PANCHAKOTesSAYS
ISSN: 0976-4968
Vol. 16, No. 2, November 2025

Invited Book Review

Stewart Gordon, *There and Back: Twelve of the Great Routes of Human History*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2018, xiv+266 pp., Rs. 595

Kanad Sinha

Department of Ancient Indian and World History, The Sanskrit College and University, 1, Bankim Chatterjee Street, Kolkata-700073, West Bengal, India
Email: kanad.india@gmail.com
DOI: *https://doi.org/10.64456/panch2025v16i2.07*

Stewart Gordon's book *There and Back: Twelve of the Great Routes of Human History* is an interesting application of the controversial subfield of geography, variously called cognitive geography, behavioural geography, or mental mapping, that points out that people's perceptions of concepts like near and far, long and short journeys, and significant and insignificant landmarks were strikingly different from what were portrayed on the maps or what an outsider might see on the ground, in historical studies. Gordon writes a history of 12 famous routes in human history, across continents and across time periods. Routes, as the theme of a book on cognitive historical geography, is immensely interesting, because no other structure, as rightly noted by Gordon, can bring people and ideas together the way a route does. Also, it is often the element of mental mapping that turned one or more roads and waterways into routes. Thus, routes are often much more than geographical features, and subjects of legends and stories, songs and paintings. Gordon has chosen twelve such historically famous routes for inspection. The book contains four sections focussing on four major kinds of routes: river routes, pilgrimage routes, tribute routes, and trade routes. Each section consists of four subsections: an introduction and the case study of three selected routes of that category. While Gordon discusses the history of all the twelve routes, each of the case studies is sketched around one particular account or set of accounts of that route.

The first section discusses three major river routes from three continents: the Rhine from Europe, the Nile from Africa, and the Mississippi from North America. Gordon follows the mental maps of Victor Hugo who explored the Rhine Route in 1839, Lucy Duff Gordon who travelled across the Nile between 1862 and 1869, and the Spink family that documented their journey across the Mississipi in 1910 in photographs. All the three journeys were in steamboats, and Gordon shows how the coming of the steamboat made a crucial intervention in the history of all the three routes.

The Rhine, though an important river route in the trade of Baltic amber, perhaps from the Neolithic times, emerged as a major river route of Europe during the Neolithic times. While it defined the eastern extremity of the civilised world in Caesar's time, a wide variety of new foods and herbs were introduced along the Rhine during the four centuries of Roman rule. Several towns and cities of the Rhine valley

emerged as processing and manufacturing centres. By 1650, religious confrontations divided the Rhine Route, as Switzerland and Holland were Protestant while the central portions remained Catholic. The importance of the Rhine Route in Europe's economy was recognised by the nineteenth century, and the Rhine route became one of the earliest centres of international cooperation in Europe. A multistate Rhine River Commission was established, and the Rhine Navigation Treaty (1831) reduced the number of tolls and eliminated boatmen's guilds to make the route more effective and accessible. Within two decades, the Ruhr Valley evolved into the iron and steel centre of Germany. The Rhine Route was critically important for transporting raw materials and finished products for the emerging German industrial economy. Steamboats improved transportation and communication drastically. It remained important till railroads came and shipping along the Rhine became limited. Gordon notes that the Rhine became a route from a river as trade unified it. The flow of wine from the Rhine valley and side valleys, timber from upriver forests, granites and stones from canyons and side streams was maintained by the sheer human effort invested in the river, from the clearance of rocks and improvement of channels in the late medieval period to the multistate River Commission. However, in the mental map of Hugo, a protagonist of Romanticism, the Rhine was a route of exploring medieval ruins and music and of exploring nature, an image fuelled by the woodcuts and etchings, stories and songs of the Rhine. Hugo was interested in the Rhine because of a woodcut of the Mouse Tower near Bignen, where Hatto – the evil and rich archbishop of Mainz – was supposedly eaten alive by rats. He divided the history of the Rhine in four epochs: 1) a geological history of the Alps, and of the Germanic tribes up to the Roman Conquest, 2) the 'epoch of the supernatural' as depicted in the folk stories about the malevolent river, many of which appear in the tales collected by the Grimm brothers, 3) 1300 to 1600, when there were small states controlled by nobles, bishops, Teutonic knights, and templars, and 4) the post-Reformation period. However, Hugo also highlighted the three times when the French controlled both the banks of the Rhine – the reigns of Pepin, Charlemagne, and Napoleon. Thus, Hugo's Romantic mental map was also coloured by the Nationalism which made the Rhine a bloody political boundary between France and Germany, generating popular patriotic songs on both the sides. To Hugo, France's destiny was to destroy the small states and control both the sides, while in German songs the control of the Rhine banks was crucial to the national honour.

If the Rhine was characterised by trade, human effort, and political conflict, the Nile – one of the oldest routes possible associated even with the earliest human long distance migrations out of Africa –was a route characterised by impressed labour, from the slave work force that built the tombs and temples between the Egyptian Old Kingdom (c. 3000 BCE) and the end of the New Kingdom (c. 1000 BCE) up to those who cleared the irrigation channels and built the Suez Canal. Even in Lady Duff's time, slavery was common along the Nile, as slaves from Sudan were brought to the

slave market of Cairo. The yearly rise of the river was the most crucial mental expectation of the Nile as a route. Agriculture along the whole length of it depended on the same summer rise and the same form of irrigation, giving rise to similar crops. The Nile route housed many communities and features prominently in several ancient religions. The ancient Egyptian religion, Judaism, Coptic Christianity, and Islam moved along the Nile. Cairo was a major staging point of the *Hajj*, while Ethiopia remained devoutly Christian even after the rise of Islam along the Nile. Personal networks were crucial in everything from credit to marriage matches and hospitality. Each group – Jews, Copts, Turks, Europeans – was embedded in their own network and had a stereotype of the other communities, reinforced by stories and homilies. But all hoped for the same summer rise and good harvest and feared the same flood and disease brought by the Nile. In Lady Duff's time, the Nile route became a major centre of Orientalist curiosity and archaeological explorations. Sudanese slave traders, slaves, brides, elite administrators, *Hajj* pilgrims, soldiers, emissaries, tourists, archaeologists, developers – all formed the mental expectations of the people along the river, till the Suez canal permanently changed the Nile system and the Aswan Dam stopped the annual floods.

On the other hand, technology had immensely influenced the development of the Mississippi as a route. It was a one-way route until the arrival of the steamboat. The adventures of the Mississippi boatmen along the risky river route is reflected in the Romantic paintings such as Celeb Bingham's *The Jolly Floatboatmen* series, romantic songs portraying a river system both promising and dangerous, and the adventure novels of Mark Twain. Steamboats with professional captains and pilots had a unifying effect on the route. However, the route was divided because of slavery during the American Civil War. After the bloody Battle of Shiloh (1862), Union control of the Mississippi river and New Orleans meant that cotton export from the South ceased.The cotton and sugarcane plantation economy collapsed. Rather, cities were gradually turned into manufacturing and processing centres. Minneapolis was famous for milling grains, Kansas for processing meat. Hamilton-Brown of St. Louis became the largest shoe-manufacturers and distributors of the world. Cape Girardeau became a major industrial hub. However, railroads gradually reduced the significance of the river route. Steamboats were practically gone by the 1920s, a decade after the Spink family undertook its steamboat journey.

The second section discusses three important pilgrimage routes associated with three religions: the Buddhist pilgrimage route along the Silk Road, the Christian pilgrimage route to the Santiago de Compostela, and the*Hajj* – the holyIslamic pilgrimage route to Makkah. Gordon argues that while river routes were linear, pilgrimage routes were structured like a bush. The pilgrimage site was the base, while various branches – each connected to several feeder routes themselves connected to a myriad of twigs – led to it. This structure describes the Compostela and the *Hajj* well, but not the Silk Road.

The Silk Road, after all, was not really a pilgrimage route. It was one of the most important ancient trade routes through which silk from China, medicines from Java and Sumatra, cotton and spices from India, tin from the Malay Peninsula, wool and horses from Central Asia, and gems, steel, salt, silver, books, furs, artist colours, dyes, glassware, and slaves from various centres reached the Roman Empire through Africa. It is trade, not religion, that unified the route. Of course it was also the route through which Buddhism travelled between India and China. Fa Xian, the Chinese Buddhist pilgrim to India between 399 and 414 CE, whose mental map Gordon followed, definitely perceived it as a pilgrimage route, and so did the Chinese pilgrims of the subsequent centuries. However, as Gordon notes, the Silk Road was segmented, as everything changed hands in the caravan cities. A caravan leader needed detailed knowledge only of his own segment of the road. Traders also specialised in particular segments.The route from China to India that Fa Xian took was one such segment of a larger trade route, not an independent pilgrimage route. There was no single holy destination at the end of the road, unlike Compostela or Makkah. Fa Xian was walking across a sacred imagined landscape dotted with places associated with the life of the Buddha and with the *Jataka* tales about the Buddha's previous incarnations. The route contained a series of monasteries which knew how to accommodate pilgrims and to provide them suitable sleeping apartments for three days,based on seniority.Fa Xian's account provided the subsequent travellers with a mental map of the way to India. The Tang Dynasty built watchtowers all along the route. More than 200 embassies came from China to India, including Buddhist monks, traders, and government officials. New centres of Buddhism emerged along it, such as the Dunhuang Caves in far western China. Thus, the characterisation of the Silk Road as a pilgrimage route remains questionable. However, Fa Xian's account definitely helps us understand how a segment of a trade route was mentally mapped out as a pilgrimage route by the Buddhist monks coming from China to India.

The Compostela, which was associated with the bodily remains of St. James from the 9th century onwards and reached the height of its popularity between 1150-1600 CE, on the other hand was a typical pilgrimage route. Each pilgrim on this route needed a permission document, wore a distinctive cloak, sandals, and hat, and carried a distinctive bag and an iron-tipped shaft. The *Pilgrim's Guide*, written by a French cleric around 1130, describes the sacred landscape forming his mental map of the journey from France to the Compostela, including the impressive monastic complex at St. Denis, the True Cross Relic, the knife used in the Last Supper, a chalice touched by God and shrine of the Blessed Martin at Orleans, the church of St. Martin at Tours, the holy body of Hilaire at Poitiers, the head of John the Baptist at Angeley, relics of Bishop Severinus and the horn of Roland at Bordeaux, the body of Roland at Blaye, a large cross commemoration of Charlemagne's prayer to St. James for a victory in Spain and a rock split by Roland on the mountains on the border between France and Spain, the body of the blessed Domingo at Castille and Compos, and the body of the

blessed Isadore at Leon. The route was characterised by the regular flow of information between France and Spain, the stories about the miracles of divine protection of St. James to his pilgrims, andthe legends of the relic's efficacy at a distance. The pilgrims collected a piece of a particular kind of scalloped shell from the seashores of Western Spain as a token of the pilgrimage.

Another typical pilgrimage route was the *Hajj*, leading towards Makkah, the birthplace of Prophet Muhammad. It was a holy site even before Muhammad's birth. Muhammad himself made a 'farewell pilgrimage' to Makkah in 632, fixed the stations and dress of the pilgrimage, and turned it into an exclusive prerogative as well as a once-in-a-lifetime obligation for the Muslims. Abbasid patronage led to the growth of the *Hajj*, as Harun-al-Rashid (764-809 CE) led the pilgrimage with his wife Zubaya, and built wells, cisterns, forts, and caravensarais along the road and in the city. The mental map of Ibn Battuta, the African traveller who went for *Hajj* in 1325-6 CE, shows an expected network of grand architecture, learned men, and miracles of saints. A network of *madrasas* (learning centres) patronised by the Muslim elite offered hospitality to the travellers according to their country and station. There was organised assistance for the poor willing to undertake the *Hajj*. The pilgrims donned the garb of *Hajj* – two pieces of white unsewn clothes – and vowed to refrain from quarrelling, committing violence, and having sexual relations, outside the holy city of Medina. There were prescribed things to see, touch, and experience, often repeating acts supposedly performed by the Prophet, such as performing a raiding ritual at the spring Tabuk that Muhammad had taken by force, and avoiding the water of the al-Hijr that Muhammad had avoided. The *Hajj* was a levelling experience for Muslims of all economic status, ethnicity, language, and origin. Apart from the pilgrimage, it also brought professional benefits for the clerics and increased a spiritual leader's credibility. They received certificates of study from famous teachers whose sermons they heard. Networks and connections formed in the *Hajj* helped clerics and jurists to seek employment in distant places of the Islamic world. Unlike the other routes discussed in the book, the *Hajj* continued and grew over time rather than declining.

Tribute routes, built by government impetus to supply produce to the capital of an empire, were of a different nature. They had a distinctive look, mile markers, commemorative inscriptions, etc. and were products of slave, impressed, or military labour. A tribute route often contained a constellation of routes leading to the capital. The empire secured and controlled these routes with garrisons or large fleets, and they were often sites of great battles for control of the empire. The imperial cuisine, fashion, language, and literature spread along these routes. The fate of the tribute routes were intimately tied with the rise and fall of the empire. The third section of the book discussed three tribute routes of three different continents: the Appian Way of Europe, the Chinese Grand Canal of Asia, and the Inka Route of South America.

Gordon explores the Appian Way through the mental map of Horace, the Roman poet who travelled to study at Athens along this route in around 45 BCE. A typical

tribute route, the Appian Way was built by Appius Claudius as a military road to the Samnite Kingdom around 310 BCE. The road split from Capua, as the main road went up to the Adriatic Sea, while the Via Campia reached the port of Puteoli. The land based tribute route to the east continued across the Peloponnesian Peninsula. The Egnatian Way was another military road built between 140 and 120 BCE that directly led to Macedonia. The port of Puteoli was crucial to the Roman Empire, mainly because ships brought to it wheat from North Africa and Egypt, which sustained the huge population of Rome. Interruption of wheat supply would have dire consequences for the Roman Empire. The maritime trade through this port also brought to the Empire Egyptian marble and linen, Syrian glassware, Indian silk, cotton, scented body oils, medicines, spices, and ivory, and frankincense and myrrh from Yemen. As the food supply of Rome depended on the Appian Way, the route was extremely crucial. The local towns and villages had to provide a specific number of pack animals at the changing stations for military or civilian couriers, officials, embassies, and anyone carrying a government pass. Certain farmers provided food and hospitality to official travellers. Apart from them, poets and philosophers travelled in search of patronage. Farmers and traders brought goods to the market. Emissaries came from distant lands to Rome. Horace describes the dirty and noisy Appian inns with bad food, threat of robbers and thieves, and ready availability of prostitutes. Roman cities along the road imitated Rome. Rome's town planning, urban culture, and books spread, as did Christianity and the knowledge of tropical medicine. Bandits and pirates also had their own mental maps. The bandit Felix Bulla received intelligence of all the travellers coming out of Rome. Pompey's major campaign in 67 BCE and his offer of clemency and resettlement to the pirates reduced the risk of piracy. The route declined after 300 CE, as Rome was gradually replaced by Constantinople as the centre of trade and politics.

Unlike the Appian Way, the Grand Canal of China, that brought the surplus grain of the productive coastal plain of the south to the capitals in the north, was totally regulated by the Government. It grew through government initiatives of the kings of the Sui, Yuan, and Ming dynasties. It was impossible to maintain the dykes and the myriads of bridges that needed constant repair and to dredge the silt annually to keep the canal open without direct government initiative. Even the ships that carried the grain surplus and taxed imports from the south were built in the government shipyards, with government-requisitioned timber. The grain fleet pre-empted all private boats when it passed along the canal with garrisons and troops. In other times, troops, bureaucrats, auditors, examination candidates, and a constant information flow of reports moved along the route. The canal administration marshalled a vast amount of corvee labour for its maintenance. As the experience of Cho'e Pu, a shipwrecked Korean officer accidentally reaching China and journeying through this route in 1488, shows, the cognitive geography of the Grand Canal was also a network of Confucian bureaucrats sharing a sophisticated mental web of expectations including rank and

service, knowledge of Chinese classics and poetry, Confucian customs, hygiene, dress, forms of hospitality, courtesy, and honour.

The government control was perhaps even more stringent in the Inka Route along the north-south trunk road from Cuzco to Quito. However, as we have no literary record of the Inkas, the cognitive geography of the route in the Inka period has to be guesswork on the basis of archaeology. Gordon also uses the accounts of the members accompanying Pizarro in his expedition of 1532-3 that signalled the Spanish conquest of the Inka.The Inka possibly suppressed all interregional trade along this route, enforcing a system of tribute paid in both commodities and labour. They feasted the local nobles and gave gifts to them, who on return sent a fixed number of men and women from their areas for a certain number of days to perform unpaid labour. This labour built the Inka cities and roads, worked the mines, filled the storage buildings with crafts, food, beer, coca, and feathers, and produced grains and tubers in the estates to feed the city-dwellers. At times, entire peasant groups and captured populations were also moved wholesale for impressed labour as peasants, soldiers, service personnel, and weavers. Cuzco provided the model for all the Inka cities along the trunk road. The road also had periodic ways stations a days' walk apart, where the staff provided individuals and groups that came on state business with food, fodder, and wood. The trunk road was connected to major feeder roads in all the sides.

In the last section, Gordon discusses the trade routes which have often been conceived as two-ended bottlebrush – one end being supply and one end demand – joined by a long wire-handle. Supply reached deep into hinterland areas. Goods went from the distribution centres to many destinations for sale. Thus, a trade route was not a single road or waterway, but many. Towns and cities along trade routes often turned into processing centres for the goods. Networks were crucial for trade routes. Mental maps of the traders included the experience of the older members of the same network. The flow of information transmitted reputation, family gossip, trade recommendations, and assessment of politics and security. Traders also watched keenly for the changes in fashion, rise in the popularity of a commodity, and the rise of new kingdoms as new demand areas. Gordon inspects three trade routes from three geographical regions, the Indian Ocean, the Trans-Sahara desert trek, and the Eerie Canal of the USA.

In an interesting chapter on the Indian Ocean trade route, Gordon shows how the same trade route changed its nature over time. This sea route was explored from the first century BCE when the Romans understood the monsoon winds of the Indian Ocean. A Greek ship captain of c. 100 CE has documented in the *Periplus of the Eryhtrean Sea* how different products of the African coast, Egypt, Arabia, India, and Rome moved along the Indian Ocean. A small number of African slaves were also sold in the Eastern Roman Empire. However, as Gordon shows, in the medieval period, slave trade, especially after the rising popularity of the military slaves in the Islamic world, was at the centre of the Indian Ocean trade. Gordon follows the career

of Malik Ambar (1548-1628), an Ethiopian military slave who played a significant role in South Indian politics, and charted out the trajectories of this slave trade. Father Alvarez has described how Ethiopia was a complete slave society in the sixteenth century. The king sent regular shipments of slaves for sale. Muslim slavers ventured beyond Ethiopia to capture slaves. Zeila, in the coastal desert of Somalia, received regular supply of slaves from inland Somalia. Massawa was a major centre of slave trade in the Swahili coast. Next stops were Mocha and Aden near the mouth of the Red Sea. These places were connected to Baghdad via three alternative routes: one through the port of Jiddah, one through the city of Zabid at coastal Yemen and across the desert of Bahrain, and one across the sea through Socotra to Kish. Spread of Islam created a unified trading culture. Traders of the Swahili coast converted to Islam, bought Indian clothes, dressed like the Arabs, built large houses, bought domestic slaves, and fabricated genealogies connecting them to Arab or Irani traders. They did not convert the inland people to Islam, as Muslims could not enslave Muslims. The long, complex history of the Indian Ocean trade finally reached a point of decline only with the rise of long-distance container shipping.

While the Indian Ocean was naturally a lucrative trade route, Trans-Sahara journey was considered an economic madness by the Romans. However, it still formed an ancient trade route as the sub-Saharan people did not have salt and needed the salt from the salt mine at Taghaza in southern Morocco. In this chapter, Gordon returns to Ibn Battuta whose last adventure was the Trans-Sahara journey. It is the use of the camel that made the journey through this dangerous desert path possible, though still risky. The camel caravan was organised by the Berbers, a Muslim nomadic group. Passengers were responsible for their own food and supplies, while the Berber guide kept the caravan on route. There were several alternative tracks, one beginning at Tripoli and ending near the Lake Chad, another running from Morocco to the Senegal valley and so on. For ensuring the safety of the caravan, a tax was paid to every nomadic group whose territory the caravan crossed. As the supplies usually finished by the last week of the trek, a highly paid scout, *takshif*, was sent early to notify the nearest city on the south about the caravan's presence. If he succeeded, the city would send men with water and supplies for four days of travel. Only the trade of high-value goods was profitable for such a dangerous trek. Apart from salt, iron and copper were the major articles of trade. Copper, found in the Takadda mine of Niger, had spiritual as well as material value, and was also an accepted currency.Gold, weapons, and slaves travelled north. Legends were formed about a rich gold mine in a concealed region named Wangara. The King of Mali was considered fabulously wealthy, while Sahara was the 'kingdom of gold' to the Arab geographers. The legend got credibility when King Mansa Musa performed the *Hajj*, carrying so much gold to Cairo and Makkah that the price was depressed for several years. Islamic culture indeed reached sub-Saharan Africa along with the Arab traders. Battuta found mosques, caravanserais, courts of Islamic law, public baths, and Muslim schools there. Sub-

Saharan people also performed the *Hajj*. Fine fabrics were popular in the court of Mali. Robes were presented by the king, as in the Middle East, Central Asia, India, and China. Like the rest of the Islamic world, the Sultan's name was read during the Friday prayers. He sat under a silk umbrella, imitating a court ritual followed in various parts of Asia. The Trans-Saharan trade continued till the French connected Senegal and Niger by a railroad in 1906.

The story of the Eerie Canal shows how cognitive geography could precede a trade route and facilitate its creation. It was after the victory of Clinton-Sullivan over the Haudensaunee (a confederacy of five tribes) who controlled the Iroquois Trail and were allied with the British, in 1779, following the War of American Independence, the farmers realised the natural market for their grain, timber, and pork was via the Iroquois Trail to New York. The New York wholesalers recognised a market for cloth, tea, sugar, and spices among these farmers. But the land route was too extensive and the British could still threaten the river route via St. Lawrence. The potential of a canal was recognised by many from George Washington to Robert Fulton, the inventor of the steamboat. De Witt Clinton, the Governor of the New York State, finally took the risk, and the Eerie Canal was constructed by 1825 with eight years of labour from more than 300 Irish contract labourers. The canal reduced the transport prices of grain and timber by 90%, cut down the travel time between Buffalo and Albany, increased the sale to the growing cities of the East Coast and the import to Europe, led to the development of boat building, contributed to the tenfold growth of the population of Buffalo and Syracuse in a decade, and turned New York in the most important port and financial centre of the USA. Towns along the Eerie Canal specialised in processing and combining goods. The General Electric produced products for the electric industry in Schenectady, Kodak developed new photography technology in Rochester, salt was mined and sodium bicarbonate produced in Syracuse, gloves were made in Gloversville, iron castings and shirt collars were made in Albany, steel was produced in Buffalo, cotton mills grew in Utica. This success led to a subsequent 'canal fever' across the USA. Gordon follows the experiences of Basil Hall in his journey via the Eerie Canal in 1825. He also notes down the stories, legends, and folk songs about the Irish 'canawlers' whose life was supposedly full of drinking, gambling, brawling, suicide, murder, betrayal, prostitution, and hard work. The supposed moral degeneration also turned New York into one of the major centres of missionary activities by various groups including the Mormons, the Oneida Community, the Shakers, the Fox Sisters, and the Millerites. The canal started losing its importance after the New York Railroad was built between New York and Buffalo in 1853. In 1900, the canal was re-routed as the New York State Barge Canal. In the 1950s, the I-90 became an intercontinental highway connecting the eastern and western coasts of the USA via the old Iroquois Trail.

The book is a novel and exciting intervention in studying the history of routes. It represents routes as places of a variety of mental maps quite successfully. It also

shows the various roles of ecology, political conflict, degree and nature of government control, flow of material goods, networks, and technology in shaping up these mental maps. However, focussing on a single narrative in each chapter reduced the possibility of exploring the route through these various mental maps. Thus, in case of the Indian Ocean, we get to know of the difference in the mental map of the first century Greek ship captain who composed the *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* and the participants of the slave trade of fifteenth-sixteenth centuries. But we hardly get to know how Fa Xian's mental map of the Silk Road as a pilgrimage road differed from the traders to whom it was a trade route. Hugo's Romantic mental mapping of the Rhine does not tell as what the route meant for the traders who used it. We wonder if the mental map of Pizarro's companion can say us anything about what the Inka Road signified to the Inka. Moreover, the strict classification of the routes at times overlooks their interconnections and overlap. The Indian Ocean after all was the maritime segment of the Silk Road, while the products of Indian Ocean trade travelled across the Appian Way to reach Rome. Similarly, Cairo was an important station of the Nile Route as well as one of the major starting points of the *Hajj*. A book of this quality also deserves fewer printing mistakes.