Two Arabs, a Berber, and a Jew
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Entangled Lives in Morocco

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For Clifford Geertz and Hildred Storey Geertz
Teachers, colleagues, friends
Has there come upon man a while of time when he was a thing unremembered?

QURAN 76:1

I will [tell] the story as I go along of small cities no less than of great. Most of those which were great once are small today; and those which in my own lifetime have grown to greatness were small enough in the old days.

HERODOTUS

From now on I’ll describe the cities to you, the Khan said. In your journeys you will see if they exist.

ITALO CALVINO, Invisible Cities

Therefore, I decided with the help of God to blacken these pages with what I saw and heard during this voyage, be it clear or obscure. For I am but a woodgatherer of the night, the one who lags behind, a horse who is out of the race. You should not judge me too harshly, for I am only doing it as a reminder to myself, and to inform others who may ask me from among my fellow countrymen. Let the masters of composition and rhetoric excuse me, and let the burden of the men of metaphor and allusion be lifted from me. I beseech God to cover my mistakes.

Disorienting Encounters: Travels of a Moroccan Scholar in France in 1845–1846: The Voyage of Muḥammad as-Ṣaffār
Sefrou, 1972

Sefrou, 2008