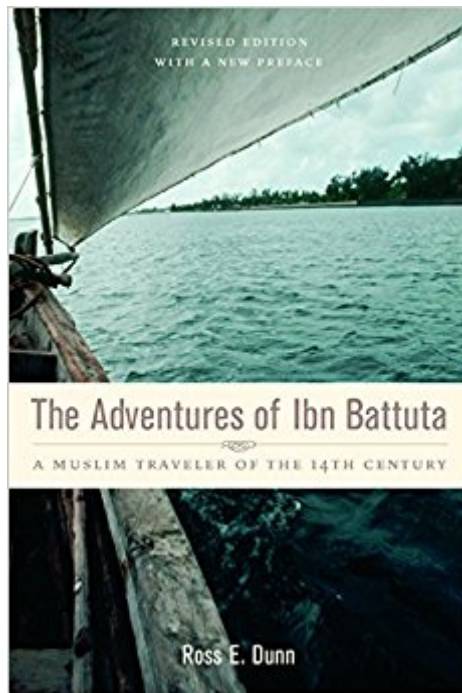




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The Adventures Of Ibn Battuta: A Muslim Traveler Of The Fourteenth Century



Synopsis

Known as the greatest traveler of premodern times, Abu Abdallah ibn Battuta was born in Morocco in 1304 and educated in Islamic law. At the age of twenty-one, he left home to make the holy pilgrimage to Mecca. This was only the first of a series of extraordinary journeys that spanned nearly three decades and took him not only eastward to India and China but also north to the Volga River valley and south to Tanzania. The narrative of these travels has been known to specialists in Islamic and medieval history for years. Ross E. Dunn's 1986 retelling of these tales, however, was the first work of scholarship to make the legendary traveler's story accessible to a general audience. Now updated with revisions, a new preface, and an updated bibliography, Dunn's classic interprets Ibn Battuta's adventures and places them within the rich, trans-hemispheric cultural setting of medieval Islam.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

It is not surprising that this book was required reading. • (Pragati: The Indian National Interest Review 2009-07-13)

Ross E. Dunn is Professor of History, San Diego State University, and the editor of *The New World History: A Teacher's Companion* (2000).

I liked this book and read it within several months of reading *The Adventures of Marco Polo*. Both men travelled Asia in approximately the same time frame (Battuta was appx 30 years later). I found this book to be somewhat better than the Marco Polo book. Mr Dunn provided great background on

the historical forces that Battuta was encountering as he travelled. I felt like I got to know the character of Battuta more so than Polo. On the other hand some more excerpts from Battuta's rihala would have made the book better. Would have liked to have read more of his views and descriptions of the customs of the people he visited. Overall a good read though.

In this book, you are being told of ibn-battuta's great adventure by the author. It still gives a nice impression as if you are travelling with ibn-battuta. You witness a time span of muslim lands and a little others. As a muslim, you can get an insight of our past if you think about what you read with comparing it to today. For example, the hajj, pilgrimage, is supposed to be like today's belief tourism(plane flights, luxurious hotels) or it is supposed to be a long travel that you meet many muslims/non-muslims on the way and get closer to the ummah idea? Plus, see differences within the ummah in humanity general and advance your understanding? I think you would love this book if you like books like the alchemist... It is really amazing how much land he traveled. It is really adventurous with life threatening dangers along the way.

This should almost be required reading in colleges, especially with the current geopolitical situation. It isn't just a translation of Ibn Battuta's book, it's at least 50% background material on the places he visited & the people he met with considerable historical info from before, during, and after Ibn's travels. The writing is excellent and easy to get through. It easily ranks next to Plutarch (in a good translation) and Gibbon for it's grand overview of a largely unknown area of history & the world (at least in the West). This was such a good book, I bought and started the Dover Pub. version of the actual text. Big mistake. That is such a dated translation & offered so little extra compared to Ross' version (not to mention being being very hard to follow, even though I'm much more knowledgeable about the muslim world than your average American), that I gave it away to a Palestinian acquaintance after reading the 1st 50 pages. Maybe the 2nd or 3rd time I haven't finished a book, ever, no matter how little I was enjoying it. Stick with this version unless you really feel the need to read Ibn's actual words & try a non-Dover version if you do. That's a little tough anyway because most of the others only cover parts of the book. Even if you do try another version, I really recommend you read this one first to make the real work more meaningful and understandable unless you're an expert on the Islamic world. My only complaint is that it might have had a little more of Ibn's actual words instead of paraphrases and summaries, but I feel this is actually a plus after trying to read the real text. Ibn was a contemporary of Marco Polo who actually travelled further and did most of his travels as an insider in muslim societies (at least at the government level), so he got

to know the society better and was accepted as a co-religionist. Like Polo, Ibn however, suffers from the same flaws in the actual text. There's a lot of "I went to x, the people follow religion y, the climate is z, I saw building a, the local produce is b...". Ross' version cuts out all the dry medieval travelogue filler and makes all the information crystal clear. Do yourself a favor and try this book. Ross is an Islamic Studies professor who obviously knows his stuff & has practiced a few thousand times in a classroom setting on presenting it in a way that makes for interesting and easy reading.

Ibn Battuta, like Marco Polo, was a great traveler who saw, described, and experienced far more than most people of his age (or any other). That in itself makes their respective travelogue-retrospectives worth reading. Unfortunately, neither of these prodigious wanderers had scruples about inclusion of gross exaggeration and invention in their writings: no one, quite obviously, had the means for checking their stories, and they well knew it! Fortunately, modern scholars have ways to distinguish what's almost certainly true, what's at least plausible, and what's patently false. Accordingly, this authoritatively annotated "rihla" of Ibn Battuta, providing a wealth of useful historical context, is must reading for anyone and everyone interested in world history.

Ross Dunn, historian, has done a remarkable job of telling us about the travels and adventures of a man who traveled the world a half-century after Genoese adventurer Marco Polo taught Europe about the Orient. The difference between Polo and Ibn Battuta is that the latter simply left home as a young man to perform the Muslim religious duty of the hajj - the pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina - and got caught up in other projects on the road for the next couple of decades. Ross' narrative is informed - he's a scholar who knows Arabic and is familiar with the history of Islam - and also very funny. His dry humor permeates the narrative and adds much readability to what might be otherwise unremarkable material. Examples include his observations about Ibn Battuta's Sunday shouting down with Quranic verses of the Christian bells in an Anatolian town and the story of Ibn Battuta being stripped and left with a flourish by sea pirates. Ibn Battuta traveled in high Muslim circles throughout northern Africa, the Arabian neighborhood, ancient Turkey, Persia and India. Ross does a good job of qualifying the possible Chinese visit Ibn Battuta claims to have made. Later, near the end of his career, Ibn Battuta would penetrate the African heartland, ironically exploring his own continent last. Highly recommended for students of Islam, world history of the Middle Ages, and travel adventures in general. Ross, in my opinion, exalts the material to five stars.

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