

The Golden Triangle (India-China-Indonesia) Maritime Cultural Relations (A Critical Analysis on *Kitab 'Ajaib al-Hind* by Buzurg Ibn Shahriyār (d.399 H/1009 M))

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Abstract—Historically the *Golden Triangle* (India-China-Indonesia) has been engaged in sea journeys since very early times. The Indian Ocean in fact unified the maritime culture of seafarers and merchants belonging to Arabian, Persian, Indian, East African backgrounds, and even from Southeast Asia though socially and ethnically diverse. The early maritime cultural ties of India-China-Indonesia might be traced back in *Kitab 'Ajaib al-Hind* by the Persian sea captain Buzurg Ibn Shahriyār (d.399/1009). It is one of the earliest Arabic tales dealing mainly with the Indian Ocean i.e. from East Africa to China, the Arabian-Persian Gulf and the Red Sea. Additionally, it also tells us the navigation activities in Malay region especially in Indonesia. The study conducts an analysis of maritime life in the Western Indian Ocean as portrayed in the mariners' tales of Buzurg b. Shahriyār. Having selected the terminology as found in *Kitab Aja'ib al-Hind* and conducting synchronic investigation, the analysis will run as follows: a) the textual reference from which the term has been extracted; b) a translation of the passage containing the term; c) a brief summary of the context of the passage, and d) a discussion of the term in question. Finally, this study establishes some proofs of India-China-Indonesia maritime relations since very ancient times.

Key words: *al-hind, al-sin, suvarnabhumi, sumatra*

1. Background

South and Southeast Asia have been an amazing and fascinating region through the ages though its role in shaping entire human civilization has not been adequately studied. The important region of Malaya lies on the busy Indian Ocean and Chinese maritime route which attracted traders from all over the world because of its lucrative spice trade. The history of maritime ties of India-China-Indonesia has been recorded in a number of historical sources such as *Akhbar al-Sin wa al-Hind*¹, *Ahsan al-Taqaṣim fī Ma'rīfat al-'Aqalim*². Despite this, we do have available for us a few early medieval Arabic texts dealing with seafaring in Indian Ocean. Among these are *Kitab 'Ajaib al-Hind* (The Book of the Marvels of India) by the Persian sea captain Buzurg Ibn Shahriyār (d.399/1009),³

¹ One of the earliest travel accounts known to us is the *Akhbar al-Sin wa l-Hind* (News of China and India), an anonymous compilation composed in the second/eighth century. It forms part of the work entitled the *Silsilat al-tawarikh* (A Chain of Narratives) published in 302/916 by Abu Zayd al-Ḥasan b. Yazid of Siraf (fl. 4th/10th century). Alongside Buzurg's *'Aja'ib al-Hind*, this work is one of the earliest Arabic works on human geography, and is possibly the most ancient account of China. Buzurg offers, amongst other things, a view of life at sea, while the *Silsilat* on the other hand, complements his work by providing the historical context in which it was written, which is why it has been included in this study. Detailed information regarding the most common (sea) routes, safe places to stop and access water, and the possibility of trade is all found in this text. It also paints a picture of the socio-economic and political changes that occurred at the time of writing, and in the gap of almost 70 years between the first part (i.e. the *Akhbar*) and the second part (i.e. Abu Zayd's work); something which is not found in the *Aja'ib al-Hind*.

² The physical and human geographical treatise *Ahsan al-taqaṣim fī ma'rīfat al-aqalim* (The Best Divisions for Knowledge of the Regions) by al-Muqaddasi (d. after 380/990) is another important contemporary text. The work is contemporary to that of Buzurg's (if a little later), and provides us with incalculable detail regarding the physical, economic, political and human geographical context of the era in which Buzurg's *'Aja'ib al-Hind* and its contemporary texts were composed. Like the *Silsilat*, it provides us with detailed information regarding many of the lands that Buzurg speaks of, including the produce and availability (and quality) of water, as well as detailed information regarding the language, religion and culture of the citizens of these lands. His apparent interest in the maritime culture makes the *Ahsan al-taqaṣim* ideal for comparing and contrasting Buzurg's use of the nomenclature. Additionally, the fact that al-Muqaddasi hails from a different region to Buzurg enables the researcher to look at the terminology of maritime culture in a broader context.

³ Not much is known about the author, Buzurg Ibn Shahriyār, other than that he lived between 299-399/912-1009; he was from Ramhurmuz in the Province of Khuzistan, southwest Persia; and that he is likely to have lived in one of the ports of the Persian Gulf. A manuscript of the *Kitab 'Aja'ib al-Hind* found in Aya Sofia, Turkey describes him as a *nakhoda*, a captain or shipmaster, which is probably true. Hopkins is of the opinion that he was an ordinary mariner and merchant.

the subject of our study. It is one of the earliest written collections of Arabic mariners' tales dealing (mainly) with the Indian Ocean i.e. from East Africa to China, the Arabian-Persian Gulf and the Red Sea. Additionally, it also tells us the navigation activities in Malay region especially in Indonesia.

According to Andre Winks the eighth to eleventh centuries constituted a period of expansion of Muslim (Arab and Persian) commerce on all major routes in the Indian Ocean, turning the Indian Ocean into an 'Arab Mediterranean', but suggesting that the Islamic influence during this period was essentially of a commercial nature.⁴ Initially settling in Konkan and Gujarat, the Persians and Arabs extended their trading bases and settlements to southern India and Sri Lanka by the eighth century, and to the Tamil lands of the Coromandel Coast by the ninth century,⁵ with the trade route extending to Guang-zhou in southern China. The tenth century saw the development of further trade linkages between the Middle East and Southeast Asia through these ports of the Indian subcontinent, with Arabs, Persians and Jews trading along these routes. One of the few named tenth-century Jewish traders was Ishaq ibn Yahuda, a merchant from Sohar in Oman, who is mentioned by Buzurg ibn Shahriyar, in his *Kitab 'Aja'ib al-Hind* ('Book of the wonders of India', c. 950 CE), as having travelled to China from Sohar between the years 882 and 912, returning to Oman with great wealth. He then departed for China again but was killed en route in Sumatra.⁶

In ancient times, traders from India went to distant lands in search of new opportunities in business. They went to Rome in the west and China in the east. As early as the first century BC, they travelled to countries like Indonesia and Cambodia in search of gold. They travelled especially to the islands of Java, Sumatra and Malaya. This is the reason why these countries were called Suvarnadvipa (suvarna means gold and dvipa means island). These traders travelled from many flourishing cities like Kashi, Mathura, Ujjain, Prayag and Pataliputra and from port cities on the east coast like Mamallapuram, Tamralipti, Puri, and Kaveripattanam. The kingdom of Kalinga had trade relations with Sri Lanka during the time of Emperor Ashoka. Wherever the traders went, they established cultural links with those places. In this way, the traders served as cultural ambassadors and established trade relations with the outside world.

2. Discussion

2.1 *Kitab 'Ajaib al-Hind*

Among the *'aja'ib'*⁷ works of marvels and curiosities there is Buzurg Ibn Shahriyar's (d.399/1009) *Kitab 'Aja'ib al-Hind* (The Book of the Marvels of India), which is the basis of investigation of the present study. It is a collection of sailors' yarns compiled by a Persian sea captain from Ramahurmuz, south-west Iran; tales which often border between myth and reality yet provide a great amount of information regarding the maritime culture of the Indian Ocean, from East Africa to China; life at sea; trade routes and goods; and physical geography. This compilation consists of over 130 stories and anecdotes dealing with the marvels of the Persian Gulf, the Arabian Peninsula, East Africa, the West Indian coast and beyond as far as China. Like many Muslim authors, Buzurg speaks only of the western Indian ports, hardly of those of the eastern coast with which he may have been unfamiliar. In his preface, he states that God created His "marvels" in ten parts and of these, eight parts were assigned to China and India,⁸ or the whole of India, which was considered to include China.

Buzurg b. Shahriyar's stories and anecdotes are about life at sea, trade, travel, and the wonders or marvels of the world. He states that the subject of his work *Kitab 'Aja'ib al-Hindi*, as the title suggests, the "Wonders of India";⁹ so called because India is centrally located between the Western

⁴ André Wink, *Al-Hind: The making of the Indo-Islamic World*, three vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1991–2004), vol. I, p. 65; and vol. II, p. 1.

⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. I, pp. 72–86.

⁶ Geoff Wadde, *An Early Commerce of Southeast Asia (900-1300 BC)*, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 40(2), June 2009, pp 221–265.

⁷ The term '*'aja'ib*', in Classical and Medieval Arabic literature, comprises a genre of curiosities, marvels and the wonders of nature; otherwise known as 'mirabilia' a type of largely geographical or cosmological writing with an emphasis on those real or imaginary phenomena in the physical world which challenged human understanding, See L. Richter-Bernburg, "'Aja'ib Literature" in *Encyclopaedia of Arabic Literature*, volumes I-II, ed. Julie Scott Meisami and Paul Starkey (London: Routledge, 1998), I: pp. 65-66. In short, the Arabic/Islamic '*'aja'ib*' is simply the "marvels of God's creation". See, Dubler, C. E. 1954-1960. "Adja'ib" in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, volumes I, Second edition (Leiden: E. J. Brill), I: 203.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Buzurg b. Shahriyar Al-Ramhurmuzi, *The Book of the Wonders of India*, ed. and trans. G. S. P. Freeman-Grenville (London: East-West Publications, 1981), p.

and Eastern Indian Ocean. From the west, it is connected by the two corridors of the Red Sea and the Arabian-Persian Gulf, and the Arabian Sea (including East Africa), and from the east, it is connected with the Seas of China. His inclusion of information regarding the regions outside of the land of India indicates that the marvels of India are, in actual fact, the marvels of the Indian Ocean World.

Buzurg's sources of information were also from the same social circle as his audience; and as such, the names of captains, ship masters and merchants given in the text, which may not mean anything to us, are, for the audience of the time, a source of reference and a way of authenticating Buzurg's tales. For a more modern audience, much of the ethnographical information provided by Buzurg can actually be verified by contemporary works, such as the *Silsilat al-tawarikh* (A Chain of Narratives) (c. 302/ 916), al-Mas'udi's (d. 345/956-7) *Muruj al-dhahab wa-ma'adin al-jawahir* (Golden Meadows and Mines of Precious Stones) and al-Muqaddasi's (d. 378/ 988-9) *Aḥsan al-taqasim fī ma'rifat al-aqalim* (The Best Divisions for Knowledge of the Regions). In addition to this, or in the absence of these contemporary texts, Buzurg has adopted a similar method of collecting information to those who collected or authenticated the *ḥadith* or *tafsir* (Qur'anic exegesis) using a chain of narrators (*isnad*) to substantiate a point in *shari'a* (Islamic) law, or the lexicographer, using anecdotes to prove a word existed.

The criteria adopted by Classical and Medieval Muslim authors to verify information is outlined in the model as defined by Agius in his *Classic Ships of Islam*:¹⁰

1. *isnad*: to state where the information was taken from through a chain of reliable scholars or chain of narrators
2. *muṭala'a*: reading or consultation
3. *mu'ayana*: eye witnessing
4. *muḥadatsa*: interviewing or discussing of material
5. *taqyid*: travel notes
6. *ta'aruf*: judging how commonly the term is used.

Of these, Buzurg is found to have adopted the *isnad*, the *mu'ayana*, and the *muḥadatsa*. There is no evidence to suggest that Buzurg consulted other texts (*muṭala'a*), or made notes on his own travels (*taqyid*); in fact, most of the information found in the text is provided by third party sources, Buzurg only ever offers his own eyewitness account (*mu'ayana*) occasionally. All the above criteria however, were applied by al-Muqaddasi in his work, *Aḥsan al-taqasim fī ma'rifat al-aqalim*.

The most important sources of information found in Buzurg's work are the people mentioned in the text (i.e. the *isnad*). These sources can be divided into three categories:

1. The original source: the original story teller, Buzurg or the one who related the tale to Buzurg; the one whose name appears at the beginning of the anecdote. These can be further divided into: a) Buzurg as the source; b) a named source; c) unidentified source with some identifying factor e.g. a man from al-Manṣūra, a sea captain; d) unidentified source i.e. قيل قد "they say", حدثني "I was told". "They say" possibly indicates the use of the *muḥādatha*; in another tale Buzurg begins the section with the words تناكرنا "we were talking"¹¹ – clearly a group talk.
2. The eyewitness (if not the original source) is either an a) identified eyewitness (identified by name); or b) unidentified eyewitness e.g. an old sailor.
3. The others include the protagonist of the tale [if not the eyewitness], ship captains/shipmasters, sailors, merchants, relatives of named people, prophets, caliphs and foreign monarchs.

2.2. Terminology *al-hind*, *al-sin*, and *bilad al-dzahab* in Buzurg's *Kitab 'Ajā'ib al-Hind*

2.2.1 Terminology *al-hind* and *al-sin*

Buzurg mentioned *al-hind* (India) in his work, for example:

توادعوا وصلی كل منهم الى جهة على قدر معبوده

¹⁰ Dionisius Albertus Agius, *Classical Ships of Islam from Mesopotamia to the Indian Ocean* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2008), p. 16.

¹¹ Buzurg, *Kitab Aja'ib al-Hind* (Livre des merveilles de l'Inde), Arabic text ed. P.A. Van der Lith, trans. Marcel Devic. Tehran: M. H. Asadi; reprint of 1883-86 Leiden edition, 1966, p. 132; *Ibid.*, 1981, p. 77.

لأنهم كانوا شيعا من أهل الصين والهند والعجم والجزاير واستسلموا للموت¹²

“the passengers said farewell to one another, and each of them prayed according to his religion, for there were men from China, India, Persia and the islands. Then they surrendered themselves to death.”¹³

This tale is generally about the apparent harmony between different faith groups in the seafaring community is witnessed in the tale regarding the Island of Women. A ship sailing in the Malay Sea, near the borders of China, was forced to steer under the star سهيل (suhayl) Canopus. The passengers, frightened by the ferocity of the weather and perhaps, sensing their impending doom. The travellers had sailed from India, a journey that would have taken at least two months during which, no mention is made of any discord amongst those on board. In fact, at one point the merchants plead with the captain to turn the ship around, stating that rather than heading toward what they believed to be fire, they would rather remain in the abysmal darkness so that they did not have to witness their comrades suffering.¹⁴ One must question whether this harmony extended beyond the Indian Ocean seafaring community, or whether it was limited to it; as often the two seem quite distinct, particularly after the expansion of Islam.¹⁵

The term *al-sin* can also be found in another tale like as below:

ولم يكن سلك قبله الى الصين الا من غرر ولم يسمع ان احدا سلكه وسلم وعاد قط فان سلم في يكاد يسلم في العودة وما سمعت ان احدا سلم في الذهاب والمجيء سواء المضى فهو عجب فلا

“Only adventurous men had made this voyage before. No one had done it without an accident. If a man reached China without dying on the way, it was already a miracle. Returning safe and sound was unheard of. I have never heard tell of anyone, except him, who had made the two voyages [i.e] there and back without mishap.”¹⁶

It tells about Captain Abhara too (see Table 2, number 11), was a well-known individual during the time of Buzurg. He was (as mentioned earlier) a native of Kirman (region in Iran), who was a shepherd in his early years; after which, he became a fisherman; then he joined a ship’s crew, sailing as far as China. He eventually rose to a higher level and took the duties of a *rubban* (navigator)¹⁷ and, we are told, sailed to China seven times.

Abhara, it seems, was a brave and adventurous navigator although not infallible; his ship was wrecked due to miscalculations regarding the tide, and he was found adrift in his ship’s boat in the South China Sea by the narrator of the tale, Captain Shahriyari (“one of the captains on the China route”).¹⁸ He was well respected for his knowledge and his sailing expertise and experience, so much so that those attempting to rescue him from the predicament they found him in were willing to pay him a salary of “a thousand dinars of merchandise at the Siraf rate”¹⁹ and give him control of the ship, in order to have him on board their ship and seek his advice. This extraordinary business venture paid off as Abhara’s knowledge of the tides and weather patterns, the (navigational) calendar, and the location of reefs and shoals saved Captain Shahriyari and his ship from certain destruction. Captain Abhara’s story proves to be an important and extremely informative one as it provides us with information regarding aspects of seafaring such as the salary of a navigator and the method of payment, and aspects of navigation such as the requisite knowledge for long distance voyages. That information, particularly the passage quoted above, and Buzurg’s admiration of the courageous men who sail to China, also reinforces the theory that Buzurg may have been a coastal navigator who

¹² *Ibid.*, 1966, p.1; *Ibid.*, 1981, p. 1.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 1981, p.1.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1981, p. 14

¹⁵ The Zoroastrians in particular, suffered after the advent of Islam, their fire temples were destroyed, the priests killed, and much of their land was confiscated. The use of the Persian (solar) calendar for navigational seasons on the other hand, suggests that the introduction of the Islamic lunar calendar did not affect the maritime world, although the changes in the lunar calendar make it generally unsuitable for calculating periodic seasonal changes or the appearance of certain stars. While writing of the Arabian modification of the Persian sidereal rose, the assimilation of the Persian system of orientation and the adoption of the Persian calendar, Tolmacheva suggests that the merger of Arabian and Persian maritime and nautical traditions either happened before the rise of Islam, or remained unaffected by it.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 1966, p. 85; *Ibid.*, 1981, p. 50.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 1966, pp. 47-8

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 1966, p. 86; *Ibid.*, 1981, p.50.

sailed around the Red Sea, the southern Arabian coast and the Arabian-Persian Gulf, rather than a deep sea navigator, or one who travelled to China.

Captain Abhara was not the only legendary captain in Buzurg's circle; Captain Allama was also amongst those who travelled to China and back successfully. Buzurg does not provide much biographical detail regarding Captain Allāma, other than that he travelled to India, China and an island of the Land of al-Bakham;²⁰ his name however, is interesting. Derived from the root term علم his name (literally) means the "most erudite, very learned";²¹ it is possible that Allama is the captain's nickname or moniker, signifying perhaps, his status amongst his peers. The tale, related by Buzurg, portrays Allama as an astute captain, who was able to recognize the signs of impending bad weather before they became visible to anyone else on board, and take precautionary measures in order to be able to ride out the storm. In fact, those on board Allama's ship during his voyage from India to China, although hindered by a violent storm which wrecked many other ships, not only survived due to the captain's foresight (and his order to jettison the cargo to lighten the ship), but also recovered or gained a great deal of valuable merchandise from ships that had been wrecked in the same storm. Thus, those travelling with Captain Allama were blessed, as the "voyage brought them wealth and happiness".²²

According to historians, India had cultural and trade relations with China during ancient times itself.²³ The spread of Buddhism helped the strengthening of this relationship. Evidences suggest that from the time of the Kushana King Kanishka or from the first century A.D the Buddhist monks had travelled to China, Central Asia and Afghanistan. It was from China that during the early centuries after Christ. Before the 6th century A.D the trade relationship between India and China was conducted through the Silk Route.²⁴ From archaeological excavations it is known that the ancient ports and port-towns like Tamralipti, Che-li-ta-lo/Manikpatna, Khalkattapatna, Palur, Kalingapatnam, Pithunda, Kaveripatnam etc., which dotted on the stretchy coast, on the western side of the Bay of Bengal served as the entrepots of Sino-Indian contacts.

The sea-route to China, followed by ancient merchants as well as the missionaries passed through Simhala/ Sri Lanka and Java. Tamralipti, an important port of Kalinga was the main point for embarkation and disembarkation of the sailors. Fa-Hien, in the fifth century CE returned from India to China through this route.²⁵ Similarly Vajrabodhi, a Buddhist monk, returned to India from China through the port of Tamralipti.²¹ All of them preferred the sea-route because in ancient times the land route through central Asia was unsafe.²⁶

According to Han Shu (the History of Former Han Dynasty), written by Pan-ku (c.32 – 92 CE), the maritime route that linked India and China passed through the South-East Asian states of Sumatra, Java, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam. The Chinese today call it the 'Maritime Silk Route' and 'it is this route that is relevant to intercourse between South India and China'.²⁷

2.2.2. Term 'Land of Gold' (بلاد الذهب (Java and Sumatra)

كان وجه النواخذة الذين سافروا الى بلاد الذهب واعرف خلق الله بامر البحر ومن
جلة البحرين ومستورهم²⁸

[he was] one of the principal shipmasters who used to sail to the Land of Gold [Sumatra and Java], and was one of the best informed of God's creatures in nautical matters, and one of the best and most respected sailors.²⁹

²⁰ Freeman-Grenville does not identify the location of the Land of al-Bakham. He may have been referring to a place in Persia as Persian lexica list بكم Bakhm as the "name of a country famous for its musk." Richardson 1829: 247

²¹ Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, (Fourth Edition- Student Edition). Ed. J.M. Cowan (New York: Ithaca Wehr 1993), p. 744.

²² Buzurg 1981: p. 28

²³ Xinru Liu, *Ancient India and Ancient China* (Trade and Religious Exchange 1-600 AD) (UK: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 1-22

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Samuel Beal, *Travels of Fah-Hien and Sung-Yun* (Buddhist Pilgrims, from China to India (400 A.D. to 518 A.D.)) (Delhi, 2005), pp.148-172;

²⁶ K.S. Behera, 'Maritime Trade in Ancient Orissa', in: M.N. Das (ed.), *Sidelights on the History and Culture of Orissa*, Cuttack, (1977), p.119.

²⁷ Haraprasad Ray, *Trade and Trade Routes between India and China c.140 B.C. - A.D. 1500* (India: Kolkata, 2003), p.1.

²⁸ Buzurg, 1966, p. 5

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 1981, p. 4

Buzurg frequently quoted from Abu Abdallah Muḥammad bin Babishad bin Ḥaram bin Ḥammawayh al-Sirafi, one of Buzurg's sources. We know from his name that Babishad was originally of Siraf. He was so distinguished, in fact, that an Indian king had a portrait painted of him, a custom usually reserved for famous, eminent men.³⁰ We know from Buzurg that Babishad spent much of his life sailing the seas, travelling to Oman, Siraf and India, as well as in the Eastern Indian Ocean, to Ceylon (Sri Lanka), Malaysia and Indonesia, Faṅsur (an island off the coast of Sumatra), and Sarira on the Lamuri Island (north of Sumatra). There is not much information given regarding Babishad's family background, though it is likely, given his agnomen Abu Abdallah, that he had a son (adopted or biological) named Abdallah; it is also possible that had a slave whom he took with him on voyages, as Buzurg relates a story told to him by Rashid, al Ghulam bin Babishad in which he describes a gale in which he was caught while travelling from Siraf to Baṣra in 305/ 918.³¹

According to historian *bilad al-dzahab* or *Suvarṇabhūmi* in Sanskrit, was well-known from very early times to the Western and Eastern countries such as Rome, Greece, Persia, India and China. It means "The Land of Gold" (*suvarna* means gold, and *bhumi* means land) because of its very fertile land. We may also call it "The Golden of Land". For the exact location of *Suvarṇabhumi*, the *Mahanithesa* mentions *Suvarṇabhumi* as being the modern Sumatra Island. The record of the Chinese pilgrim I Tsing refers to the country as *Kim-Chieu* meaning "the Island of Gold". According to him, the country *Kim-Chieu* now corresponds to modern island of Sumatra or Palembang town in that land.³²

One authority had opined that *Suvarṇabhumi* is in the Sumatra island because over 1,000 years ago, Sumatra was designated by the people as Golden Island. This designation can be found in the book *Kathasaritsakorn* which mentions one merchant named *Samudrasura*, who went to *Suvarṇadvipa*.³³

In addition, Indian merchants were drawn to Southeast Asia by its legendary natural wealth, of spices, resins and other forest products, and by its precious metals, especially gold. They were also attracted to the region because it served as the gateway to trade with China. As the maritime routes were mastered, so trade between southern India and China expanded. Chinese silk was imported at Pompuhar in the early centuries CE, according to the Shiappadikaram, probably by Tamil merchants operating via entry ports in the Malay peninsula. Southeast Asia featured early in Indian literature as an important source of gold, especially in Buddhist Jataka stories. Therein the region is identified by the title *Suvarṇadvipa* (Island of Gold) and *Suvarṇabhumi* (Land of Gold) or *bilad al-dzahab*. Western Indonesia in particular yielded a steady supply of gravel and river-borne alluvial gold; Sumatra, Kalimantan and the peninsula all played a role in this trade.³⁴

3. Conclusion

Buzurg Ibn Shahriyār provides an interesting picture of the Indian Ocean World that linkage between India-China-Indonesia. He lived and compiled his work at a time when Arabian-Persian and Indian navigation was at its peak, and the lands from East Africa to China provided the basic and luxury goods that were in demand across the region, from the rich courts of the caliphate to those of the emperors of China. Mangrove and teak wood, ivory, slaves, fruit, spices, drugs, textiles, gold and porcelain, amongst other commodities, were regularly shipped in and out of the major port towns of the Indian Ocean, including Jeddah, Siraf, Baṣra, Ṣoḥar, those on the west coast of India, such as Sindan and Ṣaymur, Sumatra and Java (the Land of Gold), and the surrounding islands i.e. Faṅsur Island (possibly Barus or Sibolga on the western coast of Sumatra, or Nias Island, off the west coast of Sumatra), Lulubilank (on the west coast of Sumatra between Faṅsur and Lamri or Lamuri Island) and Canton. From his description about India (*al-hind*), China (*al-sin*), and Sumatra and Java (*bilad al-dzahab*), we can conclude that the *Golden Triangle* (India-China-Indonesia) has been engaged on

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 57

³¹ *Ibid.*, p.94

³² Promsark Jermsawatdi, *Thai Art with Indian Influences* (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1979), p. 17

³³ *Ibid.*, p.18

³⁴ Pierre-Yves Manguin, et.al., *Early Interactions Between South and Southeast Asia: Reflections on Cross-cultural Exchange* (New Delhi: ISEAS, 2011), p. 249

maritime cultural relations since very early times and people from all faiths and cultures live, travel and trade together in harmony and peace.

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