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من ويكيبيديا، الموسوعة الحرة

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وفيات



اقرأ عن أحداث عام 346 هـ في كتاب البداية والنهاية

- عام 346 هـ الموافق حوالي 957 م توفي المؤرخ والرحالة أبو الحسن علي بن الحسين بن علي المسعودي المعتزلي الشافعي، الملقب بهردوت العرب.

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تصنيفات: قرن 4 هـ | عقد 340 هـ | 346 هـ

- آخر تعديل لهذه الصفحة كان يوم 8 مارس 2013 الساعة 23:17.
- النصوص منشورة برخصة المشاع الإبداعي: النسبة-الترخيص بالمثل 3.0. قد تنطبق مواد أخرى. طالع شروط الاستخدام للتفاصيل.

Al-Masudi

"Masudi" redirects here. For other uses, see Masudi (disambiguation).

Muslim scholar <div>Abu al-Hasan Ali ibn al-Husayn al-Mas'udi</div>	
Title	al-Mas'udi
Born	282-283 A.H/ 896 A.D
Died	Jumadi ul-Thani, 345 A.H/ September 956 A.D
Era	Islamic golden age
Main interest(s)	History and Geography
Notable work(s)	Muruj adh-dhahab wa ma'adin al-jawhar ("The Meadows of Gold and Mines of Gems") at-Tanbih wa-l-ishraf ("Notification and Review")

Abu al-Hasan Ali ibn al-Husayn ibn Ali al-Mas'udi (in Arabic أبو الحسن علي بن الحسين بن علي المسعودي transl: **Abu al-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī al-Mas‘ūdī**) (born c. 896, Baghdad, died September 956, Cairo, Egypt) (aged 63-64 lunar calendar), was an Arab historian and geographer. Al-Masudi (in Arabic المسعودي) was one of the first to combine history and scientific geography in a large-scale work, *Muruj adh-dhahab wa ma'adin al-jawhar* (Arabic: مروج الذهب ومعادن الجواهر translated *The Meadows of Gold and Mines of Gems*), a world history.

Birth, travels and literary output

Al-Mas'udi tells us that he was born in Baghdad. He was a descendant of Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud, a companion of the Prophet Muhammad. However, we know little else about his early years. He mentions his association with many scholars in the lands through which he travelled. However, most of what we know of him comes from the internal evidence of his own works. Although Shboul questions the furthest extent sometimes asserted for al-Mas'udi's travels, even his more conservative estimation is impressive:

Al-Mas'udi's travels actually occupied most of his life from at least 303/915 to very near the end. His journeys took him to most of the Persian provinces, Armenia, Azerbaijan and other regions of the Caspian Sea; as well as to Arabia, Syria and Egypt. He also travelled to the Indus Valley, and other parts of India, especially the western coast; and he voyaged more than once to East Africa. he also sailed on the Indian Ocean, the Red Sea, the Mediterranean and the Caspian.^[1]

Others include Sri Lanka and China among his travels. Lunde and Stone in the introduction to their English translation state that al-Mas'udi received much information on China from Abu Zaid al-Sirafi whom he met on the coast of the Persian Gulf.^[2] In Syria al-Mas'udi met the renowned Leo of Tripoli. Leo was a Byzantine admiral who converted to Islam. From him the historian received much of his information about Byzantium. He spent his last years in Syria and Egypt. In Egypt he found a copy of a Frankish king list from Clovis to Louis IV that had been written by an Andalusian bishop.

We know little for sure about how he supported himself during such extensive travels within and beyond the lands of Islam. Lunde and Stone speculate that like many travellers he may have been involved in trade.

Near the ending, of the *The Meadows of Gold* the author Al-Masudi wrote:

The information we have gathered here is the fruit of long years of research and painful efforts of our voyages and journeys across the East and the West, and of the various nations that lie beyond the regions of Islam. The author of this work compares himself to a man, who having found pearls of all kinds and colours and gathers them together into a necklace of and makes them into an ornament that its possessor guards with great care.

my aim has been to trace the lands and the histories of many peoples, and I have no other.^[3]

Shboul notes that al-Mas'udi rewrote *Muruj al-dhahab*.^[4] The extant version is only an earlier draft from 947, not the revised 956 edition. Lunde and Stone note that al-Mas'udi in his *Tanbih* states that the revised edition of *Muruj al-dhahab* contained 365 chapters.

Al-Masudi's intellectual environment

Lunde and Stone provide a detailed reminder of the intellectual environment in which al-Mas'udi lived:

He lived at a time when books were readily available and relatively cheap. Aside from large public libraries in major towns like Baghdad, many individuals, like Mas'udi's friend al-Suli, had private libraries, often containing thousands of volumes. The prevalence of books and their low price was the result of the introduction of paper to the Islamic world by Chinese papermakers captured at the Battle of Talas in 751. Very soon afterwards there were paper mills in most large towns and cities. The introduction of paper coincided with the coming to power of the Abbasid dynasty, and there is no doubt that the availability of cheap writing material contributed to the growth of the Abbasid bureaucracy, postal system and lively intellectual life.^[5]

They note that Mas'udi often encourages his readers to consult other books he has written, expecting these to be accessible to his readership. They also note the stark contrast between contemporary European conditions confronting say the author of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and this highly literate Islamic world.

Ahmad Shboul mentions the rich blend of Greek philosophy, Persian literature, Indian mathematics and the rich heritage of the ancient cultures that went into the vigorous life of the day.^[6] This enabled the society of the day to manifest a knowledge seeking, perceptive and analytical attitude. There was a natural association of scholarly minded people in this highly civilized atmosphere, and al-Mas'udi very much took part in this energizing activity.

Al-Mas'udi was a pupil or junior colleague of a number of prominent intellectuals, including the philologists al-Zajjaj, ibn Duraid, Niftawayh and ibn Anbari. He was acquainted with famous poets, including Kashajim, whom he probably met in Aleppo. He was well read in philosophy, knowing the works of al-Kindi and al-Razi, the Aristotelian thought of al-Farabi and the Platonic writings. Al-Mas'udi's extant writings do not confirm his meeting with his contemporaries al-Razi and al-Farabi, however such meetings were highly likely. He does record his meeting with al-Farabi's pupil Yahya ibn Adi, of whom he spoke highly.

In addition he was familiar with the medical work of Galen, with Ptolemaic astronomy, with the geographical work of Marinus and with the studies of Islamic geographers and astronomers.

He indicates training in jurisprudence. He met a number of influential jurists and was aware of the work of others. Subki states that al-Mas'udi was a student of ibn Surayj, the leading scholar of the Shafi'ite school. Al-Subki claimed he found al-Mas'udi's notes of ibn Surayj's lectures. Al-Mas'udi also met Shafi'ites during his stay in Egypt. He met Zahirites in Baghdad and Aleppo such as Ibn Jabir and Niftawayh; modern scholarship leans toward the view that Al-Masudi was an adherent of the latter school.^[7]

Al-Mas'udi knew leading Mu'tazilites, including al-Jubba, al-Nawbakhti, ibn Abdak al-Jurjani and Abu'l Qasim al-Balkhi al-Ka'bi. He was also well acquainted with previous Mu'tazilite literature. His reasoning, his phraseology, his expressed high esteem for Mu'tazilites lead many to assert he was one. However, Shboul points out that his extant works do not specifically state that he was.

Al-Mas'udi included the history of the ancient civilizations that had occupied the land upon which Islam later spread. He mentioned the Assyrians, Babylonians, Egyptians and Persians among others. He is also the only Arab historian to refer (albeit indirectly) to the kingdom of Urartu, when he speaks about the wars between the Assyrians (led by the legendary Queen Semiramis) and Armenians (led by Ara the Beautiful).^[8]

Persia was a vast empire with a history ancient before the arrival of Islam. Al-Mas'udi was aware of the influence of ancient Babylon on Persia. He had access to the wealth of translations by scholars such as ibn al-Muqaffa from Middle Persian into Arabic. In his travels he also personally consulted Persian scholars and Zoroastrian priests. He

thus had access to much material, factual and mythical. Like all other Arabic historians he was unclear on the Achaemenid dynasty, though he knew of Kurush (Cyrus the Great). He was much clearer on the more recent dynasties and his estimation of the time between Alexander the Great and Ardashir is much more accurately depicted than he is in al-Tabari.

His wide ranging interest included the Greeks and the Romans. Again, like all other Arabic historians, he was unclear on Greece before the Macedonian dynasty that produced Alexander the Great. He is aware that there were kings before this, but is unclear on their names and reigns. He also seems unfamiliar with such additional aspects of Greek political life as Athenian democratic institutions. The same situation holds for Rome prior to Caesar. He is, though, the earliest extant Arabic author to mention the Roman founding myth of Romulus and Remus.

In al-Mas'udi's view the greatest contribution of the Greeks was philosophy. He was aware of the progression of Greek philosophy from the pre-Socratics onward.

He also was keenly interested in the earlier events of the Arabian peninsula. He knew this had a long history. He was well-aware of the mixture of interesting facts in pre-Islamic times, in myths and controversial details from competing tribes and even referred to the similarity between some of this material and the legendary and story telling contributions of some Middle Persian and Indian books to the *Thousand and One Nights*.^[citation needed]

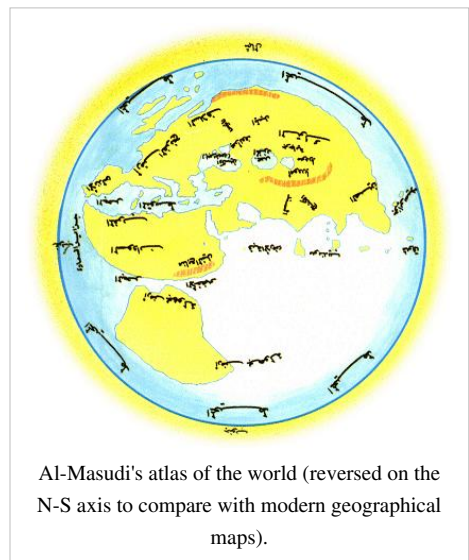
Travels in lands beyond Islam

Ahmad Shboul notes that al-Mas'udi is distinguished above his contemporaries for the extent of his interest in and coverage of the non-Islamic lands and peoples of his day. Other authors, even Christians writing in Arabic in the Caliphate, had less to say about the Byzantine Empire than al-Mas'udi. He also described the geography of many lands beyond the Caliphate, as well as the customs and religious beliefs of many peoples.

His normal inquiries of travellers and extensive reading of previous writers were supplemented in the case of India with his personal experiences in the western part of the subcontinent. He demonstrates a deep understanding of historical change, tracing current conditions to the unfolding of events over generations and centuries. He perceived the significance of interstate relations and of the interaction of Muslims and Hindus in the various states of the subcontinent.

He described previous rulers in China, underlined the importance of the revolt by Huang Chao in the late Tang dynasty, and mentioned, though less detailed than for India, Chinese beliefs. His brief portrayal of Southeast Asia stands out for its degree of accuracy and clarity. He surveyed the vast areas inhabited by Turkic peoples, commenting on the extensive authority of the Khaqan previously, though no longer in al-Mas'udi's time. He conveyed the great diversity of Turkic peoples, including the distinction between sedentary and nomadic Turks. He spoke of the significance of the Khazars and provided much fresh material on them.

His account of the Rus is an important early source for the study of Russian history. Again, while he may have read such earlier Arabic



Al-Masudi's atlas of the world (reversed on the N-S axis to compare with modern geographical maps).

authors as ibn Khurradad, ibn al-Faqih, ibn Rusta and ibn Fadlan, al-Mas'udi presented most of his material based on his personal observations and contacts made while travelling. He informed the Arabic reader that the Rus are more than some traders. They are a diverse and varied collection of peoples. He noted their independent attitude, the absence of a strong central authority among them, and their paganism. He was very well informed on Rus trade with the Byzantines and on the competence of the Rus in sailing merchant vessels and warships. He was aware that the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea are two separate bodies of water.

Al-Mas'udi was also very well informed about Byzantine affairs, even internal political events and the unfolding of palace coups. He recorded the effect of westward migration upon the Byzantines, especially the invading Bulgars. He spoke of Byzantine relations with western Europe. And, of course, he was attentively interested in Byzantine-Islamic relations.



In the year 933 Al-Masudi mentions Muslim sailors, who call the Comoros islands: "The Perfume Islands" and sing of waves that break rhythmically along broad, pearl-sand beaches, the light breezes scented with vanilla and ylang-ylang, a component in many perfumes.^[9]

One example of Al-Masudi's influence on Muslim knowledge of the Byzantine world is that we can trace the use of the name Istanbul (in place of Constantinople) to his writings of the year 947, centuries before the eventual Ottoman use of this term. He writes that the Greeks (i.e. the Byzantines of the tenth century) call it "the City" (bulin in the Arabic script, which lacks the letter p: so Greek polin); "and when they wish to express that it is the capital of the Empire because of its greatness they say Istan Bulin. They do not call it Constantinople. It is only Arabs who so designate it".^[10] A present day analogy would be the use of the phrases "I am going Downtown" or "I am going into the City" by those who live near say Chicago or London respectively.

He has some knowledge of other peoples of eastern and western Europe, even far away Britain. He names it, though he is sketchy about it. He knows Paris as the Frankish capital. He obtained a copy of a list of Frankish rulers from Clovis to his own time.

Al-Mas'udi's global interest included Africa. He was well aware of peoples in the eastern portion of the continent (mentioning interesting details of the Zanj, for example). He knows less of West Africa, though he names such contemporary states as Zagawa, Kawkaw and Ghana. He described the relations of African states with each other and with Islam. He provided material on the cultures and beliefs of non Islamic Africans.

In general his surviving works reveal an intensely curious mind, a universalist eagerly acquiring as extensive a background of the entire world as possible. The geographical range of his material and the reach of his ever inquiring spirit is truly impressive.

Al-Mas'udi and the Abbasids

Lunde and Stone have provided the English reader with a fluent translation of some three quarters of al-Mas'udi's material on the Abbasids from the *Muruj al-dhahab*. This is in the form of more than two hundred passages, many of these containing amusing and informative anecdotes. The very first one recounts the meeting of al-Mansur and a blind poet unaware of the identity of his distinguished interlocutor. The poet on two separate occasions recites praise poems for the defeated Umayyads to the Abbasid caliph; al-Mansur good naturedly rewards him.

There is the tale (p. 28 ff.) of the arrow that landed at al-Mansur's feet with verses inscribed in each of the three feathers and along the shaft causing him to investigate the unjust imprisonment of a distinguished notable from Hamadan. There is the story of the singer Harun al-Rashid asks to keep singing until the caliph falls asleep. Then a handsome young man arrives, snatches the lute from the singer's hand and shows him how it really should be done. On awakening Harun is told of this and suggests his singer had a supernatural visitation. Al-Masudi quotes the lines (five in English) of this remarkable song.

These anecdotes provide glimpses of other aspects of these prominent people, sharing, actually, greater realization of their humanity and the human concerns of their officials and ordinary subjects. One of the more interesting passages is the account of the symposium held at the home of Harun's famous vizier Yahya the Barmakid on the topic of love. A dozen leading thinkers provide their definition of love and then a thirteenth, a Magian judge, speaks at greater length on that theme.

Al-Masudi's original approach

He also wrote the *Al-Tanbih wa-l-Ashraf* (التنبيه والأشرف). This is about one fifth the size of *Muruj al-Dhahab*. It was finished shortly before his death.

Editions, translations and influence

A complete French translation of *The Meadows of Gold* was published along with the Arabic text in Paris by the Societe Asiatique in nine volumes between 1861 and 1877. Barbier de Meynard and Pavet de Courteille were the French translators for this edition. A century later, between 1966 and 1974, Charles Pellat revised the Arabic text for a more accurate edition published in five volumes by the Universite Libanaise in Beirut. Pellat also began revising the French translation. Lunde and Stone's English translation of material on the Abbasids appeared in 1989.

Ahmad Shboul notes some of the impact the French translation had on European intellectuals.^[11] Ernest Renan compared al-Masudi to the second century A.D. Greek writer Pausanias. Others compared the Arab author to the Roman writer Pliny the Elder. Even before al-Masudi's work was available in a European language, orientalist had compared him to Herodotus, the ancient Greek historian called "The Father of History." Shboul finds such comparisons to the very best in Europe's Classical past very interesting.

Among al-Masudi's living descendants is Dr. Abdulaziz Almsaodi, the author of: *Alzubairiy and the issue of Hizb Allah in Yemen*.

His reputation

Sunnis do not rely upon al-Masudi due to his Shi'i and Mu'tazili influences. For example, Ibn Hajar writes about al-Masudi that "And his books are imprecise because he was a Shi'a, a Mu'tazili."^[12] Al-Dhahabi^[13] and Taj al-Din al-Subki also confirmed that he was a Mu'tazili.^[14]

In fact, he is considered to be of Shi'i thought by the following:

- Aga Buzurg al-Tehrani in *Mawsu'a al-Dhari'a ila Tasanif al-Shi'a*
- Isma'il al-Baghdadi in *Hadya al-'Arifeen*
- Bahr al-'Uloom in *al-Fawa'id al-Rijalia*
- Al-Hilli in *Khulasa al-Aqwal*
- Al-Najashi in his book on *Rijal*
- Al-Tafrashi in *Naqd al-Rijal*
- Al-'Amli in *Amal al-Aamal*
- Al-Barujardi in *Tara'if al-Maqal*^[15]

His description of Sistan (Iran)

"... is the land of winds and sand. There are wind drives mills and raises water from the streams, whereby gardens are irritated. There is in the world, and God alone knows it, no place where more frequent use is made of the winds (947 AD.)".^[16]

Notes

- [1] Shboul, Ahmad A. M. *Al-Mas'udi and His World*. London: Ithaca Press, 1979, pp. 3-4.
- [2] Mas'udi. *The Meadows of Gold, The Abbasids*. Transl. Paul Lunde and Caroline Stone, Kegan Paul. London and New York, 1989, p. 11.
- [3] <http://www.saudiamcoworld.com/issue/200502/the.model.of.the.historians.htm>
- [4] Shboul. *Al-Mas'udi and His World*, pp. 68-69.
- [5] Mas'udi. *The Meadows of Gold, The Abbasids*, p. 14.
- [6] Shboul. *Al-Mas'udi and His World*, pp. 29ff.
- [7] Devin J. Stewart, "Muhammad b. Jarir al-Tabari's *al-Bayan 'an Usul al-Ahkam* and the Genre of Usul al-Fiqh in Ninth Century Baghdad," pg. 333. Taken from *Abbasid Studies: Occasional Papers of the School of Abbasid Studies, Cambridge, 6-10 January 2002*. Edited by James Montgomery. Leuven: Peeters Publishers and the Department of Oriental Studies, 2004.
- [8] See Ter-Ghevondyan, Aram N. "«Արա և Շամիրամ» առասպելի մի արձագանքը արաբ պատմիչ Մասուդի մոտ" ("An Echo of the Legend of 'Ara and Shamiram' Found with Arab Historian Masudi"). *Patma-Banasirakan Handes*. № 4 (31), 1965, pp. 249-253. With Russian abstract.
- [9] <http://www.saudiamcoworld.com/issue/199604/the.islands.of.the.moon.htm>
- [10] Companion to Historiography, ed Michael Bentley. Chapter 1; The Evolution of Two Asian Historiographical Traditions. Routledge Publishing. 2002.
- [11] Shboul. *Al-Mas'udi and His World*, p. xviii.
- [12] Lisan al-Mizan [258-256/4]
- [13] Siyar A'alam al-Nubala [Tabaqa al-'Ishroon / al-Mas'oodi]
- [14] Tabaqat al-Shafi'iyah al-Kubra [Biography: 226]
- [15] <http://209.85.122.83/2505/29/0/p1006798/Tashreeh.pdf>
- [16] RJ Forbes. *Studies in ancient technology*. Vol. 9. Brill, 1964.

Further reading

- "Mas'ūdī, Abu'ul-Ḥasan' Alī Ibn al-Ḥusayn Ibn 'Alī al-". *Dictionary of Scientific Biography*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1970-80. ISBN 0684101149.
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- Mas'udi, *The Meadows of Gold, The Abbasids*, transl. Paul Lunde and Caroline Stone, Kegan Paul, London and New York, 1989
- Haywood. John A. Mas'udi, al- (<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/368842/al-Masudi>). "Encyclopædia Britannica. 2006. Encyclopædia Britannica Online. 7 December 2006.
- "Masūdī, al-." Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica 2007 Ultimate Reference Suite. Chicago: Encyclopædia Britannica, 2006.
- Tolan, John; Veinstein, Gilles and Henry Laurens, *Europe and the Islamic World: A History* Princeton University Press. 2013. ISBN 978-0-691-14705-5.

External links

- *Muruj al-dhahab* at Medieval Sourcebook: *The Book of Golden Meadows*, c. 940 CE (<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/masoudi.html>)
 - *Meadows of Gold and Mines of Gems*, an English translation of the *Muruj al-dhahab* by Aloys Sprenger, London 1841
 - Vol 1 (the only volume published) (<http://www.archive.org/details/historicalencycl00masrich>)
 - *Prairies d'or*, Arabic edition and French translation of *Muruj al-dhahab* by Barbier de Meynard and Pavet de Courteille, Paris 1861-77
 - Vol 1 of 9 (<http://www.archive.org/details/lesprairiesdor01masduoft/>)
 - Vol 2 of 9 (<http://www.archive.org/details/lesprairiesdor02masuuoft/>)
 - Vol 3 of 9 (<http://www.archive.org/details/lesprairiesdor03masuuoft/>)
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al-Mas‘ūdī, in full Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Mas‘ūdī (born before 893, [Baghdad, Iraq](#)—died September 956, Al-Fuṣṭāṭ, [Egypt](#) [now part of Cairo]), historian and traveler, known as the “[Herodotus](#) of the [Arabs](#).” He was the first Arab to combine [history](#) and scientific [geography](#) in a large-scale work, *Murūj al-dhahab wa ma‘ādin al-jawāhir* (“The Meadows of Gold and Mines of Gems”), a world history.

As a child, al-Mas‘ūdī showed an extraordinary love of learning, an excellent memory, a capacity to write quickly, and a boundless curiosity that led him to study a wide variety of subjects, ranging from [history](#) and geography—his main interests—to comparative [religion](#) and [science](#). He was not content to learn merely from books and teachers but traveled widely to gain firsthand knowledge of the countries about which he wrote. His travels extended to [Syria](#), [Iran](#), [Armenia](#), the shores of the [Caspian Sea](#), the Indus valley, [Sri Lanka](#), [Oman](#), and the east coast of [Africa](#) as far south as [Zanzibar](#), at least, and, possibly, to [Madagascar](#).

The titles of more than 20 books attributed to him are known, including several about Islamic beliefs and sects and even one about [poisons](#), but most of his writings have been lost. His major work was *Akhbār al-zamān* (“The History of Time”) in 30 volumes. This seems to have been an encyclopaedic world history, taking in not only political history but also many facets of human knowledge and activity. A manuscript of one volume of this work is said to be preserved in Vienna; if this manuscript is genuine, it is all that remains of the work. Al-Mas‘ūdī followed it with *Kitāb al-awsat* (“Book of the Middle”), variously described as a supplement to or an abridgment of the *Akhbār al-zamān*. The *Kitāb* is undoubtedly a chronological history. A manuscript in the [Bodleian Library](#), Oxford, may possibly be one volume of it.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/368842/al-Masudi>