BASIC STRUCTURES AND SIGNS OF ALIENATION
IN
THE RIHLA OF IBN JUBAYR*

In a previous article I identified in the Riḥla of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa (AD 1304-1368/9 or 1377) what I termed his “pilgrim paradigm”.1 Using insights garnered from the three-tier approach to history devised by the great French scholar Fernand Braudel (1902-85), doyen supreme of the French Annales school of history, I maintained that this paradigm comprised “a series of four searches: for the shrine and/or its circumambient religious geography; for knowledge; for recognition and/or power; and for the satisfaction of a basic wanderlust”.2 Now it is frequently—and rightly—claimed that the Riḥla of Ibn Jubayr (AD 1145-1217) constituted a prototype for several others of the genre including that of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa.3 Indeed the debt of the former to other authors like Ibn Jubayr and al-ʿAbdārī4 becomes ever more apparent, as recent scholarship continues to show.5 To what extent then, it may be asked, may a similar (prototype)

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2 Ibid., pp. 37-38.


pilgrim paradigm be identified in the *Rihla* of Ibn Jubayr? As an aid to answering this question, it is proposed first in this article to analyse this *Rihla* in terms of (1) its basic structures, and (2) some of its relevant semiotics.

The concept of *talab al-*ṣilm is a noteworthy factor in the *rihlatayn* of Ibn Jubayr and Ibn Baṭṭūṭa,⁶ but it is one which should be handled with care. We see, for example, that Lenker has stressed the general relationship between pilgrimage and study: he notes that in certain Andalusian works after the middle of the eighth century "both the pilgrimage and study are two essential components of each biographical entry";⁷ and, he goes so far as to maintain that "as a motive for travel [talab al-ṣilm] surpassed in significance all other incentives including the pilgrimage itself".⁸ While this statement may well have been true, however, ultimately of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa with his unquenchable wanderlust,⁹ it must be something of an exaggeration if applied unreservedly to Ibn Jubayr, despite his advice to the youth of the Maghrib [I.J. p. 258; see further in this article]: Ibn Jubayr’s *Rihla* was undertaken for a specific religious purpose which had the pilgrimage to Mecca as its heart and goal. Indeed, his *rihla* was a pilgrimage undertaken to make expiation (*kaффāra*) for the specific fault of wine-drinking: even though he had been forced to drink the wine by the Almohad governor of Grenada, Abū Saʿīd ʿUthmān b. ʿAbd al-Muʾmin, to whom he was secretary, his delicate conscience bade him to make amends.¹⁰ This motive of *kaффāra*, rather than pure *talab al-*ṣilm, must have been the driving force on his journey, and omnipresent to him, though it is indeed strange that Ibn Jubayr nowhere refers directly in his *Rihla* to the real reasons for his journey. The details must be gleaned from other sources such as the seventeenth century *Naфф al-*Ṭīb of al-Maqqārī.¹¹

Despite however, the basic difference in motivation behind each of the *rihlatayn* under discussion, there is no doubting the exuberant delight which ʿilm, and the experiences deriving from the search for ʿilm, produced in both Ibn Jubayr and Ibn Baṭṭūṭa. The energetic visiting by both of mosque, tomb, shrine, college, saint and scholar bears ample witness to that.

Apart from their respective motivations, perhaps the other major essential difference between the works of Ibn Jubayr and Ibn Baṭṭūṭa lies

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⁶ See Lenker, "The Importance of the Rihla", pp. 189-191 for more on this concept.
⁷ Ibid., p. 103.
⁸ Ibid., p. 189.