THE INDIAN OCEAN BEFORE EUROPE

AN EMIC READING OF IBN BATTUTA AND MA HUAN

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1. Introduction

> Is zeer considerabel, off met d'occuperinge van de Straet Melaka den vyant niet meer affbreuck ende de Compagnie ook geen grooter dienst can gedean can worden dan elders in geheel Indien… Waere onse vloote in de straet Melaka gehouden, men soude de Spangiaerden van de Portugiesen connen separeren; den handel op Maccau werden haer belett.
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> Als de Javanen van Mallacca geweert wierden, en souden U. E. cleden niet alleene over geheel Indien beter getrocken, maer Melaka soo benaut worden, alsoo haar selffs niet voeden connen, dat men dese stadt soude connen vermeesteren, want inprenabel en is sy niet… Voorwaer, daer moet eerlange een off ander by der handt genomen worden, soo men voorder geraecken ende des Compagnies saecken verseeckeren wil.[1]

This excerpt, which focuses on the strategic direction of the Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC), was extracted from a letter written by Jan Pieterszoon Coen to the Heren XVII, the VOC's board of directors, in 1614.[2] Jan Pieterszoon Coen was an officer of the VOC and the fourth Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies. His perspective on trade, power, and the long-term goals of the VOC feel familiar to our modern-day sensibility. Part of a proto-capitalist movement, Coen's perspective has become engrained in our modern day thinking about the world. This capitalist mindset also influenced the early European, followed by the later Western, and, arguably, eventually the general discipline of economic history even in non-Western areas. This can result in an emphasis on shared characteristics and values that originate from the European scholars and not from the historical reality they are describing.[3] Coen's goal for the VOC was to gain a dominant trade position in the Indian Ocean, an area of the world which is, and has been, home to an incredibly diverse range of cultures, worldviews, and experiences. Too often do we look at the history of trade through an exclusive modern-day economic interpretation of it. To have a better, more inclusive, and broader understanding of history, however, it is important to understand a source within its

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[1] This is a small excerpt from a letter send by Coen to the board of the VOC. It states that with a blockade of Melaka the VOC would achieve more than it could anywhere else in Southeast Asia. Doing so would separate the Spanish and Portuguese forces as well as interrupt their trade with Java. Thus, the Dutch cloth would sell better across the archipelago. Additionally, if the city would be blockaded it could not feed itself nor would it be able to effectively resist a siege. The Dutch should, therefore, no longer hesitate and attack the city. The resulting position would guarantee long-term success. As translated by me from: H.T. Colenbrander, *Jan Pieterszoon Coen: bescheiden omtrent zijn bedrijf in Indie, Vol. I*, ('s-Gravenhage: Nijhoff, 1919), 204-5.

[2] The Heren XVII came from various cities across the Netherlands that had trade interests in Asia and numbered a total of seventeen.

[3] S. Subrahmanyam, "On World Historians in the Sixteenth Century." *Representations* 91 no. 1 (2005): 26-56.

own time and place in history. Historians like Anthony Reid, with his volumes on *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce*, and Kirti Chaudhuri, with various works such as *Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean*, have put more emphasis on the highly developed and connected culture of the region, prior to the arrival of even the first European ships. Yet, their trade-based analysis of the material can be considered to go against the grain of the primary sources used. To demonstrate this, I will study two primary sources that were written by non-European Muslim travelers who journeyed across much of the Indian Ocean, one from Morocco and one from China. In this thesis, it is my hypothesis that these sources have widely different ideas about truth, ethics and esthetics than current day economic historians. The interpretation of the original sources by these and other modern-day scholars is focused on a factual analysis of the material, which I, for the purpose of this thesis, will define as an etic approach. In doing so, they did not account for the unique origin and nature of the different source material. Accounting for this will be taken as an emic approach, meaning that the historian, when studying primary sources, takes the particular language or culture being studied, in terms of its internal elements and their functioning, rather than in terms of any existing external schemes, into consideration. This is especially relevant for studying trade around the Indian Ocean, as the few primary sources that are available on the region, prior to the arrival of the Europeans, are written by travelers that tell of their personal experiences within their set culture and literary tradition.[4] Thus, it is my contention that a more emic approach is needed to gain a better understanding of the history of Indian Ocean trade.

[4] A. Reid, *The Age of Commerce in Southeast Asia, Vol I* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), xv.

2. Research Question

This thesis will highlight some epistemological, ethical, and esthetical differences between two non-European primary sources that describe Indian Ocean trade from two seemingly very different literary traditions – the Islamicate and Chinese tradition. By specifically zooming in on the literary features of these works, in other words by reading them not *against* (like previous scholars) but *along* the grain of their cultural history (emphasizing an emic rather than etic reading of the material), I aim to investigate how trade – both as a concept as well as in its practical operation – is conceived in these two traditions. In this way, I will be able to reflect on the way these sources have been used by previous authors and understood by contemporary readers, and raise the question to what extent an emic reading of these accounts may contribute to our understanding of Indian Ocean trade. The Islamicate perspective is represented by *The Travels,* which was written by the native Moroccan but worldwide traveler Ibn Battuta.[5] The Chinese have traded and interacted with the Indian Ocean for centuries and their point of view is represented by *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores* the book of Ma Huan.[6] Interestingly enough, both these writers were Muslims. Yet, their shared faith influenced them and their books in different ways as this research will demonstrate. Unfortunately, due to my own limitations, I will have to rely on translations of both works into English. Naturally, for an emic approach that tries to gain an inside perspective by considering various cultural dimensions studying the source in its original language is preferred and, therefore, this limitation could hinder my results.

To understand each source as both an individual and as part of a larger literary tradition, it is important to approach it from various angles. By doing so, an emic understanding of the source material may be achieved. To help with this, the following setup has been devised:

What is the general background of the genre?

Technical Information

Agency

Content

[5] H. A. R. Gibb and C. F. Beckingham, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).
[6] J. V. G. Mills and F. Ch'eng-chün, *Ying-Yai Sheng-Lan: The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores [1433]* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

What is the emic background of the person?

What does the author perceive as truth?

What does the author perceive as good?

What does the author perceive as attractive to the senses both in general and within his literary genre?

Answering these questions should give a good insight into the author, his work, and his literary tradition. Following this, each part will give an in-depth overview of trade within the Indian Ocean, describing infrastructure, commodities, and merchants, as depicted in the primary source in question. Concerning infrastructure, the entrepots, routes, and ships will be examined. Concerning commodities, the place of origin, place of trade and place of consumption will be studied. Lastly, the merchants' origins and how their coming and going was governed by the various entrepots or countries will be discussed. These categories have been devised to accurately depict the various parts of trade in the Indian Ocean. By combining these sections on trade, focused on the etic information that other literature has also discussed, with the emic understanding derived from the first part, I will be able to reflect on the way these sources have been used by previous authors and raise the question to what extent an emic reading of these accounts may contribute to a better understanding of Indian Ocean trade. This approach has been inspired by the Indian historian Sanjay Subrahmanyam who argued that:

> It was European expansion and, above all, the process of the colonization of the non-West by the West that created the possibility of history as a form of knowledge in the non-West. Everywhere then, as European colonial empires engaged in enterprises not only of material conquest and exploitation but of epistemological subsumption and subjugation, non-Western peoples came to learn of history and then hesitantly to practice it… My own argument here is of a piece with earlier essays and writings, where I have argued that the history of modernity is itself global and conjunctural, not a history in which Europe alone first produces and then exports modernity to the world at large.[7]

However, efforts to combat this mindset have been limited until this point. Therefore, my own research is in essence an experiment that test the waters for a more emic approach to history's

[7] Subrahmanyam, "On World Historians in the Sixteenth Century." 26-7.

primary sources.[8] Is there value to approach primary sources in this manner, instead of through the lens of the European historical tradition, and what is that value?

[8] I opted for this approach after I found out that my attempt to study the Indian Ocean world as a Wallersteinian world-economy proved unsatisfactory as it was hard to add new theoretical insights without engaging with primary sources.

3. Historiography

Since the source material from the region itself is quite lacking, we often find that "For the life of ordinary people we are especially reliant on the rich descriptions of the first generation of European visitors --- Portuguese from 1509, Spanish from 1523, English from 1579, and Dutch from 1596."[9] But there are sources available prior to the arrival of the Europeans. These give potentially unique insights into the history of the Indian Ocean. As mentioned, several scholars have studied the area using sources like the ones that form the basis of my thesis. In this section, I set out to define a general overview of trade as argued for by the historians discussed below. However, the interpretation of said sources by these historians has been questioned by others like Subrahmanyam, Chakrabarty, Rāvu Vēlcēru Nārāyaṇa and David Shulman.[10] They pointed out that even modern historians have interpreted these sources as if they were European source material, thereby dismissing the unique insights that could have been derived by accounting for the cultural background of the works and authors. Lastly, due to the etic focused approach of these scholars, this historiography lacks the emic insights to which, I hope, my thesis will contribute.

To gain a general idea of the development of Indian Ocean trade, I turned to the work of three particular scholars - Chaudhuri, Anthony Reid and Meilink Roelofsz. The latter created an in-depth historical narrative of the period between 1500 and 1630, focusing on Southeast Asia.[11] Her work was thorough and serves as a good example of the historical perspective on the non-European influences within the region. Reid wrote his *The Age of Commerce in Southeast Asia*, Vol I and II, with a similar intent and also focused on Southeast Asia.[12] These books are crucial to those who want to gain a greater understanding of the region. They give a broad history of Southeast Asia and its developments between 1450 and 1680. Furthermore, Reid emphasizes the importance of commerce within the region, which is helpful for studying trade and economic relations within the region. These two scholars helped in creating a clear picture of the history of the region as well as the influences it experienced from the outside. Overall, we find that, according to Reid and Meilink, the infrastructure of Southeast Asian trade came to be centered around a central entrepot that

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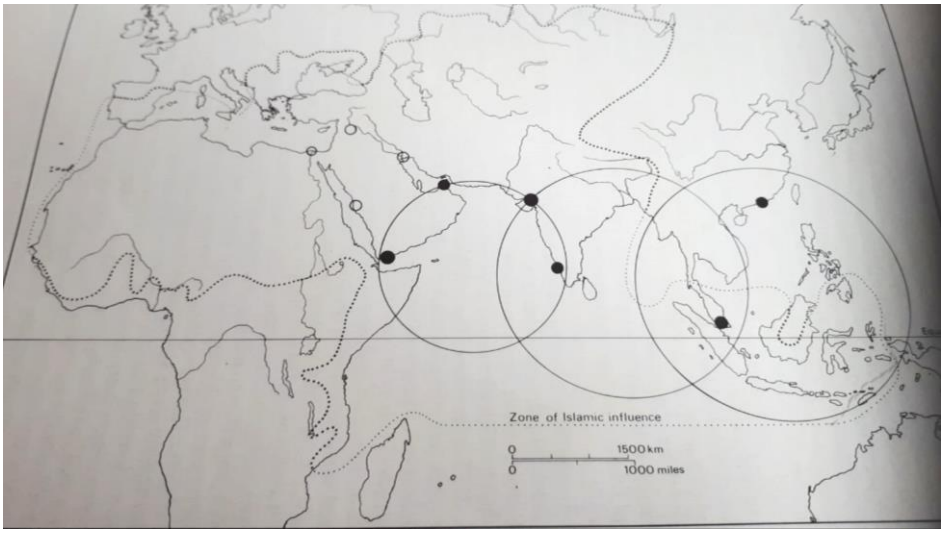
[9] Reid, *The Age of Commerce in Southeast Asia*, xv.
[10] Subrahmanyam, "On World Historians in the Sixteenth Century.", 26-56; D. Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: postcolonial thought and historical difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007); R. Vēlcēru Nārāyaṇa, D. Shulman, & S. Subrahmanyam, *Textures of Time: Writing History in South India* (New York: Other Press, 2003).
[11] M. Roelofsz, *Asian Trade and European Influence in the Indonesian Archipelago between 1500 and about 1630* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1969).
[12] A. Reid, *The Age of Commerce in Southeast Asia, Vol I & II* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993)

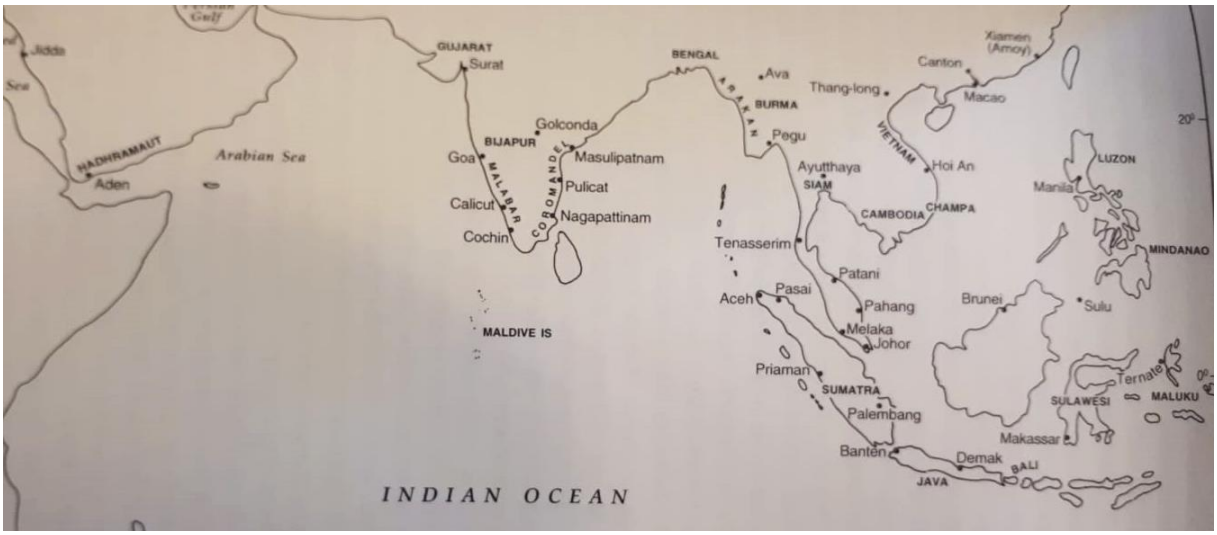
shaped the trade routes according to its gravity within the system. The best example of this is Melaka in the fifteenth and sixteenth century. Local boats sailed on the minor and major routes whereas the boats manned by outsiders chiefly sailed the main trade routes. Reid especially emphasized the importance of local merchants within the region but Meilink pointed out that the transportation over great distances of high value cargo was often achieved by others like the Indians or Chinese.[1314] The most famous commodity of Southeast Asia were the spices. Yet, there were many other luxury products being traded and produced in the region like lacquer and deerskins, as well as bulk products like rice.[15]

Due to Reid's and Meilink's sole focus on Southeast Asia, the work of the Indian historian Chaudhuri whose focus is on the broader developments within the Indian Ocean between 1000 AD and 1750 AD were also included in the secondary literature research for this thesis. Chaudhuri has been widely recognized for his contributions to the history of the wider Asian region and for rethinking its place within world history.[16] He argued for three distinct trading networks in Asia, as can be seen in the map below. He showed in his work that parts of Asia had developed and integrated to a high degree prior to the arrival of the Europeans.[17]



Map 1: Overview of trade zones and the entrepots that connected these zones in Asia between 1000-1500.[18]

[13] Reid, *The Age of Commerce in Southeast Asia,* 67.
[14] M. Roelofsz, *Asian Trade and European Influence in the Indonesian Archipelago between 1500 and about 1630* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1969), 38.
[15] A. Reid, *The Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce,* Vol II (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 2.
[16] A.T. Embree, Asia Before Europe: Economy and Civilisation of the Indian Ocean from the Rise of Islam to 1750 – Chaudhuri K.N., *American Historical Review* 97, no. 3 (1992): 910-1.
[17] K.N. Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985)
[18] Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750*, 41.



Map 2: The important trade emporia between 1000-1500.[19]

Even within this extensive period, it appears that the Indian Ocean infrastructure retained certain key features. Before the middle of the fifteenth century, the most important trade route was the one connecting India and China. This long route was not yet split and often sailed by one boat and crew, who were highly skilled.[20] Trade connections also existed between the Indian West coast and Arabia, Java and the Melakan Strait and between China and the spice producing areas. However, at this time, trade in the Indonesian archipelago was still quite insignificant and secondary to the trade between India and China. In the following period, marked by the expeditions of Zheng He and the rise of Melaka, the most significant change in trade routes was the split of the trade route around the Melakan strait. Melaka was the state that would profit most from this development and facilitated it therefore to a great degree. This area would form the base for trade connections in the coming centuries: the trade lines between Arabia – India, India – Archipelago and China – Archipelago. The period after 1500, the time of the Portuguese, saw a lot of diversification of trade routes as well as an overall increase in trade within the Indian Ocean.[21] Important commodities being traded and consumed were often connected to each other. Cotton textiles from India were used to

[19] Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750*, 44.
[20] "It is possible to discern two types of voyage in the complex Indian Ocean trade. The first took place between the commercial cities of a fairly homogenous area such as the Rea Sea and the Persian Gulf, united after the seventh century by the common bond of Islam. The second type was the long trans-regional trip to India, the Indonesian Islands, and China. Bounded by the Pacific at one end and extending all the way to the Mediterranean at the other, it was the latter circuit of trade that constituted the foundation of pre-Columbian world economy in both the east and the west. In Asia commercial traffic was in the hands of highly skilled professional merchants, who operated as private individuals with little substantive state support." Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750*, 15-6.
[21] A. Reid, *The Age of Commerce in Southeast Asia, Vol II* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 23.

purchase pepper and spices in the Indonesian Archipelago. Gold and silver from the Middle East, East Africa, and Japan were used to acquire, textiles, pepper and spices, as well as, manufactured products from China. [22] Merchants from each of these regions initially sailed long distances to gain or trade a variety of products. Yet, overtime, the routes compartmentalized into smaller parts meaning that most harbors only accommodated merchants from nearby areas. Using the monetary liquidity gained from trading local products, empires and kingdoms build centralized bureaucracies that promoted or shunned traders depending on the local ruler.[23] By looking at the material through an etic lens, Chaudhuri and the others focused on the information their sources provided, not on the sources themselves. Yet, with the emic approach and therefore a better understanding of the source material, I will gain a better understanding of the economic processes around the Indian Ocean between the fourteenth and sixteenth century.

[22] Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750*, 83.
[23] Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750*, 84.

4. Part I: The Travels

In 1325 Ibn Battuta left his native home of Tangiers to travel through most of the *Dar al-Islam*, the abode of Islam, that covered much of the Eurasian continent, and beyond.[24] In the following thirty years he would travel almost continuously, although he stayed at certain places for multiple years before continuing his journey, below is a map showing his journey across the world. Whenever he stayed in places for longer than a few months, he relied on his profession to make a living and gain stature. He was a trained and reasonably apt *qadi*, a judge whose judgements are based on the study of religious laws as described in the holy works of the Islam, a profession that, as an added benefit, made him an attractive prop to Muslim rulers to use as a legitimization of their rule.[25] Although the extent of his travels was unique, *qadi's* more regularly traveled to find employment or knowledge through studies in Cairo, Damascus or other centers of Islamic learning.[26] His description of the people and places he encountered have informed many historians about life in the fourteenth century.

Map 3: Overview of the journeys made by Ibn Battuta.[27]

[24] "This expression (*Dar al-Islam)* embraced the lands where Muslims predominated in the population, or at least where Muslim kings or princes ruled over non-Muslim majorities and where in consequence the shari'a, or Sacred Law, of Islam was presumably the foundation of the social order." E.R. Dunn, *The Adventures of Ibn Battuta, a Muslim Traveler of the Fourteenth Century.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 6.
[25] According to Dunn the great *qadi's* of the period likely did not think much of his abilities but that mattered little to rulers on the outskirts of the *Dar al-Islam.* These rulers cared more for the title and the origin of the *qadi* then how long they had studied the texts of the Quran. Dunn, *The Adventures of Ibn Battuta,* 312-3.
[26] B. Min Wha, "'Baraka', as Motif and Motive, in the "Rihla" of Ibn Battuta (1304-1369)" (PhD diss., University of Utah, 1991), 52-4.
[27] I. Hrbek, *Ibn Baṭṭūṭah's voyages*. 2020. Image from www.britannica.com/biography/Ibn-Ibn Battuta.

4.1 Genre

In this section some technical information will be explained before discussing who had agency over the writing and creation of the text, and what content was most appreciated within the genre. Finally, the ways in which this has affected the final text will be elucidated.

4.1.1 Technical Information

Although *The Travels* is generally considered to be an accurate and faithful description of the events that Ibn Battuta witnessed, there are several reasons to be careful when using it as source material.[28] Firstly, the work was dictated to a writer after the fact. Due to several incidents, for instance the shipwreck on the coasts of Malabar, in which Ibn Battuta lost most of his possessions, it is unlikely that he had many or complete notes from his adventures at the time the work was written.[29] Secondly, *The Travels* is not entirely truthful. Occasionally, passages and journeys have been identified as either of a mythical nature or made up by the author.[30] And lastly, Ibn Battuta was an Islamic judge by profession. This was at the time a sought-out commodity as he could give legitimacy and advise to the newly turned Muslims around the continent.[31] Being a Muslim informed his thoughts and ideas on other people and cultures, causing bias within his descriptions. This is, however, only natural as *The Travels* is not a historical work but rather a mixture of an autobiography and travel guide, called a *rihla* in Arabic. This, his character and his work, will be elaborated on below.

Even though, *The Travels* is now widely recognized, initially, it enjoyed little success. Its intended audience were the Maghrebians, the occupants of Northwestern Africa, whose preference of literature at this time was more mythically and poetically inclined. [32] That the Maghrebians were the intended audience becomes clear within *The Travels* by its continuous comparison of foreign towns, rulers, and customs, to those of Morocco.[33] Upon the discovery of five original manuscripts by the French occupiers of Algeria, *The Travels* started to be recognized as a key work within the Islamicate literature. A French translation was created by Charles Defrémery and Beniamino Sanguinetti between 1853 and 1858, their translation divided *The Travels* into four volumes that has become the standard division ever since. The first English translation was made, however, prior to the discovery by the French by Samuel

[28] T. Mackintosh-Smith, *The Travels of Ibn Battutah*, (London: Picador, 2002), xviii.
[29] Smith, *The Travels of Ibn Battutah*, xv.
[30] Smith, *The Travels of Ibn Battutah*, xvii.
[31] Smith, *The Travels of Ibn Battutah*, xi.
[32] Wha, *'Baraka', as Motif and Motive, in the "Rihla" of Ibn Battuta (1304-1369)*, 42.
[33] Wha, *'Baraka', as Motif and Motive, in the "Rihla" of Ibn Battuta (1304-1369)*, 62.

Lee, professor of Arabic at the University of Cambridge, in 1829. Yet, he only had an abridged version of the original text to work with.[34] In 1929 the historian and orientalist Hamilton Gibb, who taught at the School of Oriental and African Studies, St John's College, Oxford, and Harvard University, published an English translation of selected portions of the French translation of the complete work. He would continue to translate the work for the Hakluyt Society, an organization focused on translating and publishing historical works of travels and the like, resulting in a complete translation of the work into English in 1994.[35]

4.1.2 Agency

Ibn Battuta did not write his own Rihla instead this was done by Ibn Juzayy. When Ibn Battuta returned from his final journey in West-Africa Ibn Battuta he dictated his journey to the writer and scholar Ibn Juzayy, an Islamic scholar working for the Sultan of Morocco, on the behest of the Sultan of Morocco.[36] The extent to which this influenced the book is hard to tell. Certainly, it is Juzayy who is responsible for the work's adherence to the proper literary standards associated with the rihla genre. He also is likely responsible for two other additions, the addition of stylistic elements and poetry verses, and the addition of fragments copied from other *rihla's*. Although this plagiarism of others work is heavily frowned upon in today's academic practices, at the time, it was an acceptable method.[37] The reasons for these additions are likely three-part. Firstly, to confirm to the literary standards expected of a *rihla* and, secondly due to the epic proportions of his travels there were certain expectations of the readers. Ibn Battuta would have been expected to have visited at least the important places in the center of the Islamicate world. Lastly, further inclusions of distance lands and Muslim communities there were due to Ibn Juzayy's goal for *The Travels* to be, at the broadest level, a survey of the Islamicate world of the fourteenth century. Therefore, Muslim communities even in the Volga or China had to be included.[38] Although some of the journey might have not been undertaken in the manner described, this does not discredit significant portions of the

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[34] *S. Lee, The Travels of Ibn Battuta in the Near East, Asia and Africa 1325-1354,* (New York: Dover Publications, 2004).
[35] Due to the death of Gibb in 1971 the fourth and finale volume was translated by his former student Charles Beckingham, a professor of Islamic Studies. This is also the translation I used to study the work as I have no mastery over the Arabic or French Language. Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*.
[36] Wha, *'Baraka', as Motif and Motive, in the "Rihla" of Ibn Battuta (1304-1369)*, 41.
[37] "It is perfectly plain that Ibn Juzayy copied outright numerous long passages from the Rihla of Ibn Jubayr, the twelfth-century Andalusian traveler who wrote the most elegant of the medieval Muslim travel books. These passages pertain to Ibn Battuta's descriptions of Damascus, Mecca, Medina, and some other places in the Middle East." Dunn, *The Adventures of Ibn Battuta*, 313.
[38] Dunn, *The Adventures of Ibn Battuta*, 313-5.

work, as only small sections are likely fabricated or copied of other works.[39] Yet, it is important to understand that Ibn Juzayy interjected and bolstered Ibn Battuta's story to help the work adhere to literary standard that a *rihla* was supposed to adhere to.[40]

4.1.3 Content

The Travels is often considered the most famous *rihla*. *Rihla* is an Arabic word meaning both the journey and the written account of that journey. Ibn Battuta's *Rihla* is considered genre-defining and one of the highpoints within the genre.[41] Within the larger Islamicate writing tradition the *rihla* stands out for its subject matter and its deep connection to the practice of travel as a part of the Islamic faith. Travel has a wide variety of contexts within the Islam, a few of which are crucial to the interpretation of the *rihla* as a genre. Firstly, there is the migration of the Prophet Mohammed from Mecca to Medina, known as the *hijra*. This physical and mental movement away from unbelievers underlies both the migration of Muslims towards the *Dar al-Islam* and the occupations of non-Muslim, or *Dar al-Harb,* territories by the faithful.[42] Secondly, there is the religious duty of every able Muslim to visit Mecca, known as the *hajj,* which is the main subject matter of the *rihla* genre. Thirdly, there is the search of knowledge, or *talab al ʿilm*, which has deep roots in the Islamicate tradition, and facilitated the movement and exchange between Islamicate societies and scholars from the inception of the Islamic caliphates.[43] The *rihla* genre therefore fulfilled both a spiritual and practical purpose for its readers and listeners. By connecting with the wider *umma,* the community of the faithful, the *rihla* helped in creating a wider community that connected places and people separated by vast stretches of land. It also helped in establishing bonds and connections that benefited military, intellectual, religious, and, significantly for this thesis, commercial connections throughout the *Dar al-Islam*.[44] It also connected the periphery of the

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[39] "the authenticity of the Rihla has generally stood up well under modern scrutiny" additionally very few scholars have doubted his travels and description of the Indian Ocean. Dunn, *The Adventures of Ibn Battuta,* 313-5.

[40] "It seems likely that where Ibn Battuta could not remember very well certain places he visited, or where Ibn Jubayr's description was, from a literary point of view, as good as anything Ibn Juzayy could produce, then deference might be made to this learned predecessor." Dunn, *The Adventures of Ibn Battuta,* 313.

[41] Wha, *'Baraka', as Motif and Motive, in the "Rihla" of Ibn Battuta (1304-1369),* 42.

[42] For an in-depth explanation see the discussion in the following article: M.K. Masud, "Obligation to Emigrate: The Doctrine of Hijra in Islamic Law (Article)." 1990. found in the following book: D. F. Eickelman, et al, *Muslim Travelers: Pilgrimage, Migration, and the Religious Imagination.* (University of California Press, 1990.) p. 29-47.

[43] S.I. Gellens, "Search for Knowledge in Medieval Muslim Societies: A Comparative Approach (Article)." 1990. As found in: D. F. Eickelman, et al, *Muslim Travelers: Pilgrimage, Migration, and the Religious Imagination.* (University of California Press, 1990.) p. 50-68.

[44] "Taking part in *rihla* altered consciousness of the umma. There was frequent travel for military, commercial, intellectual, and religious reasons since the early centuries of Islam. Travelers, scholars, and merchants participated in extending the sense of frontiers of the umma through their activities." A. El Moudden,

Islamicate world to its center and reconfirmed those bonds regularly. In summation, Ibn Battuta was a Muslim *qadi* and traveler that journeyed large parts of the Eurasian and African continent. By doing so, he was partaking in a tradition connected to, and crucial for, the Islamicate culture. When he returned his account was written down as a *rihla,* or travel account, which finally gained wide acknowledgement as a crucial piece of historic literature through the spread of the work in French and later English.

What motivated Ibn Battuta to travel so extensively and later tell his stories in such detail? Min B. Wha who wrote his PhD dissertation: *'Baraka', as Motif and Motive, in the "Rihla" of Ibn Battuta (1304-1369),* on this subject, identified several motives in Ibn Battuta's text.[45] The first is the *hajj* (the duty of a Muslim to undertake a pilgrimage to Mecca), followed by his *talab al-ʿilm* (the seeking of knowledge), which was accompanied by his *li-ghariba shakhsíya* (personal curiosity) and the seeking of *baraka* (blessings). All of these motivations are part of one overarching, higher-level motivation. Ibn Battuta did not travel to find food, companionship, or to provide for his family, instead, according to Wha, "he constantly sought new environments which fulfilled his need for self-actualization."[46] Indeed, there are few indications within *The Travels* that Ibn Battuta faced much hardship in sustaining himself even in foreign environments. Thus, he could and did focus on the pursuit of a higher spiritual attainment and satisfaction. Wha argues that "God's blessing is most central to Ibn Battuta's character as a Muslim deeply immersed in a religious tradition in which baraka was the highest thing which any mortal could attain.", additionally Wha stressed that the Moorish traditions and people from which Ibn Battuta came greatly valued the importance of the saint or saintly man blessings.[47] This is expressed most clearly by the value that Ibn Battuta gives to encounters with various mystics. In Egypt, for instance, he met the mystic Sheikh Burhanuddin who predicted that he would travel much further: "You will visit my brother Fariduddin in India, Rukonuddin in Sind and Burhanuddin in China. Convey my greetings to them" this encountered motivated Ibn Battuta to travel further to these regions.[48]

"Ambivalence of Rihla: Community Integration and Self-Definition in Moroccan Travel Accounts, 1300-1800 (Article)." 1990. As found in: D. F. Eickelman, et al, *Muslim Travelers: Pilgrimage, Migration, and the Religious Imagination.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990.) p. 69-84.

[45] B. Min Wha, *'Baraka', as Motif and Motive, in the "Rihla" of Ibn Battuta (1304-1369),* (The University of Utah, Ann Arbor, 1991), ProQuest, https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2443/docview/303973788?accountid=12045.

[46] Wha, *'Baraka', as Motif and Motive, in the "Rihla" of Ibn Battuta (1304-1369),* 45.

[47] Wha, *'Baraka', as Motif and Motive, in the "Rihla" of Ibn Battuta (1304-1369),* 70-1.

[48] Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354,* 62-64.

Overall Ibn Battuta traveled to explore, to find *baraka*, to complete the *hajj*, to gain new knowledge, which all were part of the overarching goal of seeking spiritual self-actualization.

Yet, when tasked with writing down his story, Ibn Battuta did not just discuss his spiritual journey. At a first glance, it might be hard to understand why certain events, people, or customs are described in great detail while others are barely touched upon. Especially concerning trade, Ibn Battuta's accounts seem sporadic in nature, which is strange as trade was after all commonplace around the Indian Ocean and something he would have witnessed as being important to many of the places he visited. Additionally, he grew up in Tangiers, a quite cosmopolitan trading town at that point in time.[49] Trade, even if scaled up to a certain degree, with foreigners from distant lands, itself, was a familiar sight to him. But when Ibn Battuta opted to describe trade, it was almost always because the interaction, the people, the scale, or the commodity was foreign to him. The smaller boats that sailed out to welcome the merchants in Mogadishu were a foreign practice to him, the scale of the pepper trade on the West coast of India was beyond anything he had seen previously, as were the ships used by the Chinese sailors, explaining why they were described in such great detail while the ships used by others were not. It is unlikely that his readers had need or use for this information. But, to Ibn Battuta, it was worth writing about because it was foreign. Ibn Battuta's interest in the foreign is easily explainable by his motivations for traveling and writing. Afterall, three of his four motivation, his *hajj* (duty to travel to Mecca) being the exception, are tied to his need for self-actualization through discovering new knowledge, satisfying his curiosity and attaining *baraka*. Wha argued that "the search for *baraka* motivated every venture on which Ibn Battuta embarked during his vast travels.", but *baraka* is traditionally found in the center of the Islamicate world.[50] That is not to say that there is no *baraka* to be found outside the *Dar al-Islam*, where Ibn Battuta did spend large parts of his life. This further demonstrates that he was not only interested in attaining *baraka* but also in the unknown and foreign. Not that this interest was uncommon among learned Muslims at this point in time. The best example of this are the works written by Zakariya al-Qazwini who was a popular author at the time within the *Dar al-Islam*.[51] He wrote about *Jinn*, meaning either demons, angels, or

[49] Dunn, *The Adventures of Ibn Battuta*, 13-25.
[50] Wha, *'Baraka', as Motif and Motive, in the "Rihla" of Ibn Battuta (1304-1369)*, 69.
[51] Zakariya al-Qazwini was a *Qadi* like Ibn Battuta who lived a century early and wrote two well-read works namely *Marvels of Creatures and Strange Things Existing ('Aja'ib al-makhluqat wa-ghara'ib al-mawjudat)* and *Monument of Places and History of God's Bondsmen (Athar al-bilad wa-akhbar al-'ibad)* he mostly traveled within the *Dar al-Islam*, between countries like Syria, Iran and Iraq, finding employment in Baghdad. T. Zadeh, "The Wiles of Creation: Philosophy, Fiction, and the 'Ajā'Ib Tradition." *Middle Eastern Literatures* 13, no. 1 (2010): 21-2.

genies, unexplored wonders, famous mystics, and unknown people that could all be found in the wider world. Ibn Battuta even occasionally hints at these wonders being a motivation for his travels.[52]

4.1.3.1 How do the author's objectives fit into this?

Ibn Battuta had more goals than to portray himself as a pious Muslim. He wanted to tell of the wonders of the world that he encountered. Otherwise, the books would have been without much discussion of the foreign lands, customs, and people he met, but instead focused solely on his journeys to Mecca, the religious leaders, mystics, and scholars he met along the way and how others within the *umma* lived their life in accordance with Islam. Although all of these parts are included in his *rihla,* it is unique because it contains so much more information. Earlier I discussed his motivations for traveling, as well as the reason that certain events, people, or lands are discussed in much greater detail. The objective of Ibn Battuta's *rihla* was fourfold and connected to both his spiritual and physical journey. Firstly, in accordance with the literary genre and the request of the Sultan, it was a travelogue about his holy journeys to Mecca. Secondly, it was a demonstration of himself as a pious and sophisticated Muslim that had traveled to the centers of the Islamicate world. This is most visible in both his extensive attention to the positions he held and the importance he gave to gaining *baraka*. Thirdly, it was an account of the lives of Muslims within, and occasionally outside, the *Dar al-Islam* of the fourteenth century. This is also were the influence of the actual writer of the works Juzayy is most visible. Lastly, it was description of the foreign world that Ibn Battuta encountered through his travels. Although instructed to write down his story in form of a *rihla,* the genre was also a natural fit for his other objectives and therefore a work that even seven centuries later is worthy to read and study.

4.2 Emic Understanding

The goal of this section is to create an emic understanding of both Ibn Battuta and the influences he experienced while traveling and working on his *Rihla.* This insider perspective will be created by studying various elements that influenced his truth, his idea of goodness, and his concept of beauty.

[52] For example, the encounter with a mystic in Egypt motivated him to travel further east. Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*, 62-64.

4.2.1 The Author's Truth

To understand the emic perspective, one has to understand what truth is to the author. Every person has their own truth and perceptions of reality. Unfortunately, it is hard to understand someone's truth unless they have deliberated on the subject at length, an account that is lacking from Ibn Battuta. Yet, through studying his work and his life one can create an idea of what truth was to him, by asking not what his truth was but by asking what his truth was built on. One can identify at least three building blocks, which is not to say that there are no others, but these remain largely intangible when compared to the following three: education, faith, and traveling. Although Ibn Battuta does not discuss the content of his own education in Tangiers or possible further education while travelling, in *The Travels*, there are other sources of Morocco at the time that can be used. We, thus, turn to what we know of Morocco at the beginning of the fourteenth century to understand what his education must have been like and how it influenced his perception of truth. His faith grew partly from his education and his upbringing in Tangiers, but it is also discussed at length in *The Travels*, providing an additional tool to analyze how this influenced Ibn Battuta's truth. Finally, his travels or at least the experiences he had while traveling also build on his idea of truth. Combining these three, should give a basis of understanding Ibn Battuta's epistemology.

Ibn Battuta grew up in Tangiers with his family seemingly part of the local elite. Although he does not divulge much, we do learn that there were several others who were, like him, schooled in Islamic law either as *faqihs*, meaning scholars, or as *qadis* among his family. Although Tangiers did not possess an institute of higher learning, there were several families that must have provided the city, centered on commerce, with their services: the officers of mosques and other pious foundations, administrative and customs officials, scribes, accountants, notaries, legal counsellors, and judges, as well as teachers and professors for the sons of the affluent families of merchants, scholars and land owners.[53] So, one can assume that Ibn Battuta's education was sufficient to regard him as a member of the *ulama*, the social category of educated men. Especially as there is no description of the content of the limited further education during his travels, it is important to understand the goal of the initial education he enjoyed. Ibn Battuta grew up in what is called the Middle Period in Islamicate history. At this point, the purpose of education was not to teach students to think critically about their human or natural environment or to push the frontiers of knowledge beyond the limits of their elders. Rather, the goal was to convey the spiritual truths, moral values, and

[53] Dunn, *The Adventures of Ibn Battuta*, 18-9.

social rules of the past to the young generation.[54] Muslims had found validation in their astonishing success of both their faith and civilization. Therefore, education was in every sense conservative and focused on continuing the legacy left by earlier generations.[55] Ibn Battuta must have been influenced by this mindset and it is likely that, in his eyes, the truths of previous generations were of a similar or possibly even greater value than his own observations.

Ibn Battuta was not only generally educated in the Islamic faith, he also specialized into Islamic law or the *sharia.* As there was no distinction between the state and faith, his judicial training was integrated with his theological and literary education. Within his region the dominant school of law was Maliki. Maliki, named after its founder, Malik ibn Anas, in the eighth century, is one of the four principle schools of law found in Sunni Islam. Since Maliki law had just made a resurgence, it was likely that its doctrine was accepted in an uncritical manner while stressing traditional interpretations as correct.[56] Islamic law is based on a few guiding principles. Firstly, the Qur'an is the basis of law, while the *Hadith* and *Sunna*, or the saying and deeds of the Prophet, can be additionally used to inform decisions. Yet, there are also wider interpretations of the additional sources, materials, or ideas that can be used to help *qadi's*. Concerning this, the Maliki tradition stresses the importance of a pluralistic pragmatism of sorts. Bodies of government should be willing to accept and recognize the variety of interpretations of Islamic law found in different regions, as opposed to rigorously implementing a single interpretation of the law, given that this would be unnecessary painful and arbitrary to the local *umma.*[57] Therefore, one might expect that even though traditionalist views were emphasized in his local environment, Ibn Battuta understood that truth or faith could be interpreted differently in different communities.

Throughout *The Travels* there are continued discussions and references to the importance of faith for Ibn Battuta. He praises others for instance on their strict adherence to Islam, emphasizes his encounters with the mystics, judges those who did not adhere to the Islam in a proper manner and deliberates on the importance of faith for his personal wellbeing.[58] Although, as argued earlier, Ibn Battuta might have overstated his piousness, there is little doubt that he felt a very strong and personal connection to Islam. A good

[54] Dunn, *The Adventures of Ibn Battuta*, 17-24.
[55] Dunn, *The Adventures of Ibn Battuta*, 20.
[56] Dunn, *The Adventures of Ibn Battuta*, 22.
[57] O. Arabi, "Early Muslim Legal Philosophy: Identity and Difference in Islamic Jurisprudence." *eScholarship* (December 1999): 6, https://escholarship.org/uc/item/7c8253bt.
[58] Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*, 545, 822, 781, 765.

testament to the importance and role of faith in his life is how Ibn Battuta relies on his faith to save him from being executed by the Sultan of Delhi.[59] Also, his many completions of the *hajj*, which were not a necessity but a confirmation of his bond with God, lay testament to this. So, how did this influence his perception of truth? The crucial implication is that secular truths are subservient to the wisdom emanating from the sacred, like the Quran, the hadiths, or saints. His search for *baraka* is the best example of this truth manifesting - it is the most direct relationship with God that man can establish, and God is the ultimate truth for a man of faith. Ibn Battuta perceived the wisdom of saints, his personal trails, his attempt at living a pious live and the graces gained from those he encountered during his travels as a representation of *baraka*.[60] This means that, even if *The Travels* is not accurate at all times, which can be excepted given that the enormous journey was cited from memory, Ibn Battuta himself thought he was telling the truth about the events that he had witnessed.

The last aspect forming Ibn Battuta's perception of truth was no doubt his thirty years of traveling. The places he visited, the communities he resided in, the people he encountered must have all influenced his perception of truth. The travels most likely made him aware of his own shortcomings as a *qadi*, the good and bad sides of life in Morocco, the grand scale of the world, and, most importantly, of his need for self-actualization through travelling and satisfying his curiosity. Through his travels, he encountered many members of the *ulama* and especially those residing in the centers of learning must have made him aware of the comparatively lackluster nature of his own education.[61] Ibn Battuta mostly highlights the greatness of life in Morocco under the Sultan, which cannot be separated, however, from the fact that it was the Sultan who ordered him to write down his story. Yet, through his travels Ibn Battuta must have gained a wider perspective on what successful practices of governance looked like. In the same vein, it must have made Ibn Battuta acutely aware of how big the world really is. All three of these factors are external influences that altered his perception of the general truth of the world. His conception of himself must have also been altered by traveling. Wha argues that curiosity was the third motivation for Ibn Battuta's extensive

[59] "The day on which they begun to guard me was a Friday and God Most High inspired me to recite His words *Sufficient for us is God and excellent the protector.* I recited them that day 33.000 times and passed the night in the audience hall. I fasted five days on end, reciting the Koran from cover to cover and tasting nothing but water, After five days I broke my fast and then continued to fast for another four days on end, and I was released after the execution of the Shaikh, praise be to God Most High." Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*, 766.
[60] Wha, *'Baraka', as Motif and Motive, in the "Rihla" of Ibn Battuta (1304-1369)*, 140-2.
[61] Dunn, *The Adventures of Ibn Battuta*, 312.

traveling.[62] It was also his curiosity that pushed Ibn Battuta to use his observations to study and later describe in detail the large variety of unfamiliar objects, flora, fauna, local customs, and the stories of miracles that he encountered during his travels. The reason that we know that his travels altered his conception of self, and therefore his own truth, is that Ibn Battuta seems first unaware of his desire to explore the wider world. It was only after the completion of his first *hajj*, that he had gained this sense of amazement for the wider world, indicating a change within himself that took place during his travels.[63]

4.2.2 The Author's Ethics

Ibn Battuta's ethical compass was likely influenced strongly by two factors - his faith and his profession as a *qadi*. This is because one cannot separate Ibn Battuta's ethics from its theological foundation. This foundation consists of facts about the universe, its Creator and His speech, that have been passed on to Ibn Battuta and which are inherently normative. To argue, that one accepts the existence of a moralistic God, and still maintain that one's own purposes for action take precedence over said God's moral designs of the universe is completely irrational.[64] Therefore, when one discusses the ethical system of a man of faith, it is his faith and his interactions within this context that should be studied. Additionally, the intermediary status granted to jurisprudence, as it is essentially a translation of the divine into the normative, meant that Ibn Battuta gave clear indications of his ethical believe system.

Within the religion of Islam, there are many interpretations of how best to translate the divine into the normative. To understand how Ibn Battuta did this, examples encountered in the text as well as the background given by Omar Farahat in his dissertation on the constructions of normative ethics in early medieval Islam, a period, which as discussed earlier, was influential in the conservative education that Ibn Battuta enjoyed, will be investigated. Farahat focused on the work of different scholars debating *uṣūl al-fiqh*, which are the traditional methodological principles used in, *fiqh*, Islamic jurisprudence for deriving the rulings of, *sharia*, Islamic law. [65] They conclude that the positions taken by these scholars fall broadly into two categories. The first group took divine will and speech to be the true source of normative ethics, and therefore limited the latitude of jurists to formulate laws based

[62] Wha, *'Baraka', as Motif and Motive, in the "Rihla" of Ibn Battuta (1304-1369)*, 58-67.
[63] When he crossed into Persia, looking back, he acknowledges that from then on "it was a habit of mine on my travels never, so far as possible, to retrace any road that I had once traveled over." Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*, 283.
[64] O. Farahat, *Between God and Society Divine Speech and Norm-Construction in Islamic Theology and Jurisprudence*, (PhD diss., Colombia University, 2016.), 302.
[65] Farahat, *Between God and Society Divine Speech*, *4.*

on other sources than divine will and speech. The second group, which was in the majority, adopted the view that the formulation and creation of laws can be done by the jurists themselves. They argued that there was room for human reasoning in the creations of ethical norms and laws.[66] Ibn Battuta most likely belonged to the second category. His education as a Maliki *qadi*, which allowed for localized interpretations of truth, seems to align more with the idea of room for human interpretation. This becomes also apparent in Ibn Battuta's *Rihla* itself where he often does not judge simply based on, or in reference to, the divine texts of the Islamic faith but also based on his own ideas and within the context of the situation.[67] That is not to say, however, that there were no strict norms that Muslims, in general, had to adhere to which Ibn Battuta often used as a measuring stick to judge the society he arrived in. This implies that Ibn Battuta subscribed to a normative ethical system that was based on the teachings of his faith.

When studying *The Travels,* it becomes evident what norms and values were valued most by Ibn Battuta, what he considered important to being a good person. Due to Ibn Battuta's many encounters with different communities, there are many instances in which Ibn Battuta discusses how well others adhere to his idea of being a good Muslim. In general, Ibn Battuta seemed to value three norms above others. Specifically, he valued modesty, piousness, and generosity. He often addresses how modest those are that he encounters, critiquing those that do not behave or dress modestly, while praising those that do practice modesty in their clothing, behavior, and perspective.[68] In the same vein, those that are pious are being praised throughout the *Rihla*. Especially those, that show their devotion in explicit manners, like the mystics that gave up their possessions or the king who was dressing humbly.[69] The last virtue that Ibn Battuta praised continuously is generosity. This is

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[66] Farahat, *Between God and Society Divine Speech*, 303.

[67] A good example of this is when a slave slept with a concubine of the Sultan of the Maldives and Ibn Battuta initially refused to act as a judge as he saw it fit that only the Sultan himself would judge the slaves punishment. When the Sultan refused, Ibn Battuta judged the slave harshly to many beatings by bamboo rods which "give harder blows than whips", unfortunately this was not enough and the affair led to Ibn Battuta leaving the islands. Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*, 840-3.

[68] Although the people of the Maldives are "upright and pious, sound in belief, and sincere in purpose" the fact that their women, of whom he married several, do not cover themselves adequately was something that agitated him. As their *qadi,* he even tried to change this custom but was unsuccessful in doing so. Ibn Battuta thought of these people as good people despite this "wrong" that they continually committed, demonstrating his ethical flexibility. Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*, 823-9.

[69] Whenever Ibn Battuta found himself in a perilous spot, he would often resort to living as piously as possible to gain the good will of God, demonstrating that he believed that those who lived a pious live would gain God's grace. For example, when Ibn Battuta was near to starvation after escaping Hindu forces in India, he was rescued and by repeating "God is sufficient for us and excellent the guardian" his savior found the strength to carry him to a nearby village. The aforementioned prayer that Ibn Battuta used when being held in captivity by the Sultan is another example of this. Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*, 780, 766.

understandable as for large parts of his travels he was depended on the generous gifts of others. Being generous is also strongly connected to being a devout Muslim. The act of *Zakat*, or alms giving, is strongly represented in the Islamic faith and considered one of the five pillars of the religion.[70] Ibn Battuta would have often found himself in desperate situations, if it had not been for the help of others, especially in the form of financial support. But even when it was not directed at him, Ibn Battuta seemed to appreciate the trait of generosity.[71] These three qualities seem to be necessary for Ibn Battuta to deem a person as good. For example, the king of Mali, Sulayman, was praised for his just and stable government as well as the zeal of the Muslim population to their mosque prayers and Qur'anic studies. Therefore, he was a good person even though his generosity towards Ibn Battuta was limited.[72] Although Ibn Battuta often found these qualities in those of the same faith, they were not restricted to them exclusively. This indicates that Ibn Battuta valued these characteristics apart from the faith he had derived them from.

4.2.3 The Author's Beauty

The esthetical background of the work matters because Ibn Battuta and Juzayy's goal was not to write a historical work focused on being as accurate and truthful as possible. *The Travels* and the *rihla* as a literary genre in general are an expression of art. Therefore, what Ibn Battuta perceived as attractive might have influenced the information in the book. Additionally, as a work of the *rihla* genre Ibn Battuta and especially Juzayy likely made changes to the story to create an attractive and more readable work overall. Within *The Travels*, there are numerous references to things perceived as attractive by Ibn Battuta: women, men, buildings, gardens, and nature. Unlike his ethics and epistemology, there does not seem to be a greater, unifying, and underlying trend to what is he considers attractive. He seemed to appreciate the natural beauty of women everywhere, the rice fields of China, the jewelry gifted to the Sultan of Delphi and the beauty of buildings created to grace God all

[70] M. Khan, "The Philosophical Foundations of Islamic Political Economy." *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 13 no. 3 (1996): 389–400.
[71] There are many examples of people being set in a positive light because of their generosity, "The Amir of the merchants there was Ibrahim Shahbandar (a title that stands for chief port master and head of customs.), of the people of Bahrain, a worthy man, of generous habits, at whose house the merchants used to gather and eat at his table." Even when discussing an Imam from Mecca, Ibn Battuta points out his generosity over his other characteristics, "the most generous of the jurists of Mecca." Generosity was clearly crucial to being a good person for the traveling *qadi*. Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*, 813, 265.
[72] Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*, 961-5.

equally.[73] Overall, Ibn Battuta seemed to think that the world had many attractive aspects to it and he enjoyed travelling more because of them.

Earlier I discussed the genre of the *rihla* and the possible amendments that Juzayy may have made to adapt the Ibn Battuta's story for the genre. This was partly done because he perceived this to be a more attractive manner of telling Ibn Battuta's story. Unfortunately, we do not know the input that Ibn Battuta himself had within this process. As a sophisticated man, he might have had strong preferences or if he trusted Juzayy he might have simply let the scribe decide. In any case, we can assume that certain additions were made by Juzayy to make *The Travels* more attractive. A relatively small change that was made was the usage of rhetorical devises and the interjection of occasional bits of verses. A large adjustment was made to accommodate the complicated itinerary of Ibn Battuta's travels. His travels took him past various cities and regions multiple times, his routes overlapped, crisscrossed, backtracked, and he had very few, if any, notes to help with transcribing his story.[74] To make the narrative flow smoothly descriptions were likely mashed together, people he encountered multiple times might have been left out, or the timeline of events might have been altered.[75] Additionally, to make the work more attractive to readers, it is likely that certain places that Ibn Battuta never visited were added, as mentioned before. For Juzayy it was likely an attractive idea to use this *Rihla* to give a survey of the Islamicate world of the fourteenth century.[76] This makes it harder for the modern historian to use it as a source but it made it easier for those that read the work in the centuries following its publication to connect with the wider *Dar al-Islam.* In the same vein, it was attractive for Ibn Battuta to portray himself as a pious, modest, and generous Muslim that had experience of being a *qadi* for high level government officials. To write a quality *rihla,* Juzayy had to add stylistics and narrative techniques to create a more enjoyable read but at the heart of it likely kept to the unique and incredible story of Ibn Battuta himself.

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[73] Especially women were a prevalent subject of his admiration but it was not limited to them as he described Abu Sa'id, the last of the Mongol kings of Persia: "the most beautiful of God's creatures in features, and without any growth on his cheeks." Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*, 254, 823, 840, 888, 773, 775.
[74] There is only one mention of notes, which is when his ship had sunken at the coast of India on his way to China and he reports to have lost a few notes on the linage of the Indian Sultanate. Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*, 815.
[75] Dunn, *The Adventures of Ibn Battuta,* 314-5.
[76] "Ibn Juzayy meant the Rihla to be at the broadest level a survey of the Muslim world of the fourteenth century. Ibn Battuta had not gone absolutely everywhere in that world. Yet Ibn Juzayy probably thought that for the sake of literary integrity almost The Rihla every place in Eurasia and Africa having an important Muslim population should be mentioned within the framework of the traveler's first-person experience, even though in a few cases that experience might not be genuine." Dunn, *The Adventures of Ibn Battuta,* 314-5.

4.3 The Work

In the following sections, various aspects of trade as represented in *The Travels* will be studied in an etic manner, similarly to what other scholars have done previously. Additionally, each aspect of travel will be reflected upon using an emic approach based on the first part of the chapter, to understand how to interpret *The Travels* information. In each section a separate part of trade in the Indian Ocean will be discussed. Starting with infrastructure, followed by commodities, and ending on merchants. Following each section there will be a discussion centered on interpreting the information using the emic perspective as deliberated on in the previous part of the chapter. This is done to demonstrate how an emic understanding of the source can alter the interpretation of the source.

4.3.1 Infrastructure

In order to understand the lines that are the foundation of the Indian Ocean trading system, its infrastructure, one must examine the shipping routes and entrepots that connected the ports of the Indian Ocean. Around 1330 Ibn Battuta traveled to Yemen and, about a year later, to the trading port of Aden. In Aden, Ibn Battuta observed the enormous wealth of the in-Aden-living Indian and Egyptian merchants, that were able to outfit whole boats on their own.[77] This description informs us of the importance of Aden as an entrepot connecting the Mediterranean trade and the Indian Ocean. It also informs us about the existence of direct trading lines with various ports in India such as Calicut and Goa. From Aden onwards Ibn Battuta travelled along the African East Coast visiting the cities of Mogadishu, Mombasa, Zanzibar and Kilwa. Of these, Mogadishu was the richest and most notable, although all these cities were involved in trade with the Middle East. From the West Coast of Africa, Ibn Battuta traveled to Zafar, a city at the extremity of Yemen, from which India is only a month of travel away, given good winds. Accordingly, trade was being conducted with Indian merchants who brought cotton cloths in exchange for thorough bred horses.[78] From Zafar, Ibn Battuta sailed

[77] "I travelled from there next to the city of Adan, the port of the land of al-Yaman, on the coast of the great sea. It is surrounded by mountains and there is no way into it except from one side only. It is a large city, but has no crops, trees, or water, and has reservoirs in which water is collected during the rainy season… It is an exceedingly hot place, and is the port of the merchants of India, to which come great vessels from Kinbayah (Cambay), Tanah, Kawlam (Quilon), Qaliqut, Fandaraina, al-Shaliyat, Manjarur (Mangalore), Fakanur, Hinawr (Honavar), Sandabur (Goa), and other places. The merchants of India live there, and the merchants of Egypt also. The inhabitants of Adan are either merchants or porters or fishermen. The merchants among them have enormous wealth; sometimes a single man may possess a great ship with all it contains, no one sharing in it with him, because of the vast capital at his disposal, and there is no ostentation and rivalry between them in this respect." Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*, 373.

[78] "We then sailed from Kulwa to the city of Zafar, which is at the extremity of the land of al-Yaman, on the coast of the Indian Sea. From it thorough bred horses are exported to India, and the sea between it and the land of India can be crossed with the aid of the wind in a full month… Their cloths (of the inhabitants of Zafar) are

North towards Oman where he stopped in the city of Qalhat, a city in which the inhabitants are depended on the trade with the rest of the Indian Ocean, before returning to Mecca.[79] Before returning to the Indian Ocean, Ibn Battuta would travel the Eurasian continent for many years, finally leaving Delhi in 1341 as part of an embassy fleet to Yang, China, to resolve a dispute about a Buddhist temple in the Himalayas. From the Himalayas, Ibn Battuta traveled along the West Coast of India, to Sri Lanka and stayed on the Maldives for nine months, before traveling through the Strait of Melaka towards China.[80] Of these regions, the west coast of India stands out as being the most influenced by commerce - almost every sea side town that was encountered is described as having a harbor or large bazaar.[81]

So, what can we learn from Ibn Battuta about the infrastructure of the Indian Ocean? Firstly, it becomes clear that the west coast of India was a major hub for trade with the Middle East and China, as Ibn Battuta described merchants from both areas.[82] Various important ports are also discussed of which Lahari, Cambay, Goa, Quilon, Panderani, and most of all Calicut, stand out as entrepots at which merchants from various nations found each other. Ibn Battuta describes them as exceedingly rich and vast.[83] It is abundantly clear that the west coast of India, at this point, played a crucial role in the traffic between various parts of the Indian Sea.

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made of cotton, which is brought to them from India, and they wear wrappers fastened round their waists in place of drawers." Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*, 382.

[79] "They (the inhabitants of the city of Qalhat) are traders and make a livelihood by what comes to them on the Indian Sea. When a vessel arrives at their town, they show the greatest joy." Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*, 98.

[80] Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*, 876.

[81] Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*, 794-813.

[82] "After I had traveled for five days with Ala al-Mulk, we reached the site of his province. This is the city of *Lahari* (close to modern day Karachi), a fine town on the seacoast where the river of Sind discharges itself into the ocean, and two seas meet. It possesses a large harbor, visited by men (i.e. merchants) from al-Yaman, Fars, and elsewhere."

"Three days after leaving Fakanur (Bacanor) we reached Manjarur (Mangalore), a large town on the inlet called *Khaur al-Dund*, which is the largest inlet in the land of Malaibar. This is town at which most of the merchants from Fars and al-Yemen disembark, and pepper and ginger are exceedingly abundant there."

Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*, 602, 808.

"From there on continued our journey to town of Qaliqut (Calicut), which is one of the chief ports in Mulaibar (Malabar). It is visited by men from China, Jawah, Ceylon, The Maldives, al-Yaman, and Fars, and in it gather merchants from all quarters. Its harbor is one of the largest in the world." Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*, 807.

[83] "This city (Cambay) is one of the finest there is in regard to the excellence of its construction and the architecture of its mosques. The reason is that the majority of its inhabitants are foreign merchants, who are always building there fine mansions and magnificent mosques and vie with one another in doing so."

"On the tenth day we reached the city of Kawlaw (Quilon), one of the finest towns in the Malabar lands. It has fine bazaars, and its merchants are called Sulis. They are immensely wealthy; a single merchant will buy a vessel with all that is in it and load it with goods from his own house. There is a colony of Muslim merchants there, the chief of whom is Ala al-Din al-Awaji, from Awa in al-Iraq. He is a Rafidi, and has a number of associates belonging to his sect, and they proclaim it openly… This city is the nearest of the Malabar towns to China and it is to it that most of the merchants (from China) come. Muslims are honored and respected there."

Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*, 602, 797, 805, 817. For further information see the previous footnote.

Ibn Battuta also travelled further towards China. First, he travelled past Bengal, which he describes as the greatest producer of produce (mostly rice) he has ever seen, then he stayed in Sumatra and Java for a few weeks before traveling to China.[84] Only here does Ibn Battuta describe once more cities that rival those of India.[85] Yet, as far as entrepots in the Indian Ocean are concerned, it seems as if, at this point in time, Aden in Yemen and the west coast of India concentrated the traffic of various directions.

What is, however, still somewhat unclear is how the merchants travelled to the entrepots. To a certain degree, we can assume that Ibn Battuta followed the same travel routes as most merchants. Also, there is little information on alternative routes that merchants might have taken in his work. Yet, there are some indications for the existence of standard routes that merchants sailed along. The Chinese merchants sailed to the West coast of India but not further. The harbors they visited were, according to Ibn Battuta, Hili, Kawlam and Calicut.[86] All these towns were located at the edge of the Indian Peninsula. There is no mention of Chinese merchants in Bengal but there is in Sumatra, which could indicate a direct route over the gulf of Bengal to the tip of India.[87] Muslim merchants were encountered almost everywhere, but Ibn Battuta does mention that most of the merchants from the Middle East did not move beyond Mangalore in Malabar. [88] So, their main routes were probably from Fars and Yemen to this part of the Indian coast, but it is hard to say if this was a direct route across

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[84] Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*, 253, 255-258, 261.

[85] "When we had crossed the sea the first city to which we came was Zaitun. It is a huge and important city in which are manufactured the fabrics of velvet, damask, and satin which are known by its name. Its harbor is among the biggest in the world, or rather is the biggest; I have seen about a hundred big junks there and innumerable little ones. The Muslims live in a separate city. On the day I arrived I saw there the Amir who had been sent to India as ambassador with the present, had been in our company and had been in the junk which sank. He greeted me and installed me in handsome loggings. I received visits from the qadi of the Muslims and from the important merchants. As these merchants live in an infidel country they are delighted when a Muslim arrives among them. They say, 'He has come from the land of Islam', and give him the legal alms due on their property so that he becomes as rich as one of them.
We sailed from Zaitun on the river for twenty-seven days till we reached the city of Sin Kalan, which is the city of Sin al-Sin. Among the largest bazaars there is that of the potters, whose wars exported to other provinces of China and to India and al-Yaman. Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*, 745.

[86] "After staying with them for three days, we set sail for the town of Hili (Nileshwar is most likely its modern-day representative), which we reached two days later. It is large and well-built, situated on a big bay which is navigable for large vessels. This is the farthest town reached by ships from China; they only enter this port, the port of Kawlam (Kollam), and Calicut." Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*, 809.

[87] "I stayed in Sumutrah with the sultan for fifteen days. After that I sought permission to travel, for it was the season of the voyage to China which is not organized at any other time. The sultan prepared a junk for us, stocked it with provisions, and was most generous and kind. May god reward him! He sent one of his companions with us to be host on the junk." Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*, 788.

[88] "Three days after leaving Fakanur (Bacanor) we reached Manjarur (Mangalore), a large town on the inlet called Khaur al-Dund, which is the largest inlet in the land of Malabar. This is town at which most of the merchants from Fars and al-Yemen disembark, and pepper and ginger are exceedingly abundant there." Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*, 808.

the Indian Ocean. Indian merchants were also found in Yemen but there is no mention of them on the East coast of Africa. Due to the mentioning of cloth being traded as well as foreign merchants in the area, it is quite likely that Indian merchants regularly found their way to the Indonesian Islands. Yet, there is no more mention of them in China, and Ibn Battuta also stated that "On the sea of China travelling is done in Chinese ships only" which had to influence the abilities of Indian merchants to travel beyond the ports of Sumatra and Java.[89]

After understanding the places the merchants traveled to and the routes they used to get there, the last pieces to understand the foundation of a shipping network are the ships themselves. Ibn Battuta mentions several kinds of ships with differences often stemming from their makers. He sailed down the West coast of India on quite a big ship, he mentioned it being broader than a grab, and having over sixty oars.[90] Being able to transport horses, it had to be quite big. The ships used by the Arabians are never clearly described but they are capable of sailing around the Indian Ocean, so a certain degree of sophistication must have been a given. The only important detail that we do know about the Arabian ships is that they, like the Indian ships, did not rely on iron nails but instead on ropes to hold the ship together. Supposedly, this was more effective in resisting the collisions caused by the many reefs found along the coast of Yemen and India.[91] The Chinese ships were, meanwhile, described in quite some detail. We learn that there were generally three sizes, the famous junks, the smaller zaws, and the smallest kakams. The largest ships, the junks, could have up to twelve sails that were supported by masts of bamboo. Their sails were never lowered but turned towards the wind to deal with changes in direction and these kinds of ships were only build in Zaitun and Canton. The Chinese ships were compartmentalized through various rooms and decks. This

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[89] Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*, 813.

[90] "We embarked on a ship belonging to the Ibrahim mentioned above, called *al-Jagir*. On this ship we put seventy of the horses of the Sultan's present, and the rest we put with the horses of our companions on a ship belonging to this Ibrahim brother, called *Manurt*. Jalansi gave us a vessel on which we put the horse of Zahir al-Din and Sunbul and their party, and he furnished it for us with water, provisions and forage. He sent his son with us on a ship called *al-Ukrairi*, which resembles a grab, but is rather broader; it has sixty oars and is covered with a roof during battle in order to protect the rowers from arrows and stones. I myself went on board *al-Jagir*, which had a complement of fifty rowers and fifty Abyssinian men-at-arms. The latter are guarantors of safety on the sea; let there be but one of them on a ship and it will be avoided by the Indian pirates and idolaters." Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*, 800.

[91] "From these islands are exported by ship the fish we have mentioned, coconuts, waists cloths, *wilyan*, and cotton turbans, as well as brass utensils, of which they have a great many, cowrie shells and *qanbar*. This is the hairy integument of the coconut, which they tan in pits on the shore, and afterwards beat out with bars; the women then spin it and it is made into cords for sewing (the planks of) ships together. These cords are exported to India, China, and al-Yaman, and are better than hemp. The Indian and Yemenite ships are sewn together with them, for that sea is full of reefs, and if a ship is nailed with iron nails it breaks up on striking the rocks, whereas if it is sewn together with cords, it is given a certain resilience and does not fall to pieces." Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*, 826-7.

was done to such a degree that some passengers might have never even met until they disembarked. On a single junk there were supposedly a thousand passengers, of which more than half were the sailors, but also a significant number of men-at-arms were on board. Lastly, these ships also had oars, described as being as large as a mast, that require over ten men to stir them.[92] Although there is suspicion that Ibn Battuta might be exaggerating here, the Chinese vessels must have been quite enormous indeed and were accompanied by several smaller vessels which towed the larger ships when there was an absence of wind and waves.[93] Overall, it seems that the various merchant communities build ships fit for their trade routes and needs. The Arabian ships had to deal with difficult-to-navigate and dangerous shores. The Indians were more focused on transporting larger quantities of trade goods but still had to account for the same dangerous coastline around the Arabian Peninsula. The Chinese made the longest journeys, so these ships had to be even larger to make a single journey more profitable. Most shipping seemed to rely on the monsoon winds but especially the Chinese ships were geared towards this phenomenon.

Overall, it becomes apparent that the infrastructure of the trade network of the Indian Ocean already had clear characteristics in the beginning of the fourteenth century. There were several entrepots like Aden and Calicut, and possibly Zaitun, where merchants from different communities and regions met and mingled, resulting in vast riches for some of those involved. The trade routes connecting these regions were most likely not set in stone although there are indications of relatively direct trade routes from China, Yemen, and Fars to the Indian West coast. The ships used by these merchants used both oars and sails and could accommodate horses, quite some commodities, and people as well. Especially the Chinese junks were relatively enormous, being capable of transporting over a thousand people, trading goods, as well as supplies. Yet, some questions remain about the trade network of the Indian Ocean. What were the commodities that were transported and what do we know about the merchants that sold and bought these?

4.3.1.1 Emic Interpretation

As established before, Ibn Battuta's interest in trade itself was limited, so when reading his work for clues on how the infrastructure of the Indian Ocean trade network developed in the fourteenth century, it is important to go beyond the simple statements given in *The Travels*.

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[92] Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*, 813-4.
[93] "It has no wind and no waves and no movement in spite of its extent. For this reason every Chinese junk is accompanied by three boats, as we have said. They are rowed and tow it." Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*, 813.

Ibn Battuta emphasized the importance of entrepots of trade which is likely due to their central importance in coastal societies. These cities were often also hubs of culture and religion which explains why Ibn Battuta discussed them in more depth. Not all cities that had importance in trade were discussed in a similar manner. Some were almost entirely passed by while others were discussed at length, although without much focus on the actual trade taking place, which was often handled in a paragraph or less.[94] Therefore, one can doubt to what extend the descriptions and indicated importance of the trading cities matched their actual position in the Indian Ocean trading system. In Ibn Battuta's eyes the true worth and appeal of a city was in relation to its inhabitants and its place within the larger Islamicate world. So, when comparing the central entrepots of each area around the Indian Ocean in terms of their trade, it is important to understand how other factors could have influenced their description.

In East Africa, the city of Mogadishu seemed to be the most important trading center. But Mogadishu was also the seat of the Sultan of the Ajuran Empire, Abu Bakr ibn Sayx 'Umar, who was a sophisticated Muslim ruler fluent in scripture in both the local and Arabian language.[95] In accordance with Ibn Battuta's education and faith and his according ethical values and epistemological ideas, it is unlikely that he would have critiqued such a ruler or critically looked at the state of the city. Furthermore, he would have probably seen the true value of the city in it being part of the larger Islamicate world and, therefore, both he and Juzayy would have found relevance in making sure information about the city was included within the *Rihla*. That is not to say that Mogadishu was not an important center of commerce, it likely was, which only enhanced its importance within the larger Islamicate world prompting Ibn Battuta to discuss the city at greater length than other cities along the East Coast of Africa. The same can largely be said for the central entrepot of Aden, positioned at the end of the Yemen peninsula. This is one of the few cities in which Ibn Battuta gives a more detailed description of its merchants and the trade they conducted.[96] As crucial for much of the trade between the area of the Indian Ocean and the Middle-East, Aden was central to the larger Islamicate world. In the perspective of Ibn Battuta, it was therefore important to explain the pull it had on foreign merchants in order to show the importance of the Islamicate world. Ibn Battuta could have overstated the importance of the harbor to this effect, possibly by including merchants from foreign nations that he did not witness himself.

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[94] Compare for example the description of Calicut with that of Karachi. Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*, 602, 807-22.
[95] Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*, 374-6.
[96] Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*, 373.

In India, Ibn Battuta passed through several entrepots, like Cambay and Calicut, and from his descriptions we learn that these cities were indeed crucial to the wider Indian Ocean trade. At the same time, many of these cities were places in which the Muslim elite ruled over the Hindu majority. It is possible that, to stress the success of these rulers, Ibn Battuta stressed their success in trade. For Ibn Battuta, the truth was that they were generally good rulers due to their shared ethical dogma. However, the *Zamorin*, or ruler of Calicut, was not a Muslim. Implying that he did not purely look at the faith of the rulers but also at other facets like their capabilities as governors or possibly their treatment of Muslim merchants. The only entrepot that the reader gets to know within China is Zaitun, an entrepot described as on par with the other major entrepots. It is unlikely that Ibn Battuta was inclined to distort this information. The harbor is, however, described in less detailed than those of other entrepots, which could possibly indicate that Juzayy added this information or that Ibn Battuta simply spend very little time in the actual city as we do learn that travelers were supposed to stay within the confines of an inn.[97] Additionally, descriptions of some of the other important trading entrepots might have been omitted or added by Juzayy, depending on the size of the Muslim trading community there to support the *Rihla* in giving a general overview of the Islamicate world of the fourteenth century.

The routes that merchants took to travel between these entrepots, and other trading towns are very hard to infer from *The Travels*, as Ibn Battuta seldom describes his encounters with certain merchants. Occasionally the descriptions of these encounters were in detail, including the town of origin of the merchants, as for example in Aden, but often they were of a more general nature, such as the encounters described in Bengal. Ibn Battuta's descriptions of the ships used along these trading routes is generally also lackluster, except for the detailed description of the Chinese ships that he was about to embark on in Calicut. It is unlikely that this description was much influenced by his faith or education. The singular description of the these ships stands out, and although Ibn Battuta had described seeing Chinese merchants in other ports then Calicut, he still only opts to talk about their ships when boarding them for the first time.[98] Does this mean that Chinese traders in other parts of the Ocean used Indian or

[97] "When a Muslim merchant arrives in a Chinese town he chooses whether to stay with one of the Muslims merchants designated among those domiciled there, or in the funduq (an inn). If he prefers to stay with the merchant if money is impounded, the merchant with whom he is to reside takes charge of it and spends from it on his behalf honestly. When he wishes to leave, his money is examined and if any of it is missing the merchant with whom he stayed and to whom it was entrusted makes it good. If he wishes to stay in the funduq his money is entrusted to the master of the of the funduq, who is put in charge of it; he buys for the merchants what he wants on his account." Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*, 892.
[98] Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*, 813-4.

Arabian ships? That seems unlikely as their naval and shipbuilding techniques were superior to both and at no point is there mention of the usage of other ships than their own.[99] It is possible that Juzayy opted to include the ship's description only at the moment of boarding for literary purposes. The singular description is more likely though due to Ibn Battuta's fourth goal of amazing the readers of the unknown and foreign. The ships used by the Arabian merchants, and possibly those used by the Indians as well, were simply too common in their design to warrant a separate detailly description. In general, the trend seems to be that descriptions of things related to the infrastructure of trade were sporadic and incomplete. Therefore, it is unlikely that Ibn Battuta's account gives a full or good representation of the infrastructure of the Indian Ocean trade.

4.3.2 Commodities

Due to the great variation of landscapes around the Indian Ocean, there was quite a diverse range of trading goods that circulated through the various ports. Where these were produced, traded and consumed is what will be discussed in this section of the chapter. Although there was a large variety of products being traded, and some of these have already been mentioned, the aim of this section is to get a good overview of the main commodities being traded. Ibn Battuta started his journey into the Indian Ocean with a visit to Yemen and then sailed down along the East coast of Africa. In Aden, Yemen, he mentioned that there are no products being produced, although there are fishermen and pearl divers living in Aden. This means that it almost entirely consumed and traded products, which came from Egypt and India.[100] The outer edges of Yemen, however, had an important export product in the form of horses, which were exported to India and exchanged for Indian cotton .[101] The East Coast of Africa mostly

[99] Dunn, *The Adventures of Ibn Battuta*, 18-9.

[100] "I travelled from there next to the city of Adan, the port of the land of al-Yaman, on the coast of the great sea. It is surrounded by mountains and there is no way into it except from one side only. It is a large city, but has no crops, trees, or water, and has reservoirs in which water is collected during the rainy season… It is an exceedingly hot place, and is the port of the merchants of India, to which come great vessels from Kinbayah (Cambay), Tanah, Kawlam (Quilon), Qaliqut, Fandaraina, al-Shaliyat, Manjarur (Mangalore), Fakanur, Hinawr (Honavar), Sandabur (Goa), and other places. The merchants of India live there, and the merchants of Egypt also. The inhabitants of Adan are either merchants or porters or fishermen. The merchants among them have enormous wealth; sometimes a single man may possess a great ship with all it contains, no one sharing in it with him, because of the vast capital at his disposal, and there is no ostentation and rivalry between them in this respect." Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*, 373.

[101] "We then sailed from Kulwa to the city of Zafar, which is at the extremity of the land of al-Yaman, on the coast of the Indian Sea. From it thorough bred horses are exported to India, and the sea between it and the land of India can be crossed with the aid of the wind in a full month… Their cloths (of the inhabitants of Zafar) are made of cotton, which is brought to them from India, and they wear wrappers fastened round their waists in place of drawers." Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*, 204.

exported products such as camels, sheep, ivory, and fruits such as bananas and lemons, and consumed grain as they could not produce it themselves.[102]

When Ibn Battuta was employed by the Sultan in Delhi, he witnessed a diplomatic interaction between the Tughlaq dynasty and the Yuan dynasty. He was even put in charge of the return mission to China by the Sultan. This interaction is interesting for various reasons. Importantly here, it gave Ibn Battuta insight into the commodities that were used as bargaining chips by both empires, thereby, giving quite a comprehensive overview of the possible trading goods that were shipped across the Indian Ocean and South China Sea. Ibn Battuta learned that: "The king of China had sent to the Sultan a hundred mamluks and slave girls, five hundred pieces of velvet cloth, including a hundred of those which are manufactured in the city of Zaitun and a hundred of those which are manufactured in Khansa, five mounds of musk, five robes adorned with jewels, five embroidered quivers, and five swords" and in return the Sultan gave a rich variety of cloths, and linen, among them even Greek linen, various gold and silver trinkets, as well as various precious items encrusted with pearls.[103] Along the Indian coast various other products were also traded and produced, such as jewels and fruits, and various spices of which pepper stands out the most.[104] China's most famous products of trade were its silk and pottery both being traded throughout the Indian Ocean until they reached the countries of the Middle East.[105] Furthermore, Ibn Battuta described the Chinese climate as affluent and able to produce various fruits and cereals, gold and silver were also mined in the country.[106] The Chinese mostly traded to gain gold and

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[102] Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*, 206-10.

[103] "He (the Sultan) requited his present with an even richer one – a hundred thoroughbred horses saddled and bridled, a hundred male slaves, a hundred Hindu singing- and dancing-girls, a hundred pieces of *bairami* cloth, which are made of cotton and are unequalled in beauty, each piece being worth a hundred dinars, a hundred lengths of the silk fabrics called *juzz*, in which the silk material of each is dyed with four or five different colors – four hundred pieces of the fabrics known as *salahi*, a hundred pieces of *shirin-baf*, a hundred pieces of *shan-baf*, five hundred pieces of *miriz* woolens, one hundred of them black and a hundred each in white, red, green, and blue, a hundred lengths of Greek linen, a hundred pieces of blanket cloth, a *siracha*, six pavilions, four candelabra in gold and six in silver enameled, four golden basins with ewers to match, and six silver basins, ten embroidered robes of honor from the Sultan's own wardrobe, and ten caps also worn by him, one of them encrusted with pearls, ten embroidered quivers one of them encrusted with pearls, ten swords one of them with a scabbard encrusted with pearls, *dasht-ban* or *dastban*, that is gloves, embroidered with pearls, and fifteen eunuchs." Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*, 773-4.

[104] Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*, 773-4, 794, 807-8, 810.

[105] "Chinese pottery is made only in the city of Zaitun and in Sin Kalan… The price is that of earthenware in our country, or less. It is exported to India and other ports of the world till it reaches our country in the Maghrib, and it is the most superb kind of pottery… Silk is extremely plentiful, for the worms attach themselves to fruit, eat it and need little care. This is why it is plentiful and the poor and destitute dress in it. If it were not for the merchants trading in it, it would have no value. Among them a single robe of cotton is sold for the price of many silks." Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*, 889.

[106] "We left the country of Tawalisi, and after seventeen days of sailing very rapidly and comfortably with a favorable wind we reached the country of China. The Chinese climate is extensive and is rich in resources, fruits, cereals, gold and silver; no other climate in the world compares with it in this respect. A river known as Ab-I

silver to supplement that from mining, that they melted into hand sized ingots, which they preferred over any other currency.[107]

Ibn Battuta also visited other places around the Indian Ocean like the Maldives and the Indonesian Islands of Java and Sumatra. Here and on the Indian coast a lot of the diet consisted of rice, which was either produced locally, or imported from other places. [108] Bengal is noted as being an important country for this reason, as it produced quite a lot of rice.[109][110] The Maldives themselves also produced various products, most noticeably rope made of coconut hair that was used to hold the Arabian and Indian ships together, but also brass utensils, and cowrie shells.[111] About Java and Sumatra we learn that they produced or at least traded with sandalwood, aloes, camphor, and cloves.[112]

Overall, it becomes apparent that there was a large variety of commodities being traded throughout the Indian Ocean. Although, overall, there seems to be fewer bulk than luxury products being shipped. Rice was, however, transported from Bengal all the way to the Maldives. Certain products even made more than one journey, like the pottery from China, or the rope from the Maldives to China and Yemen. Gold and silver seemed to have played a role in trade, especially with China. It is hard to say, however, if there was a distinct trade imbalance or direction of trade. For this to be clear, relative prices for products would have to be known.

Hayat, meaning 'the water of life', divides it. It rises in the mountains near the city of Khan Baliq and flows through China for a distance of six months' travel to finish at Sin al-Sin. It is encompassed by villages, cultivated fields, orchards and bazaars, like the Nile in Egypt, but here there is more settlement." Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*, 888.

[107] "The people of China do not do business for dinars and dirhams. In their country all the gold and silver they acquire they melt down into ingots. They buy and sell with pieces of paper the size of the palm of the hand, which are stamped with the sultan's stamp." Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*, 890.

[108] "I lived also in the Maldives Islands, Ceylon, and on the Ma'bar and Malabar coasts for their eating nothing but rice, until I could not swallow it except by taking water with it." Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*, 805.

[109] "The inhabitants of these islands (Maldives) use cowrie shells as money… They sell them in exchange for rice to the people of Bengal, who also use them as money, as well as to the Yemenites, who use them instead of sand (as ballast) in their ships. These cowries are used also by the negroes in their lands; I saw them being sold at Mali and Gawgaw at the rate of 1,150 for a dinar." Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*, 826-7.

[110] "I left and we were at sea for forty-three days and then reached the country of Bengal. It is a spacious country, producing rice in abundance. Nowhere in the world have I seen cheaper produce than there, but it is gloomy and the people of Khurasan say, 'duzakhast pur ni'ma', meaning 'it is a hell full of blessings." Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*, 867.

[111] "From these islands are exported by ship the fish we have mentioned, coconuts, waists cloths, wilyan, and cotton turbans, as well as brass utensils, of which they have a great many, cowrie shells and qanbar. This is the hairy integument of the coconut, which they tan in pits on the shore, and afterwards beat out with bars; the women then spin it and it is made into cords for sewing (the planks of) ships together. These cords are exported to India, China, and al-Yaman, and are better than hemp." Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*, 826-7.

[112] Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*, 880.

4.3.2.1 Emic Interpretation

What we learn from Ibn Battuta's text is how he valued certain commodities. His general motivations had a strong influence on the commodities he valued as he was clearly motivated by curiosity and his need to explore the foreign. Pushed by his curiosity to explore the unknown, Ibn Battuta would often taste and describe new fruits and other food stuff he encountered in great detail. He gave comparatively little attention to the expensive gifts that the Sultan gave to him or the Chinese king. To Ibn Battuta, it was the strange and unknown that was worth describing, resulting in vivid descriptions of many different products found around the Indian Ocean. The downside of this, however, is that commodities encountered prior on his journey or common to him were unlikely to be mentioned again. Furthermore, as he did not partake in trade himself it seems that the relative value of most products was meaningless to him.[113] It is also possible that certain products were omitted if they did not warrant a description. If he for instance had known of them previously or if they were products, he had no interest in, such as spirits, it is likely that Ibn Battuta had no interest or reason to describe these products. Therefore, it is hard to determine what concrete commodities circulated between which harbors based on the work of Ibn Battuta.

Albeit limited, his ethics might have occasionally restricted his curiosity into remaining within the respected products of his religion. It is impossible to know, for example, if there were alcoholic beverages being traded along the Indian coast, as they were simply not included in the narrative. Although Ibn Battuta's epistemology was not based on empirical evidence, many of the products described were witnessed, tasted, or worn by himself giving his descriptions credibility. Unfortunately, the esthetical preferences of Juzayy might have diminished this credibility in order to extend the narrative into a general overview. For readability purposes, he might have grouped descriptions together as he did with repeated visits. Although it is likely that Ibn Battuta saw the same commodities again and again as he was traveling, Juzayy might have opted to include only one description of the product. For these reasons it is unlikely that *The Travels* gives a comprehensive overview of what commodities were produced, traded and consumed around the Indian Ocean. Yet, the information it does give concerning these products is presumably quite accurate but like the descriptions of the infrastructure being used by the merchants, it is likely incomplete.

[113] The exception here being his interest in the value of pepper, which was likely a product reserved for the elite in his native Tangiers, but readily available in great quantities in Malabar and around the Indonesia Peninsula, making it again an oddity instead of the norm and therefore worth discussing in detail. Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*, 807-8, 886-7.

4.3.3 Merchants

Merchants connected the various ports around the Indian Ocean, and they bought and sold the products discussed. Who were these merchants and what was the role of the state in the various towns they visited? The first merchant community, that traded around the Indian Ocean, that Ibn Battuta encountered, were those of the Yemeni towns of Aden and Zafar. About these merchants Ibn Battuta reports that "they are men of generosity and openhandedness, and make a practice of supplying food to wayfarers, and assists pilgrims, transporting them in their vessels and giving them provisions from their own funds. They are indeed noted and famed for this, and God has multiplied their wealth and given them increase of His bounty and aided them to their work in Charity.", which sounds quite positive indeed.[114] Ibn Battuta mentioned a variety of communities of Yemeni merchants in East Africa and West India. Yet, no Yemeni merchants were encountered, or at least there was no mention of them by Ibn Battuta, in China, although he did mention the presence of Muslim merchants. It is, however, possible that these Muslims might have been converts or overland travelers instead. Due to the lacking description by Ibn Battuta, it is unclear what the role of the government was in the trade of cities and nations in Africa and Yemen. This is a different story, however, when considering the Indian West Coast and Yuan China.

In the part of India governed by the Tughluq Sultanate every person arriving was detailly reported to the Sultan, including the beasts and goods in their party. The Sultan, and thus the government, took a central role in encouraging merchants and those of other nationalities to come to Delhi and other ports. Foreigners often filled important roles in this state and merchants could count on luxurious gifts for their efforts.[115] Towns outside the

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[114] Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*, 373.

[115] "When the intelligence officials write to the Sultan informing him of those who arrive in his country, the letter is written with the utmost precision and fulness of description. They report to him that a certain man has arrived of such-and-such appearance and dress, and note the number of his party, slaves and servants and beasts, his behavior both on the move and at rest, all of his doings, omitting no details relating to all of these. When the newcomer reaches the town of Multan, which is the capital of Sind, he stays there until the Sultan's order is received regarding his entry and the degree of hospitality to be extended to him. A man is honored in that country only according to what may be seen of his actions, conduct, and zeal, since no one there knows anything of his family and parentage. The king of India, the Sultan Aby'l-Mujahid Muhammad Shah, makes of practice of honoring strangers and showing affection to them and singling them out for governorships or high dignities of state. The majority of his courtiers, palace officials, ministers of state, judges, and relatives by marriage are foreigners, and he has issued a decree that foreigners are to be called in his country by the title of Aziz (honorable), so that this has become a proper name for them.
Every person proceeding to the court of this king must needs have a gift ready to present to him in person, in order to gain his favor. The Sultan requites him for it by a gift many times its value. We shall have much to tell later on about the presents made to him by foreigners. When people became familiar with this habit of his, the merchants in Sind and India began to furnish each person who came to visit the Sultan with thousands of dinars as a loan, and to supply him with whatever he might desire to offer as a gift or for his own use, such as riding animals, camels, and goods. They play both their money and their persons at his service and stand before him

Sultanate also welcomed and encouraged merchants to stay, which is exemplified by the town of Cambay in which foreign merchants were able to build fine mansions and mosques.[116] Yet, not all were so lucky. In Honavar, a yearly sum was paid to Sultan Jamal al-Din to keep him at bay and keep the port open to the foreign merchants.[117] Often, however, the local rulers were either involved in or at least encouraged trade. The Sultan of Manjarur often brokered peace between the locals and Muslim merchant communities.[118] The Sultan of Jurfattan engaged himself in trade with Oman, Fars and Yemen.[119] In Calicut there was even a dedicated port master that came from Bahrain, possibly a Muslim, which Ibn Battuta described as "a worthy man, of generous habit."[120] While docked in Calicut, a storm destroyed the ships of Ibn Battuta and the Chinese ambassadors. Normally looters or the local ruler could lay claim to the goods that were washed upon the beach. In Calicut, however, these goods are retained by the original owners, thereby making the town quite attractive to

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like attendants. When he reaches the Sultan, he receives a magnificent gift from him. And pays of his debts and his dues to them in full. So they ran a flourishing trade and made vast profits, and it became an established usage amongst them. On reaching Sind I followed this practice and bought horses, camels, and white slaves and other goods from the merchants." Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*, 595-6.

[116] "From the aforesaid Saghar we travelled on to the town of Kinbaya (Cambay) which is situated on an arm of the sea resembling a river; (Cambay was an important port at this time but declined in importance due to silting of its harbor) it is navigable for ships and tis waters ebb and flow. I myself saw the ships there lying on the mud at ebbtide and floating on the water at high tide. This city is one of the finest there is in regard to the excellence of its construction and the architecture of its mosques. The reason is that the majority of its inhabitants are foreign merchants, who are always building their fine mansions and magnificent mosques and vie with one another in doing so." Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*, 797.

[117] "We set out the next day immediately and on the next day reached the town of Hinawr (Honavar), which is on a large inlet into which the large ships enter. The town itself is half a mile from the sea. During the rainy season, this is so stormy and boisterous that for four months it is impossible for anyone to sail on it except for fishing… Its inhabitants live by maritime commerce and have no cultivated land. The people of Mulabar pay a fixed sum annually to Sultan Jamal al-Din, through fear of his sea-power. His army consists of about six thousand men, horse and foot." Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*, 802-3.

[118] (account of the Sultan of Manjarur) "He is one of the principal rulers in that land, and his name is Rama Daw. There is a colony of about four thousand Muslims living there, living in the suburbs alongside the town. Warfare frequently breaks out between them and the townspeople, but the Sultan makes peace between them on account of his need of the merchants." Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*, 808.

[119] (account of the sultan of Jurfattan) "He is called Kuwail and is one of the most powerful Sultans of Malabar. He possesses a large fleet of vessels which sail to Oman, Fars, and al-Yaman, and his territories include Dahfattan and Budfattan, which are two harbor towns that mostly produce fruits." Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*, 810.

[120] "The Amir of the merchants there was Ibrahim Shanbandar (a title that stands for chief port master and head of customs.), of the people of Bahrain, a worthy man, of generous habits, at whose house the merchants used to gather and eat at his table… In this town too lives the famous shipowner Mithqal, who possesses vast wealth and many ships for this trade with India, China, al-Yaman, and Fars. When we reached the city the Shanbandar Ibrahim, the qadi, the shaikh Shihab-al-Din, the principal merchants and the infidel Sultan's deputy, by the name of Qulaj, all came out to welcome us, with drums, trumpets, bugles and standards on their ships. We entered the harbor in great pomp, the like of which I have never seen in those lands, but it was a joy to be followed by distress. We stopped in the port of Calicut, in which there at the time thirteen Chinese vessels, and disembarked. Every one of us was lodged in a house, and we stayed there for three months as guests of the infidel, awaiting the season of the voyage to China. On the sea of China travelling is done in Chinese ships only, so we shall describe their arrangements." Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*, 813.

passing merchants.[121] So, indeed, Ibn Battuta and the Chinese ambassadors were also able to retain their possessions. Indian merchants were found in many cities around the Indian Ocean, but Ibn Battuta described little of their habits, goods and lives. The most we know is that they were supposedly quite wealthy.[122]

This leaves the merchants from China and the influence of the Yuan state on their mercantile success. Chinese merchants, as aforementioned, did not travel further than to the Indian West coast. It is unclear how permanent their stays in those harbors were. Although, it is clear that their stays must have had been long enough to sit out the change in monsoon. When storms did wreck their boats, the ambassadors were taken care of by the local Chinse merchant community before sailing back to China, most likely on ships of those same merchants.[123] In China itself, there were clear rules and protocols for foreign Muslim merchants to follow. Ibn Battuta tells of this:

> When a Muslim merchant arrives in a Chinese town, he chooses whether to stay with one of the Muslim merchants designated among those domiciled there, or in the funduq (an inn). If he prefers to stay with the merchant if money is impounded, the merchant with whom he is to reside takes charge of it and spends from it on his behalf honestly. When he wishes to leave, his money is examined and if any of it is missing the merchant with whom he stayed and to whom it was entrusted makes it good. If he wishes to stay in the funduq his money is entrusted to the master of the of the funduq, who is put in charge of it; he buys for the merchants what he wants on his account.[124]

Overall, the Chinese government seems to have had the most influence on the lives of the merchants in its lands. In India, this was depended on the local ruler, although most were quite favorable towards foreign merchants. In Yemen and Africa, meanwhile, the rulers seemed to have had a less direct influence on mercantile activities. At this point, there were a

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[121] "In all the lands of Malabar except in this one land alone, it is the custom that whenever a ship is wrecked all that is taken from custom that whenever a ship is wrecked all that is taken from it belongs to the treasury. At Calicut, however, it is retained by its owners, and for that reason Calicut has become a flourishing and much-frequented city." Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*, 815-6.

[122] "On the tenth day we reached the city of Kawlaw (Quilon), one of the finest towns in the Malabar lands. It has fine bazaars, and its merchants are called Sulis. They are immensely wealthy; a single merchant will buy a vessel with all that is in it and load it with goods from his own house." Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*, 817.

[123] "I stayed at Kawlam for some time in the hospice of shaikh Fakhr al-Din, son of the shaikh Shihab al-Din of Kazarun, the shaikh of the hospice of Calicut, but heard no news of the Kakam. During my stay there the ambassadors from the king of China who had been with us arrived there also. They embarked on one of the junks which was wrecked like the others. The Chinese merchants provided them with clothes, and they returned to China, where I met them again later." Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*, 818.

[124] Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*, 892.

few clear merchant communities in the Indian Ocean. There were those from the Muslim countries of Yemen and Fars that connected Africa through the Middle East with India. But also, Indian merchants had sailed to the coast of Yemen and the Persian Gulf, as well as surrounding lands in the East such as Bengal, and Java. Lastly, there were also Chinese merchants that sailed between the edge of the Indian sub-continent and the Chinese harbors of Zaitun and Sin Kalan.

4.3.3.1 Emic Interpretation

The last section showed that merchant communities, especially those of the Islamic faith, could be found around and beyond the Indian Ocean. However, due to Ibn Battuta's faith affecting his personal truth and ethics leading him to perceive Muslims, especially those that were pious, modest, and generous, to be those worth discussing, it is likely that this information is skewed or at least incomplete. In Ibn Battuta's view, it is not the economic weight of the different merchant communities that makes them worth mentioning but their faith. This becomes immediately clear when reading the first citation of the previous section where the merchants other qualities, i.e. their "generosity and openhandedness", are mentioned prior to their success in business, i.e. that "God has multiplied their wealth and given them increase of His bounty", which is contributed to God and not their own capabilities. Ibn Battuta saw success in life as something coming from one source only, God, and without God such success was empty. Therefore, non-Muslim merchants are occasionally mentioned but never discussed, their success did not matter to Ibn Battuta as he perceived it to be hollow. Muslim merchant communities are mentioned whenever encountered which is in essence almost everywhere Ibn Battuta traveled. From this, it becomes clear how widespread the Muslim diaspora was at this point in time. Although it is of course possible that Juzayy added to this list, in order to create a better survey of the Islamicate world. With such an impressive Muslim trading network, one gets the feeling that other merchant communities, like those of the Indian Gujarat or Chinese junk masters, were of a lesser significance. Yet, many of the Indian trading towns, especially around the Malabar coast, are mentioned as being affluent. This wealth is sometimes credited to foreign Muslim merchants as in the case of Cambay.[125] Logically, however, foreign Muslim merchants cannot be the only source of wealth for the various towns along the coast. Unfortunately, there is no further information

[125] "This city is one of the finest there is in regard to the excellence of its construction and the architecture of its mosques. The reason is that the majority of its inhabitants are foreign merchants, who are always building their fine mansions and magnificent mosques and vie with one another in doing so." Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*, 797.

about the Indian merchant communities but from their presence in Yemen and the wealth of their towns, one can deduce that they were quite successful and therefore likely had an important role in the Indian Ocean trade. Likewise, we know little of the Chinese merchants except that they sailed to the south west coast of India from China on their junks. The size of these ships, as described by Ibn Battuta, as well as the supposed splendor of Zaiton makes it likely that they too were doing relatively well at this point in time. Yet, due to both Ibn Battuta's preference to stay with Muslims and the goal of the *Rihla* being partly to describe the wider Islamicate world, these things remain uncertain.

As a traveling *qadi* Ibn Battuta often came into contact with foreign governments in a way not dissimilar to foreign merchants. Since both foreign scholars and merchants could enrich and solidify or undermine and threaten the position of a ruler, the experiences of Ibn Battuta are a good indication of how governments governed commerce. According to Ibn Battuta, most states welcomed both foreign merchants and scholars. Ibn Battuta considered this good governance, as his tone is clearly approving of governments that allow outside influences.[126] Yet, it is possible that what Ibn Battuta considered good governance was not shared by others. The gifts given by the Sultan of Delhi to merchants that came from afar to promote trade were a good thing in the eyes of Ibn Battuta, yet, the poor and marginalized Hindu majority would likely disagree with this being an example of good governance.[127] Staying in certain places for longer periods or visiting them several times, likely lead to Ibn Battuta having more knowledge about the governance of the rulers in these places. . Accordingly, it was possibly for that reason, that he was, more descriptive about the government of for example Delhi or the Maldives, often making them seem more capable. Whereas in a short visit, especially when he did not work as a *qadi*, it would have been hard to grasp how the government handled foreigners and Ibn Battuta's descriptions might have been based entirely on his own initial experience. The treatment by foreign rulers of Muslim merchants was likely similar to that of other foreign merchants, at least there is no indication otherwise. That this was not discussed is possibly due to Ibn Battuta's own limited perspective or because his readers, other Muslim scholars and merchants, belonged to the same group as him. Additionally, almost all of Ibn Battuta's interactions with government officials were either with Muslim governors or with those that were enriched by Muslim merchants, thus, Ibn Battuta was treated favorably thereby skewing his view in their favor.

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[126] The only Muslim and the most welcoming ruler along the Malabar coast was Jamal al-Din who is described as "the best and most powerful ruler" Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*, 802.
[127] Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*, 663.

Overall, it seems like governments at the beginning and middle of the fourteenth century were supportive, or even encouraging, of trade. This was made evident by the widespread diaspora of Muslim merchants encountered by Ibn Battuta on his travels around the Indian Ocean. However, similarly to the descriptions given of commodities and those given of trading routes, entrepots, and ships, it seems as if Ibn Battuta only describes a part of the larger whole by focusing almost entirely on the merchants and governments of the Islamicate world.

4.4 Conclusion

To gain an emic understanding of Ibn Battuta, both as an individual and as part of a larger literary tradition, his general background, epistemology, ethics, and esthetical preferences were discussed in the first section of the chapter. Within the second part of the chapter, the etic information on Indian Ocean trade as found in *The Travels* was analyzed using an emic understanding of the same source. With this I aimed to investigate how trade – both as a concept as well as in its practical operation – is conceived in the Islamicate literary tradition that Ibn Battuta's work is a significant part of. The first conclusion is that Ibn Battuta found trade, both its practical and conceptual side, to be largely uninteresting. This is most visible in both the limited attention given to all aspects of trade as well as in the overwhelming majority of that attention being directed towards Muslim traders. This focus can be explained by his background and the goals Ibn Battuta and Juzayy had when writing the *Rihla.* A *rihla* is in essence a story about a mostly spiritual journey, often to Mecca. So, long descriptions of markets or repeated accounts of what boats were used by what merchants do not contribute to the story that readers expect. Furthermore, Ibn Battuta aimed to depict himself as a pious and sophisticated Muslim scholar for whom the workings of the local trading bazaar were simply too mundane. Luckily, because Ibn Battuta was generally curious and wanted to use his *Rihla* to also describe the many wonderous and foreign things encountered on his journey, there is definitely relevant information on trade, at least on how Ibn Battuta conceived it.

The information on trade is colored by what Ibn Battuta perceived as truth, his ethics, and what he and Juzayy found esthetically pleasing. Firstly, in a conceptual sense, Ibn Battuta viewed the value of trade in what the riches gained from it could contribute to other elements of society. The reason for this is that in his eyes the contributions made by trade were significant if they for example helped the educated, the faithful, or those traveling for the purposes of knowledge or completing the *hajj*. Additionally, from his viewpoint, the trader's worth discussing or describing, were those that were generous, pious, and modest and as a Muslim he saw these qualities mostly in other Muslims. Thus, when Ibn Battuta discusses

merchants or important entrepots what one really learns about is how the Islamicate culture saw the importance of trade in enabling good people to do good things. In a practical sense, Ibn Battuta conceived trade through the lens of a traveler or a practicing *qadi.* Although trade and his interactions with merchants are rarely discussed, what we do learn is how common these interactions must have been. Without paying much attention to it in his work, Ibn Battuta sailed around much of the Indian Ocean on trade ships, mentioned many ports and the vast wealth of their merchants, and encountered an incredible variety of trading products and, while doing so, was rarely ever without fellow Muslims. It seems that trade in a practical sense was conceived of as being so commonplace within the Islamicate literature, that it was only mentioned when necessary or exceptional.

Now that we have established how the Islamicate tradition conceived of trade, the next step is to understand how this emic reading of *The Travels* can contribute to a better understanding of Indian Ocean trade. Notable characteristics of the trade network of this period, that Chaudhuri had identified, were the long trade lines between China and India and connections between the Indian West coast and Arabia, Java and the Straits and between China and the spice producing areas. At the juncture of various trade routes entrepots would rise like Calicut, Aden, and later Melaka. However, at this time, trade in the Indonesian archipelago was still quite insignificant and secondary to the trade between India and China. Overall, this seems to be matched by Ibn Battuta who describes how only a few merchants traveled exceptionally long distances. With the exception of the Chinese on their large junks that traveled all the way to India, most merchants stayed within one part of the Ocean. Yet, due to Ibn Battuta's extensive travels, one starts to see how most of the region was interconnected, centering around the West Coast of India. There were rich trade entrepots in the Western part of the ocean in Yemen and along the coast of Africa with strong ties to the Indian West Coast, which is also where they met the Chinese junks coming from Zaitun as well as ships from the other coastal cities of the Eastern part of the Indian Ocean. The spice trade seemed to be a standout at this point, given the attention that Ibn Battuta gave to pepper in comparison to other commodities. Something that Reid, among others, had pointed out.[128] Lastly, it seemed that Melaka was already known for accommodating Chinese junks which they will build a reputation for in later times.

[128] "The spices were important because the biggest profits were made on them and because the traders who came in search of them introduced many other trade items to ports and production areas. Hence they plated a disproportionate role in the growth of commercial centers." Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 1450-1680. Vol. II*, 2.

Unfortunately, it appears that an emic reading of *The Travels* does not give radically new insights into the working of the Indian Ocean trade. There is, however, one crucial difference between the way Ibn Battuta viewed trade of the Indian Ocean and the descriptions of modern-day historians using an etic approach. Reid and others stress the importance of commerce to many parties and people within the Indian Ocean, especially prior to the domination of the VOC.[129] Yet, in *The Travels,* Ibn Battuta describes how trade is organized by rich merchants and encouraged by even richer government officials. Admittedly, due to his position as a *qadi* for several rulers, which means that he generally lived quite a luxurious life, and his disposition towards Muslim traders it is possible that he ignored smaller local traders. Still, in the mind of Ibn Battuta, Indian Ocean trade was something that the wealthy used to acquire more wealth. According to *The Travels,* wealth was concentrated in two places in particular. Entrepots in Yemen and the South West of India are consistently described as having very rich merchant communities. However, due to Ibn Battuta's position being ingrained within the Islamicate world, it is hard to understand how well this reflects the reality of the trading balance within the Indian Ocean. The trade balance of the Indian Ocean, meaning the balance between places that attracted traders by producing desirable commodities and places which had to use bullion to buy these commodities, is described by Ibn Battuta as being favored towards the Western part of the ocean. However, it is quite possible that his own background and favoritism towards the Islamicate world made him overemphasize the importance of Muslim traders and trade, which were mainly found in the Western part of the Indian Ocean. Additionally, it is possible that he felt pressured by his surroundings and the king of Morocco when writing *The Travels* to exaggerate the importance of the same Muslim traders and trade. In the next part, we shall see that Ma Huan, whose origin is at the exact opposite direction of the Indian ocean, in the far East, did not share this view, although he was also Muslim.

[129] "Eventually, in the seventeenth century, European commercial penetration established an efficient monopoly, the effect of which was no longer to strengthen but to suppress indigenous urban and commercial life, so that many of the above processes went abruptly into reverse." Reid, *The Age of Commerce in Southeast Asia Vol I,* xv.

5. Part II: The Overall Survey of The Oceans Shores

Ma Huan, the Chinese voyager and translator that accompanied Admiral Cheng Ho during three of his seven expeditions to the South China Sea and Indian Ocean, was a Chinese-born Muslim with knowledge of the Arabic language as well as several Classical Chinese and Buddhist texts.[130] The three expeditions that he had joined took place in 1413, 1421, and 1431. In his first expedition, he visited Champa, Java, Sumatra, Palembang, Siam, Kochi, and Hormuz. In 1421, he journeyed to Melaka, Aru, Sumatra, Trincomalee, Ceylon, Kochi, Calicut, Zufar, and, once more, to Hormuz. In his final expedition, Bengal, Chittagong, Sonargaon, Gaur, and Calicut were visited. From Calicut, he was then sent to Mecca as an emissary.[131] Upon his return, he wrote *Ying-Yai Sheng-Lan* or as it is known in English *The Overall Survey of The Oceans Shores* which recounts his experiences in the countries he had visited.

5.1 Genre

In this section, similarly to the first part, some technical information will be explained before discussing who had agency over the writing and creation of the text, and what content was most appreciated within the genre. Finally, the ways in which this has affected the final text will be elucidated.

5.1.1 Technical Information

As with *The Travels,* there is reason to be careful when using this work as a source. The first reason for caution is that there is no original copy of Ma's work remaining. Still, copies of Ma's work have been preserved. These copies contain some differences, however, likely due to later editors.[132] As with Ibn Battuta, the issue of perspective remains as well. Ma Huan, like Ibn Battuta was a Muslim and not a trained historian, although his faith generally informed his perspective less than it did for Ibn Battuta, as well be discussed in the next section. Another difference is that Ibn Battuta observed the world through the eyes of an individual traveler, whereas Huan was part of the official expeditions under Zheng He. Therefore, it is likely that nations and individuals took extra care to impress or influence him. It is also unclear how great the impact of the Ming government was on Ma's work and later copies thereof. Yet, some of the issues that plagued *The Travels* are not applicable to *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores.* The notes that Huan took during his journeys were used to

[130] Mills, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, 34.
[131] Mills, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, 35-6.
[132] Mills, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, 37.

directly inspire his work. Unlike Ibn Battuta, he did not tell his story to a writer after the fact but wrote it down himself over a longer period of time, with the first part being published as early as 1416, shortly after returning from his first expedition. *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores* was also coauthored, or at least helped by the notes and experience of Guo Chongli, who also partook in three expeditions.[133]

Due to the current author's lack of mastery of the Chinese language, this discussion will be constricted to a translation of *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores* done by J.V.G. Mills. The work of Mills is based on a translation of an edition published in 1935 by Chinese scholar Feng Chengjun. This edition is widely available in China itself as well as recognized for its quality. Mills, like Gibb, wrote his work for and published it with the Hakluyt Society. Mills was an Oxford educated lawyer turned Sinologue that lived and worked in China prior to WWII. His translation stands out for involving over fifty scholars in its making and for translating over six hundred place names mentioned by Ma Huan into more modern terms.[134]

5.1.2 Agency

Like *The Travels, The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores* was a collaboration project. Although Ma Huan likely wrote large parts of the book himself, it is possible that certain sections were either written by or based on the experience of Kuo Ch'ung-li.[135] Ma Huan did sign his name under all the known versions of the work, however, indicating that he was the final composer of the work. Moreover, only places are described that Ma Huan had visited during the Cheng Ho expeditions. Now one could argue that he had possibly not partaken in any or some of the journeys undertaken by Cheng Ho but there is no reason for this assumption and the richness and accuracy of the descriptions of the places suggest otherwise. That only descriptions of countries Ma Huan had visited himself were included makes it more likely that also the observations made were his own. What suggestions or additions Kuo Ch'ung-li made to complement the writings of Ma Huan is almost impossible to detangle. What we do know is that Kuo Ch'ung-li partook in three expeditions, but of the nature or manner of his collaboration with Ma Huan is no information available.[136] Therefore, the issue of agency cannot be solved further than to assume that the work is the result of a

[133] Mills, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, 35-7.
[134] D.J.D., "J.V.G. Mills*." Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain & Ireland* 119, no. 2, (1987): 309.
[135] Mills, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, 36.
[136] Mills, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, 36.

collaboration. This generally adds credibility as both Ma Huan and Kuo Ch'ung-li journeyed throughout the Indian Ocean and were therefore able to confirm the experiences of the other. The work also loses some credibility, however, as it is influenced by the perspective of two different authors. So even if we understand Ma Huan's perspective and analyze his writing in the light of such, we are still kept in the dark about what Kuo Ch'ung-li contributed and thereby unable to analyze how his perspective might have affected the contributed section.

5.1.3 Content

The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores is a *youji* (*you* translating to travel, *ji* translating to account) or in other words a Chinese travelogue.[137] Within Chinese literature the genre of the *youji* has a long history that can be traced to at least the second century AD during the Six Dynasty period.[138] Yet, travel literature was not recognized as an independent genre for a long period and most works were instead categorized within a related field such as history, geography, or biographies, which might help explain why academic studies about Chinese travel literature has remained overall lacking. Only in 2018 did J.M. Hargett publish his *Jade Mountains and Cinnabar Pools: The History of Travel Literature in Imperial China,* which aims to explain the development of the genre over almost two thousand years, being the first work to do so in the English language.[139] Although Hargett does cite three Chinese works that had a similar aim, they will not be used in the current thesis as there have been no English translations. This furthers the narrative, however, that the subject of *youji* genre has been underappreciated in academic circles.[140] Unfortunately, Hargett does not include *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores* in his discussion of works from the early Ming period. He does, however, give a general definition of what constitutes a *youji* and what defined a *youji* during the Ming period specifically.

The first general characteristic that Hargett identified to be defining for the *youji* genre was that the author had to physically travel to the location and afterwards had to describe this journey in prose. In some Chinese texts the journeys described were not real but rather of a mythical, symbolic, or imaginative nature. According to Hargett's definition, these texts should not be considered *youji*. Furthermore, while most Western authors of travelogues visited distant and alien lands their Chinese counterparts often stayed within China. There are,

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[137] J. M. Hargett, *Jade Mountains and Cinnabar Pools: The History of Travel Literature in Imperial China*. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2018), 4.
[138] Hargett, *Jade Mountains and Cinnabar Pools*, 19.
[139] Hargett, *Jade Mountains and Cinnabar Pools*, 10.
[140] Hargett, *Jade Mountains and Cinnabar Pools*, 10.

however, exceptions to this, as Ma Huan's *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores* and the account of the Buddhist monk Xuanzang's (ca. 602–64) *Accounts of the Western Regions during the Great Tang* prove.[141] The most common forms of prose used by *youji* writers are an essay or journal format. Ma Huan's work is an example of the journal format as he tells of his own experiences within each of the places he visited. A good indication of a work belonging to the *youji* category is if its name follows the structure of account/narrative/survey (indicating the *you* aspect) to/of x-location (indicating the *ji* aspect*),* both the title of Ma Huan and Xuanzang are good examples of this.[142] Lastly, *youji* texts consist largely of descriptive information of the places, phenomena, people, and conditions observed by the author on the journey. What the author decides to report on exactly may vary widely, depending on the focus of the narrative of the work. Among the possibilities are descriptions of famous landmarks, social, religious, and political practices, local customs, and observations on the local flora and fauna. What then defines the *youji* genre is how these observations are combined with authorial notes, comments, and even personal feelings, which distinguishes the genre from geographical and ethnographic accounts which do not include these personal touches.[143] Furthermore, Ma Huan's text is an early example of what Hargett defines as the geographical-investigative perspective. Although still more focused on matters related to economy, customs, and culture, Ma Huan also discusses geographical features and the origin of localized agricultural practices, showing early signs of what would later become the subgenre of geographical-investigative. This kind of travel writing does not only describe the sights and places encountered but through investigation aims to understand the described regions, customs, and particularities in relation to the geographical features of the region.[144] In its essence this subgenre aimed to understand why things were the way that they were.

Later it will be discussed that Ma Huan enjoyed a classical education and was likely part of the *shidafu*, or scholarly elite, which he had in common with almost all *youji* writers and although not a characteristic of the work itself, it is important to understand how this informed the writing of a *youji*. Especially when traveling within China, the authors "cultural currency" as Hargett describes the knowledge gained from studying from a young age onwards was accepted by their readers. [145] When these *shidafu* observed and described local

[141] Hargett, *Jade Mountains and Cinnabar Pools*, 13.
[142] Hargett, *Jade Mountains and Cinnabar Pools*, 13.
[143] Hargett, *Jade Mountains and Cinnabar Pools*, 14.
[144] Hargett, *Jade Mountains and Cinnabar Pools*, 158-62.
[145] Hargett, *Jade Mountains and Cinnabar Pools*, 15-7.

customs of an unfamiliar place they were trusted to have the tools to interpret these customs for their readers. Unfortunately, there is little knowledge about the extent to which these scholars generally knew of the world beyond China. The descriptions of Ma Huan, however, occasionally show his cultural currency and therefore give a good indication of his heritage and his ideas on the wider world. Understanding if and were his views differed from the education he received remains difficult, however.

The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores is actually only one of a few works written around the expeditions of Cheng Ho. Firstly, there is the *Hsing-ch'a-sheng-lan: Description of the Starry Raft* which preface is dated 1436, written by Fei Hsin, who joined several expedition of Cheng Ho.[146] The second known work was written by Kung Chen titled *Hsi yang fan kuo chih: Records of the Foreign Countries in the Western Ocean.*[147] Both of these works are generally similar but inferior to that of Ma Huan, at least according to J.V.G. Mills who translated the works into English, with the exception of the work of Kung Chen of which there has been no full English translation to this date. Especially Kung Chen's work is often a word by word reproduction of *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores.* Yet, he adds some information on Melaka, defers in word choice and corrects certain facts surrounding navigation.[148] The work of Fei Hsin is about half the size of that of Ma Huan and shares many similarities in the descriptions of places they both have visited. The difference between the two is in the length of the writings. In the relatively short work of Fei Hsin, he discusses forty five places, of which nineteen are also discussed by Ma Huan, meaning that twenty six are original to the *Records of the Foreign Countries in the Western Ocean*.[149] Fei Hsin's forward was written in 1436, which allowed for the possibility of borrowing from earlier versions of the work of Ma Huan. This, in combination with Fei Hsin being part of different expeditions, can explain the number of places included. Although the differences between the three works deserve its own study, this is not the goal of the current thesis. The relevance of mentioning these differences and similarities is to show the existence of a certain blueprint to the writing of Ma Huan. Mills speculates that the manuscript of Ma Huan, as well as those of the others, might have been in circulation among the various writers. Another possibility is that later editors had a role to play. Without finding any older, original manuscripts this claim is

[146] J.V.G. Mills and P. Roderich, *Hsing-ch'a-sheng-lan: The Overall Survey of The Star Raft* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1996).
[147] Mills, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, 56.
[148] Mills, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, 56-9.
[149] Mills, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, 60-1.

impossible to support, however.[150] Based on the works' similarities, it appears that the three authors had similar goals in mind when writing their manuscripts.

The objective of the *youji* of Ma Huan, which was likely similar to those of Kung Chen and Fei Hsin, and therefore, as far as one can ascertain, of these works within the larger *youji* genre was the following: Ma Huan wanted to describe in a very consistent manner five characteristics of the countries that he had visited and in doing so show the appeal of the countries to future Chinese visitors. Firstly, the relation of each place to China was discussed, often in the first lines of the description. Secondly, the local customs and often the local customs as related to religion, law, and occasionally politics are described. The third characteristic that Ma Huan discusses is the sailing directions and geographical layout of each location. Fourth is a description of the local commodities present and of those being traded, occasionally followed by an account of the local trade practices. Finally, Ma Huan often gives a general report on the local population describing how clean, wealthy, strict, beautiful, etc. they are.[151] The consistency with which Ma Huan discusses these topics demonstrates their importance to him and his perceived audience. Although there is no information on who the target audience was, from the way it is written only two categories come to mind - Chinese merchants and government officials. Both valued the relation each country had to China, the local customs especially when related to religion, law, and politics. Merchants and government officials on later expeditions or tributary missions would have also appreciated sailing directions and recognizable landmarks, knowledge about the local commodities and trading practice, and lastly, merchants aiming to migrate or stay in one location for longer periods or government officials trying to evaluate the level of sophistication of a country would have also appreciated details about the local population.

The previous discussion could have created the illusion that *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores* is a factual report. Yet, the writing style, especially of the details given outside the aforementioned characteristics, creates a more involved personal story. Furthermore, there is no known government official or rich merchant that sponsored Ma Huan who wanted to know certain specificities. The more likely reason for this focus is that Ma Huan understood who would be interested in his work. The expeditions led by Cheng Ho as well as other policies of the Yongle emperor demonstrated a renewed interest of the Chinese

[150] Mills, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, 55.
[151] Occasionally this is omitted as in the case of Quilon which is described in only 2 paragraphs. Mills, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, 130-2.

state in the wider world. Merchants who saw the wealth brought home by the treasure ships combined with the new policies must have felt compelled to act on this opportunity.[152] The catering to this audience while still writing a rich and detailed story only demonstrates the awareness and ability of Ma Huan as a writer.

5.1.3.1 How do the author's objectives fit into this?

Whereas Wha's dissertation on Ibn Battuta gave a good understanding of the motivations that underlay the travels and writing of Ibn Battuta, there is no such study on Ma Huan in the English language. In the previous section, I have discussed how *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores* was written by Ma Huan in collaboration with Kuo Ch'ung-li, but to what extend this influenced the final work is hard to say, which is also unlike the more pronounced influence of Juzayy on *The Travels*. Furthermore, the work of Ma Huan is less personal and, although part of a long writing tradition, this tradition is significantly less studied than that of the *rihla*. Thus, understanding the goals and motivations of Ma Huan when writing and traveling for *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores* is harder as it cannot be based on secondary studies. However, by comparing the manuscript to similar works, understanding the general goals of writing a *youji* and by analyzing the text itself, certain objectives, like catering to a specific audience, become clear that influenced his views and descriptions of trade. As significantly less focused on the spiritual journey than the *rihla* genre, works of the *youji* genre are often descriptive with less personal involvement of the author. Thus, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores* might be more suited to an etic reading than *The Travels*. Yet, Ma Huan still saw the world through a certain perspective which must have also influenced his writing.

5.2 Emic Understanding

In his introduction Mills argues that:

> We cannot glean much about Ma Huan as a man. He could hardly have been free at first from the subconscious sentiment and contempt which the Chinese felt for the 'barbarian'; and he was too narrow-minded to believe the marvels by Wang Ta-yüan. But he candidly admits that he changed his views; and makes many appreciative remarks about the people and the things which he observed. He appears a simple-

[152] They were called treasure ships due to the great amount of foreign treasure they brought back to China. Mills, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, 3.

> minded person, he loathed violence, and was aghast at the frequency of judicial killing in Java.[153]

Yet, by combining the information given in Ma Huan's manuscript and with what is known about this period in Chinese history, it should be possible to understand Ma Huan on a deeper level and to understand how this influenced his work.

5.2.1 The Author's Truth

As with Ibn Battuta, the goal of this section is to get a better emic understanding of the author by trying to understand what truth was to him. Ma Huan, like Ibn Battuta, did not elaborate in his text on what he sees as truth. Although his perception of truth differed quite significantly from that of Ibn Battuta, the same three main building blocks can be identified - his education, his faith, and his travels were all almost certainly influential on his perception of truth. Ma Huan tells the reader little of his own education except in an apology for his inelegant writing style within the foreword of the first version of the book written in 1416, in which he describes himself as a 'mountain woodcutter'.[154] Yet, he must have had a proper education, as one can find classicisms within his book. He was familiar with certain Buddhist and Chinese classics and he wrote the book and its foreword including occasional use of poetry. Furthermore, at some point prior to when he joined the first expedition, he was taught the Arabic script and the Arabic or Persian speech. Like Ibn Battuta, Ma Huan was a Muslim, however, unlike the Tangier native his connection with his faith seemed less central to his truth. Ma Huan traveled less and in very different circumstances than Ibn Battuta but like him his travels changed his ideas about the world. By analyzing Ma Huan's education, faith, and travels, a general idea of what Ma Huan's epistemology was can be created.

According to Hargett, "Literate people who were essentially grounded by travel restrictions in the early Ming—literati without examination degrees, merchants, artisans, painters, monks, and so on—in fact never produced any appreciable quantity of travel literature in imperial China prior to the sixteenth century." Based on this, we can likely defer that, combined with the aforementioned familiarity with certain literature and style elements, Ma Huan was part of the scholarly elite or *shidafu*.[155] The *shidafu* were generally taught from an early age onwards, also during the Ming period. To become part of the *shidafu,* one would have to take the civil service exam and depending on how well one did certain roles were

[153] Mills, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, 37.
[154] Mills, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, 70.
[155] Hargett, *Jade Mountains and Cinnabar Pools*, 132.

assigned or available to the individual.[156] Ma Huan also studied Arabic writing and Persian or Arabic speech as he was appointed a role as a translator and converted to Islam. But as indicated by his remark on his origins of that of a 'mountain woodcutter', he quite possibly came from a relatively humble background. One can speculate as to how he came into contact with the Islamic faith but the level of literal proficiency needed to be a translator indicates further education, possibly until he joined his first expedition in 1413.[157] The pillars of *shidafu* education were the traditional Confucian texts or the Classic of Change, Poetry, Documents, Rites, and the Spring and Autumn Annals. These Confucian texts, and other aspects of the Confucianism ideology, gained prominence under the early Ming emperors who restored many of the aspects of the Confucian society that the Song dynasty had neglected or replaced.[158]

Although Ma Huan was a Muslim, it is likely that through his education as a *shidafu* and his upbringing in the early Ming period, Confucianism had a pronounced impact on his epistemology. The text left by Ma Huan gives little information on how he perceived truth but there are some indications of an influence of some essentials from Confucian theory. Firstly, he likely subscribed to the social order of Confucianism that divided the people into four categories: gentry, peasant, artisan, and lastly merchant. Although this was recognized by many as being too simple, it did serve as a template to organize local societies. Especially under the Hongwu or first Ming emperor, the occupation of merchant was deemed to be the lowest and least important. Although Ma Huan was likely partly educated within this mindset, his later education was undertaken when social change and the Yongle emperor had generally recognized the importance of merchants to China's economy. Still, merchants were under relatively strict regulations and unable to freely move between the various districts or overseas.[159] Yet, the simple fact that this division existed within the tradition meant that it likely influenced Ma Huan's worldview, especially as in the early years of his education, through the efforts of the Hongwu emperor Ming, the importance of the peasant dutifully tolling the lands was reemphasized within China.[160] The last impact of growing up in the

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[156] Hargett, *Jade Mountains and Cinnabar Pools*, 14.
[157] It is quite possible that there was a mosque or at least a semi-permanent representation of the *Dar al-Islam* around the area Ma Huan grew up. The Zhejiang's Kuaiji Commandery, today called the Shaoxing area, is part of the Hangzhou Bay area, which is traditionally a bay that was important in foreign trade. It was even visited by Ibn Battuta who told of Muslims traders he encountered there just sixty years before the birth of Ma Huan. Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa A.D. 1325-1354*, 900-3.
[158] T. Brook, *The Confusions of Pleasure - Commerce and Culture in Ming China*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 8-16.
[159] Brook, *The Confusions of Pleasure - Commerce and Culture in Ming China*, 70-5.
[160] Brook, *The Confusions of Pleasure - Commerce and Culture in Ming China*, 72.

central kingdom, as Ma Huan often refers to China, is a certain sense of superiority. This is already demonstrated in his foreword of 1416 in which he states that "he will see how the civilizing-influence of the emperor had spread which could not be matched during former dynasties."[161] He had also considered earlier work about foreign countries fabricated prior to his visits.[162] Furthermore, the official reason for the expeditions was to emphasize that Chinese *Te*, the Chinese power or virtue, had been restored. A true Chinese dynasty had returned, and all Southern kingdoms should flourish under its protection.[163] All of this indicates a sense of cultural superiority that must have influenced Ma Huan to some extent, especially during his first expedition.

Like Ibn Battuta, Ma Huan was a Muslim, although there is significantly less about the ways that his faith had influenced him to be found within his writing. During a smaller expedition led by Ma Huan that had separated from the main force of the 1431 expedition at Calicut to visit the country of the heavenly square, or Mecca, as we know it. From this it becomes clear that his faith had not informed his perception of truth to the same degree as it had for Ibn Battuta. He describes how alcohol is outlawed, how the locals dress, and what language the locals speak. He seemed rather surprised by the way the people lived their lives, which was in accordance with Islamicate culture, indicating a lack of knowledge surrounding the subject. Ma Huan also compliments the customs of the people as being pacific and admirable and the country for its lack of poverty and low rates of criminality. He ends his description by stating that Mecca seemed to be the happiest country due to their customs.[164] This indicates that to Ma Huan the inhabitants were living a happy and fruitful life likely due to their faith. He also likely volunteered, or at least opted, to go to Mecca as an emissary as it was a chance to complete the *hajj*.[165] This demonstrates that Ma Huan thought of his faith as an important aspect of life. This could imply that, as with Ibn Battuta, secular truths are subservient to the wisdom emanating from the sacred, like the Quran, the hadiths, or saints. Yet, there is no indication of this in his writing. Therefore, the only actual conclusion one can come to is that the Islamic faith was important to Ma Huan and might have therefore altered his perception of those that followed it positively.

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[161] Mills, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, 69.
[162] Mills, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, 69-70.
[163] M. Roelofsz, *Asian Trade and European Influence in the Indonesian Archipelago between 1500 and about 1630* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1969), 72.
[164] Mills, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, 173-4.
[165] Mills, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, 35.

Travelling had a profound impact on Ma Huan, as he candidly admits in his foreword of 1416, after returning from his first journey. He writes that he read a book called *A Record of the Islands and their Barbarians* in his younger years which he had not believed to have told the truth, as the world described was so different from his own.[166] In what is likely his own poem, however, also found at the beginning of the book, he still speaks very much in an us versus them mentality.[167] The barbarians of other lands "with unkempt heads and naked feet, a barbarous tongue they speak; dresses and hats they use not, nor rites and virtues they speak" are compared to those who come from the "Central Glorious Country" and who are in "Union under imperial Ming our grand and great land shares; from time forgotten until now no other land compares."[168] The travels Ma Huan undertook as part of the larger expeditions did change his perspective of the wider world. The great variety in lands, customs, religions, etc. did show him that China and he himself were part of a much larger whole. Yet, it seems to have confirmed that the center of this whole was still China. Traveling undoubtedly widened his perspective as it did for Ibn Battuta, but it also confirmed the truth he was taught of China being the central and most powerful country in the world. Nothing speaks to this as much as the fact that one of the most important aspects, highlighted by Ma Huan, of any land he visited was their relation to China and that often this relation was described in whether or not the land in question payed tribute. But this is only one aspect that his travels contributed to his perception of truth. As mentioned, there were several other Chinese works written by those that joined the Cheng Ho expeditions. *The Overall Survey of The Oceans Shores* stands out as the most detailed and immersive among them. This could be due to Ma Huan being a curious person by nature or it could be that his travels, as he says, showed him how diverse the world was. But it is also possible that, like Ibn Battuta, Ma Huan, through his travels, found amazement in the variety of localized flora and fauna, customs, objects, ships, and architecture, indicating a similar change in his conception of self, as someone who wants to explore and study the wider world. The main difference between Ma Huan and Ibn Battuta remains that Ibn Battuta, through this process, no longer thought of his native land as being central in this wider world, whereas Ma Huan did.

[166] Mills confirms that this book existed and mentions that large parts of it were translated by William Woodville Rockhill. I have, however, been unable to find a full translation of the work. Mills, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, 69, footnote 3.
[167] Mills, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, 73.
[168] Mills, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, 73-5.

5.2.2 The Author's Ethics

The ethical compass of Ma Huan was likely influenced strongly by two factors, his upbringing and education within a Confucian system and his later commitment to the Islamic faith. The central goal of Confucian ethics is to be one of *junzi* or noble virtue. Although this sounds individualistic the opposite is true, as in Confucian thought it is the actions one takes and how they relate to loved ones, family, or even the wider society that are significant. Meaning that living a morally good life is good for the person living it, it is crucially also good for the society, he or she is a part of.[169] So, what does it mean to behave in accordance with the goal of *junzi*? Although there is a wide variety of ways one can behave properly, the two crucial aspects of an ethical person is that they try to attain *ren* and observe *li.*[170] *Ren* as a concept is very transient so for clarity's sake I will highlight some of its various possible translations of benevolence, courage, generosity, wisdom, or caring. A person who is *ren* is good to others, not for rewards, but because doing so is in the interest of the group. Meanwhile, the group considers the viewpoint of the individual because doing so is good for that individual and as such good for the group it is a part of.[171] *Li* loosely translates into ritual and observing those rituals is an important aspect of a good person. This could mean that a good person serves food to one's parents according to customs in a graceful manner. But it also means that one connects to ones surrounding community through these rituals to build a more harmonious society.[172] The last concept that deserves a separate mention is that of filiality, as a good person was considered to have a strong sense of filiality meaning that they lived in a way that expressed love, respect, and support to ones parents, although once again this is an individual concept that also applies to the wider society meaning that the current generation also expresses love, respect, and support to past generations.[173] Ma Huan as someone who likely attempted and succeeded in passing the civil servant exam had to have a good understanding of these concepts, as they were part of the exam.[174] A normative translation of these concepts meant that Ma Huan was motivated to be a contributing member of the society or group he belonged to, like the expedition or Chinese society, found rituals that build a society very important, and had a great amount of respect for his elders. His ideal

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[169] P. J. Ivanhoe. "Virtue Ethics and the Chinese Confucian Tradition." In *The Cambridge Companion to Virtue Ethics*, ed. D.C. Russell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 49–69.
[170] W.Y. Wong, "The Moral and Non-Moral Virtues in Confucian Ethics." *Asian Philosophy* 21, no. 1 (2011): 75-7.
[171] Wong, "The Moral and Non-Moral Virtues in Confucian Ethics.", 79.
[172] Wong, "The Moral and Non-Moral Virtues in Confucian Ethics.", 75.
[173] H. Sarkissian, "Recent Approaches to Confucian Filial Morality." *Philosophy Compass* 5, no. 9, (2010): 732–4.
[174] Hargett, *Jade Mountains and Cinnabar Pools*, 14.

society was in harmony with itself and there was no war or other disruptions, explaining his pacifist tendencies and aversion of the judicial killings in Java.

Unlike Ibn Battuta, who gave a clear idea of the aspects of the Islamicate culture that had influenced his ethics, *The Overall Survey of The Oceans Shores* tells us relatively little about how Ma Huan was influenced by his faith. As mentioned in part one, there were two general schools of thought within the Islamicate culture around this time on how to use the Islamic faith to inform one's ethics. The larger group argued that there was room for human interpretation of the holy doctrine, while a smaller group believed that the laws set out in the Quran and other holy scriptures were to be followed without exception.[175] If Ma Huan belonged to the latter group, it is very likely that this would have been visible in his work. One would expect him to judge others for not adhering to the *sharia* or be full of praise of those that lived a life fully committed to God. Yet, as demonstrated in the previous section, he is quite appreciative of the society around Mecca and does mention when a ruler or a population is of the Muslim faith, demonstrating the importance of his faith to him in general. Exact details of how a community fasted or how often they prayed were however seemingly not essential to Ma Huan as he does not acknowledge them, indicating that Ma Huan perceived there to be room for personal interpretation within his faith. Likely, his local Confucian upbringing and education strongly influenced his personal interpretation. Therefore, it is possible that the influence of the Muslim faith on his ethics was overall quite limited. Yet, his perception of what was a good person was likely altered by his faith in one crucial way. Namely, that Muslim people were likely perceived as better people than those that were not.

5.2.3 The Author's Beauty

Ma Huan never says outright if he finds something esthetically pleasing, even the precious jewels, golden inlaid items, and intricate cloths encountered in Aden are described factually.[176] However, his preferences become clear due to the detailed attention given to certain items and places. From this we can deduct that he indeed appreciated the fine craftsmanship displayed by the Islamicate cultures, the architecture of Mecca, and the knives of the Javanese. This is, however, only a fragmentary indication of his esthetical preferences. From his Confucian background one can expect that he likely had a more general idea of beauty. This idea connects to the Confucian ethics that Ma Huan was taught during his

[175] Farahat, *Between God and Society Divine Speech*, 303.
[176] Mills, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, 155-7.

upbringing and his education to become a *shidafu*. Craig Ihara explains this best by explaining how in Confucianism life itself can be esthetically pleasing when lived the right way.[177] When a person is gracefully interacting with others in a manner that is harmonious and based on ritual, mutual respect grows. This can best be explained as a dance that one engages in with others.[178] Thus, to Ma Huan, a country that has an established order that is in harmony where people engage in a beautiful dance might simply be seen as beautiful and, therefore, more worthy of study.

Within the *youji* genre there are certain generally accepted esthetical elements and some elements that are more related to general writing within the Ming period. In general, the work had to be descriptive of the physical journey of the author while being more than a factual summation of the things encountered. The "self" of the author had to be found in the text, for example when Ma Huan describes a route to a small market outside the capital in Thailand.[179] This small excerpt shows how Ma Huan explored the regions he stayed in, which then tells the reader about him and his nature as a curious traveler. But the key defining esthetical aspect of *youji* is what Hargett calls the ability of its writers to create "cinematic-like word pictures." They want readers to "see" the places described, this also meant that authors often preferred more common language, as overly intellectual language would not enable the reader to visualize the scene as well.[180] Ma Huan often does this, but the best example is the amount of detail given to his description of the holy buildings of Mecca.[181] In this description he not only incorporates visual elements but additionally describes the smell that the a visitor would notice when entering the halls. When reading *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores* one is often told of the sights, smells, and occasionally even the sounds experienced by Ma Huan, which further indicates that his intention was indeed to write a *youji* and not a simple report on his travels. In the early Ming period, when Ma Huan finished his book, the geographical-investigative sub-genre was gaining traction.[182] Hargett adds to this by

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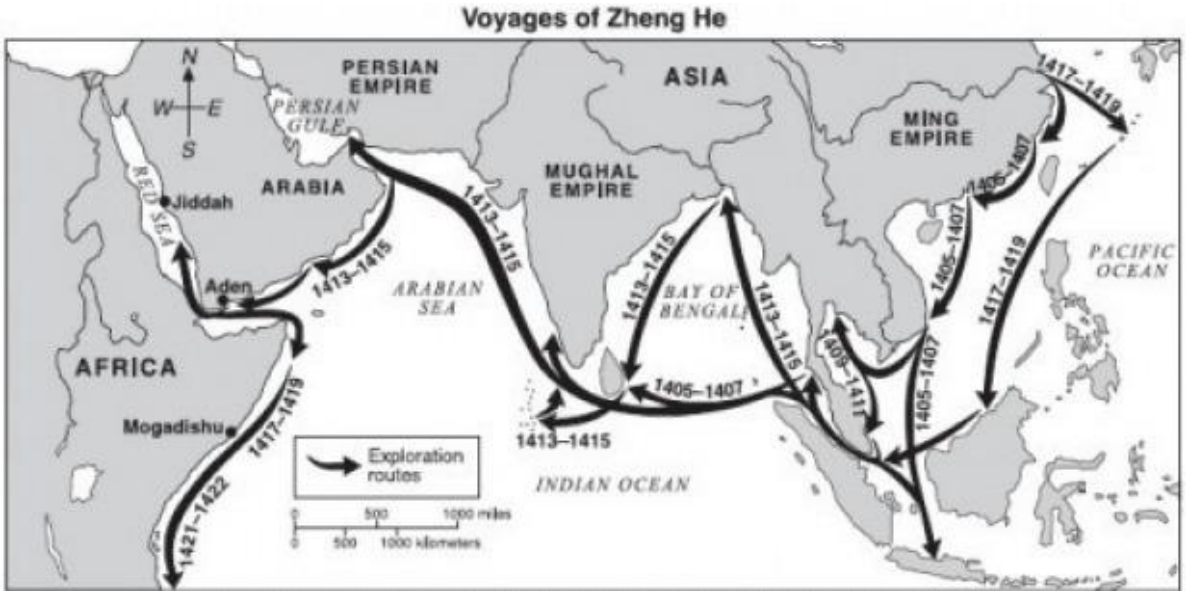
[177] C.K. Ihara, "Are Individual Rights Necessary? A Confucian Perspective." in *Confucian Ethics: A Comparative Study of Self, Autonomy, and Community*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 11–30.
[178] Ihara, "Are Individual Rights Necessary?", 13-4.
[179] Mills, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, 106.
[180] Hargett, *Jade Mountains and Cinnabar Pools*, 16.
[181] The heavenly Hall mosque description is very vivid and just one of the few buildings described: "The Hall is built with layers of five coloured stones; in shape it is square and flat-topped. Inside there are pillars formed of five great beams of sinking incense wood, and a shelf made of yellow gold. Throughout the interior of the Hall, the walls are all formed of clay mixed with rosewater and ambergris, exhaling a perpetual fragrance. Over the Hall is a covering of black hemp-silk. They keep two black lions to guard the door." Mills, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, 174-5.
[182] The final version of the book was being finished around 1450, which is when the only known afterword was written. Hargett indicates that the subgenre was started around the middle of the 15th century thus coinciding with the publishing of the book. Hargett, *Jade Mountains and Cinnabar Pools*, 158-62.

arguing that the greatest classics and most popular works of the *youji* genre were written in the middle to late Ming period and that these works were often influenced by or part of this sub-genre.[183] Thus, it is possible that, within later versions of the work, Ma Huan might have added information that was not based on his original notes but on memory to cater to the readers that enjoyed the geographical-investigative sub-genre.

5.3 The Work

In the following sections, various aspects of trade as represented in *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores* will be studied in an etic manner, similarly to what other scholars have done previously. Additionally, each aspect of trade will be reflected upon using an emic approach based on the first part of the chapter, to understand how to interpret the information within a *youji*. Concerning infrastructure, once more, the entrepots, routes, and ships will be examined. Concerning commodities, the place of origin, place of trade and place of consumption will be studied. Lastly, the merchants' origins and their interaction with the states they visited will be analyzed.



Map 4: Expeditions led by Zheng He, Ma Huan joined the expedition in 1413, 1421, 1431.[184]

5.3.1 Infrastructure

There were a few fundamental changes in the trade network within the Indian Ocean between the middle of the fourteenth and the beginning of the fifteenth century. The impact of the imperial treasure fleets would reshape the trade network of the Indian Ocean, most noticeably

[183] Hargett, *Jade Mountains and Cinnabar Pools*, 141-2.
[184] E.G. Ellis, A. Esler, B.F. Beers, *World History: Connections to Today*, (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2003), 319.

in the Eastern half where Melaka rose to prominence as a central entrepot. During the three expedition he partook in Ma Huan visited many ports and places. Although often the expeditions spread out and smaller delegations visited local rulers, they seldomly strayed far from the main fleet, meaning that Ma Huan was generally accompanied by many of his countrymen. The smaller delegation that visited Mecca, separating from the main fleet in Calicut, that Ma Huan led was more of an exception to that rule.[185] Ma Huan had a greater interest in trade and mercantilism than Ibn Battuta. He describes the state of trade in almost every country and port he had visited during his travels. Ma Huan visited Champa, various ports within and the capital of Java, Palembang, and Thailand in the South China Sea. In the Eastern part of the Indian Ocean, he visited Melaka, Aru, the Samudera Pasai Sultanate, Meureudu, Bengal, and Aceh. In the central region of the ocean, he stayed in Ceylon, Quilon, Cochin, Calicut, and the Maldives and Laccadive island groups. In the Western part of the Indian Ocean, Ma Huan saw the towns of Dhofar, Aden, Hormuz, and the aforementioned Mecca.[186]

Of these ports only a few played a central role in the trade network of the Indian Ocean. In the Eastern part of the ocean, this central role played the town of Samudera in the Samudera Pasai Sultanate, according to Ma Huan. He describes the place as "the principal center for the Western Ocean" and that there were "great ships going and coming in large numbers, hence all kinds of foreign goods are sold in great quantities in the country."[187] It produced pepper and had many oxen that were eaten or used to produce junket, which was sold in great quantities, next to many fruits and some cotton as well.[188] Later, Melaka would take over the role of central entrepot but at this point in time it was a relatively insignificant town. Melaka's chief was promoted to king by Cheng Ho and a Chinese depot for their fleets

[185] " In the fifth year of the Hsüante period (around 1430) an order was respectfully received from our imperial court that the principal envoy the grand eunuch Cheng Ho and others should go to all the foreign countries to read out the imperial commands and to bestow rewards. When a division of the fleet reached the country of Ku-li(Calicut) the grand eunuch Hung saw that this country was sending men to travel there; where upoin he selected an interpreter (presumably from the description is Ma Huan mentioning himself in the third person) and others, seven men in all, and sent them with a load of musk, porcelain articles, and other such things; and they joined a ship of this country and went there. It took them one year to go and return." Mills, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, 177-8.
[186] Mills, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, 45-51.
[187] Mills, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, 115, 120.
[188] "As to their pepper: householders who reside over against the mountains establish gardens for its cultivation; it climbs and creeps as it grows, like the 'sweet greens'of Kuang Tung (a province in China) in the Central Country; it produces flowers which are yellow and white in colour; the pepper nodes constitute the fruits; they are green when unripe, red when mature; men wait until the time when the berries are half mature, then they pluck them, dry them in the sun, and sell them as merchandise; the pepper consisting of hollow and large berries is from this place. Mills, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, 118-9.

was constructed in the town, which was undoubtedly crucial for its rapid development in the coming century.[189] In India, the trade centralized around the region of Calicut. When the treasure ships arrived, a fixed price had to be established for several products like silk, silver, or gems. The Indians showed great mathematic ability, impressing Ma Huan with their flawless calculations using only their hands and feet. This showcases the regularity with which the Indian merchants dealt with a great amount of products and coins.[190] Furthermore, Ma Huan states that "Foreign ships from every place come there; and the king of the country also sends a chief and a writer and others to watch the sales; thereupon they collect the duty and pay it in to the authorities."[191] The most important export product here was the pepper grown in large quantities on the mountain sides. None of the towns Ma Huan visited in the Eastern part of the Indian Ocean are described in terms similar to those of Calicut or Samudera. Aden is acknowledged for its wealth and beautiful gems but there is no testament of its trade with other countries or ports. Ma Huan does acknowledge that "they have market-places and public bathing-establishments, also shops selling cooked foods, silk, silk fabrics, books, and every kind of article – all these they have," but does not elaborate on where these products come from.[192]

Ma Huan often describes how he arrived at each port, noting the time it took and the direction from which he came. Naturally, his sailing directions are written in a manner most convenient to use for those coming from the Chinese direction. Bengal is for instance reached sailing Northwest starting from Sumatra and Champa is reached by going Southwest from China. It is hard to say if the routes used by the treasure ships were also commonly used by merchants at the time. But due to the boost in trade and Chinese influence therein, it is likely that traders and tributes to China followed their paths in later times.

Unlike the sea routes used by the Chinese, Ma Huan rarely ever mentions anything about the ships that the expeditions used, except for that they were grand treasure ships. The same goes for ships from other lands with the exception of the occasional mention of the kind of canoes locals used to fish.[193] So, unfortunately, we learn little of the size and make of the

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[189] Mills, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, 113.
[190] "In their method of calculation, they do not use a calculating plate; for calculating they use only the two hands and two feet and the the twenty digits on them; and they do not make the slightest mistake; this is very extraordinary." Mills, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, 140-1.
[191] Mills, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, 143.
[192] Mills, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, 155-6.
[193] "The men mostly practice fishing for a livelihood; they use a dug-out boat made from a single tree-trunk, and drift on the sea to get the fish" Mills, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, 110.

ships used by the merchants in this period. Yet, there are two crucial pieces of information that Ma Huan divulges. Firstly, Ma Huan discusses routes and distances based on sailing ships and good winds, which means that the Chinese treasure ships were mostly or exclusively sailing to their destinations. Else, distances and the time it takes when rowing would have been likely mentioned.[194] And secondly, Huan mentions at the end of every chapter whether or not the visited land send tribute to China.[195] Almost all did, some more regularly than others, which shows the ability of many to travel relatively long distances while carrying tributary goods. It additionally demonstrates the widespread ability to sail the distance between their country and China, including across the South China Sea which previously Ibn Battuta had described as being crossed only by the Chinese ships. Unfortunately, it is hard to say if this change occurred due to looser Chinese policies or an increase in navigation and shipping technologies around the Indian Ocean.

Overall, the layout of the infrastructure seems to have been altered slightly. Calicut, or the west coast of India in general, remained the most important center of trade. The growth of the importance of the Western Indian Ocean comparatively is noticeable. Though this can also be explained by the relative importance and closeness of Southeast Asia to the Chinese. The large variety of routes sailed, and ports visited by the treasure ships gives an indication of the relatively high connectivity between the ports around the Indian Ocean. In this period, when the Chinese influence and impact grew, many nations sent regular tributes to mainland China promoting further trade and relations. The ability to do so might have also meant that overall ship building, and navigational technologies had developed to a higher degree around the Indian Ocean than in previous times.

5.3.1.1 Emic Interpretation

When interpreting Ibn Battuta's manuscript, one of the underlying assumptions is that he had little interest in trade itself. The opposites can be said for Ma Huan who clearly had commerce in mind when writing *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores.* From early on it becomes clear that the target audience is Chinese merchants and fellow *shidafu.* This becomes clear as there are five elements, that are continuously discussed by Ma Huan, that these two groups

[194] There are many examples of this as Huan describes how to travel to each destination in a similar manner. "setting sail from the anchorage in the country of Ko-chih (Cochin), you travel north-west, and arrive after three days." Mills, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, 137.
[195] "the king of this country, too, sends chiefs who accompany the treasure-ships on their return from the (Western) Ocean, bring local products to be offered as tribute to the Central Country (China)." Mills, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, 137.

would have a professional as well as possibly leisure interest in. These elements are the relation each country has with China e.g. tributary or not, the local customs related to religion, politics, and law, the sailing directions, the local commodities with a focus on trade products, and lastly a general report on the behavior of the people. There are, however, various ways in which these, at face value factual seeming, descriptions of trade might have been biased and distorted.

A similarity that both Ibn Battuta's and Ma Huan's work share is that they are the result of a cooperation. But whereas the impact of Juzayy on *The Travels* was likely quite profound, the impact of Kuo Ch'ung-li is largely a mystery. Earlier I explained why his collaboration likely added more credibility, but it is possible that his help was a necessity. There is a large variance between the way certain places are described, Mecca or Calicut are discussed in a lot more detail than Quilon or Deli, and there are many possible explanations for this. Ma Huan visits might have been short, the towns might have been less interesting, or only Ma Huan or Kuo Ch'ung-li visited the place rather than both. The less detailed a description the more likely it is that Ma Huan's interaction with the place was limited or he was simply less interested. But since he himself gives no reason as to why his descriptions are sometimes lacking, we cannot know the reasons for this without speculating. In any case, it is important to understand that the descriptions of Deli, Meureudu, and Quilon are a bit less trustworthy than those of other places as they lack a lot of detail.

Ma Huan's perception is that of a Chinese citizen turned government official. As such, he had been educated and grew up in a world that affected his epistemology in various ways. His view of China was that of a superior culture and nation whose expeditions enriched the lives of those encountered. Confucianism gives great importance to the natural order of things, like that of the citizenry being divided into gentry, peasant, artisan, and lastly merchant. In the same vein, the place of China would be on top of the natural order and its place within the trade infrastructure perceived and discussed as being at the center. Furthermore, as the target audience was partly the merchants that might venture out to the harbors around the Indian Ocean and South China Sea, Ma Huan had priorities when describing certain entrepots. Traders, harbors, and products that were of interest to this audience might have been overrepresented. Combined with his upbringing within China, it is very realistic to assume that trade, not focused on China, is underrepresented in his work. Although both Ibn Battuta and Ma Huan would agree that the South West Coast of India was the central point in the Indian Ocean trade network, they differ in the importance that they

assign to other trade hubs within the rest of the network. In *The Travels* one gets the idea that the Western region of the Indian Ocean network was more important and better connected, while this is not reflected within Ma Huan's book. Instead, the Eastern region and South China Sea seem to be well connected to the larger trade network and especially to China and India. This could be because of changes within the larger trade network but it is also likely because of the bias of each author towards their own side of the ocean. The Indians were relevant trade partners to both; therefore, they were also relatively well represented by both.

Given their shared faith, Ma Huan could have been quite in line with Ibn Battuta, ethically speaking, nevertheless his book gives no such indication. Most of what we can know, namely that Ma Huan grew up in China and studied from a young age onwards to take the civil servant exam, suggests that Confucian ethics is the likeliest foundation for what he perceived as good. Accordingly, he would have strived to become one of *junzi,* or noble virtue, by trying to live a life by the principles of *ren* and *li.* He likely had a great respect for the larger purpose of the group that he belonged to, in this case the expeditions sent out by the Yongle Emperor and the wider Muslim and Chinese communities, which is demonstrated in his poem by the opening line "the Emperors glorious envoy received the divine commands, proclaim abroad the silken sounds, and go to the barbarous lands."[196] Yet, it also meant that he was appreciative of harmonious or orderly forces in other places. Traditions, or *li,* that contributed to the continued wellbeing of a group as well as respectable, or *ren,* individuals. This helps to explain his upset about the judicial killing in Java, something that in his eyes could never contribute in a harmonious manner to the community, as well as his appreciation for many varied traditions of other lands such as the funeral rights in Thailand.[197] Due to his preference for an ordered society, Ma Huan might have given extra attention to those rituals that, in his eyes, contributed to this. Although the impact of his faith on his descriptions of people seems to be limited, it could have contributed in the same way. Nations whose people followed the Islamic religion might have been presented more positively, or at all, than those who did not. The often very factual presentation of trade in the book give the impression of a complete picture but Ma Huan's conscious or unconscious biases towards his audience, the Chinese, ordered societies, and Muslims might have influenced and steered him towards

[196] Mills, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, 73.
[197] "The country has no such punishment as flogging; no matter whether the offence be great or small, they tie both hands behind his back with a fine rattan, and hustle him away several paces, then they take a blade and stab the offender once or twice in the small of the back causing instant death. According to the local custom of the country no day passes without a man being put to death; it is very terrible." Mills, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, 88, 105.

them, as is clearly the case with his visit to Mecca. Furthermore, his travels influenced his perspective in many ways but most importantly it added two aspects to his epistemology. Firstly, the world was big, and many things were different in other countries than in China. Secondly, within the wider world, the place of China was that of a leading example. Thus when describing that wider world it should both be done in detail and in relation to China. Entrepots that were more important to Chinese merchants deserved attention over others. Therefore, to understand the role of each of the discussed entrepots within the larger Indian Ocean trade network is difficult, as Ma Huan likely had favorites and was pushed occasionally towards those in a very clear manner.

Unfortunately, it is hard to see how his personal esthetical preference influenced his descriptions of the infrastructure of trade. His genres preference for movie-like descriptions adds credibility to his accounts, as the details given would be difficult to fabricate accurately. Yet, it is possible that places that in his eyes did not deserve such descriptions, like the aforementioned Deli, Meureudu, and Quilon, are based on memory, or the descriptions of Kuo Ch'ung-li.

When discussing shipping routes, or ships themselves, his bias towards China is more obvious, but therefore better accounted for, even in an etic reading of his work. The routes described are the ones used by the treasure ships, and although Ma Huan was no expert sailor, as far as we know, his descriptions are generally quite accurate. It is very well possible that many of the routes were used commonly and therefore more accurate or that he kept good notes during his time aboard the treasure ships. Unfortunately, nothing is reported of the shipping, or ships used by others. Occasionally, he mentions the presence of foreign merchants, for example in Calicut or Hormuz, indicating a large network of other traders than those of either the Muslims, as described by Ibn Battuta, or the Chinese, as described by Ma Huan. His audience knew what Chinese ships were like and as they did not rely on others to ship their wares, they had no need or interest in foreign trade routes or ships. His other personality traits likely had little effect on his lack of detailed descriptions of trade routes or ships used by merchants from other nations. Ma Huan and his audience of Chinese *shidafu* and merchants were simply more occupied with their own. Therefore, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores* is generally a rather vague source, as far as foreign ships and trade routes are concerned. As such, it is also a rather vague source for gaining an accurate and complete picture of the Indian Ocean trade network.

5.3.2 Commodities

Ma Huan was incredibly detailed and consistent in his description of locally produced products. Unfortunately, he is less detailed in his description of where products were traded to and consumed. Yet, a comprehensive overview of what products were produced locally is helpful in understanding the trade network, overall, especially if trade partners were mentioned. Table 1 on the following page gives a complete overview of the mentioned commodities in *The Overall Survey of The Oceans Shores.* It also shows were these commodities where produced, if the town in question traded with foreign lands and if so with which foreign lands, and what commodities were used to trade within the town for the local products or money.

From this table it becomes clear that a large variety of products was traded around the ocean. The Chinese clearly had strong bonds with many harbors in the Eastern part of the Indian Ocean like Melaka and Java, as well as with the Indian Coast where Cochin and Calicut had a significant pull on both sides of the Indian Ocean. Furthermore, the large number of various towns wherein foreign merchants and products are found, indicate a large degree of interconnectedness between the various regions. In many places the Chinese copper coins were used as a method of payment, possibly creating a more easily accessible and common monetary unit that lubricated trade transactions between the various entrepots and China.[198]

[198] In Java, Palembang and Ceylon the Chinese copper coins were in use, according to Ma Huan. In many other places local kings minted their own copper, silver, or even gold coins. Mills, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, 170.

Place[199]	**Commodities produced:**	**Trade with foreign lands and if so with which foreign lands:**	**Commodities traded:**
Champa	Ebony wood, lign-aloes, a unique bamboo, rhinoceros.	Yes - Chinese	Porcelain, silks, beads.
Java	Rice, sapan-wood, diamonds, sandalwood incense, nutmegs, pepper, cantharides, steel, turtle shells.	Yes - Chinese and Muslims from the West, possibly others but they are not named.	Chinese – porcelain, musk, silks, beads.
Palembang	Rice, benzoin, rhinoceros' hornbill, the cassowary, tapir.	Yes - Chinese and others from "every place" even "western foreigners."[200]	None mentioned.
Siam	Many "foreign goods", various incense, rose-wood, cardamoms, sapan-wood, tin, elephant tusks.	Yes - there are "five or six hundred families of foreigners"[201].	"all kinds of foreign goods are for sale"[202].
Melaka	Dammar, tin, sago, wild jungle animals.	Yes - Chinese	None mentioned.
Deli	Incense, cloth, benzoin.	-	-
Semudera	Sulphur, pepper, "all kinds of foreign goods"[203]	Yes - "at this place there are foreign ships going and coming in large numbers."[204]	None mentioned.
Nagur	None are mentioned.	-	-
Lide	Possibly wild rhinoceros.	-	-
Aceh	Lakawood, rhinoceroses, coral.	No but as the inhabitants were Muslims, they likely had trade contacts with the rest of the *Dar al-Islam.*	None mentioned.
Ceylon	Gemstones, pearls, coconuts.	Yes - Chinese.	Musk, silks, porcelain, copper coins, camphor.
Quilon	Sapan-wood, pepper, butter.	Similar to Aceh.	-
Cochin	Great quantities of pepper, and some gems, pearls, aromatics, corals.	Yes - Chinese and other foreigners.	Gemstones, pearls, aromatic goods.
Calicut	Gems, cloth, silk, pepper, gems, pearls, beads, coconuts.	Yes - "Foreign ships from every place come there"[205]	Chinese – silk. Others – unclear.
Maldives	Coconuts, ambergris, cowries, dried fish, silk handkerchiefs.	Yes - "people come from every country to carry dried fish away for sale in other places."[206]	None mentioned.
Dhofar	Frankincense, aloes, dragons' blood, myrrh, benzoin, liquid storax.[207]	Yes - but unclear who they traded with the Chinese only came there sporadically.	Silk and porcelain.
Aden	Precious jewels, African animals, and "shops selling goods of every kind."[208]	Yes - but the origin of the products is unclear.	None mentioned.
Bengal	Fine cloths and quality steel products such as knives, scissors, or spears.	Yes - unknown if foreign traders come to them or they just sail to other harbors.[209]	None mentioned.
Hormuz	"in this place they have all the precious merchandise from every foreign country."[210]	Yes - the implication is clearly that there are many foreign traders and products.	None mentioned.
Mecca	Rosewater, incense, local animals, precious stones, corals, amber.	-	-

Table 1: An overview of the commodities mentioned in *The Overall Survey of The Oceans Shores.*

[199] Ordered as they are in the book. Mills, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, 76.
[200] Mills, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, 100-1.
[201] Mills, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, 106-7.
[202] Mills, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, 106-7.
[203] Mills, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, 120.
[204] Mills, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, 120.
[205] Mills, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, 143.
[206] Mills, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, 150.
[207] Dragons blood is a red resin produced from a tree found in East Africa and South Arabia, liquid storax is a sweet oil produced from a tree bark. Mills, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, 152-3.
[208] Mills, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, 156.
[209] "Wealthy individuals who build ships and go to various foreign countries to trade are quite numerous." Mills, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, 160
[210] Mills, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, 170.

5.3.2.1 Emic Interpretation

Ma Huan is incredibly consistent in his work when describing which products were produced and traded in each location he visited. Yet, consistency should not be confused with completeness, as his epistemology and focus when writing could have influenced his text significantly. Ma Huan constantly described five elements of each location of which one was the local commodities being produced, another the given's place relation with China. Most importantly is the reason for the consistent inclusion of these elements which is that of his audience. As explained his audience were Chinese scholars and merchants that were not only interested in reading an interesting book on the world outside of China but had professional interests. Naturally, this meant that his focus was on products and merchants that mattered to his audience and himself. Whenever an entrepots had a strong international appeal, it is simply summarized as that it attracted many foreign traders. Yet, one reading his book gains a decent understanding of which lands traded with Chinese merchants, were loyal to China, and what products one could gain in these lands. Assuming this information is correct, it is unlikely to be complete, though, and not only in the more obvious sense of foreign merchants and foreign products being only named in vague terms. It is, quite possible, that products that were not of interested to the Chinese were not mentioned at all. The horse trade of the Yemen peninsula discussed by Ibn Battuta is for example never mentioned, although that could have been of interest as a foreign product, but it was simply too far from China to be of interest to the Chinese traders. The cloves produced in and around the Indonesian Peninsula are not mentioned by Ma Huan either but are mentioned by the Moroccan even though this product was a lot closer to the Central Country. Demonstrating yet another indication that the commodities mentioned by Ma Huan were not a complete list but instead a representation of the products that the Chinese were interested in.

This bias was furthered by his perception of truth, in which China was placed on top of the natural order of things. Accordingly, relations between other lands were simply of lesser importance. A good example of this is the specific mention of the Chinese copper coin whenever used, while not mentioning the coins of other nations. It is fathomable that each nation either had their own coins or that various coins of various nations were being used and that only a few had added the Chinese copper coin due to wealth brought by the recent expeditions and the great amount of Chinese bullion that had been brought to their lands. Furthermore, it is also possible that the Chinese copper coins were only in use either when the expeditions were docked in a certain town or possibly only for as long as expeditions passed

by regularly. Yet, due to his natural bias towards Chinese supremacy, Ma Huan might have accepted the usage of the coins as normality and never questioned its specifics. Overall, it seems that the wealth of information on commodities provided in *The Overall Survey of The Oceans Shores* is an accurate representation of the interest of the Chinese rather than a complete list of products being produced, traded, and consumed in the ports visited by Ma Huan.

5.3.3 Merchants

Ma Huan directly describes a large variety of commodities and discussed varies aspects of infrastructure like the many entrepots he visited, and the shipping lanes used by the expeditionary fleet. However, the merchants that used these shipping lanes to trade products between the various entrepots are only vaguely described. One also learns relatively little about the policies concerning merchants in the various entrepots. What one can learn from Ma Huan is that there were merchants from various lands in the following entrepots: Java, Palembang, Semudera, Calicut, Maldives, Aden, Bengal, and Hormuz. Of these, only in Java and Calicut do we learn more about the origins of these merchants. In Java the discussed merchants come, next to China, from the West and Ma Huan tells us that they were Muslims.[211] This could mean that they were merchants from the Islamicate countries or from one of the other lands in the West like India or the Maldives. In Calicut, Ma Huan does mention interactions between Indian and Chinese merchants, describing how they bartered over trade goods like silk, and that generally Muslim merchants were present in the city.[212] So, there is a good indication that there were Muslim, merchant or not, communities in cities around the Indian Ocean furthering the movement that Ibn Battuta found himself part of.

Only in India do we learn about the government policies in a meaningful way. In both Cochin and Calicut, Ma Huan describes some limited interactions between the state and merchants. Ma Huan comments that in Cochin "The transactions of buying and selling are carried out in the same manner as among the Han people of the Central Country." As aforementioned, commerce at this point in China was still under relatively strict government control, implying that the regulations were similar in Cochin meaning that merchants could

[211] "The country contains three classes of persons. One class consists of the Muslim people; they are all people from every foreign kingdom in the West who have migrated to this country as merchants; and in all matters of dressing and feeding everyone is clean and proper." Mills, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, 93.
[212] Mills, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, 139.

not move freely and needed permits to go overseas.[213],[214] This would explain why the merchants in Cochin "wait until visitors from the gem-ships of the Central Country or from foreign ships of different countries come to buy."[215] Similarly, in Calicut, which is introduced as "the great country of the Western Ocean", Ma Huan comments on the strictness and rigidness of the commercial procedures when a merchants wants to make a deal.[216] Also in Calicut there are "two great chiefs who administer the affairs of the country; both are Muslim." Whether these administrators were involved in trade regulation is not discussed but especially in Calicut, a city of commerce, it seems like a logical assumption.[217] In general, Ma Huan does not discuss much about the commercial activities of the Islamicate countries. This is possibly because these lands were considered too far to be of interest to Chinese merchants. Consequently, we do not learn much about the bureaucracies of these nations as related to trade. As mentioned, there are, however, various times that Ma Huan encountered Muslim traders in other harbors.[218] Apparently, these merchants were freer in their movement than their Chinese or Indian counter parts.

5.3.3.1 Emic Interpretation

When reading the limited information given by Ma Huan on merchants and commercial government policies, it might seem like there was only a limited variety of merchants and like most governments had no clear policies as far as commerce was concerned. Yet, this is unlikely and there are several arguments as to why the depiction of Ma Huan was inaccurate and incomplete. His audience likely only cared for port policies in certain places and was possibly familiar with port policies of harbors close to the Central Country, possibly explaining why there is no discussion of port policies in Siam, Champa, Palembang, and even Java. All these ports had Chinese communities and sent regular tribute suggesting the possibility of a general familiarity with the place.[219] Still one wonders why the port policies of Cochin and especially Calicut were mentioned so detailly. Ma Huan seems to have been personally interested in Calicut as well as thought that his audience would be, introducing

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[213] Mills, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, 134.
[214] Brook, *The Confusions of Pleasure - Commerce and Culture in Ming China*,70-5.
[215] Mills, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, 135.
[216] "Once the price-money (for the various products) has been fixed after examination and discussion…goods are given in exchange according to (the price fixed by) the original hand-clasp there is not the slightest deviation." Mills, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, 141; Mills, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, 139.
[217] Mills, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, 140.
[218] In Java he directly mentions the presence of Muslim traders from the Western Ocean, but these could also be from Calicut. Still, it is quite possible that the Muslim traders were grouped under the foreign traders in lands like Cochin, Java, and Bengal. Mills, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, 93.
[219] Mills, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, 45-6.

Calicut as "the great country of the Western Ocean."[220] Ma Huan likely admired Calicut and Cochin for both epistemological and ethical reasons. In his truth, an orderly society is a good society. Thus, when he mentions that something is akin to China, which he thinks of as the supreme society, it is a great compliment. The distinct class system in place in India created a very orderly society. Ethically, he admired a harmonious society which is likely how he had perceived the class society of the Indian cities as every civilian understood their relation to the community and the group understood the importance of each citizen. Furthermore, the wealth and wider appeal of the harbors was seemingly unmatched in the Western region of the Indian Ocean, explaining why details about trade policy, class system, as well as good relations between the two lands, were of interest to Chinese merchants and government officials alike. Overall, one can conclude very little on port policies from the work of Ma Huan, except in the case of Cochin and Calicut. Yet, the tributes sent by almost all showed that governments had great interest in gaining and/or maintaining the favor of the Chinese. The reason for this could have very well been commercial, namely, trying to attract Chinese merchants or the next expeditionary fleet. Thus, the sending of tribute could be seen as a form of governmental policy related to merchants. Accordingly, to this extent at least, many administrations did, in fact, have an active governmental stance regarding commerce even though Ma Huan only gives two examples.

Similarly, it seemed that in the time Ma Huan traveled around the Indian Ocean there were few non-Chinese merchants, especially in the Eastern part of the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea. Yet, this might be a better reflection of his epistemology and targeted audience than of the factual reality of the time. Chinese merchants were seemingly self-sufficient, since, as far as this text and *The Travels* indicates, they never had to use the ships or labor of other merchants. Therefore, Ma Huan's audience only really cared about the existence of visiting foreign merchants at a foreign port, as it generally indicates a higher level of engagement within the trading network but did not care for specifics about these merchants. Furthermore, the bias in Ma Huan's truth likely led him to disregard merchants of other nations. The exceptions here were once more the Indian merchants in Calicut and Cochin whose society was seen in a positive light and the Muslim merchants. The shared faith possibly elevated their status from other merchants. Additionally, the merchants from the Islamicate lands were one of the few merchant communities that could be commercially interesting as partners, since they came from parts in the world that the Chinese did not sail to

[220] Mills, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, 139.

with the exception of the expeditions in the beginning of the fifteenth century. In conclusion, the absence of descriptions of other merchants only really shows how little interest Ma Huan and his audience had in them.

5.4 Conclusion

Ma Huan's writing tradition *youji* has been studied a lot less than that of the *rihla* used by Ibn Battuta and the same can be said for the authors themselves. Therefore, it was harder to gain an emic understanding of Ma Huan as an individual and his work as part of a larger movement. As an outsider to his own genre, as he did not write about traveling within China, it was hard to understand how Ma Huan envisioned the goal of his book. Mills, the translator, himself argued that we could learn little about Ma Huan from the text, going as far as describing him as "simple minded."[221] I would argue the opposite, however, Ma Huan was an intellectual part of the elite scholarly class *shidafu*. Furthermore, his book likely reflects more the interests of his audience rather than just his own. The consistency with which five elements were discussed, next to the vivid descriptions of the places he encountered, which is very typical of the *youji* genre, demonstrates this well. Ma Huan always discussed the relation a country had with China, the local customs, the sailing directions, the local commodities with a focus on those suitable for trade, and the general behavior of the people. This indicates that the work was written with Chinese merchants and *shidafu* in mind who would be interested in this information if they ever decided to go abroad.

Moreover, by trying to understand the impact of his education, faith, and travels, one can understand what influenced Ma Huan's epistemology. These influences resulted in a strong believe in the importance of order for society, a positive view of those that shared his faith, and a further confirmation of the exceptionalism of the Chinese civilization. His faith and education also had an impact on his ethics, which were centered on the Confucian concepts of *ren* and *li,* likely resulting in a man who believed in the importance of a harmonious society in which the value of the individual and the group are in balance. It was tough to understand the impact of his faith on his ethics, but again the most likely result was a more positive view of those that shared it. Lastly, his own and his genre's esthetical preferences also had an influence on the work. He might have given extra attention to those that lived their life in relation to others in a graceful manner, like those living in the caste system of India or the people of Mecca. These subtilities are brushed over by Mills who

[221] Mills, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, 37.

ignores the context of his own author in favor of expending on the expedition and their commander.[222] But Ma Huan and his unique disposition could reveal as much as the expedition themselves about the Chinese zeitgeist with further studying.

Through an emic reading of the material it becomes clear that past etic readings might have misunderstood the layout of the infrastructure, the range of commodities available, and the importance of Chinese merchants. Through studying his work and character it became clear that Ma Huan's conscious or unconscious biases towards his audience, the Chinese, ordered societies, and Muslims might have influenced his descriptions of various entrepots. Whereas in *The Travels* it would seem that the Western part of the Indian Ocean is the more important and better-connected trade network, the opposite is true in *The Overall Survey of The Oceans Shores.* The Eastern region and South China Sea seem to be well connected to especially China and India. It is likely that *The Overall Survey of The Oceans Shores* does not reflect the importance of each entrepot within the wider Indian Ocean network but rather their relation to China. Similarly, shipping routes are ordered based on their directional relation to China. Commodities seem listed factual at every harbor, yet, an emic reading of the work reveals that the products listed are an accurate representation of the interest of the Chinese rather than a complete list of products being produced, traded, and consumed in the ports visited by Ma Huan. Similarly, the absence of merchant communities within the descriptions of the ports indicates that, to the Chinese reader and in the eyes of Ma Huan, they were largely irrelevant. Familiarity or disinterest could also explain why there is little attention given to the port policies of many nations, as the only government policy that truly mattered to Ma Huan and his readers was that of tribute to China. The exception of Calicut and Cochin prove this, as they were of interest due to their wealth and sophisticated culture, while at the same time not overly familiar to the Chinese reader. One might have noticed that the impact of the *youji* genre on Ma Huan's work is relatively absent in the emic interpretation sections above. This is for two reasons. Firstly, there was relatively little academic interest in the genre, at least until recently, and therefore, the ways in which a text is influenced by being part of the genre is largely unknown. Secondly, and most importantly, the most defining characteristic of the genre is the detailed description of the things witnessed by the author, which generally adds credibility to the text without altering the factual realities.

[222] Mills gives context to the various expeditions and their commander for a combined total of 29 pages, around one sixth of the total book when one does not include the appendix. In comparison, Ma Huan's life and persona is contextualized in only three pages. Mills, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, vii.

In conclusion, *The Overall Survey of The Oceans Shores* seems like an almost factual account of the visits of Ma Huan to various ports, lands, and people. Yet, one can, through an emic reading of the work, discover that Ma Huan's survey is quite colored. Due to his own biases and preferences and to keep the work interesting to his readers, Ma Huan focused on how the wider world related to the Central Country. In doing so, it is quite possible that whole trade routes, ranges of products, and merchant communities were left out. If these and other elements of the Indian Ocean trade network had no relevance to China, they had no place within *The Overall Survey of The Oceans Shores.* Previous researchers using an etic methodology might have not accounted for this and could have overestimated the role of China or misunderstood how various trade routes were connected in the Eastern part of the Indian Ocean. What makes *The Overall Survey of The Oceans Shores* even more interesting as a historical source to the modern historian is the additional information that an emic reading can reveal. An emic reading of the current book reveals a lot about the expeditions, the zeitgeist of the Chinese at the beginning of the Ming period, and the state of the Indian Ocean trade network, if one accounts for the aforementioned concerns. Furthermore, as the genre of the *youji* is generally an understudied genre, especially when concerning *youji* whose authors traveled outside of China, there is a lot to learn about how the Chinese historically viewed the world in various periods through more extensive studies of this genre.

6. Conclusion

This thesis aimed to understand how two very different non-European literary traditions, the Islamicate and Chinese tradition, conceived of trade in the Indian Ocean, both as a concept as well as in its practical operation. By zooming in on the literary features of the two selected works and reading Ibn Battuta's *The Travels* and Ma Huan's *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores* along the grain of their cultural history, also known as an emic reading of the work, the information provided by these works could be better understood and its value analyzed better than has been done by previous historians who read the books only in an etic manner. By applying this method in the first part, it became clear that Ibn Battuta himself had little interest in trade. Although he never paid much attention to it, from his account we learn that Ibn Battuta sailed around much of the Indian Ocean on trade ships. He also mentions many entrepots and the vast wealth of the merchants that occupied these ports. Going against the current consensus among historians, that had been reached through an etic reading of the material, it seems that in the eyes of Ibn Battuta partaking in and profiting from trade was reserved for the wealthy traders and rulers of the various entrepots dotted around the Indian Ocean. While travelling, he encountered an incredible variety of trading products and, while doing so, was rarely ever without fellow Muslims. Still, overall, trade was conceived of as being so commonplace, within the Islamicate culture, that it was only mentioned when necessary or exceptional. Thus, what we can learn from *The Travels* about the details of trade in the Indian Ocean is limited, even through an emic reading of the material.

Whereas Ibn Battuta had little interest in trade, it was on the forefront of Ma Huan's mind when writing *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores.* There are strong indications that the work was written with Chinese merchants and *shidafu* in mind. Furthermore, the *youji* style combined with the education of Ma Huan created a book that in an initial reading felt like a very factual and inclusive description of the places visited. However, by understanding the emic elements that formed both Ma Huan and his work, it becomes clear that his biases and goals have shaped the book's information. This is exemplified by the ascription of importance to entrepots based on their relation to China, the description of shipping routes only in relation to China and the detailed descriptions of only commodities that the Chinese had an interest in. Yet, the best indication for a strong bias is the general absence of other merchant communities in the descriptions of the entrepots visited. Previous etic readings of the book might have therefore overestimated the importance of Chines merchant communities, wrongly judged the availability of certain commodities, and misunderstood the

layout of the trade network to be almost solely focused on China. Still, the impact of the expeditions as described by later historians seems to align with how Ma Huan's accounts demonstrate the impact of the expeditions on various places, like Melaka and the Indian West Coast. Overall, the stories of Ma Huan and Ibn Battuta show similarities but also noticeable differences. The most noticeable shared experience is the importance of foreign trade to the entrepots found around the Indian Ocean. Another resemblance is the importance ascribed to their own merchant communities while barely mentioning the others. Ibn Battuta told of the many Muslim traders he encountered in the Western part of the ocean, whereas Ma Huan told of the Chinese merchant communities found in the many places visited by the expedition. Further studies based on emic readings of primary source material could help elaborate on the relative importance of these and other merchant communities, the availability of various commodities throughout the ocean, and the connections that held together the Indian Ocean trade network.

An emic reading of this material did also demonstrate the differences between both the literary traditions of Ibn Battuta and Ma Huan. Both had certain biases which were informed by their backgrounds. Ma Huan was biased towards the Chinese society, people, and philosophy. Ibn Battuta was not biased towards a single nation, like China or Morocco, but towards the whole Islamicate culture, meaning that to Ibn Battuta there was no significant difference between a Muslim from Tangiers, Aden, or Calicut. All of them were united within the *Dar al-Islam* by their shared Islamicate heritage. Meanwhile Ma Huan favored the culture and people from China over others. Interestingly enough, Ma Huan's own Islamicate heritage seemed to have had less influence on him comparatively to his upbringing and education within China. Both their epistemology was influenced by their education, faith and travel. But, whereas for Ibn Battuta this was all related to the Islamic faith, for Ma Huan this was largely associated with the empire of China and its culture. Similarly, their ethics were built mainly on the Islamic faith and Confucianism, respectively. Esthetically, Ibn Battuta was heavily influenced by his scribe Juzayy and the genre rules as they were aiming to write a *rihla*. Ma Huan, however, was mostly concerned with creating a story along the lines of other *youji* which meant that it was extremely descriptive of the things, especially places, he had encountered. Although, they shared the Islamic faith and both travelled around the Indian Ocean extensively their personalities were and the resulting travelogues are very different.

Finally, this research has displayed benefits next to understanding how well historians have done in using these sources in understanding Indian Ocean trade. Overall, this research

has not brought to light fundamentally new insights on Indian Ocean trade. Yet, this methodology has benefits beyond challenging the status quo. Firstly, it highlighted how understudied the *youji* genre is and how further studies of this genre could help in gaining a better understanding of the Chinese worldview at different points in time. What really demonstrates the value of this method to modern day historians is how these and similar works allow for an insight into the local zeitgeist of a particular place. The casual manner with which Ibn Battuta dealt with trade demonstrates how to him and his audience trade, even to far away areas, was commonplace. The conviction of cultural superiority that Ma Huan demonstrated in subtle ways throughout his book is a good example of the zeitgeist of the Chinese scholarly elite. The emic approach also demonstrates how it is possible that two cultures whose heartlands were on the outskirts of the Indian Ocean saw their own additions to the Indian Ocean as crucial. Most importantly, through this method, modern historians should be able to reinterpret source material to not only shine a light on the subject of the researcher but also on the culture that produced it. Overall, this could enhance our understanding of history and make the discipline more inclusive to those whose history has been largely interpreted through a European or Western point of view. These benefits are then themselves a reason to pursue research in this direction and further this experiment.

7. Bibliography

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