things (Qur. 54, 49), which constitutes a central concept in the discussions on predestination and free will (AL-TĀZĪ II: 106; GIBB II: 368 [EP 170-171]). For the concept of *qadar*, see among others GUILLAUME 1924; ZAKARIA 2015.
- 178 The first is when, passing through Jabala, in present-day Syria, he recalls the *Nuṣayrī* (or Alawite) revolt that broke out there in 717/1317 and reports that the combined armies of the governors of Latakia and Tripoli, intervening to suppress it, killed some 20,000 people (AL-TĀZĪ I: 292; GIBB I: 112 [EP 179]). The second concerns the invasion of Iraq by the Tatars in 1258. In this case it is Ibn Ġuzayy who speaks, and he reports having heard that “there perished in the Tatar massacre in al-‘Irāq twenty-four thousand men of the class of scholars” (AL-TĀZĪ III: 24; GIBB III: 553-554 [EP 27]).
- 179 See Gibb’s laconic comment on the description of the plague by IB: “In a few terse sentences he reveals its frightful ravages” (GIBB 2004 [1929]: 8).
- 180 In this regard, I have only looked for the plague in the two already mentioned compendia of the *Rihla* translated on the basis of manuscripts other than those of by Defremery and Sanguinetti edition. The manuscript translated into Latin by Kosegarten does not mention the plague (KOSEGARTEN 1818),

however, that when IB dictated his travelogue and Ibn Ğuzayy edited it, they were thinking not so much of posterity as their audience at the time; those, who knew even more about the plague than they did and did not want to hear more. Or, alternatively, given that the plague is almost always mentioned in the final part of the work, might perhaps IB and Ibn Ğuzayy both have been tired? The sultan was pressing for delivery of the commissioned work and therefore they were anxious to conclude and preferred to shorten the story in order to complete the task? Since Ibn Ğuzayy probably died less than one year after the edition of the *Rihla*, someone has even suggested that he was in a hurry to conclude because he was seriously ill.¹⁸¹ If we look at the *Rihla* as a literary text, however, we can also assume that IB and/or Ibn Ğuzayy deliberately did not include an overly strong description of such recent destruction and death, which fits poorly into a story where all sorts of adventures and misadventures happen to IB, but he always comes out unscathed.¹⁸²

Personal testimony or not?

As already often mentioned, in IB's time there were those who criticised the "exaggeration" of his stories and to this day scholars continue to examine the authenticity of his testimony with regard to many passages of the *Rihla*. It therefore seems necessary to subject his narration of the Black Death to the same scrutiny, comparing it with that of the chronicles cited in this paper.

With regard to IB's two-year journey during the Black Death, there seems to be no reason to suppose that IB and/or Ibn Ğuzayy borrowed information from these sources. Although the literary style is very similar to that usually adopted in chronicles, the narrative of Black Death chroniclers is much more exciting and engaging. In this regard, therefore, the *Rihla* does not reveal external influences. We do not find any external influences regarding the numbers of victims, which, although they may be interpreted as "not discordant" with those of the chroniclers, vary considerably from them. As we have seen, some important information reported by the chroniclers—the epochal outbreak of the plague in Mecca during the Pilgrimage, Medina that remains unscathed, the ravage of the

while that by al-Baylūnī cites the plague twice. First when providing a summary of the prayer gathering in Damascus (LEE 1829: 30-31; AL-BAYLŪNĪ, f. 9a, where the word *tā'ūn* is found; ELGER 2010a: 34-35) and then at the end of the journey, when, arriving in Cairo, IB only states: "At these time there was a general plague throughout Egypt [*kāna al-wabā' 'āmma bi-kulli al-bilād*]. I was told that the number of those who died daily in Cairo amounted to one and twenty thousand" (LEE 1829: 225; AL-BAYLŪNĪ, f. 78b; see also ELGER 2010a: 167, who more accurately translates "Im ganzen Land Ägypten grassierte die Seuche", "The epidemic was rampant throughout the country of Egypt").

181 AL-TĀZĪ I: 130.

182 Just to mention a few examples: in Anatolia IB almost perishes in the snow (AL-TĀZĪ II: 201-202; GIBB II: 456-457 [EP 329-332]); his ship is in danger of sinking off the coast of Sinope (AL-TĀZĪ II: 210, 215; GIBB II: 468-469 [EP 354-355]); in Punjab, together with some 20 companions, he is attacked by brigands and hit by an arrow (AL-TĀZĪ III: 97; GIBB and BECKINGHAM III: 613 [EP 134]); on the road from Delhi to Dawlat Ābād he falls prisoner to a group of Hindus (AL-TĀZĪ IV: 11-12; GIBB and BECKINGHAM IV: 776-778 [EP 8-12]) and on arrival in al-Andalus he accidentally escapes an ambush by Christians near Marbella (AL-TĀZĪ IV: 218; GIBB and BECKINGHAM IV: 939-940 [EP 364-365]).

Black Death in the Delta region and in Tunis, the markets closed in Gaza—does not appear in the *Riḥla*, nor does it describe any of the scenes of tragedy reported by chroniclers. Conversely, in the *Riḥla* we found several pieces of information that, although credible, are not reported by other sources: the number of victims in Homs, the end of the plague in Jerusalem and Alexandria, the percentage of deaths among Gaza's notables and the presence of the plague in the *Raḡab* caravan—not to mention the precise number of 1,080 victims per day in Alexandria. Finally, some details suggest that IB speaks from personal experience: in Damascus, shortly before the outbreak of the epidemic, he says he met a jurist from Tangier who gave him news of his parents. Some months later, when he leaves Jerusalem for Cairo, he states that he travelled together with the sheikh of the Maghrebi of Jerusalem, Ṭalḥa al-ʿAbd al-Wādī, and the traditionalist Šaraf al-Dīn Sulaymān al-Milyānī, which means “from Milyāna,” a city in present-day north-western Algeria, a few hundred kilometres from Fez. All three of these characters could have denied it, but if they did, no trace of it remains.¹⁸³

To conclude this comparison with a typical expedient of classical Arabic literature much used in the *Riḥla*, however, I must temper this assertion with a counterbalancing observation:¹⁸⁴ with regard to all the information contained in the first account of the Damascus prayer gathering, I myself, in a previous study, have demonstrated that it cannot be ruled out (but neither proved) that IB and/or Ibn Ġuzayy drew information from other sources.¹⁸⁵

Good health or divine inspiration?

A final question remains to be answered. As we have seen, the *Riḥla*, in chronological order, mentions the Black Death in Gaza, Homs, Damascus, Jerusalem, Alexandria, Cairo, the road from Cairo to Mecca, Tangier and Gibraltar: all places through which IB claims to have passed during the raging of the scourge. Not to mention that the plague also raged in Mecca and Tunis, where IB claims to have stayed, and in the Delta region, which he

183 See in this respect Gibb's and Monteil's argument that IB's trip to China should be true because he claims to have met a compatriot from Ceuta, whose brother lived in Sijilmasa, in the Tafilalt oasis, who could easily have verified the information and discredited him (GIBB 2004 [1929]: 14; MONTEIL 1968: XIII). See also Levtzion and Hopkins, who suggest some borrowing from al-ʿUmarī's work in IB's description of Western Sudan, but do not question his journey to this area also by noting that he claims having met some compatriots there who, if not true, could have contradicted him (LEVTZION and HOPKINS 1981: 280).

184 The search for a counterbalance to weaken an assertion is undoubtedly one of the most recurrent Arab literary devices in IB's text: thus, for instance, the Shiite inhabitants of al-Najaf, in Iraq, are said to be “...courageous and open-handed” and the period ends “...but they are fanatical about ‘Alī” (AL-TĀZĪ I: 423; GIBB I: 258 [EP 419]). See also in the Maldives, when IB complains about the women's clothing (“most of them wear only one apron from the navel to the ground, the rest of their bodies being uncovered”), but on reflection adds: “I had some slave-girls who wore garments like those worn at Dihlī and who covered their heads, but it was more of a disfigurement than an ornament in their case, since they were not accustomed to it” (AL-TĀZĪ IV: 60-61; GIBB and BECKINGHAM IV: 827-828 [EP 123]).

185 See TRESSO 2021b.

crossed to reach Alexandria (and maybe also in Western Sudan, where he made his last journey). His account of the epidemic in the first person and in so many places is exceptional, if not unique: given our current knowledge of contagion, if IB really made this journey the question arises, how did he remain unscathed?¹⁸⁶

It is almost impossible to find an answer and this could simply be due to chance, but I will try to put forward two hypotheses.¹⁸⁷ The first is that IB may have acquired a number of empirical hygiene skills from the many Sufis he liked to frequent, adopting the habits of their ascetic life. The assiduous observance of the rules guaranteeing the ritual purification necessary for prayer, the sober diet and the many periods of spiritual retreats he claims to have undergone during his travels, may have protected him even minimally from the risk of contagion.¹⁸⁸ The second is that in the period between 1333 and 1346, during which he claims to have travelled in the Indian sub-continent and South-East Asia, IB could have at least partly protected (not to say immunised) himself from the plague. For some time, scholars believed that the Black Death bacillus belonged to the same strain as that of Justinian's plague,¹⁸⁹ but in recent decades it has been shown that between the first and second plague pandemics, probably between 1142 CE and 1339 CE, in the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau (modern China), the bacillus underwent a series of mutations that, in the years immediately preceding the Black Death, gave rise to an array of new strains, which were much more aggressive than the original one.¹⁹⁰ These new, highly contagious bacilli spread extremely rapidly in the Middle East from many places and directions, until appearing in Egypt, Iraq and Syria in 1348. So it could be noted that IB claims to have travelled in different areas close to those where, at that very time, new strains of *Yersinia pestis* were

186 This question has already been raised: see DUNN 1986: 273, who reports that IB leaves Damascus “in good health” but notes that “he says nothing of any personal measures he may have taken to keep from falling ill [...] and he does not seem to have taken to the road to escape it”.

187 I have already partly put forward these hypotheses with Marco Rivalta in TRESSO and RIVALTA 2009.

188 Although he was never affiliated with a particular Sufi brotherhood, IB recounts having visited all the main places and personalities of Sufism and in his travels there are many occasions when he claims having shared the thoughts and practices of the Sufis: attending their meetings, staying in their monasteries [*zāwīya*], paying homage at the tombs of sheikhs and pious people. Not to mention that, in the most difficult moments, we found him retreating to some Sufi hermitages to pray and fast. For example in India, perhaps in order to escape the sultan's wrath, he recounts that he gave away all his money and possessions to the *faqīr* and the poor and led an ascetic life together with a Sufi, ‘Abd Allāh al-Ġārī, for five months, concluding this retreat with a forty-day fast (AL-TĀZĪ III: 248-249; GIBB III: 766-767 [EP 445-447]). On IB and his relationship with Sufis, see GIBB 1929: 33-39; DUNN 1986: 20-23; MANDUCHI 2000: 108-122.

189 Among the most recent, see ECHENBERG 2007.

190 Green 2015b: 39. Recent paleo-genomic research has shown that, for reasons that are not entirely clear, the strain of *Yersinia p.* that caused Justinian's epidemic has gradually died out (WAGNER et al. 2014). The second pandemic caused by *Yersinia p.*, the Black Death, is said to have been caused by what scholars call a “Big Bang”, a polytomy with four branches (bacilli lineages). These newly generated strains were responsible for the Black Death and for the third pandemic—and all of them have living descendants today in rodent colonies in different parts of the world. As we have seen (note 77), scholars have recently suggested that the four explosive *Yersinia pestis* proliferations in new environments (i.e. the epidemiological process) started in the 13th century—and not in the 14th century where we customarily place the onset of the Black Death (CUI et al. 2013; WAGNER et al. 2014: 325; GREEN 2015b: 35-39; HYMES 2015; DEMEURE et al. 2019; GREEN 2020: 1610-1615).

progressively supplanting older, less virulent ones. Although the epidemic did not break out in India—at least not as strongly as in the Mediterranean area,¹⁹¹ it cannot be ruled out that some bacilli arrived there and claimed a small number of victims. That is, there may have been individual cases of the plague in several of the areas that IB frequented, or where he met people with whom he talked, slept and ate. A series of contacts with some of the bacillus carriers may therefore have enabled IB to develop some resistance to attacks by their new, very dangerous successors. But these answers are no more than hypotheses. Many others could be made: perhaps IB has not actually been in all these places, or he was simply very lucky or he has been blessed.

Conclusion

We cannot be certain that IB really followed the itinerary and made the stops he claims in this two-year journey “under the arrows of the Black Death.” That is, the hypothesis suggested by several scholars, that the *Rihla* is not a personal travelogue but rather a work of “haute couture” that brings together the personal experiences and knowledge of both IB and Ibn Juzayy, information received from witnesses met on site or elsewhere and news extrapolated from other works, might apply also to this part of IB’s travels.¹⁹²

Be that as it may, sources confirm that IB returned home at that time after twenty years of travelling.¹⁹³ In his case, “return home” meant crossing the Arabic area during the rage of the pandemic and witnessing it. As for Ibn Ğuzayy, who edited the text from the notes that IB dictated on his adventures, he too certainly witnessed the scourge in al-Andalus, where he was resident until 715/1353.¹⁹⁴ Like all their contemporaries, they certainly heard—and like some of them also read—a lot of information about the Black Death and witnessed its fury.

The narration of the Black Death in IB’s *Rihla* is therefore certainly how two educated Moroccan Muslims who personally experienced the most shocking event of the Middle Ages decided to describe it. Some scholars have identified borrowings from other sources in some of the literary devices of the *Rihla*.¹⁹⁵ In this case no one else, to my knowledge, has described the plague in the Mediterranean using a travelogue as a literary framework. If describing the Black Death with a two-year journey in the three continents then known, passing through and staying in the most affected places, is not a direct testimony but a literary procedure, it is certainly unique and of great impact.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹¹ See note 62.

¹⁹² The expression “haute couture” is proposed by COLLET 2017. See also FAUVELLE-AYMAR and HIRSCH 2003: 93 and *passim*, who use “bricolage”.

¹⁹³ See note 52.

¹⁹⁴ For Ibn Juzayy moving to Fez, see note 4. For the Black Death in al-Andalus, see note 150.

¹⁹⁵ On the borrowing techniques allegedly used by IB and/or Ibn Ğuzayy in the *Rihla* see esp. MATTOCK 1981, esp. 212-213; EUBEN 2006; ELGER 2010b.

¹⁹⁶ As for Arab travellers, I do not know of any other reports during the Black Death: Ibn al-Ĥaṭīb mentions IB as “one of the great travellers” who gave news about the plague, suggesting that he had heard or read other reports, but IB is the only one he cites (Ibn al-Ĥaṭīb, *Muqni‘at al-sā‘il*, 9). As for

Whether the *Rihla*'s narration of the scourge is the truthful account of a traveller or how two educated men decided to narrate the scourge in the world they lived in, it remains a reliable documentary source on the history of Black Death in the Arab Mediterranean area and a unique and interesting masterpiece of (not only Arabic) medieval literature.¹⁹⁷

Bibliography¹⁹⁸

Dictionaries and Grammars

GRÜNBAUM, Hanne, and Alessandro COLETTI. 2006. *Dizionario persiano-italiano*. Roma: La Sapienza Orientale.

IBN MANZŪR, Ġamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Mukarram (630/1232-711/1312). *Lisān al-ʿArab*. Al-Qāhira [II Cairo]: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1986. <https://archive.org/details/0661_20191225> (01 Nov. 2021).

LANE, William. 1984 [1863-1893]. *An Arabic-English Lexicon*. 8 vols. Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society.

WRIGHT, William. 1986 [1859]. *A Grammar of the Arabic Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Editions of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa's Travels quoted in this article

AL-BAYLŪNĪ, Faḥ Allāh ibn Muḥammad. n.d. *Maḥṭūṭa muntaqā mulahḥaṣ Riḥlat Ibn Baṭṭūṭa* (ed. by Sulaymān al-Fayyūmī). Al-Maktaba al-Azhariyya. <https://www.alukah.net/manu/files/manuscript_2852/elmtot.pdf> (01 Nov. 2021).

CHARLES-DOMINIQUE, Paule (ed. and transl.). 1995. "Ibn Baṭṭūṭa. Voyages et périples." In: *Voyageurs arabes. Ibn Faḍlān, Ibn Jubayr, Ibn Baṭṭūṭa et un auteur anonyme*, edited by Paule Charles-Dominique, 369-1050. Paris: Gallimard.

DEFREMERY, Charles-Dominique (ed. and transl. Anthology, with Arabic text). 1994 [1848]. "Voyages d'Ibn Batoutah dans la Perse et dans l'Asie Centrale. Extraits de l'original arabe, traduits et accompagnés de notes." In: *Islamic Geography*, edited by Fuat Sezgin, 4 vols, vol. 181: 1-165. Frankfurt am Main: Johann Wolfgang Goethe University.

— . and Beniamino R. SANGUINETTI (ed. and transl., with Arabic text). 1853-1858. *Voyages d'Ibn Batoutah*. 4 vols. Paris: Imprimerie impériale.

ELGER, Ralf. 2010a (ed. and transl.). *Ibn Battuta: Die Wunder des Morgenlandes. Reisen durch Afrika und Asien*. München: C. H. Beck.

travellers from other areas, the only one I am aware of is the Italian Franciscan friar Niccolò da Poggibonsi, who travelled throughout the Middle East between March 1346 and December 1350, but who apparently does not mention the epidemic in his memoirs (see Golubovich 1927, vol. 5, 1-12, who gives a detailed summary of them).

¹⁹⁷ Elger, who does not hesitate to call IB "a liar (and forger and plagiarist)" (ELGER 2010b: 71), concludes his comparison of IB's and/or Ibn Ġuzayy's *Rihla* with different Arabic sources by stating: "If they did use these sources, they did it cleverly and produced a masterpiece, like the German author and famous liar Karl May" (*ibid.*: 86). Together with Karl May (1842-1912), and among others, we can recall the famous *Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, from the 14th century, and the Italian novelist Emilio Salgari (1862-1911).

¹⁹⁸ EP (Encyclopedia of Islām, 2nd edition) has been consulted and sometimes quoted in the notes, but is not listed in the Bibliography.

- FANJUL, Serafín, and Federico ARBÓS (ed. and transl.). 1993 [1987]. *A través del Islam*. Madrid: Alianza Editorial.
- GABRIELI, Francesco. 1961. *I viaggi di Ibn Battuta* (transl. Anthology). Firenze: Sansoni.
- . 1975. “Ibn Baṭṭūṭa” (transl. anthology). In: *Viaggi e viaggiatori arabi*, 93-96. Firenze: Sansoni.
- GIBB, Hamilton A. R. (transl., anthology). 2004 [1929]. *Ibn Battuta: Travels in Asia and Africa, 1325-54*. Delhi: Low Price Publication.
- . 1958-1971. *The travels of Ibn Battuta, A.D. 1325-1354*, vols. I-III. 1994. Gibb, Hamilton A. R. and Charles F. Beckingham (ed. and transl.), vol. IV. 2000. Bivar, Adrian David Hugh (ed.), vol. V (Index to vols. I-IV). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (for the Hakluyt Society).
- HUSAIN, Mahdi. 1976 [1953]. *The Rehla of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa (India, Maldives Islands and Ceylon)* (ed. and Transl. Anthology). Baroda: Oriental Institute. Husain, Mahdi. <<https://archive.org/details/TheRehlaOfIbnBattuta>> (01 Nov. 2021).
- KOSEGARTEN, Jannes Gothofredus (Johann Gottfried) L. (ed. and transl. into Latin, Anthology, with Arabic text). 1818. “De Mohammede Ebn Batuta arabe tingitano eiusque itineribus.” *Officina Libraria Croekeriana* 4: 1-51.
- LEE, Samuel. 1829. *The Travels of Ibn Battuta*. London: J. Murray, Parbury and Howell & Stewart for the Oriental Translation Committee. <<https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.286321/page/n249/mode/2up>> (01 Nov. 2021). Lee did not edit the Arabic text, but the Arab manuscript (Qq 205 of Cambridge) by Faṭḥ Allāh ibn Muḥammad al-Baylūnī could be found at <https://www.alukah.net/manu/files/manuscript_2852/elmktot.pdf> (01 Nov. 2021).
- MONTEIL, Vincent (ed.), Charles-Dominique DEFREMERY, and Beniamino R. SANGUINETTI (transl.). 1968. *Voyages d'Ibn Baṭṭūṭa*. 4 vols. Paris: Editions Anthropos.
- MOURA, José de Santo Antonio. 1840. *Viagens extensas e dilatadas do célebre Arabe Abu Abd Allah mais conhecido pelo nome de Ben Baluta*. Lisboa: Na Typografia da Academia.
- VON MŽIK, Hans. 1911. *Die Reise des Arabers Ibn Batuta durch Indien und China (14. Jahrhundert)*. Hamburg: Gutenberg-Verlag. <<https://archive.org/details/diereisedurchind00muam>> (01 Nov. 2021).
- AL-TĀZĪ, ‘Abd al-Hādī (ed.). 1417/1997. *Riḥlat Ibn Baṭṭūṭa*. 4 vols. and Indexes (vol. 5). al-Ribāṭ [Rabat]: Maṭbū‘āt Akādīmiyya al-Mamlaka al-Maġribiyya. <<https://books.rafed.net/>> (01 Nov. 2021).
- TRESSO, Claudia M. (ed. and transl.). 2006. *Ibn Baṭṭūṭa. I viaggi*. Torino: Einaudi.
- YERASIMOS, Stéphane (ed.), Charles-Dominique DEFREMERY, and Beniamino R. SANGUINETTI (transl.). 1997 [1982]. *Ibn Baṭṭūṭa. Voyages*. 3 vols. Paris: La Découverte.

Medieval Arabic sources¹⁹⁹

al-BUḤĀRĪ, Abū ‘Abd Allāh (194/810-256/870):

2014. *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḥārī* / ed. Markaz al-Buḥūt wa-Taḥqīyat al-Ma‘lūmāt. 9 voll. al-Qāhira [Cairo] and Bayrūt [Beirut]: Dār al-Tāṣīl.

IBN ABĪ ḤAĠĀLA, Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā (725/1325-776/1375):

¹⁹⁹ The alphabetical order takes into account the name by which the author is known, which appears before the comma. For information on the manuscripts of the cited works, see DOLS 1977: 320-335, Appendix III, “The Arabic Manuscript Sources for the History of Plague from the Black Death to the Nineteenth Century”.

[n.d.]. *Daḡf al-niqma fi al-ṣalāt ‘alā nabī al-rahma* (copy of manuscript 510 from the Escorial Library). Maktabat al-Ustād al-Duktūr Muḡammad ibnTurkī al-Turkī. <<https://archive.org/details/Ta3oon/mode/2up>> (01 Nov. 2021).

IBN ḤAĠĀR, Šihāb al-Dīn al-‘Asqalānī (773/1372-852/1449):

1993. *Badl al-mā‘ūn fi faql al-tā‘ūn* / Abū Ibrāhīm Kīlānī. al-Qāhira [Cairo]: Dār al-Kutub al-Atāriyya. <<https://archive.org/details/bathl.al.maoun>> (01 Nov. 2021).²⁰⁰

1993. *al-Durar al-kāmina fi a‘yān al-mi‘a al-tāmina* (ed. Sālim al-Krankuwī). 4 vols. and Appendix. Bayrūt [Beirut]: Dār al-Ġil. <<https://archive.org/details/ar106biog06>> (01 Nov. 2021).

IBN ḤALDŪN, Walī al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Rahmān (732/1332-808/1406):

1970. *Al-Ta‘rif* (ed. Muḡammad ibnTāwīt al-Ṭanġī). Al-Qāhira [Cairo]: Maṭba‘a Laġnat al-Ta‘rif wa-l-tarġama. <<https://archive.org/details/al.taarif.b.ibn.khaldoun/page/n1/mode/2up>> (01 Nov. 2021).

1992 [1858]. *Muqaddima. Prolegomènes d’Ebn-Khaldoun*. (ed. Étienne M. Quatremère). Paris: Firmin Didot Frères. <<https://archive.org/details/noticesetextraitsdesmss16p1/page/n57/mode/2up>> (01 Nov. 2021).

1958. *Ibn Khaldun: The Muqaddimah. An Introduction to History*, ed. Franz Rosenthal. 3 vols. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul. <<https://archive.org/details/in.gov.ignca.16173/page/n183/mode/2up>> (01 Nov. 2021).

IBN AL-ḤAṬĪB, Muḡammad ibn ‘Abdallāh Lisān al-Dīn (713/1313-776/1374):

1863. *Muqni‘at al-sā‘il ‘an al-maraḡ al-hā‘il*. In: “Ibnul-khatibs Bericht über die Pest,” edited and translated by Marcus Joseph Müller. *Sitzungsberichte der Königlich Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften* 2: 1-34. <https://www.zobodat.at/pdf/Sitz-Ber-Akad-Muenchen-phil-phil-Kl_1863-2_0001-0034.pdf> (01 Nov. 2021).

IBN IYĀS, Zayn al-‘Ābidīn Muḡammad al-Ḥanaḡī (852/1448-930/1524):

1984. *Badā‘i‘ al-zuhūr fi waqā‘i‘ al-duhūr* / ed. Muḡammad Muṣṭafā. 5 vols. al-Qāhira [Cairo]: al-Hay‘a al-Miṣriyya al-‘Āmma li-l-Kitāb. <<https://archive.org/details/0017749>> (01 Nov. 2021).

IBN KAṬĪR, Ismā‘īl ibn‘Umar (700/1301-774/1373).

2010. *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya (Ta‘riḡ Ibn Kaṭīr)* / ed. Muḡī al-Dīn Matū. 20 vols. Bayrūt [Beirut]: Dār Ibn Kaṭīr. <<https://archive.org/details/bidayawnihaya>> (01 Nov. 2021).²⁰¹

IBN QĀDĪ ŠUHBA, Taqī al-Dīn (779/1377-851/1448):

1994. *Ta‘riḡ Ibn Qāḡī Šuhba* / ed. Adnān Darwīš. Damascus: Institut Français de Damas. 4 vols. <<https://archive.org/details/12zip387>> (01 Nov. 2021).

IBN TAĠRĪ BIRDĪ, Ġamāl al-Dīn Yūsuf (813/1411-874/1470):

1979. *al-Nuġūm al-zāhira fi aḡbār mulūk Miṣr wa-l-Qāhira* / ed. Muḡammad Ḥafāġī. 16 vols. al-Qāhira [Cairo]: Maṭābi‘ al-Hay‘a al-Miṣriyya al-‘Āmma li-l-Kitāb. <<https://archive.org/details/FP159836>> (01 Nov. 2021).²⁰²

IBN AL-WARDĪ, Zayn al-Dīn (691/1292-749/1349):

²⁰⁰ Ibn Ḥaġar’s work has been deeply analysed by SUBLET 1971 (see also DOLS 1977: 110-121). DOLS 1974b: 374 defines it as “perhaps the most comprehensive and best known plague treatise in the later Middle Ages”, and it represents a summa on the behaviour of a good (educated) Muslim of the 15th century during an epidemic.

²⁰¹ Some passages translated into English can be found in ABERTH 2005: 112-114.

²⁰² The part of Ibn Taġrī Birdī’s work related to the Black Death is translated into French in WIET 1962.

1997. *Taʿrīḥ Ibn al-Wardī* / ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Qādir. 2 vols. Bayrūt [Beirut]: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya. <https://archive.org/details/hamlaenglish_gmail_20180324_1853> (01 Nov. 2021).
- al-MAQRĪZĪ, Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad (766/1364-845/1442):
1971. *al-Sulūk li-maʿrifat duwal al-mulūk* / ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Qādir ʿAtā. 4 vols. Bayrūt [Beirut]: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya. <<https://archive.org/details/0071581>> (01 Nov. 2021).²⁰³
- MUSLIM, Abū al-Ḥusayn ibn al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ (206/815-261/875):
2014. *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* / ed. Markaz al-Buḥūt wa-Taḥqīyat al-Maʿlūmāt. 7 voll. al-Qāhira [Cairo] and Bayrūt [Beirut]: Dār al-Tāšīl.
- al-NAWAWĪ, Abū Zakariyyā Muḥyī al-Dīn (631/1234-676/1278):
1929. *Ṣarḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* / ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Laṭīf. 18 vols. al-Qāhira [Cairo]: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Miṣriyya bi-l-Azhar. “*Bāb al-tāʿūn wa-al-ṭayra wa-l-kihāna wa-naḥwahā*,” vol. 14: 204-213. <https://archive.org/details/FP48131/00_48131> (01 Nov. 2021).
- al-SAHĀWĪ, Šams al-Dīn Muḥammad (830/1427-902/1497):
1992. *al-Dayl al-tāmm ʿalā duwal al-Islām* / ed. Ḥasan Ismāʿīl Marwa and Maḥmūd al-Arnāʿūt. 3 vols. Bayrūt [Beirut]: Dār Ibn al-ʿImād li-l-Našr wa-l-Tawzīʿ. <<https://archive.org/details/2584zip200>> (01 Nov. 2021).
- al-TIRMIDĪ, Abū ʿIsā Muḥammad (209/824-279/892):
2011. *Ġāmiʿ al-Tirmiḍī* / ed. ʿIzz al-Dīn Ḍalī, ʿImād al-Ṭayyār and Yāsir Ḥasan. Dimašq [Damascus]: Muʿassasat al-Risāla.

Modern studies

- ABERTH, John. 2005. *The Black Death: The Great Mortality of 1348-1350. A Brief History with Documents*. Bedford: St. Martin’s.
- . 2010 [2000]. *From the Brink of the Apocalypse. Confronting Famine, War, Plague and Death in the Later Middle Ages*. New York: Routledge.
- . 2011. *Plagues in World History*. Lanham (Maryland): Rowman & Littlefield.
- AKASOY, Anna Ayse. 2007. “Islamic Attitudes to Disasters in the Middle Ages: A Comparison of Earthquakes and Plagues.” *The Medieval History Journal*, 10: 387-410. <<https://doi.org/10.1177/097194580701000214>> (01 Nov. 2021).
- ALLOUCHE, Adel. 1990. “A Study of Ibn Baṭṭūṭah’s Account of his 726/1326 Journey through Syria and Arabia.” *Journal of Semitic Studies* 35.2: 283-299. <<https://doi.org/10.1093/jss/XXXV.2.283>> (01 Nov. 2021).
- ALMONTE, Victoria. 2014. “Ibn Battuta e il viaggio in Cina del Nord.” In: *Atti del XIV Convegno AISC, Procida, 19-21 settembre 2013*, edited by Paola Paderni, 33-62. Napoli: Il Torcoliere.
- ANANDAVALLI, Lakshmikanthan. 2007. “The Black Death in Medieval India: A Historical Mystery.” *Tangents: The Journal of the Master of Liberal Arts Program at Stanford University* 6: 20-25. <<https://mla.stanford.edu/sites/g/files/sbiybj1421/f/tangents07.pdf>> (01 Nov. 2021).
- AYALON (NEUSTADT), David. 1946. “The Plague and its Effects upon the Mamlūk Army.” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* (JRAS): 67-73.
- al-ʿAZZĀWĪ, ʿAbbās. 2004 [1935-1956]. *Mawsūʿat taʿrīḥ al-ʿIrāq bayna iḥtilālayn*. 8 vols. Bayrūt [Beirut]: Al-Dār al-ʿarabiyya li-l-mawsūʿāt. <<https://archive.org/details/zip397>> (01 Nov. 2021).

203 Al-Maqrīzī’s text on the Black Death can be found translated into French in WIET 1962. See also MUJANI and YAAKUB 2013 and DOLS 1977: 7-8, who calls it “the most important (though not contemporary) historical text dealing with the Black Death in Egypt and Syria”.

- BARONE, Francesco. 2020. "Misericordia, martirio e contagio. Realtà, percezioni e interpretazioni della peste nell'Islam medievale (secc. VI-XIV)." *European Center of Medieval Research (CERM) Online Journal*. <<https://www.cerm-ts.org>> (01 Nov. 2021).
- BAUSANI, Alessandro. 1983. "L'Islam indonesiano." *Convegno internazionale del tema: Aspetti dell'Islam marginale, 5-24*. Roma: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei.
- BENEDICTOW, Ole Jørgen. 2004. *The Black Death 1346-1353: The Complete History*. Woodbridge: Boydell Press.
- BENHIMA, Yassir. 2010. "Épidémies et mouvements de populations au Maroc (XIV-XVI siècle)." In: *Atti della XLI settimana di studi Fondazione Datini: Le interazioni fra economia e ambiente biologico nell'Europa preindustriale*, edited by Simonetta Cavaciocchi, 279-285. Firenze: Firenze University Press.
- BIRABEN, Jean-Noël. 1975. *Les hommes et la peste en France et dans les pays européens et méditerranéens*. Tome I: *La peste dans l'histoire*. Paris/Le Haye: Mouton.
- . and Jacques LE GOFF. 1969. "La peste dans le Haut Moyen Age." *Annales. Economies, sociétés, civilisations*, 6: 1484-1510.
- BORSCH, Stuart. 2005. *The Black Death in Egypt and England*, Austin: University of Texas Press.
- . 2016. "Plague Depopulation and Irrigation Decay in Medieval Egypt." *The Medieval Globe*, 1.1, article 7. <<https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.12151.21922>> (01 Nov. 2021).
- . and Tarek SABRAA. 2017. "Refugees of the Black Death: Quantifying Rural Migration for Plague and Other Environmental Disasters." *Annales de démographie historique*, 2: 63-93. <<https://doi.org/10.3917/adh.134.0063>> (01 Nov. 2021).
- BOS, Kirsten I., Verena I. SCHUENEMANN, Brian G. GOLDING, et al. 2011. "A draft genome of *Yersinia pestis* from victims of the Black Death." *Nature*, 478: 506-510.
- BROSSOLLET, Jacqueline. 1984. "Quelques aspects religieux de la grande peste du XIVe siècle." *Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses*, 1: 53-66. <https://www.persee.fr/doc/rhpr_0035-2403_1984_num_64_1_4749> (01 Nov. 2021).
- BURCKHARDT, John L. 1829. *Travels in Arabia*. 2 vols. London: Henry Colburn, London, 1829. <https://archive.org/details/b29328548_0002/page/n7/mode/2up> (01 Nov. 2021).
- BURTON, Richard F. 1893. *Personal narrative of a Pilgrimage to Al-Madinah and Mecca* (ed. Isabel Burton). 2 vols. London: Tylston and Edwards. <<https://archive.org/details/personalnarrati01burt>> (01 Nov. 2021).
- BUTT, Qasim. 2018. "The Concept of Contagiousness in the Ahādīth." *Pakistan Journal of Islamic Research*, 19/1: 59-75.
- BUZZARD, Chloe. 2017. "Sin, Salvation and the Medieval Physician: Religious Influences on Fourteenth Century Medicine." *Student Theses, Papers and Projects (History)*, 66. <<https://digitalcommons.wou.edu/his/66>> (01 Nov. 2021).
- BYARD, Roger M. 2000. "A Forensic Evaluation of Plague — a Re-emerging Infectious Disease with Biowarfare Potential." *Medicine, Science, and the Law*, 60/3: 200-205. <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0025802420908483>> (01 Nov. 2021).
- CARMICHAEL, Ann G. 2009. "Plague, Historical." In: *Encyclopedia of Microbiology. Third Edition*, edited by Moselio Schaechter, 58-72. Oxford: Elsevier. <<https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-012373944-5.00311-4>> (01 Nov. 2021).
- . 2015. "Plague Persistence in Western Europe: a Hypothesis." In: *Pandemic Disease in the Medieval World: Rethinking the Black Death*, edited by Monica Green and Carol Symes, 157-191. The Medieval Globe Books 1, Kalamazoo: ARC Medieval Press. <<https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/tmg/vol1/iss1/8/>> (01 Nov. 2021).

- CHOUIN, Gérard. 2018. "Reflections on plague in African history (14th-19th c.)," *Afriques [on-line]*, n. 09. <<https://doi.org/10.4000/afriques.2228>> (01 Nov. 2021).
- COHN, Samuel Kline. 2002. "The Black Death: End of a Paradigm." *The American Historical Review*, 107.3: 703-738. <<https://doi.org/10.1086/ahr/107.3.703>> (01 Nov. 2021).
- COLLET, Hadrien. 2017. "Deviser les merveilles du monde. Le voyage au Soudan dans la *Tuhfat al-nuzzār* d'Ibn Battūta et Ibn Ġuzayy." *Annales islamologiques*, 51: 85-109. <<https://doi.org/10.4000/anisl.3355>> (01 Nov. 2021)
- CONGOURDEAU, Marie-Hélène, and Mohammed MELHAOUI. 2001. "La perception de la peste en pays chrétien byzantin et musulman." *Revue des études byzantines*, 59: 95-124. <https://www.persee.fr/doc/rebyz_0766-5598_2001_num_59_1_2238> (01 Nov. 2021).
- CONRAD, Lawrence I. 1981. "Arabic Plague Chronologies and Treatises: Social and Historical Factors in the Formation of a Literary Genre." *Studia Islamica*, 54: 51-93. <<https://doi.org/10.2307/1595381>> (01 Nov. 2021).
- . 1982. "*Tā'ūn* and *Wabā'*. Conceptions of Plague and Pestilence in Early Islam." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient (JESHO)*, 25.3: 268-307. <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/3632188>> (01 Nov. 2021).
- . 1998. "Umar at Sargh: The Evolution of an Umayyad Tradition on Flight from the Plague." In: *Story-telling in the Framework of Non-Fictional Arabic Literature*, edited by Stefan Leder, 428-528. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- , and Dominik WUJASTYK (eds.). 2000. *Contagion: Perspectives from pre-modern societies*. Aldershot (UK): Ashgate.
- COSMACINI, Giorgio. 2006. *Le spade di Damocle: paure e malattie nella storia*. Roma-Bari: Laterza.
- CRESPO, Fabian and Matthew B. LAWRENZ. 2015. "Heterogeneous Immunological Landscapes and Medieval Plague: an Invitation to a New Dialogue Between Historian and Immunologists." In: *Pandemic Disease in the Medieval World: Rethinking the Black Death*, edited by Monica Green and Carol Symes, 229-257. The Medieval Globe Books 1, Kalamazoo: ARC Medieval Press. <<https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/tmg/vol1/iss1/10>> (01 Nov. 2021).
- CUI, Yujun, Chang YU, Yanfeng YAN et al. 2013. "Historical Variations in Mutation Rate in an Epidemic Pathogen, *Yersinia pestis*." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science* 110, 2: 577-582. <<https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1205750110>> (01 Nov. 2021).
- CURSON, Peter and Kevin McCracken. 1989. *Plague in Sydney: The Anatomy of an Epidemic*. Kensington: New South Wales University Press.
- DE SLANE, Mac Guckin. 1843. "Voyage dans le Soudan" notes (ed. and transl. Anthology). *Journal Asiatique*, March: 181-240.
- DEAN, Katharine R., Fabienne KRAUER, Lars WALLØE, et al. 2018. "Human Ectoparasites and the Spread of Plague in Europe During the Second Pandemic." *PNAS (Proceeding of the National Academy of Science) USA*, 115.6: 181-246. <<https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1715640115>> (01 Nov. 2021).
- DEMEURE, Christian E., Olivier DUSSURGET, Guillem Mas FIOL, et al. 2019. "*Yersinia pestis* and plague: an updated view on evolution, virulence determinants, immune subversion, vaccination and diagnostics." *Genes & Immunity*, 20: 357-370. <<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41435-019-0065-0>> (01 Nov. 2021).
- D'IRSA, Stephen. 1926. "Notes to the Origin of the Expression 'Atra Mors'." *Isis*, 8.2: 328-332. <<https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/358397>> (01 Nov. 2021).
- DOLS, Michael Walters. 1974a. "Ibn al-Wardi's *Risalah al-naba' 'an al-wabā'*. A Translation of a Major Source for the History of the Black Death in the Middle East." In: *Near Eastern Numismatics Iconography, Epigraphy and History: Studies in Honor of George C. Miles*, edited

- by Diecran K. Kouymjian, 443-455. Bayrūt [Beirut]: American University. <<https://archive.org/details/michaeldolstr.ibnalwardiontheplague1974>> (01 Nov. 2021).
- . 1974b. “The Comparative Communal Responses to the Black Death in Muslim and Christian Societies.” *Viator. Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 5: 269-287. <<https://doi.org/10.1484/J.VIATOR.2.301626>> (01 Nov. 2021).
- . 1974c. “Plague in Early Islamic History.” *Journal of American Oriental Society*, 94.3: 371-383. <<https://doi.org/10.2307/600071>> (01 Nov. 2021).
- . 1977. *The Black Death in the Middle East*. Princeton (NY): Princeton University Press.
- . 1979. “The Second Plague Pandemic and Its Recurrences in the Middle East: 1347-1894.” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 22.2: 162-189. <<https://doi.org/10.2307/3631953>> (01 Nov. 2021).
- . 1981. “The General mortality of the Black Death in the Mamluk Empire.” In: *The Islamic Middle East, 700-1900: Studies in Economic and Social History*, edited by Abraham Labe Udovitch, 397-428. Princeton (NY): Darwin Press.
- DUNN, Ross E. 1986. *The Adventures of Ibn Battuta: A Muslim Traveler of the 14th Century*. London and Sydney: Croom Helm.
- ECHENBERG, Myron. 2007. “Alexandre Yersin.” In: *Dictionary of medical biography*, edited by William F. Bynum and Helen Bynum, 5: 1335-1336. Westport (Connecticut) / London: Greenwood Press.
- EICKELMAN, Dale F., and James PISCATORI (ed.). 1990. *Muslim Travellers. Pilgrimage, migration and the religious imagination*. London: Routledge.
- ELAD, Amikam. 1987. “The Description of the Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūta in Palestine: is it Original?” *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, 2: 256-272. <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/25212152.pdf>> (01 Nov. 2021).
- ELGER, Ralf. 2010b. “Lying, Forging, Plagiarism: Some Narrative Techniques in Ibn Baṭṭūta’s Travelogue.” In: *Many Ways of Speaking about the Self: Middle Eastern Ego-documents in Arabic, Persian and Turkish (14th-20th century)*, edited by Ralf Elger and Yavuz Köse, 71-88. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- . 2010c. “Die Reisen eines Reiseberichts: Ibn Baṭṭūta’s Rihla im Vorderen Orient des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts.” In: *Buchkultur im Nahen Osten des 17. und 18. Jahrhundert*, Tobias Heinzelmann and Henning Sievert (eds), 53-98. Bern: Peter Lang.
- EUBEN, Roxanne. 2006. *Journeys to the Other Shore*. Princeton: University Press.
- FAUVELLE-AYMAR, François-Xavier and Bertrand HIRSCH. 2003. “Voyage aux frontières du monde. Topologie, narration et jeux de miroir dans la Rihla de Ibn Baṭṭūta.” *Afrique et histoire* 1/1: 75-122. <<https://www.cairn.info/revue-afrique-et-histoire-2003-1-page-75.htm#>> (01 Nov. 2021).
- FERNÁNDEZ, Manuel García (ed.). 2015. *El siglo XIV en primera persona. Alfonso XI, rey de Castilla y Leon (1312-1350)*. Sevilla: UEUS (Editorial Universidad de Sevilla).
- FIorentini, Mario. 2020. “Caelum Pestilens. Riflessi delle pandemie antiche nel diritto romano.” In: *Virus in fabula. Diritti e Istituzioni ai tempi del Covid-19*, edited by Gian Paolo Dolso, Maria Dolores Ferrara and Davide Rossi, 47-60. Trieste: Università di Trieste. <https://www.openstarts.units.it/bitstream/10077/30883/1/4_covid-OpenstarTs.pdf> (01 Nov. 2021).
- GAUDEFRY-DEMOMBYNES, Maurice. 1923. *Le Pèlerinage à La Mekke*. Paris: Paul Geuthner.
- GOUMEZIANE, Smaïl. 2006. *Ibn Khaldoun (1332-1406). Un génie maghrébin*. Paris: Non Lieu.
- GRÁCIO, A. J. dos Santos and Maria Amélia A. GRÁCIO. 2017. “Plague: A Millenary Infectious Disease Reemerging in the XXI Century.” *BioMed Research International*, Article ID 5696542. <<https://doi.org/10.1155/2017/5696542>> (01 Nov. 2021).

- GRAY, Albert (ed.). 1994 [1890]. "Early notices of the Maldives." In: *The Voyage of François Pyrard of Laval to the East Indies, the Maldives, the Moluccas and Brazil*, edited by Albert Gray and Harry Charles Bell, vol. 2/2: 423-492. In: *Islamic Geography*, edited by Fuat Sezgin, 4 vols, 183: 221-292. Frankfurt am Main: Johann Wolfgang Goethe University, vol. Gray 1994 [1890]
- GREEN, Monica H. 2015a. "Editor's Introduction." In: *Pandemic Disease in the Medieval World: Rethinking the Black Death*, edited by Monica Green and Carol Symes, 9-26. The Medieval Globe Books 1, Kalamazoo: ARC Medieval Press. <<https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/tmg/vol1/iss1/3/>> (01 Nov. 2021).
- . 2015b. "Taking 'Pandemic' Seriously: Making the Black Death Global." In *ibid.*: 27-62. <<https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/tmg/vol1/iss1/4/>> (01 Nov. 2021).
- . 2018. "Putting Africa on the Black Death map: Narratives from genetics and history." In *Afriques*. <<https://doi.org/10.4000/afriques.2125>> (01 Nov. 2021).
- . 2020. "The Four Black Deaths." *American Historical Review* 125/5: 1601-1631. <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ahr/rhaa511>> (01 Nov. 2021).
- . 2021. "Bringing Dols and Conrad into the Genomic Age: What's New in the History of Infectious Diseases?," presented to the "History of Infectious Disease in the Islamic World" workshop, Consortium for the History of Science, Technology and Medicine <<https://www.chstm.org/sites/default/files/HIDIW02022021.pdf>> (01 Nov. 2021).
- GRMEK, Mirko D. 1969. "Préliminaires d'une étude historique des maladies." *Annales. Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, 6: 1473-1483. <<https://doi.org/10.3406/ahess.1969.422182>> (01 Nov. 2021).
- GUANGBIN Li. 2009. *Yi Ben Baitutai Zhongguo Ji xing kao*. Beijing: Haiyang Chubanshe.
- GUILLAUME, Alfred. 1924. "Some Remarks on Free Will and Predestination in Islam, together with a translation of the *Kitabu-l Qadar* from the Sahih of al-Bukhari." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain & Ireland*, 56.1: 43-63. <<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0035869X00094806>> (01 Nov. 2021).
- HAENSCH, Stephanie, Raffaella BIANUCCI, Michel SIGNOLI, et al. 2010. "Distinct Clones of *Yersinia pestis* Caused the Black Death." *PLoS Pathogens*, 6.10: 1-8. <<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.ppat.1001134>> (01 Nov. 2021).
- HAMDUN, Said and Noël KING. 1998 [1975]. *Ibn Battuta in Black Africa*. Princeton: Wiener.
- HARDY, Anne. 2019. "The Under-Appreciated Rodent: Harbingers of Plague from the Middle Ages to the Twenty-First Century." *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 50: 171-185. <https://doi.org/10.1162/jinh_a_01408> (01 Nov. 2021).
- HINNEBUSCH, Joseph B., Clayton O. JARRETT, and David M. BLAND. 2017. "'Fleaing' the plague: adaptations of *Yersinia pestis* to its insect vector that lead to transmission." *Annual Review of Microbiology*, 71.1: 215-232. <<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-micro-090816-093521>> (01 Nov. 2021).
- HRBEK, Ivan. 1962. "The Chronology of Ibn Battuta's Travels." *Archiv Orientální*, 30: 409-86.
- HYMES, Robert. 2015. "Epilogue: a Hypothesis on the East Asian Beginnings of the *Yersinia Pestis* Polytoomy." *The Medieval Globe*, 1, art. 12: 285-308. <<https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/tmg/vol1/iss1/12/>> (01 Nov. 2021).
- IBRAHIMOVICH, Ibrahimov N. 1999. *The Travels of Ibn Battuta to Central-Asia*. Reading: Ithaca Press (Garnet).
- IRSAÏ, Stephen D' → D'IRSAÏ, Stephen.
- JACKSON, William G. F. 1986. *The Rock of the Gibraltarians*. Cranbury: Associated University Presses.

- JACQUART, Danielle. 2006. "La perception par les contemporaines de la peste de 1348." *Cahiers de la Villa Kérylos*, 17: 237-47. <https://www.persee.fr/doc/keryl_1275-6229_2006_act_17_1_1129> (01 Nov. 2021).
- JANSSENS, Herman F. 1948. *Ibn Batouta, "le Voyageur de l'Islam" (1304-1369)*. Bruxelles: Office de Publicité.
- JOMIER, Jacques. 1953. *Le mahmal et la caravane égyptienne des pèlerins de La Mecque, XIIIe-XXe siècles*. Le Caire: Institut français d'archéologie orientale.
- KAADAN, Abdul Nasser, and Mahmud ANGRINI. 2013-2014. "Was the Plague Disease a Motivating or an Inhibiting Factor in the Early Muslim Community?" *Journal of the International Society for the History of Islamic Medicine (ISHIM)*: 107-114. <https://www.academia.edu/11294412/Was_the_Plague_Disease_a_Motivating_or_an_Inhibiting_Factor_in_the_Early_Muslim_Community> (01 Nov. 2021).
- LACOSTE, Yves. 1998. *Ibn Khaldoun. Naissance de l'Histoire, passé du tiers monde*. Paris: La Découverte.
- LINDEMANN, Mary. 2006. "The Black Death 1346-1353: The Complete History, by Ole J. Benedictow." *Renaissance Quarterly*, 59.2: 599-601. <<https://doi.org/10.1353/ren.2008.0304>> (01 Nov. 2021).
- LITTLE, Lester K. (ed.). 2007. *Plague and the End of Antiquity. The Pandemic of 541-750*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- LOISEAU, Julien. 2014. "Routes et histoire: le ḥaġġ dans l'islam classique." In: *Hajj. Le pèlerinage à La Mecque*, edited by Omar Saghi and Fahad Abdul Kareem, 65-75. Paris: Snoeck.
- MACKINTOSH-SMITH, Tim. 2001. *Travels with a Tangerine: A Journey in the Footnotes of Ibn Battutah*. London: John Murray.
- MANDUCHI, Patrizia. 2000. *Da Tangeri a La Mecca passando per la Cina*. Cagliari: CUEC.
- MARAVILLAS, Aguiar Aguilar. 2014. "Aproximación al léxico árabe medieval de la epidemia y de la peste." *Medicina Historia*, 2: 4-15. <<https://riull.ull.es/xmlui/handle/915/11215>> (01 Nov. 2021).
- MATTOCK, John Nicholas. 1981. "Ibn Baṭṭūṭa's use of Ibn Jubayr's *Riḥla*." In: *Proceedings of the Ninth Congress of the Union Européenne des Arabisants et Islamisants (Amsterdam, 1978)*, edited by Rudolph Peters, 209-218. Leiden: Brill.
- MCCORMICK, Michael. 2007. "Toward a Molecular History of the Justinian's Pandemic." In: *Plague and the End of Antiquity. The Pandemic of 541-750*, edited by Lester K. Little, 290-312. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- MCNEILL, William H. 1976. *Plagues and Peoples*, New York: Anchor Press.
- MELHAOUI, Mohammed. 1997. "Processions en islam occidental médiéval au temps de la calamité: sécheresse et peste." *Sources, travaux historiques*, 51/52: 105-113.
- . 2005. *Peste, contagion et martyre. Histoire du fléau en Occident musulman médiéval*. Paris: Publisud.
- MIRZA, Younous. 2020a. "'It was a Memorable Day', How the Black Death United the Population of Medieval Damascus." *Maydan. Islamic Thought*, march 30. <https://themaydan.com/2020/03/it-was-a-memorable-day-how-the-black-death-united-the-population-of-medieval-damascus/> (1 Nov. 2021).
- MIRZA, Younous. 2020b. "'It was a Memorable Day', Plague Gatherings and their Critics." *Islamic Law Blog*, 18 May. <<https://islamiclaw.blog/2020/05/18/younus-y-mirza/>> (01 Nov. 2021).
- MORDECHAY, Lee and Merle EISENBERG. 2019. "Rejecting Catastrophe: The Case of the Justinianic Plague." *Past & Present* 244/1: 3-50. <<https://doi.org/10.1093/pastj/gtz009>> (01 Nov. 2021).

- MUJANI, Wan Kamal, and Noor I. YAAKUB. 2013. "Al-Maqrizi (d. 1442) and Abd al-Basit (d. 1514) and Their Accounts on the Economy of Egypt." *Proceedings of the 2013 International Conference on the Modern Development of Humanities and Social Science*, 32-35. Paris: Atlantis Press. <<https://doi.org/10.2991/mdhss-13.2013.8>> (01 Nov. 2021).
- NETTON, Ian R. 1984. "Myth, Miracle, and Magic in the *Rihla* of Ibn Battuta." *Journal of Semitic Studies*, 29.1: 131-40.
- . 1986. "Arabia and the Pilgrim Paradigm of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa: A Braudelian Approach." In: *Arabia and the Gulf: From Traditional Society to Modern States*, edited by Ian R. Netton, 29-42. London: Croom Helm.
- NEUSTADT, David → AYALON, David.
- NORRIS, Harry T. 1959. "Ibn Baṭṭūṭa's Andalusian Journey." *Journal of Royal Geographical Society*, 125: 185-196.
- NORRIS, John. 1977. "East or West? The Geographic Origin of the Black Death." *Bulletin of History of Medicine*, 51: 1-24. <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/44450388>> (01 Nov. 2021).
- OUSTI, Boussif. 2006. *La Rihla d'Ibn Battūta, voyageur écrivain marocain*. Paris: L'Harmattan.
- PERRY, Robert D., and Jacqueline D. FETHERSTON. 1997. "*Yersinia pestis*—Etiologic Agent of Plague." *Clinical Microbiology Reviews*, 10.1: 35-66. <<https://doi.org/10.1128/CMR.10.1.35>> (01 Nov. 2021).
- PERTA, Giuseppe. 2020. "Da Quanzhou alla Mecca: pandemia, contagi e devozioni nell'itinerario di Ibn Battuta (1346-1349)." *Annali degli Studi Suor Orsola Benincasa*, 459-464. <https://www.unisob.na.it/ateneo/annali/2020_21_Perta.pdf> (01 Nov. 2021).
- PROCOPIUS of Caesarea (c. 500-after 565). 1914. *History of the Wars* (ed. H. B. Dewing). 6 vols (1914-1935). Vol. I, book I-II. London: William Heinemann / New York: The Macmillan Co. <https://archive.org/details/b24750281_0001> (01 Nov. 2021).
- al-RASHED, Saad ibn Abdelaziz. 2014. "Les chemins de La Mecque. Introduction historique." In: *Hajj. Le pèlerinage à La Mecque*, edited by Omar Saghi and Fahad Abdul Kareem, 21-37. Paris: Snoeck.
- ROSELL, Cayetano. 1875. "Crónica de Alfonso el Onceno." In: *Crónicas de los reyes de Castilla*, edited by Cayetano Rosell, vol. I: 71-400. Madrid: Rivadeneyra. <<http://bibliotecadigital.jcyl.es/consulta/registro.cmd?id=8333>> (01 Nov. 2021).
- ROSEN, William. 2007. *Justinian's Flea: Plague, Empire and the Birth of Europe*. London: Jonathan Cape.
- ROSENWEIN, Barbara H. (ed.). 2010. *Reading the Middle Ages. Sources from Europe, Byzantium and the Islamic World*. Toronto: Toronto University Press.
- SABBATANI Sergio, Roberto MANFREDI, and Siro FIORINO. 2012a. "La peste di Giustiniano (prima parte). L'influenza dell'epidemia sulla formazione dell'Impero Islamico." *Le infezioni in medicina*, 2: 217-232. <https://www.infezmed.it/media/journal/Vol_20_2_2012_11.pdf> (01 Nov. 2021).
- . 2012b. "La peste di Giustiniano (seconda parte). L'influenza dell'epidemia sulla formazione dell'Impero Islamico." *Le infezioni in medicina*, 3: 125-139. <https://www.infezmed.it/media/journal/Vol_20_3_2012_12.pdf> (01 Nov. 2021).
- SALLARES, Robert. 2007. "Ecology, Evolution and Epidemiology of Plague." In *Plague and the End of Antiquity: The Pandemic of 541-750*, edited by Lester K. Little, 231-289. <<https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511812934.014>> (01 Nov. 2021).

- SANJUÁN, Alejandro García. 2015. "Alfonso XI frente a los musulmanes en las fuentes árabes." In: *El siglo XIV en primera persona. Alfonso XI, rey de Castilla y León (1312-1350)*, edited by Manuel García Fernández, 53-70. Sevilla: UEUS (Editorial Universidad de Sevilla).
- SCOTT, Susan, and Christopher J. DUNCAN. 2001. *Biology of Plagues: Evidence from Historical Populations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 2004. *Return of the Black Death. The World's Greatest Serial Killer*. Chichester (UK): Wiley.
- SHOSHAN, Boaz. 1981. "Notes sur les épidémies de peste en Égypte." *Annales de Démographie Historique*: 387-404. <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/44384670>> (01 Nov. 2021).
- . 2002. *Popular Culture in Medieval Cairo*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <<https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511524004>> (01 Nov. 2021).
- SINGER, Rachel. 2020. "The Black Death in Maghreb: A Call to Action." *Journal of Medieval Worlds*, 2.3/4: 115-123. <<https://doi.org/10.1525/jmw.2020.2.3-4.115>> (01 Nov. 2021).
- SLANE, Mac Guckin De → DE SLANE, Mac Guckin.
- SPEZIALE, Salvatore. 2016. *Il contagio del contagio. Circolazione di saperi e sfide bioetiche tra Africa ed Europa dalla Peste nera all'Aids*. Reggio Calabria: Città del Sole.
- STEARNS, Justin. 2007. "Contagion in Theology and Law: Ethical Considerations in the Writings of Two 14th Century Scholars of Nasrid Granada." *Islamic Law and Society*, 14.1: 109-129. <<https://doi.org/10.1163/156851907780323852>> (01 Nov. 2021).
- . 2009. "New Directions in the Study of Religious Responses to the Black Death." *History Compass*, 7: 1-13. <<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1478-0542.2009.00634.x>> (01 Nov. 2021).
- . 2011. *Infectious Ideas: Contagion in Premodern Islamic and Christian Thought in the Western Mediterranean*. Baltimore MD: Johns Hopkins University Press. <<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020743814000415>> (01 Nov. 2021).
- . 2020a. "Against 'flattening the [curve of] diversity of approaches' to Muslim understandings of contagion in a time of pandemic. Part one." Post on *Islamic Law Blog*, April 28. <<https://islamiclaw.blog/2020/04/28/against-flattening-the-curve-of-diversity-of-approaches-to-muslim-understandings-of-contagion-in-a-time-of-pandemic-part-one/>> (01 Nov. 2021).
- . 2020b. "Against 'flattening the [curve of] diversity of approaches' to Muslim understandings of contagion in a time of pandemic. Part two," post on *Islamic Law Blog*, April 29. <<https://islamiclaw.blog/2020/04/29/against-flattening-the-curve-of-diversity-of-approaches-to-muslim-understandings-of-contagion-in-a-time-of-pandemic-part-two/>> (01 Nov. 2021).
- STICKER, Georg. 1908. *Abhandlungen aus der Seuchengeschichte und Seuchenlehre*. 2 vols. Giessen: Topelmann. <<https://archive.org/details/abhandlungenaus01stic/mode/2up>> (01 Nov. 2021).
- SUBLET, Jacqueline. 1971. "La peste prise aux rêts de la jurisprudence; le traité d'Ibn Ḥaḡar al-'Asqalānī sur la peste." *Studia Islamica*, 33: 141-149. <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/1595030>> (01 Nov. 2021).
- SUSSMAN, George D. 2011. "Was the black death in India and China?." *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 85.3: 319-355. <<https://doi.org/10.1353/bhm.2011.0054>> (01 Nov. 2021).
- THUCYDIDES (c. 460-395 BCE). 1998. *History of the Peloponnesian War* (ed. Benjamin Jowett). 2 vols. in one. New York: Prometheus. <https://archive.org/details/historyofpelopon00thuc_0> (01 Nov. 2021).
- TRAUSCH, Ludwig M. 2021. "Rewriting *Baranī*? The Description of the Delhi Sultanate in the *Riḥlah* of Ibn Baṭṭūṭah / Ibn Djuzayy and the *Ta'riḫ-i Fīrūz Shāhī* of Ḍiyā' al-Dīn Baranī." In: *Asiatische Studien Etudes Asiatiques* LXIV/1, 139-172. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz. <<https://doi.org/10.5167/uzh-35192>> (01 Nov. 2021).

- TRESSO, Claudia M. and Marco RIVALTA. 2006. "Ibn Baṭṭūṭa: sana e robusta costituzione o divina ispirazione?" In: *Loquentes linguis. Studi linguistici e orientali in onore di Fabrizio A. Pennacchietti*, edited by Pier Giorgio Borbone, Alessandro Mengozzi and Mauro Tosco, 711-715. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- TRESSO, Claudia M. 2021a. "Ibn Baṭṭūṭa: The Prayer of Damascus. A window on Damascus in the hell of the Black Death. Part one." In: *Kervan. International Journal of Afro-Asiatic Studies*, 25.1: 131-161. <<https://doi.org/10.13135/1825-263X/5785>> (01 Nov. 2021).
- . 2021b. "Ibn Baṭṭūṭa: The Prayer of Damascus. A window on Damascus in the hell of the Black Death. Part two." In: *Kervan. International Journal of Afro-Asiatic Studies*, 25.2 (forthcoming).
- . 2022. "India's Epidemics in the *Rihlah* of Ibn Baṭṭūṭah: Plague, Cholera or Lexical Muddle?," in *La Rivista di Arablit* (forthcoming).
- VARLIK, Nükhet. 2015a. "New Science and Old Sources: Why the Ottoman Experience of Plague Matters." In: *Pandemic Disease in the Medieval World: Rethinking the Black Death*, edited by Monica Green and Carol Symes, 193-228. The Medieval Globe Books 1, Kalamazoo: ARC Medieval Press. <<https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/tmg/vol1/iss1/9>> (01 Nov. 2021).
- . 2015b. *Plague and Empire in the Early Modern Mediterranean World: The Ottoman Experience (1347-1600)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 2021. "Why Is Black Death Black? European Gothic Imagineries of 'Oriental' Plague." In: *Plague Image and Imagination from Medieval to Modern Times*, edited by Christos Lynteris, 11-35. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-72304-0_2> (01 Nov. 2021).
- VENTURA, Alberto. 1999 [1995]. "L'islām sunnita nel periodo classico (VII-XVI secolo)." In: *Islam*, edited by Giovanni Filoramo, 77-202. Roma-Bari: Laterza.
- WAGNER, David M., Jennifer KLUNK, Michaela HARBECK, et al. 2014. "Yersinia pestis and the Plague of Justinian 541–543 AD: a genomic analysis." *Lancet Infectious Disease*, 14: 319-326. <[https://doi.org/10.1016/S1473-3099\(13\)70323-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1473-3099(13)70323-2)> (01 Nov. 2021).
- WAINES, David. 2010. *The Odyssey of Ibn Battuta: Uncommon Tales of a Medieval Adventurer*. Chicago: Tauris.
- WIET, Gaston. 1962. "La grande Peste Noire en Syrie et en Égypte." *Études documentaires dédiées à la mémoire de Lévi-Provençal*, vol. I: 367-384. Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS).
- ZAKARIA, Wan Fariza. 2015. "Qadar in Classical and Modern Islamic Discourses: Commending a Futuristic Perspective." *International Journal of Islamic Thought*, 7: 39-48.
- ZIEGLER, Michelle. 2015. "The Black Death and the Future of the Plague." In: *Pandemic Disease in the Medieval World: Rethinking the Black Death*, edited by Monica Green and Carol Symes, 259-283. The Medieval Globe Books 1, Kalamazoo: ARC Medieval Press. <<https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/tmg/vol1/iss1/11>> (01 Nov. 2021).