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Review

"[An] exceptional little anthology. . . . It is a fascinating book, with a nugget of curious information on each page, adding up to a picture that turns preconceptions on their head. . . . These are not just interesting books: they go a long way towards undermining the stereotypes about Islam that have become such a toxic part of our current discourse." —The Scotsman

About the Author

Ibn Fadlan was a tenth-century diplomat who, in 922 AD, was sent on a mission from Baghdad to the far north by the caliph Muqtadir. His subsequent account of his travels and the peoples he encountered is one of the most important documents from the period.

Paul Lunde studied at London University's School of Oriental and African Studies and specializes in Islamic history and literature. He is the author of *Islam: Culture, Faith, and History* and is working on an Internet project to map pre-modern Eurasian cultural and intellectual exchanges.

Caroline Stone has edited and written numerous books and articles, principally on textile history, medieval history and literature, Islamic culture and literature, and the cultural and economic relations between Europe and the Orient in the pre-modern era. With Paul Stone, she is translating a collection of the writings by the Arab geographer Mas'udi for Penguin Classics.

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A fascinating collection of medieval Arabic travel writing in an important new translation

Between the ninth and fourteenth centuries, Arab explorers journeyed widely and frequently into the far north, crossing territories that now include Russia, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan. Ibn Fadla-n's chronicles of his travels are one of the most important documents from the period, and this illuminating new translation offers insight into the world of the Arab geographers and the medieval lands of the far north. Based on an expedition to the upper Volga River in 922 AD, Ibn Fadla-n and the Land of Darkness provides a rare and valuable glimpse of Viking customs, dress, table manners, religion, and sexual practices, including the only eyewitness account ever written of a Viking ship cremation.

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Most helpful customer reviews

43 of 50 people found the following review helpful.

Adventure in the far north

By M. Dalton

Most people with any interest in the Vikings have heard of Ibn Fadlan, the Arab traveler who famously witnessed the funeral of a Rus chieftain during a Diplomatic visit to the Bulgars. This short but evocative (and provocative) account was repeated in Michael Crichton's rather silly novel "Eaters of the Dead", and then again (in more fanciful form) in the even sillier film 13th Warrior.

Some are also familiar with some other fragments, such as a more sympathetic account of some Vikings in the trading town of Hedeby. Well, it turns out there are quite a few of these little fragments, almost all of which are collected in this book "Ibn Fadlan and the Land of Darkness", along with other equally interesting accounts of travels by Muslim merchants and diplomats in Northern Europe and Western Central-Asia, among such interesting characters as the Slavs, the mysterious and evocative Khazars (the Worlds only ever Empire of Jewish Turks), the Bulgars, the Magyars, Norsemen and Saxons.

Among other things I found interesting it includes the first ever (early 10th Century) account of Prague at a time when I think it was still pagan, (described as a prosperous stone city with very cheap provisions and good quality trade goods) a 10th Century description of Mainz (in which they mention the markets included cloves and ginger from the East Indies) and a first hand account of the then Danish town of Schleswig in which the locals are described as wearing eye-makeup, as well as trips into the far north (the land of darkness) and descriptions of ice skating and dog sleds and other exotica.

Maybe the most gripping part was a short but by far the most epic account of a (Rus) Viking raid that I've ever read. A very vivid and evocative description of a large 'Rus' invasion and their capture and subsequent abandonment of a large Muslim town in the coast of the Caspian Sea, which virtually demands to be made into a movie.

Most of the accounts are from the 9th-10th Centuries, and almost all from Arab, Moorish (in one case Moorish-Jewish), Turkish or Persian authors, with a couple of short excerpts from the Russian Primary Chronicle and Marco Polo thrown in for variety.

If you have any interest in the Vikings or in this early period of Medieval history, this is a must-read in my opinion.

5 of 7 people found the following review helpful.

An Arab Journal and Travel Log of Northeastern Eurasia, from Bagdad to Kiev, about 900 A.D.

By Drew Roberts

It seemed to me, reading this translation of Ibn Fadlan's observations and descriptions of peoples and lands in northern Europe were amazingly descriptive and nonjudgmental in a period of history some might call "the Viking Age".

I have heard the Vikings described as "The Nazis of the Middle Ages". And from the accounts of Early European town folk, Christian clergymen, and other contemporary, the northmen or vikings were just raiders, slavers, pirates, killers and uncivilized pagans or barbarians. Ibn Fadlan's written accountArab s of

his travels describe a much more complex and open minded view of the foreign places and people he met in his travels, such as "the Rus".

And Ibn Fadlan's accounts seem to be first hand and objective, for the most part. Not second hand descriptions or what some story teller or unsubstantiated legend. The writer, Michael Chrichton, was impressed enough with Ibn Fadlan's journals to base the movie, "The Thirteenth Warrior", on them.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

It is a well written travelogue from the 10th century ...

By Clyde Dotson

It is a well written travelogue from the 10th century. There are other short articles by Arabic travelers in the area also included, these reach up to the 12th century.

[See all 37 customer reviews...](#)

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Based on some encounters of many people, it remains in reality that reading this **Ibn Fadlan And The Land Of Darkness: Arab Travellers In The Far North (Penguin Classics) By Ibn Fadlan** can help them making much better selection and also give even more encounter. If you want to be among them, allow's acquisition this book **Ibn Fadlan And The Land Of Darkness: Arab Travellers In The Far North (Penguin Classics) By Ibn Fadlan** by downloading and install guide on web link download in this website. You could obtain the soft data of this book **Ibn Fadlan And The Land Of Darkness: Arab Travellers In The Far North (Penguin Classics) By Ibn Fadlan** to download and put aside in your readily available electronic devices. What are you awaiting? Allow get this publication **Ibn Fadlan And The Land Of Darkness: Arab Travellers In The Far North (Penguin Classics) By Ibn Fadlan** online as well as review them in whenever as well as any sort of area you will certainly check out. It will not encumber you to bring hefty book **Ibn Fadlan And The Land Of Darkness: Arab Travellers In The Far North (Penguin Classics) By Ibn Fadlan** within your bag.

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