



# From the Meadows of Gold

*Al-Mas'udi*

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## From the Meadows of Gold Al-Mas'udi

Much of his work has vanished, but Mas'udi's matchless *The Meadows of Gold* has almost miraculously survived: a compendium of stories and information on what he knew of the worlds of the Middle East, the Far East and Europe. It is both a great monument to Islamic scholarship and a time capsule allowing us into the world over a millennium ago.

## From the Meadows of Gold Details

Date : Published August 1st 2009 by Penguin Books (first published 947)

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Author : Al-Mas'udi

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# From Reader Review From the Meadows of Gold for online ebook

## Samdenney says

The second of twenty short, neat, gorgeously packaged books that I got in a boxset last Christmas (or birthday, I forget which). Masʿūd wrote *thirty-six* books, but only two survived to the present day. Still, a pretty incredible achievement for a man born in 890AD. A lot of this condensed version is what I think of as "hard history"; lots of dates and places and fairly dry descriptions of various nations, their characteristics, kings and wars. Reading this book, it really struck me how *much* of everything there is; how much must have been lost over the years. Even focusing on such a relatively small area, Masʿūd packs in the detail. I particularly liked his stance on religion; his firm belief in Islam not tainted by scorn for other faiths. If only we were as tolerant now. I also loved the (sadly rare) descriptions of customs and practices, little details preserved forever in the text, as Masʿūd says, "snatched from oblivion".

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## Daniel Simmons says

This was an enjoyable and sometimes eye-opening window into the past, a Herodotus-style 10th century romp through the world as it was then known, peppered with useful medical advice (the electric catfish "can be used to provide instant relief from the pain of a severe migraine by being applied live to the head of the sufferer") and descriptions of historico-cultural marvels.

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## Evander v says

It was so frustrating to read him write so often that he's omitting further details of certain events and people because he'd already written about in his other books but they're not extant!

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## NoBeatenPath says

Much better than Herodotus. This selection is from a longer book, which I would be willing to read. It is a description of the ancient world around the time of 975, and like many history books of that period there is a mix of heresay and actual events or places seen by the author. While there is not much narrative to this book it is still an engaging read.

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## Troy says

This was very, very similar to Herodotus. It is refreshing to see a writer of one faith write so impartially of the practices of another faith and reserve judgment.

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## **Gary Brooks says**

one of my pet loves classical literature. doesn't dissapoint.

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## **Ronan Mcdonnell says**

A very specific part of a relatively arcane history. This is probably one for someone seeking a specific reference on an exact topic, not for general reading necessarily.

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## **Daren says**

An eclectic collection of short chapters, covering a huge number of countries/locations and a vast array of things! Culture, people, animals, customs, stories, etc. Very like Herodotus or Marco Polo in their travel / cataloguing type books. Helpfully where places or people are named in Arabic, their modern equivalent (by which they are better known) is provided in brackets, which is a helpful thing!

Some example chapter titles: (there are 80 of them.

The lighthouse of Hercules

The Galicians

The Lombards

Viking raiders

The wine cups of Alexander

The sources of the Nile

Ivory

Pearl fishing in the Gulf

The Seventh Sea - The sea of China

Camphor

St Elmo's Fire

The skillfulness of the Chinese

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## **Merlin Zuni says**

The author Mas' udi was born in Bagdad around AD 890. He was a sort of global historian similar to the likes of Herodotus. He wrote thirty-six books in his life time, of which only two have survived.

There is a very ironic chapter of the book where he praises his birthplace Iraq and his hometown of Bagdad. He says "The earth is fertile,life is easy and everthing is available in abundance. All of its people are secure, knowing no ills."

That's a far cry from the state of things these days in Iraq.

I like his enthusiastic and unusal style of writing. He often is telling an interesting story and when he mentions a persons name dead or living, He inserts the text "May prayers and peace be with him", and

continues the story.

I'm about half way through. This is the 2nd book in the Penguin book series "Great Journeys".

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### **Erni says**

Only at 120 pages, this book reveals the important points in history during the life of al-masudi, encompassing his travels from Iraq, to the whole of Middle East, India, and even to the Far East. It's amazing how many places he had been and all the things he had seen, to be able to be a part of history. I've learnt so much history by reading this tiny book, and his adventures were so interesting, I kept reading until 4am.

Now I think if I have the chance I'd like to collect all the books in the Penguin Great Journeys series.

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### **yellow tree says**

i'm currently reading this masterpiece for a seminar, i.e. the original in five volumes, its partial translation into german by gernot rotter and its partial translation into english; and already it seems a pity to me that there's only two of al-mas'udi's works that survived until the modern age.

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### **Brian Kovesci says**

So far this book has been my favorite in the series because Al-Masudi was sent on behalf of an entire nation to recount the history of the world whereas the other accounts were personal stories of adventure and unknown travel. Some of the dates and facts are mistaken, but the wealth of information in this short volume is astounding!

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### **Janez says**

A short, yet marvellous description of the civilisation(s) that have ceased to exist long ago!!!!

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### **El-Jahiz says**

This volume from the Meadows of Gold by Al-Masudi, the Herodotus of the Arabs (9th century) is an excellent translation by Paul Lunde and Caroline Stone. Probably captures the true essence of the masterpiece in presenting the time of the Abbasiad Caliphs through a collage of anecdotes woven together that flows like poetry. Wish they also translated the rest of this enchanting book.

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