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**PALESTINE UNDER THE MOSLEMS
A DESCRIPTION OF SYRIA AND THE HOLY LAND
FROM A.D. 650 TO 1500**

Translated From The Works of
THE MEDLEVEL ARAB GEOGRAPHERS
BY
GUY LE STRANGE.

WITH MAPS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

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NABULUS (NEAPOLIS, SHECHEM).—“An ancient city in Palestine. Near by to it are two sacred mountains. Under the town is an underground city hollowed out in the rocks. * Its inhabitants are Arabs, foreigners (‘Ajam), and Samaritans.” (Yb., 116, writing in A.D. 891.)

“Nabulus,” says Istakhri, “is the city of the Samaritans who assert that the Holy City is Nabulus (and not Jerusalem). The Samaritans possess no other city elsewhere in the world; and the people of Jerusalem say that no Samaritans exist elsewhere han here, on the whole face of the earth.” (Is., 58; I.H., 113.)

“Nabulus,” writes Mukaddasi, “lies among mountains. It abounds in olive-trees, and they even name it the ‘Little Damascus.’ The town, situated in the valley, is shut in on either hand by the two mountains (of Ebal and Gerizim). Its market-place extends from gate to gate, and a second market goes to the centre of the town. The Great Mosque is in its midst, and is very finely paved. The city has through it a stream of running water; its houses are built of stone, and some remarkable mills are to be seen here.” (Muk., 174.)

“Nabulus,” reports Idrisi, “is the city of the Samaritans. There is here the well that Jacob dug- peace be on him! – (p. 512) where also the Lord Messiah sat, asking of water to drink from a Samaritan woman. There is at the present day a fine church built over it. The people of Jerusalem say that no Samaritans are found elsewhere but here.” (Id., 4.)

“Outside the town of Nabulus,” writes ‘Ali of Herat, in 1173, “is a mosque where they say Adam made his prostration in prayer. There is here the mountain (Gerizim) which the Jews believe to be the place of the sacrifice (made by Abraham), and they believe that he who was sacrificed was Isaac- peace be on him! The Jews hold this mountain in the greatest veneration. Its name is Kazirim (an accepted error for Karizim, Gerizim, see p. 484). It is mentioned in the Pentateuch. The Samaritans pray turning towards it. There is

* See Gueria, Samarie, i. 399, for this underground city.

here a spring, under a cave, which they venerate and make pilgrimage to. The Samaritans are very numerous in this town. There is also near Nabulus the spring of Al Khudr (Elias), and the field of Yusuf as Sadik (Joseph); further, Joseph is buried at the foot of the tree at this place, and this is the true story.” (A.H., Oxf., folio 34.)

“Nabulus,” writes Yakut, “is a celebrated town in Filastin, lying between two mountains which straiten it in so the site has no breadth, but is drawn out in length. Nabulus has much water, for it lies adjacent to a mountain, where the soil is stony. It is 10 leagues from nabulus to Jerusalem. The town has wide lands, and a fine district, all situated in the Jabal al Kuds (the Holy Mountains). Outside Nabulus is a mountain, in which, as they relate, Adam prostrated himself in prayer; and there is here the mountain in which, according to the belief of the Jews, the sacrifice (of Abraham) was offered up; and the victim according to them was Ishak (Isaac)- peace be on him! ** The Jews have great veneration for this mountain; they call it Kazirim. Nabulus is inhabited by the Samaritans, who live in this place alone, and only go elsewhere for the purposes of trade, or advantage. The Samaritans are a sect of the Jews. They have a large mosque in Nabulus (1225), which city they call Al Kuds- the Holy City- and the Holy City of Jerusalem is accursed by them, and when one (p. 513) of them is forced to go there, he takes a stone and throws it against the city of Jerusalem. The Mountain (of Gerizim) is mentioned in the Pentateuch. The Samaritans pray towards it. There is here a spring in a cave which they venerate and pay visitation unto, and for this reason it is that there are so many Samaritans in this city of Nabulus.” (Yak., iv.724; Mar., iii. 188.)

“Nabulus,” says Dimashki, “is in the Iklm Samirah (the district of the Samaritans). It is a very fertile and pleasant city, lying between two mountains, but spaciouly situated. It possesses running water in plenty and excellent baths; also a fine mosque in which prayer is said, and the Kuran recited night and day, men being appointed thereto. The town stands like a palace in its gardens, and has great numbers of trees. The oil of its olives is carried into all the lands of Egypt, Syria, the Hujjaz, and the Arabian desert. They send also of its oil to Damascus, for use in the (Great) Omayyad Mosque, yearly, a thousand Kintars of the Damascene measure. From the oil also they make soap of a fine quality, which is exported to all lands, and to the Islands of the Mediterranean. They grow in Nabulus a kind of yellow melon sweeter than all other kinds of melon. There are the two mountains, called Jabal Zaita (the Mount of Olives), and to these the Samaritans make their pilgrimage; their sacrifices also are made on this mountain; they slay lambs and burn their flesh. In no other city are there as many Samaritans as there are here, for in all the other cities of Palestine together there are not of the Samaritans a thousand souls. It is said that when a Muslim, a Jew, a Samaritan, a Christian come together on the road, the Samaritan will take company in preference with the Muslim.” (Dim., 200)

“Nabulus,” says Abu-l Fida, in 1312, “lies in the Jordan Province. It is related that when Jeroboam (Yarbu’am) took with him the ten tribes, and revolted against the sons of Solon, the son of David, he went and established himself at Nabulus. And on the hill above Nabulus he built a great temple, for he denied that David and Solomon and the rest were the prophets of Israel, and he only held Moses and Aaron and Joshua as prophets. And he made a law for the Samaritans, and a religion (p. 514) forbidding them to make the pilgrimage to the Holy City of Jerusalem lest they should perceive the excellence of the kings who were the sons of Solomon, and depart from him, Jeroboam. This was how

** The Muslim tradition asserts that it was Ishmael, not Isaac, whom Abraham was about to sacrifice.

the sect of the Samaritans was instituted, and took its rise. Their place of pilgrimage was to a mountain that is above Nablus.” (A.F., 241.)

Nabulus was visited by the traveler Ibn Batutah in 1355. He speaks of it as full of trees and streams, full also of olives, the oil of which they export to Damascus and Cairo. “They make here,” he says, “a sweetmeat of the carob-fruit, which they export to Damascus and even Cairo, and the lands beyond. They boil down the carob-fruit, and then press the mass together. An excellent kind of water-melon, called after Nabulus, is grown here. There is a fine Jami’ Mosque, in the middle of which is a tank of sweet water.” (I.B., i. 128.)

Comments on this section from the Editor of the Samaritan Update.com

With the help of Wikipedia.org comes the following information

It appears that *Istakhri* is **Abu Ishaq Ibrahim ibn Muhammad al-Farisi al Istakhri** (aka **Estakhri**, Persian: یرختسا, i.e. from the city of [Estakhr](#), b. - d. 957 AD [346AH]^[11]) was a medieval Persian geographer in the 10th century. His Arabic language works included *Al-masaalik al-mamaalik* (كُل املا كِل اسمل, "Traditions of Countries").

Mukaddasi is **Muhammad ibn Ahmad Shams al-Din Al-Muqaddasi** (Arabic: نب دمحم (أي سدق مل ن يدل س مش دم ح أ), also transliterated as **Al-Maqdisi** and **el-Mukaddasi**, (c. 945/946 - 1000) was a medieval Arab geographer, author of *Ahsan at-Taqasim fi Ma`rifat il-Aqalim* (*The Best Divisions for Knowledge of the Regions*).

Idrisi is **Abu Abd Allah Muhammad al-Idrisi al-Qurtubi al-Hasani al-Sabti** or simply **Al Idrisi** (Arabic: أي سدق مل ن يدل س مش دم ح أ; Latin: **Dreses**) (1099–1165 or 1166) was a Muslim geographer, cartographer, Egyptologist and traveller who lived in Sicily, at the court of King Roger II. Muhammed al-Idrisi was born in Ceuta then belonging to the Almoravid Empire and died in Sicily. Al Idrisi was a descendent of the Idrisid rulers of Morocco, who in turn were descendants of Hasan bin Ali, the son of Ali and the grandson of the Islamic prophet Muhammad. An abridged version of the Arabic text was published in Rome in 1592 with title: *De geographia universalis or Kitāb Nuzhat al-mushtāq fī dhikr al-amār wa-al-aqār wa-al-buldān wa-al-juzur wa-al-madā' in wa-al-āfāq* which in English would be *Recreation of the desirer in the account of cities, regions, countries, islands, towns, and distant lands*. This was one of the first Arabic books ever printed. The first translation from the original Arabic was into Latin. The Maronites Gabriel Sionita and Joannes Hesronita translated an abridged version of the text which was published in Paris in 1619 with the rather misleading title of *Geographia nubiensis*.^[8] Not until the middle of the 19th century was a complete translation of the Arabic text published. This was a translation into French by Pierre Amédée Jaubert.^[9] More recently sections of the text have been translated for particular regions. In the 1970s a critical edition of the complete Arabic text was published.^[10]

'*Ali of Herat* is Ali ibn Abi Bakr al-Harawi (Abu al-Hasan) (d. 611A.H./1215) was an early thirteenth century Persian traveller originally from Herat, located in Afghanistan. Born in Mosul, Iraq he travelled far and wide and died in Aleppo, Syria in a fort built for him. He is a celebrated traveller Abu al-Hasan, Ali ibn abi bakr al-Harawi of a family from Heart. He wrote *Kitab al-ishara ila ma`rifat al-ziyara* (Book of indications to make known the places of visitations).

Yaqut is Yaqut al-Hamawi or **Yaqut ibn-'Abdullah al-Rumi al-Hamawi** (1179–1229) (Arabic: (أيامورالايومحلانوقاي) was a Syrian biographer and geographer renowned for his encyclopedic writings on the Muslim world. "al-Rumi" ("from Rûm") refers to his Greek (Byzantine) descent; "al-Hamawi" means that he is from Hama, Syria, and ibn-Abdullah is a reference to his father's name, Abdullah. Yaqut was a Greek sold as a slave to someone who later moved to Baghdad, Iraq. He wrote *Kitab mu'jam al-buldan* (معجم نادلبل "Dictionary of Countries")

Dimashki is **Al-Dimashqi** or **Sheikh Shams al-Din al-Ansari al-Dimashqi** or simply **al-Dimashqi** (Arabic: (أيقشمدلأيراصنألانيدلاشمش) (1256-1327) was a medieval Arab geographer, completing his main work in 1300. Born in Damascus—as his name "Dimashqi" implies—he mostly wrote of his native land, the Greater Syria (*Bilad ash-Sham*), upon the complete withdrawal of the Crusaders. He became a contemporary of the Mamluk sultan Baibars, the general who led the Muslims in war against the Crusaders. His work is of value in connection with the Crusader Chronicles. He died while in Safad, in 1327. Al-Dimaski's writings on Syria were published in St. Petersburg in 1866 by [M.A.F Mehren](#), and this edition was later used for the English translation by Guy le Strange in 1890. **August Ferdinand M. Mehren** (1862): [Syrien og Palestina, Studie efter en arabisk Geograph \(Shams al-Dîn Dimashqī\)](#). August Ferdinand Mehren (ed) (1866): [Cosmographie de Chems-ed-Din Abou Abdallah Mohammed ed-Dimichqui](#)

Abu-l Fida is **Abu al-Fida** (Arabic: (أءادفلاوبا) or **Abul Fida Ismail Hamvi** (fully **Abu Al-fida' Isma'il Ibn 'ali ibn Mahmud Al-malik Al-mu'ayyad 'imad Ad-din**, (also transliterated **Abulfeda**, **Abu Alfida**, and other ways)) (November 1273 – October 27, 1331) was an Arab historian, geographer, and local sultan. His *Geography* is, like much of the history, founded on the works of his predecessors, including the works of Ptolemy and Muhammad al-Idrisi. A long introduction on various geographical matters is followed by twenty-eight sections dealing in tabular form with the chief towns of the world. After each name are given the longitude, latitude, climate, spelling, and then observations generally taken from earlier authors. Parts of the work were published and translated as early as 1650 in Europe. *A Sketch of the Countries* (Arabic: *Taqwim al-Buldan*)

Ibn Batutah is **Hajji Abu Abdullah Muhammad Ibn Battuta** (Arabic: (للادبعوبا) (February 25, 1304–1368 or 1369), was a Moroccan Berber Islamic scholar and traveller known for the record of his travels and excursions published in the *Rihla* (literally, "The Journey"). His journeys spanned nearly thirty years and covered almost the entire known Islamic world and beyond, extending from North Africa, West Africa, Southern Europe and Eastern

Europe in the West, to the Middle East, Indian subcontinent, Central Asia, Southeast Asia and China in the East, a distance far surpassing that of his predecessors and his near-contemporary Marco Polo. On account of the *Rihla*, Ibn Battuta is considered one of the greatest travellers of all time. His work: ***Rihla*** (Arabic: راصمألابئارغيفراظنلأقفحت *Tuḥfat An-Naḥār Fī Gharā'ib Al-Amḥār Wa Ajā'ib Al-Asfār* - may be translated as *A Gift to Those Who Contemplate the Wonders of Cities and the Marvels of Travelling* but is often simply referred to as the *Rihla* رةلحلأ or "The Journey") is a medieval book which recounts the journey of the 14th-century Berber Moroccan scholar and traveler Ibn Battuta.