

Ibn Battuta: Travels in Asia and Africa 1325-1354

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Here begins Ibn Battuta's travels p. 43

I left Tangier, my birthplace, on Thursday, 2nd Rajab 725 [June 14, 1325], being at that time twenty-two years of age [22 lunar years; 21 and 4 months by solar reckoning], with the intention of making the Pilgrimage to the Holy House [at Mecca] and the Tomb of the Prophet [at Medina].

I set out alone, finding no companion to cheer the way with friendly intercourse, and no party of travellers with whom to associate myself. Swayed by an overmastering impulse within me, and a long-cherished desire to visit those glorious sanctuaries, I resolved to quit all my friends and tear myself away from my home. As my parents were still alive, it weighed grievously upon me to part from them, and both they and I were afflicted with sorrow.

On reaching the city of Tilimsan [Tlemcen], whose sultan at that time was Abu Tashifin, I found there two ambassadors of the Sultan of Tunis, who left the city on the same day that I arrived. One of the brethren having advised me to accompany them, I consulted the will of God in this matter, and after a stay of three days in the city to procure all that I needed, I rode after them with all speed. I overtook them at the town of Miliana, where we stayed ten days, as both ambassadors fell sick on account of the summer heats. When we set out again, one of them grew worse, and died after we had stopped for three nights by a stream four miles from Miliana. I left their party there and pursued my journey, with a company of merchants from Tunis.

Ibn Battuta travels overland from Algiers to Tunis pp. 43-45.

On reaching al-Jaza'ir [Algiers] we halted outside the town for a few days, until the former party rejoined us, when we went on together through the Mitija [the fertile plain behind Algiers] to the mountain of Oaks [Jurjura] and so reached Bijaya [Bougie].

The commander of Bijaya at this time was the chamberlain Ibn Sayyid an-Nas. Now one of the Tunisian merchants of our party had died leaving three thousand dinars of gold, which he had entrusted to a certain man of Algiers to deliver to his heirs at Tunis. Ibn Sayyid an-Nas came to hear of this and forcibly seized the money. This was the first instance I witnessed of the tyranny of the agents of the Tunisian government.

At Bijaya I fell ill of a fever, and one of my friends advised me to stay there till I recovered. But I refused, saying, "If God decrees my death, it shall be on the road with my face set toward Mecca." "If that is your resolve," he replied, "sell your ass and your heavy baggage, and I shall lend you what you require. In this way you will travel light, for we must make haste on our journey, for fear of meeting roving Arabs on the way." I followed his advice and he did as he had promised--may God reward him!

On reaching Qusantinah [Constantine] we camped outside the town, but a heavy rain forced us to leave our tents during the night and take refuge in some houses there. Next day the governor of the city came to meet us. Seeing my clothes all soiled by the rain he gave orders that they should be washed at his house, and in place of my old worn headcloth sent me a headcloth of fine Syrian cloth, in one of the ends of which he had tied two gold dinars. This was the first alms I received on my journey.

From Qusantinah we reached Bona [Bone] where, after staying in the town for several days, we left the merchants of our party on account of the dangers of the road, while we pursued our journey with the utmost speed. I was again attacked by fever, so I tied myself in the saddle with a turban-cloth in case I should fall by reason of my weakness. So great was my fear that I could not dismount until we arrived at Tunis.

Ibn Battuta and his party arrive at Tunis pp. 43-46.

The population of the city came out to meet the members of our party, and on all sides greetings and question were exchanged, but not a soul greeted me as no one there was known to me. I was so affected by my loneliness that I could not restrain my tears and wept bitterly, until one of the pilgrims realized the cause of my distress and coming up to me greeted me kindly and continued to entertain me with friendly talk until I entered the city.

The Sultan of Tunis at that time was Abu Yahya, the son of Abu' Zakariya IL, and there were a number of notable scholars in the town. During my stay the festival of the Breaking of the Fast fell due, and I joined the company at the Praying-ground. The inhabitants assembled in large numbers to celebrate the festival, making a brave show and wearing their richest apparel. The Sultan Abu Yahya arrived on horseback, accompanied by all his relatives, courtiers, and officers of state walking on foot in a stately procession. After the recital of the prayer and the conclusion of the Allocution the people returned to their homes.

### **Ibn Battuta leaves Tunis with the annual pilgrim caravan**

Some time later the pilgrim caravan for the Hijaz was formed, and they nominated me as their qadi [judge]. We left Tunis early in November [1325], following the coast road through Susa Sfax, and Qabis, where we stayed for ten days on account of incessant rains. Thence we set out for Tripoli, accompanied for several stages by a hundred or more horsemen as well as a detachment of archers, out of respect for whom the Arabs [brigands] kept their distance.

I had made a contract of marriage at Sfax with the daughter of one of the syndics at Tunis, and at Tripoli she was conducted to me, but after leaving Tripoli I became involved in a dispute with her father, which necessitated my separation from her. I then married the daughter of a student from Fez, and when she was conducted to me I detained the caravan for a day by entertaining them all at a wedding party.

### **Arrival at Alexandria pp. 47-50**

At length on April 5th (1326) we reached Alexandria. It is a beautiful city, well-built and fortified with four gates and a magnificent port. Among all the ports in the world I have seen none to equal it except Kawlām [Quilon] and Calicut in India, the port of the infidels [Genoese] at Sudaq [Sudak, in the Crimea] in the land of the Turks, and the port of Zaytun [Canton?] in China, all of which will be described later.

### **The famous lighthouse, one of the "wonders of the ancient world"**

I went to see the lighthouse on this occasion and found one of its faces in ruins. It is a very high square building, and its door is above the level of the earth. Opposite the door, and of the same height, is a building from which there is a plank bridge to the door; if this is removed there is no means of entrance. Inside the door is a place for the lighthouse-keeper, and within the lighthouse there are many chambers. The breadth of the passage inside is nine spans and that of the wall ten spans; each of the four sides of the lighthouse is 140 spans in breadth. It is situated on a high mound and lies three miles from the city on a long tongue of land which juts out into the sea from close by the city wall, so that the lighthouse cannot be reached by land except from the city. On my return to the West in the year 750 [1349] I visited the lighthouse again, and found that it had fallen into so ruinous a condition that it was not possible to enter it or climb up to the door.

Al-Malik an-Nasir had started to build a similar lighthouse alongside it but was prevented by death from completing the work. Another of the marvellous things in this city is the awe-inspiring marble column [an obelisk] on its outskirts which they call the Pillar of Columns. It is a single block, skilfully carved, erected on a plinth of square stones like enormous platforms, and no one knows how it was erected there nor for certain who erected it.

Two holy men of the city

One of the learned men of Alexandria was the qadi, a master of eloquence, who used to wear a turban of extraordinary size. Never either in the eastern or the western lands have I seen a more voluminous headgear.

Another of them was the pious ascetic Burhan ad-Din, whom I met during my stay and whose hospitality I enjoyed for three days. One day as I entered his room he said to me "I see that you are fond of travelling through foreign lands." I replied "Yes, I am " (though I had as yet no thought of going to such distant lands as India or China). Then he said "You must certainly visit my brother Farid ad-Din in India, and my brother Rukn ad-Din in Sind, and my brother Burhan ad-Din in China, and when you find them give them greeting from me." I was amazed at his prediction and the idea of going to these countries having been cast into my mind, my journeys never ceased until I had met these three that he named and conveyed his greeting to them.

### **A visit to a holy man in the country**

During my stay at Alexandria I had heard of the pious Shaykh al-Murshidi, who bestowed gifts miraculously created at his desire. He lived in solitary retreat in a cell in the country where he was visited by princes and ministers. Parties of men in all ranks of life used to come to him every day and he would supply them all with food. Each one of them would desire to eat some flesh or fruit or sweetmeat at his cell, and to each he would give what he had suggested, though it was frequently out of season. His fame was carried from mouth to mouth far and wide, and the Sultan too had visited him several times in his retreat. I set out from Alexandria to seek this shaykh and passing through Damanhur came to Fawwa [Fua], a beautiful township, close by which, separated from it by a canal, lies the shaykh's cell. I reached this cell about mid-afternoon, and on saluting the shaykh I found that he had with him one of the sultan's aides-de-camp, who had encamped with his troops just outside. The shaykh rose and embraced me, and calling for food invited me to eat. When the hour of the afternoon prayer arrived he set me in front as prayer-leader, and did the same on every occasion when we were together at the times of prayer during my stay. When I wished to sleep he said to me "Go up to the roof of the cell and sleep there " (this was during the summer heats). I said to the officer "In the name of God," but he replied [quoting from the Koran] "There is none of us but has an appointed place." So I mounted to the roof and found there a straw mattress and a leather mat, a water vessel for ritual ablutions, a jar of water and a drinkingcup, and I lay down there to sleep.

A dream of travels to come

That night, while I was sleeping on the roof of the cell, I dreamed that I was on the wing of a great bird which was flying with me towards Mecca, then to Yemen, then eastwards and thereafter going towards the south, then flying far eastwards and finally landing in a dark and green country, where it left me. I was astonished at this dream and said to myself "If the shaykh can interpret my dream for me, he is all that they say he is." Next morning, after all the other visitors had gone, he called me and when I had related my dream interpreted it to me saying: "You will make the pilgrimage [to Mecca] and visit [the Tomb of] the Prophet, and you will travel through Yemen, Iraq, the country of the Turks, and India. You will stay there for a long time and meet there my brother Dilshad the Indian, who will rescue you from a danger into which you will fall." Then he gave me a travelling-provision of small cakes and money, and I bade him farewell and departed. Never since parting from him have I met on my journeys aught but good fortune, and his blessings have stood me in good stead.

Ibn Battuta leaves for Cairo via Damietta

We rode from here to Damietta through a number of towns, in each of which we visited the principal men of religion. Damietta lies on the bank of the Nile, and the people in the houses next to the river draw water from it in buckets. Many of the houses have steps leading down to the river. Their sheep and goats are allowed to pasture at liberty day and night; for this reason the saying goes of Damietta "Its walls are sweetmeats and its dogs are sheep." Anyone who enters the city may not afterwards leave it except by the governor's seal. Persons of repute have a seal stamped on a piece of paper so

that they may show it to the gatekeepers; other persons have the seal stamped on their forearms. In this city there are many seabirds with extremely greasy flesh, and the milk of its buffaloes is unequalled for sweetness and pleasant taste. The fish called buri is exported thence to Syria, Anatolia, and Cairo. The present town is of recent construction; the old city was that destroyed by the Franks in the time of al Malik as as-Salih.

From Damietta I travelled to Fariskur, which is a town on the bank of the Nile, and halted outside it. Here I was overtaken by a horseman who had been sent after me by the governor of Damietta. He handed me a number of coins saying to me "The Governor asked for you, and on being informed about you, he sent you this gift"--may God reward him! Thence I travelled to Ashmun, a large and ancient town on a canal derived from the Nile. It possesses a wooden bridge at which all vessels anchor, and in the afternoon the baulks are lifted and the vessels pass up and down. From here I went to Samannud, whence I journeyed upstream to Cairo, between a continuous succession of towns and villages. The traveller on the Nile need take no provision with him because whenever he desires to descend on the bank he may do so, for ablutions, prayers, provisioning, or any other purpose. There is an uninterrupted chain of bazaars from Alexandria to Cairo, and from Cairo to Assuan [Aswan] in Upper Egypt.

Arrival in Cairo pp. 50-55.

I arrived at length at Cairo, mother of cities and seat of Pharaoh the tyrant, mistress of broad regions and fruitful lands, boundless in multitude of buildings, peerless in beauty and splendour, the meeting-place of comer and goer, the halting-place of feeble and mighty, whose throngs surge as the waves of the sea, and can scarce be contained in her for all her size and capacity. It is said that in Cairo there are twelve thousand water-carriers who transport water on camels, and thirty thousand hirers of mules and donkeys, and that on the Nile there are thirty-six thousand boats belonging to the Sultan and his subjects which sail upstream to Upper Egypt and downstream to Alexandria and Damietta, laden with goods and profitable merchandise of all kinds.

A pleasure garden

On the bank of the Nile opposite Old Cairo is the place known as The Garden, which is a pleasure park and promenade, containing many beautiful gardens, for the people of Cairo are given to pleasure and amusements. I witnessed a fete once in Cairo for the sultan's recovery from a fractured hand; all the merchants decorated their bazaars and had rich stuffs, ornaments and silken fabrics hanging in their shops for several days.

Religious institutions

The mosque of 'Amr is highly venerated and widely celebrated. The Friday service is held in it and the road runs through it from east to west. The madrasas [college mosques] of Cairo cannot be counted for multitude. As for the Maristan [hospital], which lies "between the two castles" near the mausoleum of Sultan Qala'un, no

description is adequate to its beauties. It contains an innumerable quantity of appliances and medicaments, and its daily revenue is put as high as a thousand dinars.

There are a large number of religious establishments ["convents "] which they call khanqahs, and the nobles vie with one another in building them. Each of these is set apart for a separate school of darwishes, mostly Persians, who are men of good education and adepts in the mystical doctrines. Each has a superior and a doorkeeper and their affairs are admirably organized. They have many special customs one of which has to do with their food. The steward of the house comes in the morning to the darwishes, each of whom indicates what food he desires, and when they assemble for meals, each person is given his bread and soup in a separate dish, none sharing with another. They eat twice a day. They are each given winter clothes and summer clothes, and a monthly allowance of from twenty to thirty dirhams. Every Thursday night they receive sugar cakes, soap to wash their clothes, the price of a bath, and oil for their lamps. These men are celibate; the married men have separate convents.

At Cairo too is the great cemetery of al-Qarafa, which is a place of peculiar sanctity and contains the graves of innumerable scholars and pious believers. In the Qarafa the people build beautiful pavilions surrounded by walls, so that they look like houses. They also build chambers and hire Koran-readers who recite night and day in agreeable voices. Some of them build religious houses and madrasas beside the mausoleums and on Thursday nights they go out to spend the night there with their children and women-folk, and make a circuit of the famous tombs. They go out to spend the night there also on the "Night of midSha'ban," and the market-people take out all kinds of eatables. Among the many celebrated sanctuaries [in the city] is the holy shrine where there reposes the head of alHusayn. Beside it is a vast monastery of striking construction, on the doors of which there are silver rings and plates of the same metal.

### The great river Nile

The Egyptian Nile surpasses all rivers of the earth in sweetness of taste, length of course, and utility. No other river in the world can show such a continuous series of towns and villages along its banks, or a basin so intensely cultivated. Its course is from South to North, contrary to all the other great rivers. One extraordinary thing about it is that it begins to rise in the extreme hot weather at the time when rivers generally diminish and dry up, and begins to subside just when rivers begin to increase and overflow. The river Indus resembles it in this feature. The Nile is one of the five great rivers of the world, which are the Nile, Euphrates, Tigris, Syr Darya and Amu Darya; five other rivers resemble these, the Indus, which is called Panj Ab [i.e. Five Rivers], the river of India which is called Gang [Ganges]--it is to it that the Hindus go on pilgrimage, and when they burn their dead they throw the ashes into it, and they say that it comes from Paradise--the river Jun [Jumna or perhaps Brahmaputra] in India, the river Itil [Volga] in the Qipchaq steppes, on the banks of which is the city of Sara, and the river Saru [Hoang-Ho] in the land of Cathay. All these will be mentioned in their proper places, if God will. Some distance below Cairo the Nile divides into three streams, none of which can be crossed except by boat, winter or summer. The

inhabitants of every township have canals led off the Nile; these are filled when the river is in flood and carry the water over the fields.

Upriver

From Cairo I travelled into Upper Egypt, with the intention of crossing to the Hijaz. On the first night I stayed at the monastery of Dayr at-Tin, which was built to house certain illustrious relics--a fragment of the Prophet's wooden basin and the pencil with which he used to apply kohl, the awl he used for sewing his sandals, and the Koran belonging to the Caliph Ali written in his own hand. These were bought, it is said, for a hundred thousand dirhams by the builder of the monastery, who also established funds to supply food to all comers and to maintain the guardians of the sacred relics.

Thence my way lay through a number of towns and villages to Munyat Ibn Khasib [Minia], a large town which is built on the bank of the Nile, and most emphatically excels all the other towns of Upper Egypt. I went on through Manfalut, Asyut, Ikhmim, where there is a berba with sculptures and inscriptions which no one can now read--another of these berbas there was pulled down and its stones used to build a madrasa--Qina, Qus, where the governor of Upper Egypt resides, Luxor, a pretty little town containing the tomb of the pious ascetic Abu'l-Hajjaj, Esna, and thence a day and a night's journey through desert country to Edfu.

### **Camels, Hyenas, and Bejas**

Here we crossed the Nile and, hiring camels, journeyed with a party of Arabs through a desert, totally devoid of settlements but quite safe for travelling. One of our halts was at Humaythira, a place infested with hyenas. All night long we kept driving them away, and indeed one got at my baggage, tore open one of the sacks, pulled out a bag of dates, and made off with it. We found the bag next morning, torn to pieces and with most of the contents eaten. After fifteen days' travelling we reached the town of Aydhab, a large town, well supplied with milk and fish; dates and grain are imported from Upper Egypt. Its inhabitants are Bejas. These people are black-skinned; they wrap themselves in yellow blankets and tie headbands about a fingerbreadth wide round their heads. They do not give their daughters any share in their inheritance. They live on camels milk and they ride on Meharis [dromedaries]. One-third of the city belongs to the Sultan of Egypt and two-thirds to the King of the Bejas, who is called al-Hudrubi. On reaching Aydhab we found that al-Hudrubi was engaged in warfare with the Turks [i.e. the troops of the Sultan of Egypt], that he had sunk the ships and that the Turks had fled before him. It was impossible for us to attempt the sea-crossing [across the Red Sea], so we sold the provisions that we had made ready for it, and returned to Qus with the Arabs from whom we had hired the camels.

Back downriver to Cairo; from Cairo to Syria and Jerusalem

We sailed thence down the Nile (it was at the flood time) and after an eight days' journey reached Cairo, where I stayed only one night, and immediately set out for Syria. This was in the middle of July, 1326. My route lay through Bilbays and as-

Salihya, after which we entered the sands and halted at a number of stations. At each of these there was a hostelry which they call a khan, where travellers alight with their beasts. Each khan has a water wheel supplying a fountain and a shop at which the traveller buys what he requires for himself and his beast.

### **Crossing the border into Syria**

At the station of Qatya customs-dues are collected from the merchants, and their goods and baggage are thoroughly examined and searched. There are offices here, with officers, clerks, and notaries, and the daily revenue is a thousand gold dinars. No one is allowed to pass into Syria without a passport from Egypt, nor into Egypt without a passport from Syria, for the protection of the property of the subjects and as a measure of precaution against spies from Iraq. The responsibility of guarding this road has been entrusted to the Badawin [Bedouin]. At nightfall they smooth down the sand so that no track is left on it, then in the morning the governor comes and looks at the sand. If he finds any track on it he commands the Arabs to bring the person who made it, and they set out in pursuit and never fail to catch him. He is then brought to the governor, who punishes him as he sees fit. The governor at the time of my passage treated me as a guest and showed me great kindness, and allowed all those who were with me to pass. From here we went on to Gaza, which is the first city of Syria on the side next the Egyptian frontier.

On the road to Jerusalem: Hebron and Bethlehem pp. 55-57

From Gaza I travelled to the city of Abraham [Hebron], the mosque of which is of elegant, but substantial construction, imposing and lofty, and built of squared stones. At one angle of it there is a stone, one of whose faces measures twenty-seven spans. It is said that Solomon commanded the jinn to build it. Inside it is the sacred cave containing the graves of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, opposite which are three graves, which are those of their wives. I questioned the imam, a man of great piety and learning, on the authenticity of these graves, and he replied: "All the scholars whom I have met hold these graves to be the very graves of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and their wives. No one questions this except introducers of false doctrines; it is a tradition which has passed from father to son for generations and admits of no doubt." This mosque contains also the grave of Joseph, and somewhat to the east of it lies the tomb of Lot, which is surmounted by an elegant building. In the neighbourhood is Lot's lake [the Dead Sea], which is brackish and is said to cover the site of the settlements of Lot's people.

On the way from Hebron to Jerusalem, I visited Bethlehem, the birthplace of Jesus. The site is covered by a large building; the Christians regard it with intense veneration and hospitably entertain all who alight at it.

### **Jerusalem and its holy sites**

We then reached Jerusalem (may God ennoble her !), third in excellence after the two holy shrines of Mecca and Medina and the place whence the Prophet was caught up



into heaven. Its walls were destroyed by the illustrious King Saladin and his Successors, for fear lest the Christians should seize it and fortify themselves in it. The sacred mosque is a most beautiful building, and is said to be the largest mosque in the world. Its length from east to west is put at 752 "royal" cubits and its breadth at 435. On three sides it has many entrances, but on the south side I know of one only, which is that by which the imam enters. The entire mosque is an open court and unroofed, except the mosque al-Aqsa, which has a roof of most excellent workmanship, embellished with gold and brilliant colours. Some other parts of the mosque are roofed as well. The Dome of the Rock is a building of extraordinary beauty, solidity, elegance, and singularity of shape. It stands on an elevation in the centre of the mosque and is reached by a flight of marble steps. It has four doors. The space round it is also paved with marble, excellently done, and the interior likewise. Both outside and inside the decoration is so magnificent and the workmanship so surpassing as to defy description. The greater part is covered with gold so that the eyes of one who gazes on its beauties are dazzled by its brilliance, now glowing like a mass of light, now flashing like lightning. In the centre of the Dome is the blessed rock from which the Prophet ascended to heaven, a great rock projecting about a man's height, and underneath it there is a cave the size of a small room, also of a man's height, with steps leading down to it. Encircling the rock are two railings of excellent workmanship, the one nearer the rock being artistically constructed in iron and the other of wood.

### **The Christian holy places**

Among the grace-bestowing sanctuaries of Jerusalem is a building, situated on the farther side of the valley called the valley of Jahannam [Gehenna] to the east of the town, on a high hill. This building is said to mark the place whence Jesus ascended to heaven. In the bottom of the same valley is a church venerated by the Christians, who say that it contains the grave of Mary. In the same place there is another church which the Christians venerate and to which they come on pilgrimage. This is the church of which they are falsely persuaded to believe that it contains the grave of Jesus [Church of the Holy Sepulcher]. All who come on pilgrimage to visit it pay a stipulated tax to the Muslims, and suffer very unwillingly various humiliations. Thereabouts also is the place of the cradle of Jesus which is visited in order to obtain blessing.

Ibn Battuta arrives at Damascus pp. 65-73

I entered Damascus on Thursday 9th Ramadan 726 [9th August, 1326], and lodged at the Malikite college called ash-Sharabishiya. Damascus surpasses all other cities in beauty, and no description, however full, can do justice to its charms.

### **The Umayyad Mosque**

The Cathedral Mosque, known as the Umayyad Mosque, is the most magnificent mosque in the world, the finest in construction and noblest in beauty, grace and perfection; it is matchless and unequalled. The person who undertook its construction was the Caliph Walid I [AD 705-715]. He applied to the Roman Emperor at Constantinople, ordering him to send craftsmen to him, and the Emperor sent him

twelve thousand of them. The site of the mosque was a church, and when the Muslims captured Damascus, one of their commanders entered from one side by the sword and reached as far as the middle of the church, while the other entered peaceably from the eastern side and reached the middle also. So the Muslims made the half of the church which they had entered by force into a mosque and the half which they had entered by peaceful agreement remained as a church. When Walid decided to extend the mosque over the entire church he asked the Greeks to sell him their church for whatsoever equivalent they desired, but they refused, so he seized it. The Christians used to say that whoever destroyed the church would be stricken with madness and they told that to Walid. But he replied "I shall be the first to be stricken by madness in the service of God," and seizing an axe, he set to work to knock it down with his own hands. The Muslims on seeing that followed his example, and God proved false the assertion of the Christians.

This mosque has four doors. The southern door, called the "Door of Increase," is approached by a spacious passage where the dealers in second-hand goods and other commodities have their shops. Through it lies the way to the [former] Cavalry House, and on the left as one emerges from it is the coppersmiths' gallery, a large bazaar, one of the finest in Damascus, extending along the south wall of the mosque. This bazaar occupies the site of the palace of the Caliph Mu'awiya I, which was called al Khadri [The Green Palace]; the Abbasids pulled it down and a bazaar took its place.

The eastern door, called the Jayrun door, is the largest of the doors of the mosque. It also has a large passage, leading out to a large and extensive colonnade which is entered through a quintuple gateway between six tall columns. Along both sides of this passage are pillars, supporting circular galleries, where the cloth merchants amongst others have their shops; above these again are long galleries in which are the shops of the jewellers and booksellers and makers of admirable glass-ware. In the square adjoining the first door are the stalls of the principal notaries, in each of which there may be five or six witnesses in attendance and a person authorized by the qadi to perform marriage-ceremonies. The other notaries are scattered throughout the city. Near these stalls is the bazaar of the stationers who sell paper, pens, and ink. In the middle of the passage there is a large round marble basin, surrounded by a pavilion supported on marble columns but lacking a roof. In the centre of the basin is a copper pipe which forces out water under pressure so that it rises into the air more than a man's height. They call it "The Waterspout" and it is a fine sight. To the right as one comes out of the Jayrun door, which is called also the "Door of the Hours," is an upper gallery shaped like a large arch, within which there are small open arches furnished with doors, to the number of the hours of the day. These doors are painted green on the inside and yellow on the outside, and as each hour of the day passes the green inner side of the door is turned to the outside, and vice versa. They say that inside the gallery there is a person in the room who is responsible for turning them by hand as the hours pass.

The western door is called the "Door of the Post"; the passage outside it contains the shops of the candlemakers and a gallery for the sale of fruit.

The northern door is called the "Door of the Confectioners "; it too has a large passageway, and on the right as one leaves it is a khanqah, which has a large basin of water in the centre and lavatories supplied with running water. At each of the four doors of the mosque is a building for ritual ablutions, containing about a hundred rooms abundantly supplied with running water.

### **A controversial theologian**

One of the principal Hanbalite doctors at Damascus was Taqi ad-Din Ibn Taymiya, a man of great ability and wide learning, but with some kink in his brain. The people of Damascus idolized him. He used to preach to them from the pulpit, and one day he made some statement that the other theologians disapproved; they carried the case to the sultan and in consequence Ibn Taymiya was imprisoned for some years. While he was in prison he wrote a commentary on the Koran, which he called " The Ocean," in about forty volumes. Later on his mother presented herself before the sultan and interceded for him, so he was set at liberty, until he did the same thing again. I was in Damascus at the time and attended the service which he was conducting one Friday, as he was addressing and admonishing the people from the pulpit. In the midst of his discourse he said "Verily God descends to the sky over our world [from Heaven] in the same bodily fashion that I make this descent," and stepped down one step of the pulpit. A Malikite doctor present contradicted him and objected to his statement, but the common people rose up against this doctor and beat him with their hands and their shoes so severely that his turban fell off and disclosed a silken skull-cap on his head. Inveighing against him for wearing this, they haled him before the qadi of the Hanbalites, who ordered him to be imprisoned and afterwards had him beaten. The other doctors objected to this treatment and carried the matter before the principal amir, who wrote to the sultan about the matter and at the same time drew up a legal attestation against Ibn Taymiya for various heretical pronouncements. This deed was sent on to the sultan, who gave orders that Ibn Taymiya should be imprisoned in the citadel, and there he remained until his death.

### **The Plague of 1348**

One of the celebrated sanctuaries at Damascus is the Mosque of the Footprints (al-Aqdam), which lies two miles south of the city, alongside the main highway which leads to the Hijaz, Jerusalem, and Egypt. It is a large mosque, very blessed, richly endowed, and very highly venerated by the Damascenes. The footprints from which it derives its name are certain footprints impressed upon a rock there, which are said to be the mark of Moses' foot. In this mosque there is a small chamber containing a stone with the following inscription "A certain pious man saw in his sleep the Chosen One [Muhammad], who said to him 'Here is the grave of my brother Moses.'"

I saw a remarkable instance of the veneration in which the Damascenes hold this mosque during the great pestilence on my return journey through Damascus, in the

latter part of July 1348. The viceroy Arghun Shah ordered a crier to proclaim through Damascus that all the people should fast for three days and that no one should cook anything eatable in the market during the daytime. For most of the people there eat no food but what has been prepared in the market. So the people fasted for three successive days, the last of which was a Thursday, then they assembled in the Great Mosque, amirs, sharifs, qadis, theologians, and all the other classes of the people, until the place was filled to overflowing, and there they spent the Thursday night in prayers and litanies. After the dawn prayer next morning they all went out together on foot, holding Korans in their hands, and the amirs barefooted. The procession was joined by the entire population of the town, men and women, small and large; the Jews came with their Book of the Law and the Christians with their Gospel, all of them with their women and children. The whole concourse, weeping and supplicating and seeking the favour of God through His Books and His Prophets, made their way to the Mosque of the Footprints, and there they remained in supplication and invocation until near midday. They then returned to the city and held the Friday service, and God lightened their affliction; for the number of deaths in a single day at Damascus did not attain two thousand, while in Cairo and Old Cairo it reached the figure of twenty-four thousand a day.

### **The good and pious works of the Damascenes**

The variety and expenditure of the religious endowments at Damascus are beyond computation. There are endowments in aid of persons who cannot undertake the pilgrimage to Mecca, out of which are paid the expenses of those who go in their stead. There are other endowments for supplying wedding outfits to girls whose families are unable to provide them, and others for the freeing of prisoners. There are endowments for travellers, out of the revenues of which they are given food, clothing, and the expenses of conveyance to their countries. Then there are endowments for the improvement and paving of the streets, because all the lanes in Damascus have pavements on either side, on which the foot passengers walk, while those who ride use the roadway in the centre.

### **The story of a slave who broke a valuable dish**

Besides these there are endowments for other charitable purposes. One day as I went along a lane in Damascus I saw a small slave who had dropped a Chinese porcelain dish, which was broken to bits. A number of people collected round him and one of them said to him, "Gather up the pieces and take them to the custodian of the endowments for utensils." He did so, and the man went with him to the custodian, where the slave showed the broken pieces and received a sum sufficient to buy a similar dish. This is an excellent institution, for the master of the slave would undoubtedly have beaten him, or at least scolded him, for breaking the dish, and the slave would have been heartbroken and upset at the accident. This benefaction is indeed a mender of hearts--may God richly reward him whose zeal for good works rose to such heights!

## **The hospitality and friendship received by Ibn Battuta**

The people of Damascus vie with one another in building mosques, religious houses, colleges and mausoleums. They have a high opinion of the North Africans, and freely entrust them with the care of their moneys, wives, and children. All strangers amongst them [i.e., among North Africans like Ibn Battuta] are handsomely treated and care is taken that they are not forced to any action that might injure their self-respect.

When I came to Damascus a firm friendship sprang up between the Malikite professor Nur ad-Din Sakhawi and me, and he besought me to breakfast at his house during the nights of Ramadan. After I had visited him for four nights I had a stroke of fever and absented myself. He sent in search of me, and although I pleaded my illness in excuse he refused to accept it. I went back to his house and spent the night there, and when I desired to take my leave the next morning he would not hear of it, but said to me "Consider my house as your own or as your father's or brother's." He then had a doctor sent for, and gave orders that all the medicines and dishes that the doctor prescribed were to be made for me in his house. I stayed thus with him until the Fast-breaking when I went to the festival prayers and God healed me of what had befallen me. Meanwhile, all the money I had for my expenses was exhausted. Nur ad-Din, learning this, hired camels for me and gave me travelling and other provisions, and money in addition, saying "It will come in for any serious matter that may land you in difficulties"-may God reward him !

## **Funeral customs**

The Damascenes observe an admirable order in funeral processions. They walk in front of the bier while reciters intone the Koran in beautiful and affecting voices, and pray over it in the Cathedral mosque. When the reading is completed the muezzins rise and say "Reflect on your prayer for so-and-so, the pious and learned," describing him with good epithets, and having prayed over him they take him to his grave.

## **Ibn Battuta leaves Damascus with the annual pilgrim caravan**

When the new moon of the month Shawwal appeared in the same year [1st September 1326], the Hijaz caravan left Damascus and I set off along with it. At Bosra the caravans usually halt for four days so that any who have been detained at Damascus by business affairs may make up on them. Thence they go to the Pool of Ziza, where they stop for a day, and then through al-Lajjun to the Castle of Karak. Karak, which is also called "The Castle of the Raven," is one of the most marvellous, impregnable, and celebrated of fortresses. It is surrounded on all sides by the river-bed, and has but one gate, the entrance to which is hewn in the living rock, as also is the approach to its vestibule. This fortress is used by kings as a place of refuge in times of calamity, as the sultan an-Nasir did when his mamluke Salar seized the supreme authority. The caravan stopped for four days at a place called ath-Thaniya outside Karak, where preparations were made for entering the desert.

Thence we Journeyed to Ma'an, which is the last town in Syria, and from 'Aqabat as-Sawan entered the desert, of which the saying goes: " He who enters it is lost, and he who leaves it is born."

### **Crossing the desert from Syria to Medina**

After a march of two days we halted at Dhat Hajj, where there are subterranean waterbeds but no habitations, and then went on to Wadi Baldah (in which there is no water) and to Tabuk, which is the place to which the Prophet led an expedition. The great caravan halts at Tabuk for four days to rest and to water the camels and lay in water for the terrible desert between Tabuk and al-Ula. The custom of the watercarriers is to camp beside the spring, and they have tanks made of buffalo hides, like great cisterns, from which they water the camels and fill the waterskins. Each amir or person of rank has a special tank for the needs of his own camels and personnel; the other people make private agreements with the watercarriers to water their camels and fill their waterskins for a fixed sum of money.

From Tabuk the caravan travels with great speed night and day, for fear of this desert. Halfway through is the valley of al-Ukhaydir, which might well be the valley of Hell (may God preserve us from it). One year the pilgrims suffered terribly here from the samoom-wind; the water-supplies dried up and the price of a single drink rose to a thousand dinars, but both seller and buyer perished. Their story is written on a rock in the valley.

Five days after leaving Tabuk they reach the well of al-Hijr, which has an abundance of water, but not a soul draws water there, however violent his thirst, following the example of the Prophet, who passed it on his expedition to Tabuk and drove on his camel, giving orders that none should drink of its waters. Here, in some hills of red rock, are the dwellings of Thamud. They are cut in the rock and have carved thresholds. Anyone seeing them would take them to be of recent construction. [The] decayed bones [of the former inhabitants] are to be seen inside these houses.

Al-Ula, a large and pleasant village with palm-gardens and water-springs, lies half a day's journey or less from al-Hijr. The pilgrims halt there four days to provision themselves and wash their clothes. They leave behind them here any surplus of provisions they may have, taking with them nothing but what is strictly necessary. The people of the village are very trustworthy. The Christian merchants of Syria may come as far as this and no further, and they trade in provisions and other goods with the pilgrims here. On the third day after leaving al-Ula the caravan halts in the outskirts of the holy city of Medina.

### **Ibn Battuta visits the holy sites of Medina pp. 74-77.**

That same evening [the third day after leaving al-Ula, on the route from Syria and Damascus] we entered the holy sanctuary and reached the illustrious mosque, halting in salutation at the Gate of Peace; then we prayed in the illustrious "garden" between the tomb of the Prophet and the noble pulpit, and reverently touched the fragment that

remains of the palm-trunk against which the Prophet stood when he preached. Having paid our meed of salutation to the lord of men from first to last, the intercessor for sinners, the Prophet of Mecca, Muhammad, as well as to his two companions who share his grave, Abu Bakr and 'Omar, we returned to our camp, rejoicing at this great favour bestowed upon us, praising God for our having reached the former abodes and the magnificent sanctuaries of His holy Prophet, and praying Him to grant that this visit should not be our last and that we might be of those whose pilgrimage is accepted.

On this journey, our stay at Medina lasted four days. We used to spend every night in the illustrious mosque, where the people, after forming circles in the courtyard and, lighting large numbers of candles, would pass the time either in reciting the Koran from volumes set on rests in front of them, or in intoning litanies, or in visiting the sanctuaries of the holy tomb.

### **From Medina to Mecca through a final desert, the vale of Bazwa**

We then set out from Medina towards Mecca, and halted near the mosque of Dhu'l-Hulayfa, five miles away. It was at this point that the Prophet assumed the pilgrim garb and obligations, and here too I divested myself of my tailored clothes, bathed, and putting on the pilgrim's garment I prayed and dedicated myself to the pilgrimage. Our fourth halt from here was at Badr, where God aided His Prophet and performed His promise. It is a village containing a series of palm-gardens and a bubbling spring with a stream flowing from it. Our way lay thence through a frightful desert called the Vale of Bazwa for three days to the valley of Rabigh where the rainwater forms pools which lie stagnant for a long time. From this point (which is just before Juhfa) the pilgrims from Egypt and Northwest Africa put on the pilgrim garment. Three days after leaving Rabigh we reached the pool of Khulays which lies in a plain and has many palm-gardens. The Bedouin of that neighbourhood hold a market there, to which they bring sheep, fruits, and condiments. Thence we travelled through 'Usfan to the Bottom of Marr, a fertile valley with numerous palms and a spring supplying a stream from which the district is irrigated. From this valley fruit and vegetables are transported to Mecca

We set out at night from this blessed valley, with hearts full of joy at reaching the goal of our hopes, and in the morning arrived at the City of Surety, Mecca (may God ennoble her !), where we immediately entered the holy sanctuary and began the rites of pilgrimage.

### **The pious kindness of the people of Mecca**

The inhabitants of Mecca are distinguished by many excellent and noble activities and qualities, by their beneficence to the humble and weak, and by their kindness to strangers. When any of them makes a feast, he begins by giving food to the religious devotees who are poor and without resources, inviting them first with kindness and delicacy. The majority of these unfortunates are to be found by the public bakehouses, and when anyone has his bread baked and takes it away to his house, they follow him and he gives each one of them some share of it, sending away none disappointed. Even

if he has but a single loaf, he gives away a third or a half of it, cheerfully and without any grudgingness.

Another good habit of theirs is this. The orphan children sit in the bazaar, each with two baskets, one large and one small. When one of the townspeople comes to the bazaar and buys cereals, meat and vegetables, he hands them to one of these boys, who puts the cereals in one basket and the meat and vegetables in the other and takes them to the man's house, so that his meal may be prepared. Meanwhile the man goes about his devotions and his business. There is no instance of any of the boys having ever abused their trust in this matter, and they are given a fixed fee of a few coppers.

### **The cleanliness of the people of Mecca**

The Meccans are very elegant and clean in their dress, and most of them wear white garments, which you always see fresh and snowy. They use a great deal of perfume and kohl and make free use of toothpicks of green arak-wood. The Meccan women are extraordinarily beautiful and very pious and modest. They too make great use of perfumes to such a degree that they will spend the night hungry in order to buy perfumes with the price of their food. They visit the mosque every Thursday night, wearing their finest apparel; and the whole sanctuary is saturated with the smell of their perfume. When one of these women goes away the odour of the perfume clings to the place after she has gone.

On the caravan route to Basra from Mecca to Medina pp. 86-87.

Three days' march through this district brought us to the town of Wisit. Its inhabitants are among the best people in Iraq--indeed, the very vest of them without qualification. All the Iraqis who wish to learn how to recite the Koran come here, and our caravan contained a number of students who had come for that purpose.

### **The customs of the Ahmadi dervishes at Umm 'Ubayda**

As the caravan stayed here [Wisit] three days, I had an opportunity of visiting the grave of ar-Rifai which is at a village called Umm 'Ubayda, one day's journey from there. I reached the establishment at noon the next day and found it to be an enormous monastery containing thousands of darwishes [dervishes]. After the mid-afternoon prayer drums and kettledrums were beaten and the darwishes began to dance. After this they prayed the sunset prayer and brought in the meal, consisting of rice-bread, fish, milk and dates. After the night prayer they began to recite their litany. A number of loads of wood had been brought in and kindled into a flame, and they went into the fire dancing; some of them rolled in it and others ate it in their mouths until they had extinguished it entirely. This is the peculiar custom of the Ahmadi darwishes. Some of them take large snakes and bite their heads with their teeth until they bite them clean through.

### **Ibn Battuta comes to Basra**



After visiting ar-Rifai's tomb I returned to Wasit and found that the caravan had already started, but overtook them on the way, and accompanied them to Basra. As we approached the city I had remarked at a distance of some two miles from it a lofty building resembling a fortress. I asked about it and was told that it was the mosque of 'Ali. Basra was in former times a city so vast that this mosque stood in the centre of the town, whereas now it is two miles outside it. Two miles beyond it again is the old wall that encircled the town, so that it stands midway between the old wall and the present city.

Basra is one of the metropolitan cities of Iraq and no place on earth excels it in quantity of palm-groves. The current price of dates in its market is fourteen pounds to an Iraqi dirham, which is one-third of a nuqra. The qadi sent me a hamper of dates that a man could scarcely carry; I sold them and received nine dirhams, and three of those were taken by the porter for carrying the basket from the house to the market.

### **The kindness and ignorance of the inhabitants**

The inhabitants of Basra possess many excellent qualities; they are affable to strangers and give them their due, so that no stranger ever feels lonely amongst them. They hold the Friday service in the mosque of 'Ali mentioned above, but for the rest of the week it is closed. I was present once at the Friday service in this mosque and when the preacher rose to deliver his discourse he committed many gross errors of grammar. In astonishment at this I spoke of it to the qadi and this is what he said to me: "In this town there is not a man left who knows anything of the science of grammar." Here is a lesson for those who will reflect on it--Magnified be He who changes all things! This Basra, in whose people the mastery of grammar reached its height, from whose soil sprang its trunk and its branches, amongst whose inhabitants is numbered the leader whose primacy is undisputed--the preacher in this town cannot deliver a discourse without breaking its rules!

### **Ibn Battuta leaves Basra by boat**

At Basra I embarked in a sumbuq, that is a small boat, for Ubulla, which lies ten miles distant. One travels between a constant succession of orchards and palm-groves both to right and left, with merchants sitting in the shade of the trees selling bread, fish, dates, milk and fruit. Ubulla was formerly a large town, frequented by merchants from India and Firs, but it fell into decay and is now a village.

Ibn Battuta describes the city of Baghdad pp. 99-101.

Thence we travelled to Baghdad, the Abode of Peace and Capital of Islam. Here there are two bridges like that at Hilla on which the people promenade night and day, both men and women. The town has eleven cathedral mosques, eight on the right bank and three on the left, together with very many other mosques and madrasas, only the latter are all in ruins.

The baths at Baghdad are numerous and excellently constructed, most of them being painted with pitch, which has the appearance of black marble. This pitch is brought from a spring between Kufa and Basra, from which it flows continually. It gathers at the sides of the spring like clay and is shovelled up and brought to Baghdad. Each establishment has a large number of private bathrooms, every one of which has also a wash-basin in the corner, with two taps supplying hot and cold water. Every bather is given three towels, one to wear round his waist when he goes in, another to wear round his waist when he comes out, and the third to dry himself with. In no town other than Baghdad have I seen all this elaborate arrangement, though some other towns approach it in this respect.

The western part of Baghdad was the earliest to be built, but it is now for the most part in ruins. In spite of that there remain in it still thirteen quarters, each like a city in itself and possessing two or three baths. The hospital (maristan) is a vast ruined edifice, of which only vestiges remain.

The eastern part has an abundance of bazaars, the largest of which is called the Tuesday bazaar. On this side there are no fruit trees, but all the fruit is brought from the western side, where there are orchards and gardens.

### **Ibn Battuta leaves Baghdad for Persia and the city of Tabriz**

I left Baghdad with the mahalla of Sultan Abu Sa'id, on purpose to see the way in which the king's marches are conducted and travelled with it for ten days, thereafter accompanying one of the amirs to the town of Tabriz.

Ibn Battuta journeys to Tabriz pp. 101-102.

I left Baghdad with the mahalla of Sultan Abu Sa'id, on purpose to see the way in which the king's marches are conducted, and travelled with it for ten days, thereafter accompanying one of the amirs to the town of Tabriz. We reached the town after ten days' travelling, and encamped outside it in a place called ash-Sham. Here there is a fine hospice, where travellers are supplied with food, consisting of bread, meat, rice cooked in butter, and sweetmeats.

### **The riches of the Ghazan bazaar in Tabriz**

The next morning I entered the town and we came to a great bazaar, called the Ghazan bazaar, one of the finest bazaars I have seen the world over. Every trade is grouped separately in it. I passed through the jewellers' bazaar, and my eyes were dazzled by the varieties of precious stones that I beheld. They were displayed by beautiful slaves wearing rich garments with a waist-sash of silk, who stood in front of the merchants, exhibiting the jewels to the wives of the Turks, while the women were buying them in large quantities and trying to outdo one another. As a result of all this I witnessed a riot--may God preserve us from such! We went on into the ambergris and musk market, and witnessed another riot like it or worse.

Ibn Battuta meets the Sultan

We spent only one night at Tabriz. Next day the amir received an order from the sultan to rejoin him, so I returned along with him, without having seen any of the learned men there [in Tabriz]. On reaching the camp the amir told the sultan about me and introduced me into his presence. The sultan asked me about my country, and gave me a robe and a horse. The amir told him that I was intending to go to the Hijaz, whereupon he gave orders for me to be supplied with provisions and to travel with the cortege of the commander of the pilgrim caravan, and wrote instructions to that effect to the governor of Baghdad. I returned therefore to Baghdad and received in full what the sultan had ordered. As more than two months remained before the period when the pilgrim caravan was to set out, I thought it a good plan to make a journey to Mosul and Diyar Bakr to see those districts and then return to Baghdad when the Hijaz caravan was due to start.

After returning to Baghdad, Ibn Battuta makes his second pilgrimage to Mecca

Ibn Battuta returns to Mecca with the Baghdad pilgrim's caravan pp. 104-107.

When we arrived at Baghdad [after touring Tabriz and other cities in Iran and Iraq] I found the pilgrims preparing for the journey, so I went to visit the governor and asked him for the things which the sultan had ordered for me. He assigned me the half of a camel-litter and provisions and water for four persons, writing out an order to that effect, then sent for the leader of the caravan and commended me to him. I had already made the acquaintance of the latter, but our friendship was strengthened and I remained under his protection and favoured by his bounty, for he gave me even more than had been ordered for me.

As we left Kufa I fell ill of a diarrhoea and had to be dismounted from the camel many times a day. The commander of the caravan used to make enquiries for my condition and give instructions that I should be looked after. My illness continued until I reached Mecca, the Sanctuary of God (may He exalt her honour and greatness!) I made the circuit of the Sacred Edifice [the Ka'aba] on arrival, but I was so weak that I had to carry out the prescribed ceremonies seated, and I made the circuit and the ritual visitation of Safa and Marwa riding on the amir's horse. When we camped at Mina I began to feel relief and to recover from my malady. At the end of the Pilgrimage I remained at Mecca all that year, giving myself up entirely to pious exercises and leading a most agreeable existence After the next Pilgrimage [of AD 1328] I spent another year there, and yet another after that.

### **Ibn Battuta leaves Mecca for the port of Jedda and a voyage down the Red Sea to Yemen**

After the Pilgrimage at the close of the year [AD 1330] I set out from Mecca, making for Yemen. I arrived at Judda [Jedda], an ancient town on the sea-coast, which is said to have been built by the Persians. . . . We embarked here on a boat which they called a jalba. The Sharif Mansur embarked on another and desired me to accompany him, but I refused. He had a number of camels in his jalba and that frightened me, as I had never travelled on sea before. For two days we sailed with a favouring wind, then it

changed and drove us out of our course. The waves came overboard into our midst and the passengers fell grievously sick.

These terrors continued until we emerged at a roadstead called Ra's Dawa'ir between Aydhab and Sawakin. We landed here and found on the shore a reed hut shaped like a mosque, inside which were ostrich egg-shells filled with water. We drank from these and cooked food. A party of Bejas came to us, so we hired camels from them and travelled with them through a country in which there are many gazelles. The Bejas do not eat them so they are tame and do not run away from men. After two days' travelling we reached the island of Sawakin [Suakin]. It is a large island lying about six miles off the coast and has neither water nor cereal crops nor trees. Water is brought to it in boats, and it has large reservoirs for collecting rainwater. The flesh of ostriches, gazelles and wild asses is to be had in it, and it has many goats together with milk and butter, which is exported to Mecca. Their cereal is jurjur, a kind of coarse grained millet, which is also exported to Mecca. The sultan of Sawakin when I was there was the Sharif Zayd, the son of the amir of Mecca.

We took ship at Sawakin for Yemen. No sailing is done on this sea at night because of the number of rocks in it. At nightfall they land and embark again at sunrise. The captain of the ship stands constantly at the prow to warn the steersman of rocks. Six days after leaving Sawakin we reached the town of Hali, a large and populous town inhabited by two Arab tribes. The sultan is a man of excellent character, a man of letters and a poet. I had accompanied him from Mecca to Judda, and when I reached his city he treated me generously and made me his guest for several days. I embarked in a ship of his and reached the township of Sarja, which is inhabited by Yemenite merchants.

### **Ibn Battuta arrives in Yemen, first visiting the town of Zabid pp.108-110.**

Zabid is a hundred and twenty miles from San'a, and is after San'a the largest and wealthiest town in Yemen. It lies amidst luxuriant gardens with many streams and fruits, such as bananas and the like. It is in the interior, not on the coast, and is one of the capital cities of the country. The town is large and populous, with palm-groves, orchards, and running streams--in fact, the pleasantest and most beautiful town in Yemen. Its inhabitants are charming in their manners, upright, and handsome, and the women especially are exceedingly beautiful.

The people of this town hold the famous [picnics called] subut an-nakhl in this wise. They go out to the palmgroves every Saturday during the season of the colouring and ripening of the dates. Not a soul remains in the town, whether of the townsfolk or of the visitors. The musicians go out [to entertain them], and the shopkeepers go out selling fruits and sweetmeats. The women go in litters on camels. For all we have said of their exceeding beauty they are virtuous and possessed of excellent qualities. They show a predilection for foreigners, and do not refuse to marry them, as the women in our country [Tangiers, Morocco] do. When a woman's husband wishes to travel she goes out with him and bids him farewell, and if they have a child, it is she who takes

care of it and supplies its wants until the father returns. While he is absent she demands nothing from him for maintenance or clothes or anything else, and while he stays with her she is content with very little for upkeep and clothing. But the women never leave their own towns, and none of them would consent to do so, however much she were offered.

### **Ibn Battuta travels on to Ta'izz and San'a**

We went on from there to the town of Ta'izz, the capital of the king of Yemen, and one of the finest and largest towns in that country. Its people are overbearing, insolent, and rude, as is generally the case in towns where kings reside. Ta'izz is made up of three quarters; the first is the residence of the king and his court, the second, called 'Udayna, is the military station, and the third, called al-Mahalib, is inhabited by the commonalty, and contains the principal market.

The sultan of Yemen is Nur ad-Din 'Ali of the house of Rasul. He uses an elaborate ceremonial in his audiences and progresses. The fourth day after our arrival was a Thursday, on which day the king holds a public audience. The qadi presented me to him and I saluted him. The way in which one salutes is to touch the ground with the index-finger, then lift it to the head and say "May God prolong thy Majesty." I did as the qadi had done, and the king, having ordered me to sit in front of him, questioned me about my country and the other lands and princes I had seen. The wazir was present, and the king ordered him to treat me honourably and arrange for my lodging.

After staying some days as his guest I set out for the town of San'a', which was the former capital, a populous town built of brick and plaster, with a temperate climate and good water. A strange thing about the rain in India, Yemen, and Abyssinia is that it falls only in the hot weather, and mostly every afternoon during that season, so travellers always make haste about noon to avoid being caught by the rain, and the townsfolk retire indoors, for their rains are heavy downpours. The whole town of San'a is paved, so that when the rain falls it washes and cleans all the streets.

### **Ibn Battuta arrives in Aden**

I travelled thence to 'Aden, the port of Yemen, on the coast of the ocean. It is surrounded by mountains and can be approached from one side only; it has no crops, trees, or water, but has reservoirs in which rainwater is collected. The Arabs often cut off the inhabitants from their supply of drinking-water until they buy them off with money and pieces of cloth. It is an exceedingly hot place. It is the port of the Indians, and to it come large vessels from Kinbayat [Cambay], Kawlam [Quilon], Calicut and many other Malabar ports [on the south-west coast of India]. There are Indian merchants living there, as well as Egyptian merchants. Its inhabitants are all either merchants, porters, or fishermen. Some of the merchants are immensely rich, so rich that sometimes a single merchant is sole owner of a large ship with all it contains, and this is a subject of ostentation and rivalry amongst them. In spite of that they are pious, humble, upright, and generous in character, treat strangers well, give liberally to devotees, and pay in full the tithes due to God.

Ibn Battuta sails along the east coast of Africa pp. 110-112

I took ship at Aden, and after four days at sea reached Zayla [Zeila, on the African coast], the town of the Berberah, who are a negro people. Their land is a desert extending for two months' journey from Zayla to Maqdashaw [Mogadishu]. Zayla is a large city with a great bazaar, but it is the dirtiest, most abominable, and most stinking town in the world. The reason for the stench is the quantity of its fish and the blood of the camels that they slaughter in the streets. When we got there, we chose to spend the night at sea, in spite of its extreme roughness, rather than in the town, because of its filth.

### **The town of Mogadishu in Somalia**

On leaving Zayla we sailed for fifteen days and came to Maqdasha [Mogadishu], which is an enormous town. Its inhabitants are merchants and have many camels, of which they slaughter hundreds every day [for food]. When a vessel reaches the port, it is met by sumbuqs, which are small boats, in each of which are a number of young men, each carrying a covered dish containing food. He presents this to one of the merchants on the ship saying "This is my guest," and all the others do the same. Each merchant on disembarking goes only to the house of the young man who is his host, except those who have made frequent journeys to the town and know its people well; these live where they please. The host then sells his goods for him and buys for him, and if anyone buys anything from him at too low a price, or sells to him in the absence of his host, the sale is regarded by them as invalid. This practice is of great advantage to them.

We stayed there [in Mogadishu] three days, food being brought to us three times a day, and on the fourth, a Friday, the qadi and one of the wazirs brought me a set of garments. We then went to the mosque and prayed behind the [sultan's] screen. When the Shaykh came out I greeted him and he bade me welcome. He put on his sandals, ordering the qadi and myself to do the same, and set out for his palace on foot. All the other people walked barefooted. Over his head were carried four canopies of coloured silk, each surmounted by a golden bird. After the palace ceremonies were over, all those present saluted and retired.

Ibn Battuta sails to Mombasa pp. 112-113.

I embarked at Maqdashaw [Mogadishu] for the Sawahil [Swahili] country, with the object of visiting the town of Kulwa [Kilwa, Quiloa] in the land of the Zanj.

We came to Mambasa [Mombasa], a large island two days' journey by sea from the Sawihil country. It possesses no territory on the mainland. They have fruit trees on the island, but no cereals, which have to be brought to them from the Sawahil. Their food consists chiefly of bananas and fish. The inhabitants are pious, honourable, and upright, and they have well-built wooden mosques.

### **Kulwa on the African mainland**

We stayed one night in this island [Mombasa], and then pursued our journey to Kulwa, which is a large town on the coast. The majority of its inhabitants are Zanj, jet-black in colour, and with tattoo marks on their faces. I was told by a merchant that the town of Sufala lies a fortnight's journey [south] from Kulwa and that gold dust is brought to Sufala from Yufi in the country of the Limis, which is a month's journey distant from it. Kulwa is a very fine and substantially built town, and all its buildings are of wood. Its inhabitants are constantly engaged in military expeditions, for their country is contiguous to the heathen Zanj.

The sultan at the time of my visit was Abu'l-Muzaffar Hasan, who was noted for his gifts and generosity. He used to devote the fifth part of the booty made on his expeditions to pious and charitable purposes, as is prescribed in the Koran, and I have seen him give the clothes off his back to a mendicant who asked him for them. When this liberal and virtuous sultan died, he was succeeded by his brother Dawud, who was at the opposite pole from him in this respect. Whenever a petitioner came to him, he would say, "He who gave is dead, and left nothing behind him to be given." Visitors would stay at his court for months on end, and finally he would make them some small gift, so that at last people gave up going to his gate.

Ibn Battuta returns to Yemen pp. 113-115.

From Kulwa we sailed to Dhafari [Dhofar], at the extremity of Yemen [near the border with Oman]. Thoroughbred horses are exported from here to India, the passage taking a month with a favouring wind. Dhafari is a month's journey from 'Aden across the desert, and is situated in a desolate locality without villages or dependencies. Its market is one of the dirtiest in the world and the most pestered by flies because of the quantity of fruit and fish sold there. Most of the fish are of the kind called sardines, which are extremely fat in that country. A curious fact is that these sardines are the sole food of their beasts and flocks, a thing which I have seen nowhere else. Most of the sellers [in the market] are female slaves, who wear black garments. The inhabitants cultivate millet and irrigate it from very deep wells, the water from which is raised in a large bucket drawn up by a number of ropes attached to the waists of slaves. Their principal food is rice imported from India.

### **The people of Dhofar and their customs**

Its population consists of merchants who live entirely on trade. When a vessel arrives they take the master, captain and writer in procession to the sultan's palace and entertain the entire ship's company for three days in order to gain the goodwill of the shipmasters. Another curious thing is that its people closely resemble the people of Northwest Africa in their customs.

### **Banana, betel, and coconut trees**

In the neighbourhood of the town there are orchards with many banana trees. The bananas are of immense size; one which was weighed in my presence scaled twelve ounces and was pleasant to the taste and very sweet. They grow also betel-trees and

coco-palms, which are found only in India and the town of Dhafari. Since we have mentioned these trees, we shall describe them and their properties here.

Betel-trees are grown like vines on cane trellises or else trained up coco-palms. They have no fruit and are grown only for their leaves. The Indians have a high opinion of betel, and if a man visits a friend and the latter gives him five leaves of it, you would think he had given him the world, especially if he is a prince or notable. A gift of betel is a far greater honour than a gift of gold and silver. It is used in this way. First one takes areca-nuts, which are like nutmegs, crushes them into small bits and chews them. Then the betel leaves are taken, a little chalk is put on them, and they are chewed with the areca-nuts. They sweeten the breath and aid digestion, prevent the disagreeable effects of drinking water on an empty stomach, and stimulates the faculties.

The coco-palm is one of the strangest of trees, and looks exactly like a date-palm. The nut resembles a man's head, for it has marks like eyes and a mouth, and the contents, when it is green, are like the brain. It has fibre like hair, out of which they make ropes, which they use instead of nails to bind their ships together and also as cables. Amongst its properties are that it strengthens the body, fattens, and adds redness to the face. If it is cut open when it is green it gives a liquid deliciously sweet and fresh. After drinking this one takes a piece of the rind as a spoon and scoops out the pulp inside the nut. This tastes like an egg that has been broiled but not quite cooked, and is nourishing. I lived on it for a year and a half when I was in the Maldiv islands.

### **The many uses of the coconut**

One of its peculiarities is that oil, milk and honey are extracted from it. The honey is made in this fashion. They cut a stalk on which the fruit grows, leaving two fingers' length, and on this they tie a small bowl, into which the sap drips. If this has been done in the morning, a servant climbs up again in the evening with two bowls, one filled with water. He pours into the other the sap that has collected, then washes the stalk, cuts off a small piece, and ties on another bowl. The same thing is repeated next morning until a good deal of the sap has been collected, when it is cooked until it thickens. It then makes an excellent honey, and the merchants of India, Yemen, and China buy it and take it to their own countries, where they manufacture sweetmeats from it. The milk is made by steeping the contents of the nut in water, which takes on the colour and taste of milk and is used along with food. To make the oil, the ripe nuts are peeled and the contents dried in the sun, then cooked in cauldrons and the oil extracted. They use it for lighting and dip bread in it, and the women put it on their hair.

Ibn Battuta arrives in Oman pp. 118-122

It is a fertile land, with streams trees, orchards, palm gardens, and fruit trees of various kinds. Its capital, the town of Nazwa, lies at the foot of a mountain and has fine bazaars and splendid clean mosques. Its inhabitants make a habit of eating meals in the courts of the mosques, every person bringing what he has, and all sitting down to he meal together, and travellers join in with them. They are very warlike and brave, always fighting between themselves. The sultan of Oman is an Arab of the tribe of Azd,



and is called Abu Muhammad, which is the title given to every sultan who governs Oman. The towns on the coast are for the most part under the government of Hormuz.

### **The city of Hormuz**

I travelled next to the country of Hormuz. Hormuz is a town on the coast, called also Mughistan, and in the sea facing it and nine miles from shore is New Hormuz, which is an island. The town on it is called Jarawn. It is a large and fine city, with busy markets, as it is the port from which the wares from India and Sind are despatched to the Iraqs, Firs and Khurasan. The island is saline, and the inhabitants live on fish and dates exported to them from Basra. They say in their tongue . . . "Dates and fish are a royal dish."

Water is a valuable commodity in this island. They have wells and artificial reservoirs to collect rainwater at some distance from the town. The inhabitants go there with waterskins, which they fill and carry on their backs to the shore, load them on boats and bring them to the town.

### **Ibn Battuta leaves Hormuz by land and crosses a desert**

We set out from Hormuz to visit a saintly man in the town of Khunjubal, and after crossing the strait, hired mounts from the Turkmens who live in that country. No travelling can be done there except in their company, because of their bravery and knowledge of the roads. In these parts there is a desert four days' journey in extent, which is the haunt of Arab brigands, and in which the deadly samum [simoom] blows in June and July. All who are overtaken by it perish, and I was told that when a man has fallen a victim to this wind and his friends attempt to wash his body [for burial], all his limbs fall apart. All along the road there are graves of persons who have succumbed there to this wind. We used to travel by night, and halt from sunrise until late afternoon in the shade of the trees.

This desert was the scene of the exploits of the famous brigand Jamal al-Luk, who had under him a band of Arab and Persian horsemen. He used to build hospices and entertain travellers with the money that he gained by robbery, and it is said that he used to claim that he never employed violence except against those who did not pay the tithes on their property. No king could do anything against him, but afterwards he repented and gave himself up to ascetic practices and his grave is now a place of pilgrimage.

We went on to the town of Khunjubal, the residence of the Shaykh Abu Dulaf, whom we had come to visit. We lodged in his hermitage and he treated me kindly and sent me food and fruit by one of his sons.

### **Pearl divers of the Persian Gulf**

From there we journeyed to the town of Qays, which is also called Siraf. The people of Siraf are Persians of noble stock, and amongst them there is a tribe of Arabs, who dive for pearls. The pearl fisheries are situated between Siraf and Bahrayn in a calm bay like

a wide river. During the months of April and May a large number of boats come to this place with divers and merchants from Firs, Bahrayn and Qathif. Before diving the diver puts on his face a sort of tortoiseshell mask and a tortoiseshell clip on his nose, then he ties a rope round his waist and dives. They differ in their endurance under water, some of them being able to stay under for an hour or two hours [sic] or less. When he reaches the bottom of the sea he finds the shells there stuck in the sand between small stones, and pulls them out by hand or cuts them loose with a knife which he has for the purpose, and puts them in a leather bag slung round his neck. When his breath becomes restricted he pulls the rope, and the man holding the rope on the shore feels the movement and pulls him up into the boat. The bag is taken from him and the shells are opened. Inside them are found pieces of flesh which are cut out with a knife, and when they come into contact with the air solidify and turn into pearls [sic]. These are then collected large and small together; the sultan takes his fifth and the remainder are bought by the merchants who are there in the boats. Most of them are the creditors of the divers, and they take the pearls in quittance of their debt [i.e., the debt of the divers] or so much of it as is their due.

Ibn Battuta in Jemma p. 123.

After the [AD 1332] pilgrimage I went to Jemma [Jemma], intending to take ship to Yemen and India, but that plan fell through and I could get no one to join me. I stayed at Jemma about forty days. There was a ship there going to Qusayr [Kosair], and I went on board to see what state it was in, but I was not satisfied. This was an act of providence, for the ship sailed and foundered in the open sea, and very few escaped.

Afterwards I took ship for Aydhab, but we were driven to a roadstead called Ra's Dawa'ir [on the Egyptian coast of the Red Sea], from which we made our way [overland] with some Bejas through the desert to Aydhab. Thence we travelled to Edfu [on the Nile] and down the Nile to Cairo, where I stayed for a few days, then set out for Syria and passed for the second time through Gaza, Hebron, Jerusalem, Ramleh Acre, Tripoli, and Jabala to Ladhikiya.

In Syria Ibn Battuta boards a Genoese merchant galley for the sea crossing to the southern coast of Anatolia; he then travels overland to the city of Konia

Ibn Battuta arrives in Konia pp. 130-134

It is a large town with fine buildings, and has many streams and fruit-gardens. The streets are exceedingly broad, and the bazaars admirably planned, with each craft in a bazaar of its own. It is said that this city was built by Alexander. It is now in the territories of Sultan Badr ad-Din ibn Quraman, whom we shall mention presently, but it has sometimes been captured by the king of Iraq, as it lies close to his territories in this country. We stayed there at the hospice of the qadi, who is called Ibn Qa'lam Shah, and is a member of the Futuwa. His hospice is very large indeed, and he has a great many disciples. They trace their affiliation to the Futuwa back to the Caliph 'Ali, and the distinctive garment of the order in their case is the trousers, just as the Sufis wear the

patched robe. This qadi showed us even greater consideration and hospitality than our former benefactors and sent his son with us in his place to the bath.

### **Leaving Konia, Ibn Battuta visits with the sultan of Birgi, a Turk**

We went on to the town of Birgi where we had been told there was a distinguished professor called Muhyi ad-Din. On reaching the madrasa we found him just arriving, mounted on a lively mule and wearing ample garments with gold embroidery, with his slaves and servants on either side of him and preceded by the students. He gave us a kindly welcome and invited me to visit him after the sunset prayer. I found him in a reception hall in his garden, which had a stream of water flowing through a white marble basin with a rim of enamelled tiles. He was occupying a raised seat covered with embroidered cloths, having a number of his students and slaves standing on either side of him, and when I saw him I took him for a king. He rose to greet me and made me sit next him on the dais, after which we were served with food and returned to the madrasa.

The sultan of Birgi was then at his summer quarters on a mountain close by and on receiving news of me from the professor sent for me. When I arrived with the professor he sent his two sons to ask how we were, and sent me a tent of the kind they call Khargah [kurgan]. It consists of wooden laths put together like a dome and covered with pieces of felt; the upper part is opened to admit the light and air and can be closed when required. Next day the sultan sent for us and asked me about the countries I had visited, then after food had been served we retired. This went on for several days, the sultan inviting us daily to join him at his meal, and one afternoon visiting us himself, on account of the respect which the Turks show for theologians. At length we both became weary of staying on this mountain, so the professor sent a message to the sultan that I wished to continue my journey, and received a reply that we should accompany the sultan to his palace in the city on the following day.

Next day he sent an excellent horse and descended with us to the city. On reaching the palace we climbed a long flight of stairs with him and came to a fine audience hall with a basin of water in the centre and a bronze lion at each corner of it spouting water from its mouth. Round the hall were daises covered with carpets, on one of which was the sultan's cushion. When we reached this place, the sultan removed his cushion and sat down beside us on the carpets. The Koran readers, who always attend the sultan's audiences, sat below the dais. After syrup and biscuits had been served I spoke thanking the sultan warmly and praising the professor, which pleased the sultan a great deal.

### **The sultan of Birgi shows Ibn Battuta an asteroid**

As we were sitting there, he said to me "Have you ever seen a stone that has fallen from the sky?" I replied " No, nor ever heard of one." "Well," he said, "a stone fell from the sky outside this town," and thereupon called for it to be brought. A great black stone was brought, very hard and with a glitter in it, I reckon its weight was about a hundredweight. The sultan sent for stone breakers, and four of them came and struck it

all together four times over with iron hammers, but made no impression on it. I was amazed, and he ordered it to be taken back to its place.

We stayed altogether fourteen days with this sultan. Every night he sent us food, fruit, sweetmeats and candles, and gave me in addition a hundred pieces of gold, a thousand dirhems, a complete set of garments and a Greek slave called Michael, as well as sending a robe and a gift of money to each of my companions. All this we owed to the professor Muhyi ad-Din--may God reward him with good !

### **Ibn Battuta buys a slave girl**

We went on through the town of Tim, which is in the territories of this sultan, to Aya Suluq [Ephesus], a large and ancient town venerated by the Greeks. It possesses a large church built of finely hewn stones, each measuring ten or more cubits in length. The cathedral mosque, which was formerly a church greatly venerated by the Greeks, is one of the most beautiful in the world. I bought a Greek slave girl here for forty dinars.

Ibn Battuta reaches Bursa pp. 136-137 and 141.

We journeyed next to Bursa [Brusa], a great city with fine bazaars and broad streets, surrounded by orchards and running springs. Outside it are two thermal establishments, one for men and the other for women, to which patients come from the most distant parts. They lodge there for three days at a hospice which was built by one of the Turkmen kings. In this town I met the pious Shaykh 'Abdullah the Egyptian, a traveller, who went all round the world, except that he never visited China, Ceylon, the West, or Spain or the Negrolands, so that in visiting those countries I have surpassed him.

### **Ibn Battuta travels on to Nicea, where he meets the Turkish sultan**

The sultan of Bursa is Orkhan Bek, son of Othman Chuk. He is the greatest of the Turkmen kings and the richest in wealth, lands, and military forces, and possesses nearly a hundred fortresses which he is continually visiting for inspection and putting to rights. He fights with the infidels and besieges them. It was his father who captured Bursa from the Greeks, and it is said that he besieged Yaznik [Nicea] for about twenty years, but died before it was taken. His son Orkhan besieged it twelve years before capturing it, and it was there that I saw him.

Yaznik lies in a lake and can be reached only by one road like a bridge admitting only a single horseman at a time. It is in ruins and uninhabited except for a few men in the Sultan's service. It is defended by four walls with a moat between each pair, and is entered over wooden drawbridges. Inside there are orchards and houses and fields, and drinking water is obtained from wells. I stayed in this town forty days owing to the illness of one of my horses, but growing impatient at the delay I left it and went on with three of my companions and a slave girl and two slave boys. We had no one with us who could speak Turkish well enough to interpret for us, for the interpreter we had left us at Yaznik.

After leaving this town [Nicea] we crossed a great river called Saqari [Sakaria] by a ferry. This consisted of four beams bound together with ropes, on which the passengers are placed, together with their saddles and baggage; it is pulled across by men on the further bank, and the horses swim behind.

### **Ibn Battuta continues on to Sinope on the Black Sea coast**

[Sinope is] a populous town combining strength with beauty. It is surrounded by sea except on the east, where there is only one gate which no one is allowed to enter without permission from the governor, Ibrahim Bek, who is a son of Sulayman Padshah. Outside the town there are eleven villages inhabited by Greek infidels. The cathedral mosque at Sanub [Sinope] is a most beautiful building, constructed by Sultan Parwanah. He was succeeded by his son Ghazi Chelebi, at whose death the town was seized by Sultan Sulayman. Ghazi Chelebi was a brave and audacious man, with a peculiar capacity for swimming under water. He used to sail out with his war vessels to fight the Greeks, and when the fleets met and everyone was occupied with the fighting he would dive under the water carrying an iron tool with which he pierced the enemy's ships, and they knew nothing about it until all at once they sank.

Ibn Battuta sails from Sinope to the Crimea pp. 147-155.

We stayed at Sanub [Sinope] about forty days waiting for the weather to become favourable for sailing to the town of Qiram [in the Crimea]. Then we hired a vessel belonging to the Greeks and waited another eleven days for a favourable wind. At length we set sail, but after travelling for three nights, we were beset in mid-sea by a terrible tempest. The storm raged with unparalleled fury, then the wind changed and drove us back nearly to Sanub. The weather cleared and we set out again, and after another tempest like the former, we at length saw the hills on the land. We made for a harbour called Karsh [Kerch], intending to enter it, but some people on the hill made signs to us not to enter, and fearing that there were enemy vessels in the port, we turned back along the coast.

As we approached the land I said to the master of the ship "I want to descend here, so he put me ashore." The place was in the Qipchaq desert [steppe] which is green and verdant, but flat and treeless. There is no firewood so they make fires of dung, and you will see even the highest of them picking it up and putting it in the skirts of their garments. The only method of travelling in this desert is in waggons; it extends for six months' journey, of which three are in the territories of Sultan Muhammad Uzbeg.

### **Ibn Battuta arrives at Kaffa**

The day after our arrival one of the merchants in our company hired some waggons from the Qipchaqs who inhabit this desert, and who are Christians, and we came to Kafa [Kaffa], a large town extending along the sea-coast, inhabited by Christians, mostly Genoese, whose governor is called Damdir [Demetrio].

We stayed at Kaffa in the mosque of the Muslims. An hour after our arrival we heard bells ringing on all sides. As I had never heard bells before, I was alarmed and made my companions ascend the minaret and read the Koran and issue the call to prayer. They did so, when suddenly a man entered wearing armour and weapons and greeted us. He told us that he was the qadi of the Muslims there, and said "When I heard the reading and the call to prayer, I feared for your safety and came as you see." Then he went away, but no evil befel us.

The next day the governor came to us and entertained us to a meal, then we went round the city and found it provided with fine bazaars. All the inhabitants are infidels. We went down to the port and saw a magnificent harbour with about two hundred vessels in it, ships of war and trading vessels, small and large, for it is one of the most notable harbours in the world.

### **Traveling by wagon on the steppe**

We hired a waggon and travelled to the town of Qiram, which forms part of the territories of Sultan Uzbek Khan and has a governor called Tuluktumur. On hearing of our arrival the governor sent the imam to me with a horse; he himself was ill, but we visited him and he treated us honourably and gave us gifts. He was on the point of setting out for the town of Sari, the capital of the Khan, so I prepared to travel along with him and hired waggons for that purpose. These waggons have four large wheels and are drawn by two or more horses, or by oxen or camels, according to their weight. The driver rides on one of the horses and carries a whip or wooden goad. On the waggon is put a light tent made of wooden laths bound with strips of hide and covered with felt or blanket-cloth, and it has grilled windows so that the person inside can see without being seen. One can do anything one likes inside, sleep, eat, read or write, during the march. The waggons conveying the baggage and provisions are covered with a similar tent which is locked.

We set out with the amir Tuluktumur and his brother and two sons. At every halt the Turks [let] loose their horses, oxen and camels, and drive them out to pasture at liberty, night or day, without shepherds or guardians. This is due to the severity of their laws against theft. Any person found in possession of a stolen horse is obliged to restore it with nine others; if he cannot do this, his sons are taken instead, and if he has no sons he is slaughtered like a sheep.

### **The food of the Turks**

They do not eat bread nor any solid food, but prepare a soup with a kind of millet, and any meat they may have is cut into small pieces and cooked in this soup. Everyone is given his share in a plate with curdled milk, and they drink it, afterwards drinking curdled mares milk, which they call qumizz [kumis]. They have also a fermented drink prepared from the same grain, which they call buza [beer] and regard as lawful to drink. It is white in colour; I tasted it once and found it bitter, so I left it alone. They regard the eating of sweetmeats as a disgrace. One day during Ramadan I presented

Sultan Uzbek with a plate of sweetmeats which one of my companions had made, but he did no more than touch them with his finger and then place it in his mouth.

### **Turkish horses**

The horses in this country are very numerous and the price of them is negligible. A good one costs about a dinar of our money. The livelihood of the people depends on them, and they are as numerous as sheep in our country, or even more so. A single Turk will possess thousands of horses. They are exported to India in droves of six thousand or so, each merchant possessing one or two hundred of them or less or more. For each fifty they hire a keeper, who looks after their pasturage. He rides on one of them, carrying a long stick with a rope attached to it, and when he wishes to catch any horse he gets opposite it on the horse which he is riding, throws the rope over its neck and draws it towards him, mounts it and sets the other free to pasture

On reaching Sind [in India] the horses are fed with forage, because the vegetation of Sind will not take the place of barley, and the greater part of them die or are stolen. The owners pay a duty of seven silver dinars on entering Sind and a further duty at Multan. Formerly they were taxed a quarter of the value of their imports, but Sultan Muhammad abolished this tax and ordered that Muslim merchants should pay the legal tithe and infidel merchants a tenth. Nevertheless the merchants make a handsome profit, for the least that a horse fetches [in India] is a hundred dinars (that is twenty-five dinars in Moroccan money) and it often sells for twice or three times that amount. A good horse sells for five hundred or more. The Indians do not buy them as racehorses, for in battle they wear coats of mail and cover their horses with armour; what they prize in a horse is its strength and length of pace. Their racehorses are brought from Yemen, Oman and Firs, and they cost from a thousand to four thousand dinars each.

### **Turkish women**

A remarkable thing which I saw in this country was the respect shown to women by the Turks, for they hold a more dignified position than the men. The first time that I saw a princess was when, on leaving Qiram, I saw the wife of the amir in her waggon. The entire waggon was covered with rich blue woollen cloth, and the windows and doors of the tent were open. With the princess were four maidens, exquisitely beautiful and richly dressed, and behind her were a number of waggons with maidens belonging to her suite. When she came near the amir's camp she alighted with about thirty of the maidens who carried her train. On her garments there were loops, of which each maiden took one, and lifted her train clear of the ground on all sides, and she walked in this stately manner. When she reached the amir he rose before her and greeted her and sat her beside him, with the maidens standing round her. Skins of qumizz were brought and she, pouring some into a cup, knelt before him and gave it to him, afterwards pouring out a cup for his brother. Then the amir poured out a cup for her and food was brought in and she ate with him. He then gave her a robe and she withdrew.

I saw also the wives of the merchants and commonalty. One of them will sit in a waggon which is being drawn by horses, attended by three or four maidens to carry her train, and on her head she wears a conical headdress incrusting with pearls and surmounted by peacock feathers. The windows of the tent are open and her face is visible, for the Turkish women do not veil themselves. Sometimes a woman will be accompanied by her husband and anyone seeing him would take him for one of her servants; he has no garment other than a sheep's wool cloak and a high cap to match.

### **Ibn Battuta travels to meet Uzbek Khan**

We then prepared for the journey to the sultan's camp, which was four days' march [to] a place called Bishdagh, which means "Five mountains." In these mountains there is a hot spring in which the Turks bathe, claiming that it prevents illness.

We arrived at the camp on the first day of Ramadan and found that it was moving to the neighbourhood from which we had just come, so we returned thither. I set up my tent on a hill there, fixing a standard in the ground in front of it, and drew up the horses and waggons behind. Thereupon the mahalla approached (the name they give to it is the ordu) and we saw a vast town on the move with all its inhabitants, containing mosques and bazaars, the smoke from the kitchens rising in the air (for they cook while on the march), and horse-drawn waggons transporting them. On reaching the encampment they took the tents off the waggons and set them upon the ground, for they were very light, and they did the same with the mosques and shops.

The sultan's khatuns [wives] passed by us, each separately with her own retinue. The fourth of them, as she passed, saw the tent on top of the hill [i.e., Ibn Battuta's tent] with the standard in front of it, which is the mark of a new arrival, and sent pages and maidens to greet me and convey her salutations, herself halting to wait for them. I sent her a gift by one of my companions and the chamberlain of the amir Tuluktumur. She accepted it as a blessing and gave orders that I should be taken under her protection, then went on. Afterwards the sultan arrived and camped with his mahalla separately.

### **Uzbek Khan**

The illustrious Sultan Muhammad Uzbek Khan is the ruler of a vast kingdom and a most powerful sovereign, victor over the enemies of God, the people of Constantinople the Great, and diligent in warring against them. He is one of the seven mighty kings of the world, to wit: [first], our master the Commander of the Faithful, may God strengthen his might and magnify his victory! [the sultan of Morocco]; [second] the sultan of Egypt and Syria; [third], the sultan of the Two Iraqs; [fourth], this Sultan Uzbek; [fifth], the sultan of Turkistan and the lands beyond the Oxus; [sixth], the sultan of India; and [seventh], the sultan of China [the emperor].

The day after my arrival I visited him [Uzbek Khan] in the afternoon at a ceremonial audience; a great banquet was prepared and we broke our fast in his presence. These Turks do not follow the custom of assigning a lodging to visitors and giving them



money for their expenses, but they send him sheep and horses for slaughtering and skins of qumizz, which is their form of benefaction.

Every Friday, after the midday prayer, the sultan holds an audience in a pavilion called the Golden Pavilion, which is richly decorated. In the centre there is a wooden throne covered with silver-gilt plates, the legs being of pure silver set with jewels at the top. The sultan sits on the throne, having on his right the Khatun Taytughli with the khatun Kebek on her right, and on his left the khatun Bayalun with the khatun Urduja on her left. Below the throne stand the sultan's sons, the elder on the right and the younger on the left, and his daughter sits in front of him. He rises to meet each Khatun as she arrives and takes her by the hand until she mounts to the throne. All this takes place in view of the whole people, without any screening.

### **Ibn Battuta meets Uzbek's wives, the khatuns**

On the morrow of my interview with the sultan I visited the principal khatun Taytughli, who is the queen and the mother of the sultan's two sons. She was sitting in the midst of ten aged women, who appeared to be servants of hers, and had in front of her about fifty young maidens with gold and silver salvers filled with cherries which they were cleaning. The khatun also had a golden tray filled with cherries in front of her and was cleaning them. She ordered qumizz to be brought and with her own hand poured out a cupful and gave it to me, which is the highest of honours in their estimation. I had never drunk qumizz before, but there was nothing for me but to accept it. I tasted it, but found it disagreeable and passed it on to one of my companions.

The following day we visited the second khatun Kebek and found her sitting on a divan reading the holy Koran. She also served me with qumizz.

The third khatun Bayalun is the daughter [almost certainly an illegitimate daughter] of the Emperor of Constantinople the Great. On visiting her we found her sitting on a throne set with jewels, with about a hundred maidens, Greek, Turkish and Nubian, standing or sitting in front of her. Behind her were eunuchs and in front of her Greek chamberlains. She asked how we were and about our journey and the distance of our native lands, and wept, in pity and compassion, wiping her face with a handkerchief that lay before her. She ordered food to be served and we ate in her presence, and when we desired to leave she said "Do not sever relations with us, but come often to us and inform us of your needs." She showed great kindness to us and after we had gone sent us food, a great quantity of bread, butter, sheep, money, a magnificent robe and thirteen horses, three good ones and ten of the ordinary sort. It was with this khatun that I made my journey to Constantinople the Great, as we shall relate hereafter.

The fourth khatun is one of the best, most amiable and sympathetic of princesses. We visited her and she showed us a kindness and generosity that cannot be surpassed. By the sultan's daughter however we were treated with a generosity and kindness that no other khatun showed us; she loaded us with surpassing favours, may God reward her!

Ibn Battuta leaves the steppe kingdom of Uzbek Khan with the retinue of Uzbek's wife the khatun Bayalan, a Byzantine princess pp. 152-159.

We set out . . . in the company of the khatun Bayalan and under her protection. The sultan [Uzbek] escorted her one stage then returned, he and the queen [the khatun Taytughli] and the heir to the throne; the other khatuns accompanied her [the khatun Bayalan] for a second stage and then returned. The amir Baydara with five thousand troops travelled with her, and her own troops numbered about five hundred horsemen, two hundred of whom were her attendant slaves and Greeks, and the remainder Turks. She had with her also about two hundred maidens, most of whom were Greeks, and about four hundred carts and about two thousand draught and riding horses, as well as three hundred oxen and two hundred camels. She had also ten Greek youths and the same number of Indians, whose leader-in-chief was called Sunbul the Indian; the leader of the Greeks was a man of conspicuous bravery called Michael, but the Turks gave him the name of Lu'lu' [Pearl]. She left most of her maidens and her baggage at the sultan's camp, since she had set out only to pay a visit [to her father the emperor].

### **The khatun is met at the border of her father's territory**

The Greeks had heard that this khatun was returning to her country, and there came to this fortress [at the Byzantine border] to meet her the Greek Kifali [Greek kephale, meaning chief] Nicolas, with a large army and a large hospitality-gift, accompanied by the princesses and nurses from the palace of her father, the king of Constantinople. From Mahtuli to Constantinople is a journey of twenty-two days, sixteen to the canal [unclear, perhaps the Danube?], and six thence to Constantinople. From this [border] fortress one travels on horses and mules only, and the waggons are left behind there on account of the rough ground and the mountains. Kifali had brought many mules, six of which the khatun sent to me. She also commended to the care of the governor of the fortress those of my companions and of my slaves whom I had left behind with the waggons and baggage, and he assigned them a house.

The commander Baydara returned [to Uzbek Khan] with his troops, and none travelled on with the khatun but her own people. She left her mosque behind at the fort and the practice of calling to prayer was abolished. As part of her hospitality-gifts she was given intoxicating liquors, which she drank, and swine, and I was told by one of her suite that she ate them. No one remained with her who prayed except one Turk, who used to pray with us. Sentiments formerly hidden were revealed because of our entry into the land of the infidels, but the khatun charged the amir Kifali to treat us honourably, and on one occasion he beat one of his guards because he had laughed at our prayer.

### **Nearer Constantinople the khatun is greeted by her brother**

Then her brother, whose name was Kifali Qaras, arrived with five thousand horsemen, fully accoutred in armour. When they prepared to meet the princess, her brother, dressed in white, rode a grey horse, having over his head a parasol ornamented with jewels. On his right hand he had five princes and the same number on his left hand, all dressed in white also, and with parasols embroidered in gold over their heads. In front

of him were a hundred foot soldiers and a hundred horsemen, who wore long coats of mail over themselves and their horses, each one of them leading a saddled and armoured horse carrying the arms of a horseman, consisting of a jewelled helmet, a breastplate, a bow, and a sword, and each man had in his hand a lance with a pennant at its head. Most of these lances were covered with plaques of gold and silver. These led horses are the riding horses of the sultan's son.

His horsemen were divided into squadrons, two hundred horsemen in each squadron. Over them was a commander, who had in front of him ten of the horsemen, fully accoutred in armour, each leading a horse, and behind him ten coloured standards, carried by ten of the horsemen, and ten kettledrums slung over the shoulders of ten of the horsemen, with whom were six others sounding trumpets and bugles and fifes.

The khatun rode out with her guards, maidens, slave boys and servants, these numbering about five hundred, all wearing silken garments, embroidered with gold and encrusted with precious stones. She herself was wearing a garment of gold brocade, encrusted with jewels, with a crown set with precious stones on her head, and her horse was covered with a saddle-cloth of silk embroidered in gold. On its legs were bracelets of gold and round its neck necklaces set with precious stones, and her saddle frame was covered with gold ornamented with jewels.

Their meeting took place in a flat piece of ground about a mile distant from the town. Her brother dismounted to her, because he was younger than her, and kissed her stirrup and she kissed his head. The commanders and princes also dismounted and they all kissed her stirrup, after which she set out with her brother.

### **The procession reaches Constantinople**

We encamped at a distance of ten miles from Constantinople, and on the following day the population, men, women and children, came out riding or on foot, in their richest apparel. At dawn the drums, trumpets and fifes were sounded; the troops mounted, and the Emperor with his wife, the mother of this khatun, came out, accompanied by the high officials of state and the courtiers. Over the king's head there was a canopy, carried by a number of horsemen and men on foot, who had in their hands long staves, each surmounted by something resembling a ball of leather, with which they hoisted the canopy. In the centre of this canopy was a sort of pavilion which was supported by horsemen [carrying] staves. When the Emperor approached, the troops became entangled with one another and there was much dust. I was unable to make my way amongst them, so I kept with the khatun's baggage and party, fearing for my life. I was told that when the princess approached her parents she dismounted and kissed the ground before them, and then kissed the two hoofs of their horses, the principal members of her party doing the same.

Our entry into Constantinople the Great was made about noon or a little later, and they rang their bells until the very skies shook with the mingling of their sounds. When we reached the first gate of the king's palace we found there about a hundred men, with an officer on a platform, and I heard them saying "Sarakinu, Sarakinu," ["Saracen,

Saracen"] which means Muslims. They would not let us enter, and when those who were with the khatun said that we belonged to their party, they answered "They cannot enter except by permission," so we stayed at the gate. One of the khatun's party sent a messenger to tell her of this while she was still with her father. She told him about us and he gave orders that we should enter, and assigned us a house near the khatun's house. He wrote also on our behalf an order that we should not be abused wheresoever we went in the city, and this order was proclaimed in the bazaars.

We stayed indoors three days, receiving from the khatun gifts of flour, bread, sheep, chickens, butter, fruit, fish, money and beds, and on the fourth day we had audience of the sultan.

### **Ibn Batutta meets the Byzantine emperor**

The Emperor of Constantinople is called Takfur [actually Andronicus III], son of the Emperor Jirgis ["George," but actually Andronicus II]. His father, the Emperor George, was still alive, but had become an ascetic and monk, devoting himself to religious exercises in the churches, and had resigned the sovereignty to his son. We shall speak of him later.

On the fourth day after our arrival in Constantinople, the khatun sent the slave Sunbul the Indian to me, and he took my hand and led me into the palace. We passed through four gateways, each of which had archways in which were footsoldiers with their weapons, their officer being on a carpeted platform. When we reached the fifth gateway the slave Sunbul left me, and going inside returned with four Greek youths, who searched me to see that I had no knife on my person. The officer said to me: "This is a custom of theirs; every person who enters the king's presence, be he noble or private citizen, foreigner or native, must be searched." The same practice is observed also in India. After they had searched me the man in charge of the gate rose and took me by the hand and opened the gate. Four of the men surrounded me, two of them holding my sleeves and two behind me, and brought me into a large hall, the walls of which were of mosaic work, in which there were pictures of creatures, both animate and inanimate. In the centre there was a stream of water, with trees on either side of it, and men were standing to right and left, silent, not one of them speaking.

In the midst of the hall three men were standing to whom those four men delivered me. These took hold of my garments as the others had done, and on a signal from another man led me forward. One of them was a Jew, and he said to me in Arabic "Do not be afraid; this is their custom that they use with one who enters. I am the interpreter, and I come from Syria." So I asked him how I should salute the Emperor, and he told me to say "As-salam alaykum."

After this I reached a great pavilion, where the Emperor was seated on his throne, with his wife, the mother of the khatun, before him. At the foot of the throne were the khatun and her brothers, to the right of it six men and to the left of it four, and behind it four, every one of them armed. The Emperor signed to me, before I had saluted and reached him, to sit down for a moment, in order that my apprehension might be

calmed. After doing so I approached him and saluted him, and he signed to me to sit down, but I did not do so. He questioned me about Jerusalem, the Sacred Rock, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the cradle of Jesus, and Bethlehem, and about the city of Abraham [Hebron], then about Damascus, Cairo, Iraq, and Anatolia, and I answered all his questions about these, the Jew interpreting between us. He was pleased with my replies and said to his sons "Treat this man with honour and ensure his safety." Then he bestowed upon me a robe of honour and assigned me a horse with saddle and bridle, and an umbrella of the kind which the king has carried above his head, that being a sign of protection. I requested him to designate someone to ride in the city with me every day, that I might see its marvellous and rare sights and tell of them in my own country, and he appointed a man as I had asked. They have a custom that anyone who wears the king's robe of honour and rides his horse is paraded round with trumpets, fifes and drums, so that the people may see him. They do this mostly with the Turks who come from the territories of Sultan Uzbeg, so that the people may not molest them, and I was paraded in this fashion through the bazaars.

Ibn Battuta describes Constantinople pp. 159-164.

The city is enormous in size, and in two parts separated by a great river [the Golden Horn], in which there is a rising and ebbing tide. In former times there was a stone bridge over it, but it fell into ruins and the crossing is now made in boats. The part of the city on the eastern bank of the river is called Istambul, and contains the residence of the Emperor, the nobles and the rest of the population. Its bazaars and streets are spacious and paved with flagstones; each bazaar has gates which are closed upon it at night, and the majority of the artisans and sellers in them are women. The city lies at the foot of a hill which projects about nine miles into the sea, its breadth being the same or greater. On the top of the hill there is a small citadel and the Emperor's palace. Round this hill runs the city-wall, which is very strong and cannot be taken by assault from the sea front. Within its circuit there are about thirteen inhabited villages. The principal church is in the midst of this part of the city.

The second part, on the western bank of the river, is called Galata, and is reserved to the Frankish Christians who dwell there. They are of different kinds, including Genoese, Venetians, Romans [other Italians?] and people of France; they are subject to the authority of the king of Constantinople, who sets over them one of their own number of whom they approve, and him they call the Comes [count]. They are bound to pay a tax every year to the king of Constantinople, but often they revolt against him and he makes war on them until the Pope makes peace between them. They are all men of commerce and their harbour is one of the largest in the world; I saw there about a hundred galleys and other large ships, and the small ships were too many to be counted. The bazaars in this part of the town are good but filthy, and a small and very dirty river runs through them. Their churches too are filthy and mean.

## **Hagia Sophia**

Of the great church I can only describe the exterior, for I did not see its interior. It is called by them Aya Sufiya [Hagia Sophia], and the story goes that it was built by Asaph, the son of Berechiah, who was Solomon's cousin. It is one of the greatest churches of the Greeks, and is encircled by a wall so that it looks as if it were a town. It has thirteen gates and a sacred enclosure, which is about a mile long and closed by a great gate. No one is prevented from entering this enclosure, and indeed I went into it with the king's father; it resembles an audience-hall paved with marble, and is traversed by a stream which issues from the church. Outside the gate of this hall are platforms and shops, mostly of wood, where their judges and the recorders of their bureaux sit. At the gate of the church there are porticoes where the keepers sit who sweep its paths, light its lamps and close its gates.

They allow none to enter it until he prostrates himself to the huge cross there, which they claim to be a relic of the wood upon which the pseudo-Jesus was crucified. This is over the gate of the church, set in a golden case whose height is about ten cubits, across which a similar golden case is placed to form a cross. This gate is covered with plaques of silver and gold and its two rings are of pure gold.

I was told that the number of monks and priests in this church runs into thousands, and that some of them are descendants of the apostles, and that inside it is another church exclusively for women, containing more than a thousand virgins and a still greater number of aged women who devote themselves to religious practices. It is the custom of the king, the nobles and the rest of the people to come every morning to visit this church. The Pope comes to visit it once a year [sic]. When he is four days' journey from the town the king goes out to meet him, and dismounts before him and when he enters the city walks on foot in front of him. During his stay in Constantinople the king comes to salute him every morning and evening.

### **On Christian communities of religious**

A monastery is the Christian equivalent of a religious house or convent among the Muslims, and there are a great many such monasteries at Constantinople. Among them is the monastery which King George [Andronicos II] built outside Istanbul and opposite Galata, and two monasteries outside the principal church, to the right as one enters it. These two monasteries are inside a garden traversed by a stream of water; one of them is for men and the other for women. In each there is a church and they are surrounded by the cells of men and women who have devoted themselves to religious exercises. Each monastery possesses pious endowments for the clothing and maintenance of the devotees. Inside every monastery there is a small convent designed for the ascetic retreat of the king who built it, for most of these kings, on reaching the age of sixty or seventy, build a monastery and put on garments of hair, investing their sons with the sovereignty and occupying themselves with religious exercises for the rest of their lives. They display great magnificence in building these monasteries, and construct them of marble and mosaic-work.

I entered a monastery with the Greek whom the king had given me as a guide. Inside it was a church containing about five hundred virgins wearing hair-garments; their heads were shaved and covered with felt bonnets. They were exceedingly beautiful and showed the traces of their austerities. A youth sitting on a pulpit was reading the gospel to them in the most beautiful voice I have ever heard; round him were eight other youths on pulpits with their priest, and when the first youth had finished reading another began. The Greek said to me, "These girls are kings' daughters who have given themselves to the service of this church, and likewise the boys who are reading [are kings' sons]."

I entered with him also into churches in which there were the daughters of ministers, governors, and the principal men of the city, and others where there were aged women and widows, and others where there were monks, each church containing a hundred men or so. Most of the population of the city are monks, ascetics, and priests, and its churches are not to be counted for multitude. The inhabitants of the city, soldiers and civilians, small and great, carry over their heads huge parasols, both in winter and summer, and the women wear large turbans.

The former emperor now a monk

I was out one day with my Greek guide, when we met the former king George [Andronicos II] who had become a monk. He was walking on foot, wearing haircloth garments and a bonnet of felt, and he had a long white beard and a fine face, which bore traces of his austerities. Behind and before him was a body of monks, and he had a staff in his hand and a rosary on his neck. When the Greek saw him he dismounted and said to me, "Dismount, for this is the king's father." When my guide saluted him the king asked him about me, then stopped and sent for me. He took my hand and said to the Greek (who knew the Arabic tongue), "Say to this Saracen (meaning Muslim), 'I clasp the hand which has entered Jerusalem and the foot which has walked within the Dome of the Rock and the great church of the Holy Sepulchre and Bethlehem,'" and he laid his hand upon my feet and passed it over his face. I was astonished at their good opinion of one who, though not of their religion, had entered these places. Then he took my hand and as I walked with him asked me about Jerusalem and the Christians who were there, and questioned me at length.

I entered with him the sacred enclosure of the church which we have described above. When he approached the principal gate, a party of priests and monks came out to salute him, for he is one of their chief men in monasticism, and on seeing them he let go my hand. I said to him "I should like to enter the church with you." Then he said to the interpreter, "Say to him, 'He who enters it must needs prostrate himself before the great cross, for this is a rule which the ancients laid down and which cannot be contravened.'" So I left him and he entered alone and I did not see him again.

After leaving the king I entered the bazaar of the scribes, where I was noticed by the judge, who sent one of his assistants to ask the Greek about me. On learning that I was a Muslim scholar he sent for me and I went up to him. He was an old man with a fine

face and hair, wearing the black garments of a monk, and had about ten scribes in front of him writing. He rose to meet me, his companions rising also, and [he] said, "You are the king's guest and we are bound to honour you." He then asked me about Jerusalem, Syria, and Egypt, and spoke with me for a long time. A great crowd gathered round him, and he said, "You must come to my house that I may entertain you." After that I went away, but I did not see him again.

### **The khatun declines to return to her husband Uzbek Khan**

When it became clear to the Turks who were in the khatun's company that she professed her father's religion and wished to stay with him, they asked her for leave to return to their country. She made them rich presents and sent them an amir called Saruja with five hundred horsemen to escort them to their country. She sent for me, and gave me three hundred of their gold dinars, called *barbara*, which are not good money, and a thousand Venetian silver pieces, together with some robes and pieces of cloth and two horses, which were a gift from her father, and commended me to Saruja. I bade her farewell and left, having spent a month and six days in their town.

Ibn Battuta returns to the steppe kingdom of Uzbek Khan, from where he journeys on deeper into Central Asia and then to India, Java, and China; he then returns westward and homeward, arriving at the city of Fez in Morocco in November of 1349.

### **Ibn Battuta arrives in Fez pp. 308-311.**

[I] arrived at the royal city of Fez on Friday, at the end of the month of Sha'ban of the year 750 [November 13, 1349].

I presented myself before our most noble master the most generous imam, the Commander of the Faithful, al-Mutawakkil Abu' Inan--may God enlarge his greatness and humble his enemies. His dignity made me forget the dignity of the sultan of Iraq, his beauty the beauty of the king of India, his fine qualities the noble character of the king of Yemen, his courage the courage of the king of the Turks, his clemency the clemency of the king of the Greeks, his devotion the devotion of the king of Turkistan, and his knowledge the knowledge of the king of Jawa [Java]. I laid down the staff of travel in his glorious land, having assured myself after unbiassed [sic] consideration that it is the best of countries, for in it fruits are plentiful, and running water and nourishing food are never exhausted. Few indeed are the lands which unite all these advantages, and well spoken are the poet's words:

"Of all the lands the West by this token's the best:

Here the full moon is spied and the sun speeds to rest."

### **Ibn Battuta lauds the diet of the Maghreb over that of other lands**

The dirhams [silver coins] of the West are small, but their utility is great. When you compare its prices with the prices of Egypt and Syria, you will see the truth of my contention, and realize the superiority of the Maghrib. For I assure you that mutton in



Egypt is sold at eighteen ounces for a dirham nuqra, which equals in value six dirhams of the Maghrib, whereas in the Maghrib meat is sold, when prices are high, at eighteen ounces for two dirhams that is a third of a nuqra. As for melted butter, it is usually not to be found in Egypt at all.

The kinds of things that the Egyptians eat along with their bread would not even be looked at in the Maghrib. They consist for the most part of lentils and chickpeas, which they cook in enormous cauldrons, and on which they put oil of sesame; "basilla," a kind of peas which they cook and eat with olive oil; gherkins, which they cook and mix with curdled milk; purslane [a salad herb], which they prepare in the same way; the buds of almond trees, which they cook and serve in curdled milk; and colocasia, which they cook. All these things are easily come by in the Maghrib, but God has enabled its inhabitants to dispense with them, by reason of the abundance of fleshmeats, melted butter, fresh butter, honey, and other products. As for green vegetables, they are the rarest of things in Egypt, and most of their fruit has to be brought from Syria. Grapes, when they are cheap, are sold amongst them at a dirham nuqra for three of their pounds, their pound being twelve ounces.

As for Syria, fruits are indeed plentiful there, but in the Maghrib they are cheaper. Grapes are sold there at the rate of one of their pounds for a dirham nuqra (their pound is three Maghribi pounds), and when their price is low, two pounds for a dirham nuqra. Pomegranates and quinces are sold at eight fals [copper pieces] apiece, which equals a dirham of our money. As for vegetables the quantity sold for a dirham nuqra is less than that sold for a small dirham in our country. Meat is sold there at the rate of one Syrian pound for two and a half dirhams nuqra. If you consider all this, it will be clear to you that the lands of the Maghrib are the cheapest in cost of living, the most abundant in good things, and blest with the greatest share of material comforts and advantages.

### **Ibn Battuta praises his natural lord, the sultan of Morocco**

Moreover, God has augmented the honour and excellence of the Maghrib by the imamate of our master, the Commander of the Faithful, who has spread the shelter of security throughout its territories and made the sun of equity to rise within its borders, who has caused the clouds of beneficence to shed their rain upon its dwellers in country and town, who has purified it from evildoers, and established it in the ways alike of worldly prosperity and of religious observance. Ibn Battuta returns to his native Tangiers After I had been privileged to observe this noble majesty and to share in the all-embracing bounty of his beneficence, I set out to visit the tomb of my mother. I arrived at my home town of Tangier and visited her, and went on to the town of Sabta [Ceuta], where I stayed for some months. While I was there I suffered from an illness for three months, but afterwards God restored me to health.

I then proposed to take part in the jihad and the defence of the frontier, so I crossed the sea from Ceuta in a barque belonging to the people of Asila [Arzila], and reached the land of Andalusia (may God Almighty guard her!) where the reward of the dweller is abundant and a recompense is laid up for the settler and visitor.

Sailing from Morocco, Ibn Battuta lands in Gibraltar and travels to Ronda pp. 313-316.

I went out of Gibraltar to the town of Ronda, one of the strongest and most beautifully situated fortresses of the Muslims. The qadi there was my cousin, the doctor Abu'l-Qasim Muhammad b. Yahya Ibn Battuta. I stayed at Ronda for five days, then went on to the town of Marbala [Marbella].

### **An ambush by Christian raiders along the road from Marbella to Malaga**

The road between these two places is difficult and exceedingly rough. Marbala is a pretty little town in a fertile district. I found there a company of horsemen setting out for Malaqa [Malaga], and intended to go in their company, but God by His grace preserved me, for they went on ahead of me and were captured on the way, as we shall relate. I set out after them, and when I had traversed the district of Marbala, and entered the district of Suhayl I passed a dead horse lying in the ditch, and a little farther on a pannier of fish thrown on the ground. This aroused my suspicions. In front of me there was a watchtower, and I said to myself, "If an enemy were to appear here, the man on the tower would give the alarm." So I went on to a house thereabouts, and at it I found a horse killed.

While I was there I heard a shout behind me (for I had gone ahead of my party) and turning back to them, found the commander of the fort of Suhayl with them. He told me that four galleys belonging to the enemy [the Christian Spanish] had appeared there, and a number of the men on board had landed when the watchman was not in the tower. The horsemen who had just left Marbala, twelve in number, had encountered this raiding force. The Christians had killed one of them, one had escaped, and ten were taken prisoner. A fisherman was killed along with them, and it was he whose basket I had found lying on the road. The officer advised me to spend the night with him in his quarters, so that he could escort me thence to Malaqa. I passed the night in the castle of the regiment of mounted frontiersmen called the Suhayl regiment. All this time the [Christian] galleys of which we have spoken were lying close by.

### **The city of Malaga**

On the morrow he rode with me and we reached Malaqa [Malaga], which is one of the largest and most beautiful towns of Andalusia. It unites the conveniences of both sea and land, and is abundantly supplied with foodstuffs and fruits. I saw grapes being sold in its bazaars at the rate of eight pounds for a small dirham, and its ruby-coloured Murcian pomegranates have no equal in the world. As for figs and almonds, they are exported from Malaqa and its outlying districts to the lands both of the East and the West. At Malaqa there is manufactured excellent gilded pottery, which is exported thence to the most distant lands. Its mosque covers a large area and has a reputation for sanctity; the court of the mosque is of unequalled beauty, and contains exceptionally tall orange trees.

### **Ibn Battuta arrives in Granada**

Thence [from Malaga] I went to on the city of Gharnata [Granada], the metropolis of Andalusia and the bride of its cities. Its environs have not their equal in any country in the world. They extend for the space of forty miles, and are traversed by the celebrated river of Shannil [Xenil] and many other streams. Around it on every side are orchards, gardens, flowery meads, noble buildings, and vineyards. One of the most beautiful places there is "Ayn ad-dama" [the Fountain of Tears], which is a hill covered with gardens and orchards and has no parallel in any other country.

The king of Gharnata at the time of my visit was Sultan Abu'l-Hajjaj Yusuf. I did not meet him on account of an illness from which he was suffering, but the noble, pious, and virtuous woman, his mother, sent me some gold dinars, of which I made good use. I met at Gharnata a number of its distinguished scholars and the principal Shaykh, who is also the superior of the Sufi orders. I spent some days with him in his hermitage outside Gharnata. He showed me the greatest honour and went with me to visit the hospice, famed for its sanctity, known as the Outpost of al-Uqab [the Eagle]. Al-Uqab is a hill overlooking the environs of Gharnita, about eight miles from the city and close by the ruined city of al-Bira.

There is also at Gharnita a company of Persian darwishes [dervishes], who have made their homes there because of its resemblance to their native lands. One is from Samarqand [Samarkand], another from Tabriz, a third from Quniya [Konia], one from Khurasan, two from India, and so on.

### **Ibn Battuta leaves Andalusia and returns to Morocco**

On leaving Gharnita I travelled back through al-Hamma, Ballash, and Malaqa, to the castle of Dhakwan, which is a fine fortress with abundant water, trees, and fruits. From there I went to Ronda and on to Gibraltar, where I embarked on the ship by which I had crossed before, and which belonged to the people of Asili [Arzila].

Ibn Battuta briefly describes the city of Marrakesh p. 316

It is one of the most beautiful of cities, spaciouly built and extending over a wide area, with abundant supplies. It contains magnificent mosques, such as its principal mosque, known as the Mosque of the Kutubiyin [the Booksellers]. There is a marvellously tall minaret there; I climbed it and obtained a view of the whole town from it. The town is now largely in ruins, so that I could compare it only to Baghdad, though the bazaars in Baghdad are finer. At Marrakush [Marrakesh] too there is a splendid college, distinguished by its fine site and solid construction; it was built by our master the Commander of the Faithful, Abu'l-Hasan [the late sultan of Morocco].

After returning to Fez, in 1352 Ibn Battuta crosses the Sahara and makes a tour of the kingdom of Mali, including the city of Timbuktoo.

Ibn Battuta prepares to cross the Sahara pp. 317-323.

At Sijilmasa [at the edge of the desert] I bought camels and a four months' supply of forage for them. Thereupon I set out on the 1st Muharram of the year 53 [AH 753,

February 13, 1352] with a caravan including, amongst others, a number of the merchants of Sijilmasa.

### **The saltworks at the oasis of Taghaza**

After twenty-five days [from Sijilmasa] we reached Taghaza, an unattractive village, with the curious feature that its houses and mosques are built of blocks of salt, roofed with camel skins. There are no trees there, nothing but sand. In the sand is a salt mine; they dig for the salt, and find it in thick slabs, lying one on top of the other, as though they had been tool-squared and laid under the surface of the earth. A camel will carry two of these slabs.

No one lives at Taghaza except the slaves of the Massufa tribe, who dig for the salt; they subsist on dates imported from Dar'a and Sijilmasa, camels' flesh, and millet imported from the Negrolands. The negroes come up from their country and take away the salt from there. At Iwalatan a load of salt brings eight to ten mithqals; in the town of Malli [Mali] it sells for twenty to thirty, and sometimes as much as forty. The negroes use salt as a medium of exchange, just as gold and silver is used [elsewhere]; they cut it up into pieces and buy and sell with it. The business done at Taghaza, for all its meanness, amounts to an enormous figure in terms of hundredweights of gold-dust.

We passed ten days of discomfort there, because the water is brackish and the place is plagued with flies. Water supplies are laid in at Taghaza for the crossing of the desert which lies beyond it, which is a ten-nights' journey with no water on the way except on rare occasions. We indeed had the good fortune to find water in plenty, in pools left by the rain. One day we found a pool of sweet water between two rocky prominences. We quenched our thirst at it and then washed our clothes. Truffles are plentiful in this desert and it swarms with lice, so that people wear string necklaces containing mercury, which kills them.

### **Death in the desert**

At that time we used to go ahead of the caravan, and when we found a place suitable for pasturage we would graze our beasts. We went on doing this until one of our party was lost in the desert; after that I neither went ahead nor lagged behind. We passed a caravan on the way and they told us that some of their party had become separated from them. We found one of them dead under a shrub, of the sort that grows in the sand, with his clothes on and a whip in his hand. The water was only about a mile away from him.

### **The oasis of Tisarahla, where the caravan hires a desert guide**

We came next to Tisarahla, a place of subterranean water-beds, where the caravans halt. They stay there three days to rest, mend their waterskins, fill them with water, and sew on them covers of sackcloth as a precaution against the wind.

From this point the "takshif" is despatched. The "takshif" is a name given to any man of the Massufa tribe who is hired by the persons in the caravan to go ahead to Iwalatan,

carrying letters from them to their friends there, so that they may take lodgings for them. These persons then come out a distance of four nights' journey to meet the caravan, and bring water with them. Anyone who has no friend in Iwalatan writes to some merchant well known for his worthy character who then undertakes the same services for him.

It often happens that the "takshif" perishes in this desert, with the result that the people of Iwalatan know nothing about the caravan, and all or most of those who are with it perish. That desert is haunted by demons; if the "takshif" be alone, they make sport of him and disorder his mind, so that he loses his way and perishes. For there is no visible road or track in these parts, nothing but sand blown hither and thither by the wind. You see hills of sand in one place, and afterwards you will see them moved to quite another place. The guide there [sic] is one who has made the journey frequently in both directions, and who is gifted with a quick intelligence. I remarked, as a strange thing, that the guide whom we had was blind in one eye, and diseased in the other, yet he had the best knowledge of the road of any man. We hired the "takshif" on this journey for a hundred gold mithqals; he was a man of the Massufa. On the night of the seventh day [from Tasarahla] we saw with joy the fires of the party who had come out to meet us.

### **The caravan reaches the oasis of Walata**

Thus we reached the town of Iwalatan [Walata] after a journey from Sijilmasa of two months to a day. Iwalatan is the northernmost province of the negroes, and the sultan's representative there was one Farba Husayn, "farba" meaning deputy [in their language]. When we arrived there, the merchants deposited their goods in an open square, where the blacks undertook to guard them, and went to the farba. He was sitting on a carpet under an archway, with his guards before him carrying lances and bows in their hands, and the headmen of the Massufa behind him. The merchants remained standing in front of him while he spoke to them through an interpreter, although they were close to him, to show his contempt for them. It was then that I repented of having come to their country, because of their lack of manners and their contempt for the whites.

I went to visit Ibn Badda, a worthy man of Sala' [Sallee, near the Moroccan city of Rabat], to whom I had written requesting him to hire a house for me, and who had done so. Later on the mushrif [inspector] of Iwalatan, whose name was Mansha Ju, invited all those who had come with the caravan to partake of his hospitality. At first I refused to attend, but my companions urged me very strongly, so I went with the rest. The repast was served--some pounded millet mixed with a little honey and milk, put in a half calabash shaped like a large bowl. The guests drank and retired. I said to them, "Was it for this that the black invited us?" They answered, "Yes; and it is in their opinion the highest form of hospitality." This convinced me that there was no good to be hoped for from these people, and I made up my mind to travel [back to Morocco at once] with the pilgrim caravan from Iwalatan. Afterwards, however, I thought it best to go to see the capital of their king [of the kingdom of Mali, at the city of Mali].

## **Life at Walata**

My stay at Iwalatan lasted about fifty days; and I was shown honour and entertained by its inhabitants. It is an excessively hot place, and boasts a few small date-palms, in the shade of which they sow watermelons. Its water comes from underground waterbeds at that point, and there is plenty of mutton to be had. The garments of its inhabitants, most of whom belong to the Massufa tribe, are of fine Egyptian fabrics.

Their women are of surpassing beauty, and are shown more respect than the men. The state of affairs amongst these people is indeed extraordinary. Their men show no signs of jealousy whatever; no one claims descent from his father, but on the contrary from his mother's brother. A person's heirs are his sister's sons, not his own sons. This is a thing which I have seen nowhere in the world except among the Indians of Malabar. But those are heathens; these people are Muslims, punctilious in observing the hours of prayer, studying books of law, and memorizing the Koran. Yet their women show no bashfulness before men and do not veil themselves, though they are assiduous in attending the prayers. Any man who wishes to marry one of them may do so, but they do not travel with their husbands, and even if one desired to do so her family would not allow her to go.

The women there have "friends" and "companions" amongst the men outside their own families, and the men in the same way have "companions" amongst the women of other families. A man may go into his house and find his wife entertaining her "companion" but he takes no objection to it. One day at Iwalatan I went into the qadi's house, after asking his permission to enter, and found with him a young woman of remarkable beauty. When I saw her I was shocked and turned to go out, but she laughed at me, instead of being overcome by shame, and the qadi said to me "Why are you going out? She is my companion." I was amazed at their conduct, for he was a theologian and a pilgrim [to Mecca] to boot. I was told that he had asked the sultan's permission to make the pilgrimage that year with his "companion"--whether this one or not I cannot say--but the sultan would not grant it.

## **From Walata to the river Niger**

When I decided to make the journey to Malli [the city of Mali], which is reached in twenty-four days from Iwalatan if the traveller pushes on rapidly, I hired a guide from the Massufa--for there is no necessity to travel in a company on account of the safety of that road--and set out with three of my companions.

On the way there are many trees [baobabs], and these trees are of great age and girth; a whole caravan may shelter in the shade of one of them. There are trees which have neither branches nor leaves, yet the shade cast by their trunks is sufficient to shelter a man. Some of these trees are rotted in the interior and the rain-water collects in them, so that they serve as wells and the people drink of the water inside them. In others there are bees and honey, which is collected by the people. I was surprised to find inside one tree, by which I passed, a man, a weaver, who had set up his loom in it and was actually weaving.

A traveller in this country carries no provisions, whether plain food or seasonings, and neither gold nor silver. He takes nothing but pieces of salt and glass ornaments, which the people call beads, and some aromatic goods. When he comes to a village the womenfolk of the blacks bring out millet, milk, chickens, pulped lotus fruit, rice, "funi" (a grain resembling mustard seed, from which "kuskusu" [couscous] and gruel are made), and pounded haricot beans. The traveller buys what of these he wants, but their rice causes sickness to whites when it is eaten, and the funi is preferable to it.

### **Ibn Battuta reaches the Niger river, which he mistakenly believes to be the Nile**

The Nile [actually the Niger] flows from there down to Kabara, and thence to Zagma. In both Kabara and Zagma there are sultans who owe allegiance to the king of Mali. The inhabitants of Zagma are of old standing in Islam; they show great devotion and zeal for study.

Thence the Nile [Niger] descends to Tumbuktu [Timbuktoo] and Gawgaw [Gogo], both of which will be described later; then to the town of Muli in the land of the Limis, which is the frontier province of [the kingdom of] Mali; thence to Yufi, one of the largest towns of the negroes, whose ruler is one of the most considerable of the negro rulers. It cannot be visited by any white man because they would kill him before he got there.

### **A crocodile**

I saw a crocodile in this part of the Nile [Niger], close to the bank; it looked just like a small boat. One day I went down to the river to satisfy a need, and lo, one of the blacks came and stood between me and the river. I was amazed at such lack of manners and decency on his part, and spoke of it to someone or other. [That person] answered. "His purpose in doing that was solely to protect you from the crocodile, by placing himself between you and it."

### **Ibn Battuta arrives at the city of Mali, capital of the kingdom of Mali p 323-335.**

Thus I reached the city of Mali [Mali], the capital of the king of the blacks. I stopped at the cemetery and went to the quarter occupied by the whites, where I asked for Muhammad ibn al-Faqih. I found that he had hired a house for me and went there. His son-in-law brought me candles and food, and next day Ibn al-Faqih himself came to visit me, with other prominent residents. I met the qadi of Mali, 'Abd ar-Rahman, who came to see me; he is a negro, a pilgrim, and a man of fine character. I met also the interpreter Dugha, who is one of the principal men among the blacks. All these persons sent me hospitality-gifts of food and treated me with the utmost generosity--may God reward them for their kindnesses!

Ten days after our arrival we ate a gruel made of a root resembling colocasia, which is preferred by them to all other dishes. We all fell ill--there were six of us--and one of our number died. I for my part went to the morning prayer and fainted there. I asked a

certain Egyptian for a loosening remedy and he gave me a thing called "baydar," made of vegetable roots, which he mixed with aniseed and sugar, and stirred in water. I drank it off and vomited what I had eaten, together with a large quantity of bile. God preserved me from death but I was ill for two months.

### **Ibn Battuta meets the king of Mali**

The sultan of Mali is Mansa Sulayman, "mansa" meaning [in Mandingo] sultan, and Sulayman being his proper name. He is a miserly king, not a man from whom one might hope for a rich present. It happened that I spent these two months without seeing him, on account of my illness. Later on he held a banquet in commemoration of our master [the late sultan of Morocco] Abu'l-Hasan, to which the commanders, doctors, qadi and preacher were invited, and I went along with them. Reading-desks were brought in, and the Koran was read through, then they prayed for our master Abu'l-Hasan and also for Mansa Sulayman.

When the ceremony was over I went forward and saluted Mansa Sulayman. The qadi, the preacher, and Ibn al-Faqih told him who I was, and he answered them in their tongue. They said to me, "The sultan says to you 'Give thanks to God,'" so I said, "Praise be to God and thanks under all circumstances." When I withdrew the [sultan's] hospitality gift was sent to me. It was taken first to the qadi's house, and the qadi sent it on with his men to Ibn al-Faqih's house. Ibn al-Faqih came hurrying out of his house barefooted, and entered my room saying, "Stand up; here comes the sultan's stuff and gift to you." So I stood up thinking--since he had called it "stuff"--that it consisted of robes of honour and money, and lo!, it was three cakes of bread, and a piece of beef fried in native oil, and a calabash of sour curds. When I saw this I burst out laughing, and thought it a most amazing thing that they could be so foolish and make so much of such a paltry matter.

### **The court ceremonial of king Sulayman of Mali**

On certain days the sultan holds audiences in the palace yard, where there is a platform under a tree, with three steps; this they call the "pempi." It is carpeted with silk and has cushions placed on it. [Over it] is raised the umbrella, which is a sort of pavilion made of silk, surmounted by a bird in gold, about the size of a falcon. The sultan comes out of a door in a corner of the palace, carrying a bow in his hand and a quiver on his back. On his head he has a golden skull-cap, bound with a gold band which has narrow ends shaped like knives, more than a span in length. His usual dress is a velvety red tunic, made of the European fabrics called "mutanfas." The sultan is preceded by his musicians, who carry gold and silver guimbris [two-stringed guitars], and behind him come three hundred armed slaves. He walks in a leisurely fashion, affecting a very slow movement, and even stops from time to time. On reaching the pempi he stops and looks round the assembly, then ascends it in the sedate manner of a preacher ascending a mosque-pulpit. As he takes his seat the drums, trumpets, and bugles are sounded. Three slaves go out at a run to summon the sovereign's deputy and the military commanders, who enter and sit down. Two saddled and bridled horses are



brought, along with two goats, which they hold to serve as a protection against the evil eye. Dugha stands at the gate and the rest of the people remain in the street, under the trees.

The negroes are of all people the most submissive to their king and the most abject in their behaviour before him. They swear by his name, saying "Mansa Sulayman ki" [in Mandingo, "the emperor Sulayman has commanded"]. If he summons any of them while he is holding an audience in his pavilion, the person summoned takes off his clothes and puts on worn garments, removes his turban and dons a dirty skullcap, and enters with his garments and trousers raised knee-high. He goes forward in an attitude of humility and dejection and knocks the ground hard with his elbows, then stands with bowed head and bent back listening to what he says. If anyone addresses the king and receives a reply from him, he uncovers his back and throws dust over his head and back, for all the world like a bather splashing himself with water. I used to wonder how it was they did not blind themselves. If the sultan delivers any remarks during his audience, those present take off their turbans and put them down, and listen in silence to what he says.

Sometimes one of them stands up before him and recalls his deeds in the sultan's service, saying, "I did so-and-so on such a day," or, "I killed so-and-so on such a day." Those who have knowledge of this confirm his words, which they do by plucking the cord of the bow and releasing it [with a twang], just as an archer does when shooting an arrow. If the sultan says, "Truly spoken," or thanks him, he removes his clothes and "dusts." That is their idea of good manners.

### **Festival ceremonial**

I was at Malli during the two festivals of the sacrifice and the fast-breaking. On these days the sultan takes his seat on the pempri after the midafternoon prayer. The armour-bearers bring in magnificent arms--quivers of gold and silver, swords ornamented with gold and with golden scabbards, gold and silver lances, and crystal maces. At his head stand four amirs driving off the flies, having in their hands silver ornaments resembling saddle-stirrups. The commanders, qadi and preacher sit in their usual places.

The interpreter Dugha comes with his four wives and his slave-girls, who are about a hundred in number. They are wearing beautiful robes, and on their heads they have gold and silver fillets, with gold and silver balls attached. A chair is placed for Dugha to sit on. He plays on an instrument made of reeds, with some small calabashes at its lower end, and chants a poem in praise of the sultan, recalling his battles and deeds of valour. The women and girls sing along with him and play with bows. Accompanying them are about thirty youths, wearing red woollen tunics and white skull-caps; each of them has his drum slung from his shoulder and beats it. Afterwards come his boy pupils who play and turn wheels in the air, like the natives of Sind. They show a marvellous nimbleness and agility in these exercises and play most cleverly with swords. Dugha also makes a fine play with the sword. Thereupon the sultan orders a gift to be presented to Dugha and he is given a purse containing two hundred mithqals of gold

dust and is informed of the contents of the purse before all the people. The commanders rise and twang their bows in thanks to the sultan. The next day each one of them gives Dugha a gift, every man according to his rank. Every Friday after the 'asr prayer, Dugha carries out a similar ceremony to this that we have described.

On feast-days after Dugha has finished his display, the poets come in. Each of them is inside a figure resembling a thrush, made of feathers, and provided with a wooden head with a red beak, to look like a thrush's head. They stand in front of the sultan in this ridiculous make-up and recite their poems. I was told that their poetry is a kind of sermonizing in which they say to the sultan: "This pempî which you occupy was that whereon sat this king and that king, and such and such were this one's noble actions and such and such the other's. So do you too do good deeds whose memory will outlive you." After that the chief of the poets mounts the steps of the pempî and lays his head on the sultan's lap, then climbs to the top of the pempî and lays his head first on the sultan's right shoulder and then on his left, speaking all the while in their tongue, and finally he comes down again. I was told that this practice is a very old custom amongst them, prior to the introduction of Islam, and that they have kept it up.

### **Ibn Battuta judges the character of the people of Mali**

The negroes possess some admirable qualities. They are seldom unjust, and have a greater abhorrence of injustice than any other people. Their sultan shows no mercy to anyone who is guilty of the least act of it. There is complete security in their country. Neither traveller nor inhabitant in it has anything to fear from robbers or men of violence. They do not confiscate the property of any white man who dies in their country, even if it be uncounted wealth. On the contrary, they give it into the charge of some trustworthy person among the whites, until the rightful heir takes possession of it. They are careful to observe the hours of prayer, and assiduous in attending them in congregations, and in bringing up their children to them.

### **Their piety**

On Fridays, if a man does not go early to the mosque, he cannot find a corner to pray in, on account of the crowd. It is a custom of theirs to send each man his boy [to the mosque] with his prayer-mat; the boy spreads it out for his master in a place befitting him [and remains on it] until he comes to the mosque. Their prayer-mats are made of the leaves of a tree resembling a date-palm, but without fruit.

Another of their good qualities is their habit of wearing clean white garments on Fridays. Even if a man has nothing but an old worn shirt, he washes it and cleans it, and wears it to the Friday service. Yet another is their zeal for learning the Koran by heart. They put their children in chains if they show any backwardness in memorizing it, and they are not set free until they have it by heart. I visited the qadi in his house on the day of the festival. His children were chained up, so I said to him, "Will you not let them loose?" He replied, "I shall not do so until they learn the Koran by heart."

### **The nakedness of the women**

Among their bad qualities are the following. The women servants, slave-girls, and young girls go about in front of everyone naked, without a stitch of clothing on them. Women go into the sultan's presence naked and without coverings, and his daughters also go about naked. Then there is their custom of putting dust and ashes on their heads, as a mark of respect, and the grotesque ceremonies we have described when the poets recite their verses. Another reprehensible practice among many of them is the eating of carrion, dogs, and asses.

### **Ibn Battuta leaves the city of Mali**

The date of my arrival at Malli was 14th Jumada I, 53 [AH 753, June 28, 1352], and of my departure from it 22nd Muharram of the year 54 [AH 754, February 27, 1353].

### **The hippos of the river Niger**

I was accompanied by a merchant called Abu Bakr ibn Ya'qub. We took the Mima road. I had a camel which I was riding, because horses are expensive, and cost a hundred mithqals each. We came to a wide channel which flows out of the Nile [Niger] and can only be crossed in boats. The place is infested with mosquitoes, and no one can pass that way except by night. We reached the channel three or four hours after nightfall on a moonlit night.

On reaching it I saw sixteen beasts with enormous bodies, and marvelled at them, taking them to be elephants, of which there are many in that country. Afterwards I saw that they had gone into the river, so I said to Abu Bakr, "What kind of animals are these?" He replied, "They are hippopotami which have come out to pasture ashore." They are bulkier than horses, have manes and tails, and their heads are like horses' heads, but their feet like elephants' feet. I saw these hippopotami again when we sailed down the Nile [Niger] from Tumbuktu to Gawgaw. They were swimming in the water, and lifting their heads and blowing. The men in the boat were afraid of them and kept close to the bank in case the hippopotami should sink them.

They have a cunning method of catching these hippopotami. They use spears with a hole bored in them, through which strong cords are passed. The spear is thrown at one of the animals, and if it strikes its leg or neck it goes right through it. Then they pull on the rope until the beast is brought to the bank, kill it and eat its flesh. Along the bank there are quantities of hippopotamus bones.

### **Cannibals**

We halted near this channel at a large village, which had as governor a negro, a pilgrim, and man of fine character named Farba Magha. He was one of the negroes who made the pilgrimage in the company of Sultan Mansa Musa. Farba Magha told me that when Mansa Musa came to this channel, he had with him a qadi, a white man. This qadi attempted to make away with four thousand mithqals and the sultan, on learning of it, was enraged at him and exiled him to the country of the heathen cannibals. He [the qadi] lived among them for four years, at the end of which the sultan sent him

back to his own country. The reason why the heathens did not eat him was that he was white, for they say that the white is indigestible because he is not "ripe," whereas the black man is "ripe" in their opinion.

Sultan Mansa Sulayman was visited by a party of these negro cannibals, including one of their amirs. They have a custom of wearing in their ears large pendants, each pendant having an opening of half a span. They wrap themselves in silk mantles, and in their country there is a gold mine. The sultan received them with honour, and gave them as his hospitality-gift a servant, a negress. They killed and ate her, and having smeared their faces and hands with her blood came to the sultan to thank him. I was informed that this is their regular custom whenever they visit his court. Someone told me about them that they say that the choicest parts of women's flesh are the palm of the hand and the breast.

### **Ibn Battuta arrives at Timbuktoo**

Thence we went on to Tumbuktu, which stands four miles from the river [Niger]. Most of its inhabitants are of the Massufa tribe, wearers of the face-veil. Its governor is called Farba Musa. I was present with him one day when he had just appointed one of the Massufa to be amir of a section. He assigned to him a robe, a turban, and trousers, all of them of dyed cloth, and bade him sit upon a shield, and the chiefs of his tribe raised him on their heads. In this town is the grave of the meritorious poet Abu Ishaq as-Sahili, of Gharnata [Granada], who is known in his own land as at-Tuwayjin ["Little Saucepan"].

### **Ibn Battuta leaves Timbuktoo for Gogo**

From Tumbuktu I sailed down the Nile on a small boat, hollowed out of a single piece of wood.

I went on . . . to Gawgaw [Gogo], which is a large city on the Nile, and one of the finest towns in the Negrolands. It is also one of their biggest and best-provisioned towns, with rice in plenty, milk, and fish, and there is a species of cucumber there called "inani" which has no equal. The buying and selling of its inhabitants is done with cowry-shells, and the same is the case at Malli [the city of Mali]. I stayed there about a month, and then set out in the direction of Tagadda by land with a large caravan of merchants from Ghadamas.

Ibn Battuta continues to travel in the lands along the Niger, but then returns to Morocco, re-crossing the Sahara. He arrives in Fez in December of 1355.

Ibn Battuta ends his long and many travels p, 339.

I arrived at the royal city of Fa's [Fez], the capital of our master the Commander of the Faithful (may God strengthen him), where I kissed his beneficent hand and was privileged to behold his gracious countenance. [Here] I settled down under the wing of his bounty after long journeying. May God Most High recompense him for the abundant

favours and ample benefits which he has bestowed on me; may He prolong his days and spare him to the Muslims for many years to come.

Here ends the travel-narrative entitled "A Donation to those interested in the Curiosities of the Cities and Marvels of the Ways." Its dictation was finished on 3rd Dhu'l-hijja 756 [December 9, 1355]. Praise be to God, and peace to His creatures whom He hath chosen.

This is the end of Ibn Battuta's book of travels

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Source.

Ibn Battuta, *Travels in Asia and Africa 1325-1354*, tr. and ed. H. A. R. Gibb (London: Broadway House, 1929)

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