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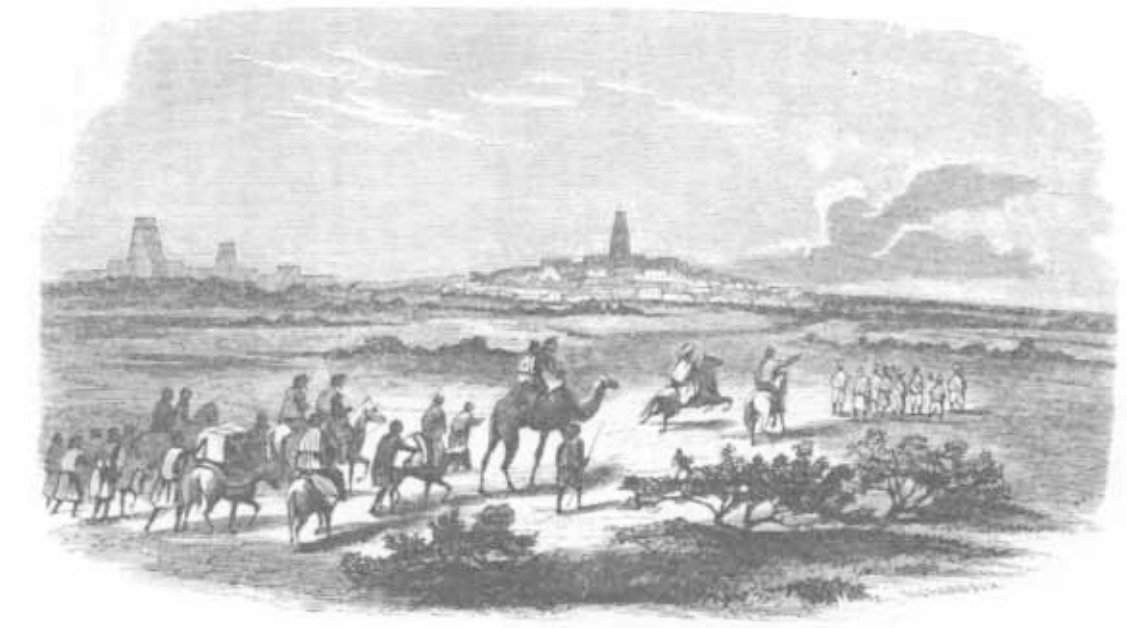
# Ibn Battuta:

## A View of the Fourteenth-Century World

A Unit of Study for Grades 7-10

by

Joan Arno and Helen Grady



Caravan arriving at Timbuktu

**National Center for History in the Schools**
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**University of California, Los Angeles**

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

**Joan Arno** has been a teacher with the School District of Philadelphia for twenty-five years. She currently teaches world and American history at George Washington High School. She helped write curriculum for the Philadelphia World History Project and assisted in developing the National Standards for World History. She is secretary of the Middle Atlantic World History Association.

**Helen Grady** teaches world, United States, and European history at Springside School in Philadelphia. She has attended teacher institutes sponsored by the NEH and the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation. She has given numerous workshops for teachers and has published a curricular module on the role of the Mongols in world history. She would like to thank her ninth-grade students who helped her to refine the documents used in this unit.

Ross E. Dunn, National Center for History in the Schools (NCHS) Director of World History Projects, worked closely with Joan Arno and Helen Grady in developing this unit. He is the author of the book *The Adventures of Ibn Battuta, a Muslim Traveler of the 14t" Century.* David Vigilante, Associate Director of NCHS, provided extensive editorial assistance and advice. Marian McKenna Olivas was the layout editor.

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All maps are reprinted, with the author's permission, from Ross E. Dunn, *The Adventures of Ibn Battuta: A Muslim Traveler of the 14th Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986)

# TEACHER BACKGROUND MATERIALS

## I. UNIT OVERVIEW AND RATIONALE

In 1991, the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation sponsored a summer institute for world history teachers on the campus of Princeton University. This program, which focused on the theme of global connections in the era of Columbus, inspired participants to rethink the teaching of world history, especially the pivotal period before and during global contact.

In particular, teachers enjoyed learning about Ibn Battuta. The Muslim world traveler and his adventures provide a wonderful mechanism for teaching the early fourteenth century and painting the era with a broad brush. If teachers enjoy this topic, then that enthusiasm will catch on in the classroom. Students will be able to put themselves into the past and mentally travel with Ibn Battuta as he rides across the steppe, sweeps across the Indian Ocean in a dhow, or crosses the Sahara on a camel. The concept of an Afro-Eurasian zone of intercommunication and of a religiously united region, Dar al-Islam (regions converted to Islam or ruled by Muslims), can provide a focus for study of the entire period 1000 to 1500 C. E. and can prepare the way for investigation of the year 1492 and global contact. The story of Ibn Battuta helps students to understand both *what we know about the past* and *how we know about* it, in terms of both history and historiography.

Map exercises are part of this unit. The initial map work is extensive but worth the effort. Even students with a strong geographic background need to be reminded of place location. Most importantly, students should begin to think of Afro-Eurasia, that is the land mass of Africa and Eurasia together, as one interrelated region in which ideas and goods flowed across vast distances. In a practical way, the map work gives students a chance to improve hand-eye coordination. Next is a summary of the travels and adventures of Ibn Battuta. We have divided the travels into segments in order to focus on particular regions within Dar al-Islam. Suggested activities at the end are designed to develop in students a variety of skills. The subsequent lessons incorporate primary documents into assignments that teach higher order thinking skills. The documents bring Ibn Battuta alive and get the students thinking about how one does history.

## II. UNIT CONTEXT

This unit may be presented in connection with such commonly taught topics as Muslim civilization, the Mongol empires, West African kingdoms, Europe in the later Middle Ages, medieval trade and travel, Marco Polo, the Black Death, and the hemispheric context of the European voyages of discovery.

Teachers and students should note that throughout this unit the term "Southwest Asia" is used to designate the area commonly referred to as the Middle East, that is, the region extending from the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea to Afghanistan, including Turkey and the Arabian Peninsula. Egypt is designated separately. This usage is compatible with the National Standards for History.

## III. Correlation to the National History Standards

Ibn Battuta: A View of the Fourteenth-Century World" provides teaching materials that address the *National Standards for History,* Basic Edition (National Center for History in the Schools, UCLA, 1996), World History, Era 5, "Intensified Hemispheric Interactions, 1000-1500 C.E." Lessons specifically address Standard 1 C on the rise of new states and the expansion of Islam, 3B on the significance of Mongol rule, 4AB on the growth of states, towns, and trade in West and East Africa, 5A on the consequences of the Black Death, and 7 on the importance of Muslims and Muslim civilization in mediating long-distances exchanges.

## V. Unit Objectives

1. Students will understand the physical geography of Afro-Eurasia and the features that connect large parts of this world region.

2. Students will understand the significance of Ibn Battuta's journey in the context of historical documents and the religious and cultural experience of Muslims within Dar al-Islam.

3. Students will be able to read and interpret maps and primary documents.

4. Students will be able to write cohesive essays as well as verbally analyze the material presented.

5. Students will better understand the tools and dilemmas of the historian in doing research and using primary sources.

## V. LESSON PLANS

1. Ibn Battuta and His Travels
2. The Geography of Afro-Eurasia and Dar al-Islam, circa 1330
3. Why Can't Everyone Be Like Me?
4. The Historian's Dilemma: To What Extent Can Primary Documents Be Trusted?
5. The Realities of Dar al-Islam
6. Ibn Battuta's Trip to Mali

## Dramatic Moment

Woe is me! Seven days ago I was leading an important diplomatic mission to the emperor of China in Peking. I was entrusted with loads of fine goods and hundreds of slaves and horses as gifts to the emperor from the sultan of Delhi. A thousand cavalry soldiers accompanied us to give protection. My ambassadorship was a sign of the esteem in which the Sultan held me, a Muslim scholar from Morocco. Now look at me!

As our entourage traveled across India, we were attacked by Hindu rebels. We were robbed and became separated from one another. A small group of us were trying to decide what to do next when an enemy force sprang at us from nearby woods. We fought furiously, but then I found myself alone and fearing for my life. The rebels drove my horse off and chased me. I hid at the bottom of a deep, dirty ditch until they got tired of trying searching for me. After nightfall, I crawled out of the ditch, stiff, sore, and bruised. Then, I set off on foot to find food and protection.

As I trudged along moaning about my bad luck, my predicament got even worse. About forty men suddenly blocked my path, weapons aimed at me. I feared this was the end! They took my last sword and all the rest of my personal possessions. They left me with nothing but the clothes I was wearing. Then they marched me to their camp and let me know I was to be killed. I turned in prayer to God and began to recite passages from the Holy Qur'an.

Then I was puzzled because nothing seemed to be happening. The villains were sitting around trying to decide who should kill me when one of them asked what they could gain by murder since they had taken everything I had to offer. They decided to let me go! I thanked God for his mercy and ran into a nearby bamboo forest. Now I have wandered for days with no idea where I am. I've existed on herbs and well water. I've became an expert at eluding robbers and rebels who roam the countryside. One day I hid in a cotton field for hours to escape the attention of a band of fifty armed Hindus. Finally, a week after setting out from Delhi and surviving several violent encounters, I am afraid I am going to die of starvation and exhaustion out here on the North Indian plain. But listen! Here comes someone. Should I hide or. . . .

Source: Adapted by Helen Grady from Ross E. Dunn, The *Adventures of Ibn Baattuta: A Muslim Traveler of the 14th Century*, pp. 213–17.

# LESSON ONE:
# A SUMMARY ACCOUNT OF IBN BATTUTA'S TRAVELS

## A. OBJECTIVES

1. Students will read, accurately interpret, and analyze primary documents.

2. Students will learn historical research skills (e.g. formulate questions from encounters with documents, obtain data from a variety of sources, and examine the context of historical data).

3. Students will examine the influence of geography in history.

4. Students will improve skills at drawing comparisons across eras in order to define enduring issues as well as large-scale developments that transcend regional boundaries.

## B. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

### The Life and Times of the Moroccan Traveler

During the first half of the fourteenth century a large part of Afro-Eurasia was tied together by trade. Religion, politics, and culture united and divided the pan-continental region stretching from Europe and western Africa in the West to China and Japan in the East. Many historians refer to this region as the Afro-Eurasian intercommunicating zone. Overtime, the societies, cities, and trade routes of this zone became increasingly connected, welding the Mediterranean, Southwest Asia, and most of India and China into a single region of interaction and change. By the fourteenth century, Southeast Asia, Inner Asia, northern Europe, and much of Sub-Saharan Africa were fully incorporated into this interacting zone.

The interconnected chain of deserts and steppes extending from the Sahara to the Gobi allowed pastoral groups to move quickly. Pastoral populations exchanged goods and elements of culture during peaceful times. The nomadic peoples could also be a threat to settled agrarian communities. Periodically nomads would attack settled populations, pillage cities, and change the ruling structure and way of life of the people. The last major nomadic movement in Afro-Eurasia occurred in the thirteenth century when the Mongols and their allies spread out of Central Asia, conquering China, Russia, and much of Southwest Asia. Their conquest created the largest land empire the world had ever known.

Countries as we know them today did not exist in the fourteenth century. People did not feel that they belonged to a nation. Rather, their most basic allegiances were to their extended family, lineage, clan, neighborhood and occupational group. Political leaders or rulers regulated the government and extracted taxes from those they governed. The centers of learning and culture were in the cities. For Muslims, the cities were important because they were the location of government, manufacture, and trade, as well as educational institutions where learned men gathered to study, share knowledge, and teach the rising generation.

The period from 1000 to 1500 C.E. saw the expansion of Islam as a religious and cultural force among increasing numbers of people in this zone of intercommunication. Islam expanded for two main reasons. The first was the movement of Turkish-speaking Muslims, both conquerors and migrants, from original homelands in Inner Asia to Southwest Asia, Egypt, and India. The second reason was the spread of Muslim traders into lands touching the Indian Ocean, Central Asia, and West Africa south of the Sahara. With the spread of Islam came the idea that all humans were made equal through their allegiance to the one God and to His holy laws (the *shari'a).*

When Ibn Battuta was born in 1304, the Mongol military rulers of Persia and West Central Asia, call the *khans,* were converting to Islam. This development gave Ibn Battuta the freedom to travel widely under the protection of his religion. He participated in four different travel and migration movements. The first was the holy pilgrimage, or *hajj* to visit Mecca and Medina. The second was as a follower of Sufism, the dimension of Islam that emphasized love, devotion to God, and the struggle to come closer to Him. Muslims dedicated to Sufi ideals often made journeys, sometimes over long distances, to visit well-known spiritual teachers and their centers of Muslim study and prayer. The third movement was Ibn Battuta's travels to urban centers of learning as a Muslim scholar. The fourth included journeys to areas new to Islam where he sought employment, adventure, and honor.

Ibn Battuta journeyed, not as a citizen of Morocco, but as a Muslim, an enlightened member of the larger world of Muslim peoples known as Dar al-Islam. Touching this Islamic world were regions of other religions and cultures involved in trade with Muslim lands. Ibn Battuta visited some of these regions, but he never seemed to be comfortable when traveling beyond the frontiers of Dar al-Islam. The Moroccan traveler provides us with a view of an urban, civilized, culturally diverse world. It was a world struggling to realize Islam's ideals of universal brotherhood as expressed in the Holy Qur'an and the sacred law. Understanding this world view and the history of the places Ibn Battuta visited can help us grasp the meaning of events in the modern and contemporary eras. Most important for capturing the imagination of students, Ibn Battuta's life of travels is an interesting story, filled with drama, adventure, and historical grandeur.

## C. LESSON ACTIVITIES (Completion Time: 3-4 days)

The lesson activities provide a range of ideas and skill exercises to enhance students' knowledge of and ability to do history. These abilities imply skill in writing, research, critical thinking, and understanding the influence of geography in history. The story of Ibn Battuta presents the opportunity to see the interaction of peoples in the Eastern Hemisphere, to look at individual regions within the Afro-Eurasian zone of intercommunication, and to understand Afro-Eurasia as it was before the era of global contact. Activities are suggested pertaining to the several sections of his Book of Travels, called in Arabic the *Rihla.*

Have students read **Student Handout 1**, "Ibn Battuta: Who and why important?" Explain that Ibn Battuta was an educated Muslim who had studied the *shari'a,* the sacred law of Islam. As a traveling scholar he was given shelter, food, and virtually everything he needed in his travels throughout Dar al-Islam, the cultural boundaries of the Islamic world. Dar al-Islam, embraced lands where Muslims predominated or where Muslim kings and princes ruled over non-Muslim majorities. Throughout Dar al-Islam the *shari'a* was the foundation of social order.

Distribute copies of **Student Handout 2,** "The Life of Ibn Battuta." A number of places are mentioned in the reading that may be unfamiliar to students. Use the alphabetical list of places given below as a `pre-test' to determine which students may already know. Before students read the handout, locate the following places mentioned in the reading on a world map:

Afghanistan
Arabian Peninsula
Asia Minor
Bengal
Black Sea
Burma
Canton (Kwangchow)
Ceylon (Sri Lanka)
Constantinople (Istanbul)
Delhi
Egypt
Fez
Gibraltar
Granada
India
Indus River
Iraq
Khurasan (Khorasan)
Maldive Islands
Mali
Mecca
Medina
Morocco
Oman
Palestine
Persia (Iran)
Sahara Desert
Sudan
Sumatra
Syria
Tanzania
Transoxiana (Uzbekistan)

Use the reading on Ibn Battuta as a homework assignment or general class reading. What was the purpose of Ibn Battuta's first journey beyond Morocco? Why did he continue to travel throughout the Islamic world after the *hajj?* Discuss why people travel today. Where might one hesitate to travel today? Why? Did Ibn Battuta travel for

similar reasons? Explain how his travels may have differed from those most people take today. Explain why Ibn Battuta limited his travels mainly to regions within Dar al-Islam.

One option is to divide the class into groups. Assemble the alphabetical lists of places by region and assign a different region to each group. Have students sketch a map of their assigned region on a large sheet of butcher paper to dimensions previously determined for all groups. Students, working within their groups, should locate each of the places on their section of the class map and use a photograph or drawn illustration to symbolize the region (e.g. Constantinople, Hagia Sophia; Palestine, The Dome of the Rock.) Assemble the maps and display on a wall or large bulletin board. Refer to the class map throughout the study of the unit.

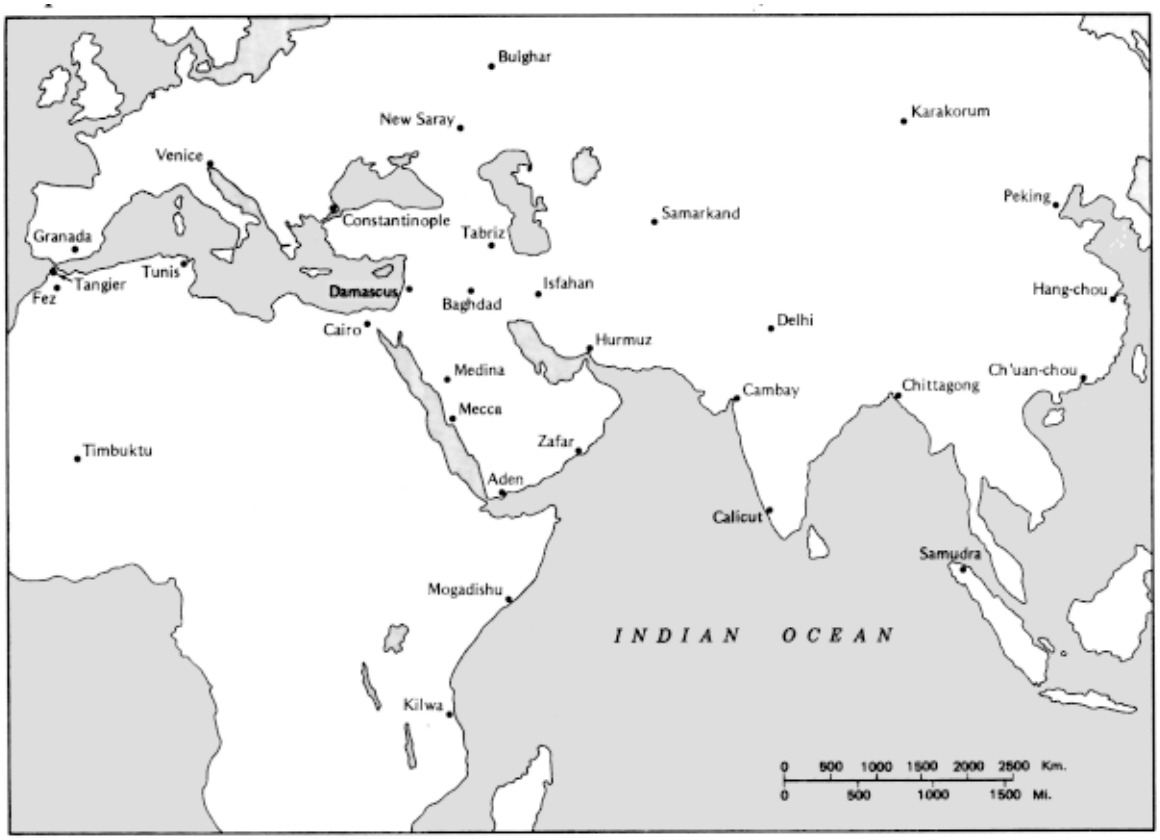
After discussing Ibn Battuta's life and the reasons for his journeys have students read **Student Handout 3**, "The *Rihla:* How do we know about Ibn Battuta?" Explain that the *Rihla* is considered as a primary source document even though some sections may have been added by Ibn Juzayy who did not accompany Ibn Battuta on his journeys. Ask students how can its reliability be judged? To what extent can primary documents be trusted?

Discuss and list the various reasons why people keep a journal or diary or why they write a travelogue. List the reasons. For homework, ask students to keep a journal of the events in their lives over the next twenty-four hours. On the following day, allow students to share what they wrote. Did different students see some of the same activities in a different light? The same way? Why might there be similarities and differences in these journals? If these journals were found a century later and used by historians to write about the daily life of people of our time, what are some of the problems they may encounter in interpreting events? Follow up with a discussion of the purpose of Ibn Battuta's *Rihla.* How might his motives influence what was recorded and how it was told?

In order to establish a context for Ibn Battuta's travels, have students read **Student Handout 4,** "Ibn Battuta: What was his early background and education?" What influence did religious beliefs have on his life?

For the last **part of Lesson One,** divide the class into five groups and explain that each group will examine a reading that explores a different part of the travels of Ibn Battuta. (Use **Group Handouts One-Five**.) After discussing the reading and related questions within the group, have members of each group report to the class summarizing their leg of the journey. Plot the journey on a classroom map as the reports are given.

## Map 1: Cities of Eurasia and Africa in the Fourteenth Century




## Map 2: Region of the Strait of Gibraltar

Conclude the lesson with a discussion of the importance of Ibn Battuta's travels. What do his travels reveal about Dar al-Islam of the fourteenth century.

**Group 1: The Hajj: Travels through Egypt, Syria, and Arabia**

QUESTIONS: Why did Ibn Battuta leave home? What major cities did he visit on this leg of this journey? How did he spend his time in these cities? Why is the *hajj* both a religious and an enlightening experience for Muslims?

**Group 2: Travels to Iraq, Persia, Arabia, and East Africa**

QUESTIONS: How do the basic beliefs of the Shi'a and Sunni sects differ? In what ways are the pillars of Islam reflected in this reading? How important was trade in the fourteenth-century Muslim world? How did trade promote interregional contact?

**Group 3: Travels to Anatolia and the Asian Steppes**

QUESTIONS: How was Ibn Battuta treated during his residency in Anatolia? What were Ibn Battuta's impressions of the Byzantine capital? How does this reading illustrate differences in cultural beliefs in Dar al-Islam?

**Group 4: Travels to India and China**

QUESTIONS: How did Ibn Battuta show his concern for people suffering from famine in Northern India? Why was he imprisoned by the Sultan? How did he attempt to enforce the *shari'a* while serving as *qadi* in the Maldives? What evidence can be given to support the belief that Ibn Battuta traveled to China?

**Group 5: Travels to Morocco, Spain, and Mali**

QUESTIONS: What caused the Black Death? How did it spread? How serious was the plague in Southwest Asia and North Africa? How important was the salt trade? Some historian believe that the Sultan of Morocco sent Ibn Battuta to Mali to visit Mansa Sulayman and gather intelligence information. Why might the Sultan want information about Mali?

## D. CULMINATING ACTIVITIES

Teachers may elect to use one or more of the following activities to culminate the lesson.

1. Divide the class into teams, assigning each a research project related to a region Ibn Battuta visited. Research the political, economic, and social characteristics of each region. Explore the clothing, foods, rituals, language, architecture, art, music, and dance of the people in Ibn Battuta's time. Set up the classroom with different stations around the room representing the regions researched. The teams should be dressed in costume and decorate their section with a banner and a poster showing the topography of the region. Foods and trade items should be illustrated or available to be shared by the class. Have a team of "reporters" go around the room and interview each regional team, asking pertinent questions. Videotape the interviews and show the next day, analyzing the accuracy of the presentations. Invite another class to participate.

2. Create a HyperCard stack or a Web site based on the adventures of Ibn Battuta. Students can use their research as the informational part of the stack or site. A map of Afro-Eurasia should have hot buttons tied to different geographic areas, which in turn would give information about the physical setting, economic viability, customs, and political culture of the region. Scan in images and incorporate them into the project. Topics such as the Five Pillars of Islam, the architecture of mosques, and biographies of important people might be included. Collaborate with a computer teacher, allowing time for writing, proofing, and scanning. Get a team of three or four students to create the final product. The project takes time, but teaches many skills and is well worth the effort.

3. Trace the complete travels of Ibn Battuta using the maps in this unit. Make a calculated estimate of the number of miles he traveled. (One historian has estimated about 73,000 miles total, another 75,000 miles. How does your estimate compare?) Compare Ibn Battuta's travel mileage with the distance across the continental United States, the Atlantic Ocean, or around the world. List all the means of transportation he used or was likely to use. Do you think Ibn Battuta was unique in traveling so far?

4. Design a newspaper featuring Ibn Battuta's story and events of a particular year in the fourteenth century. Illustrate with political cartoons or drawings reflecting topics and aspects of Ibn Battuta's journey.

5. Write a short play about an imaginary meeting between Ibn Battuta (1304-1368) and Marco Polo (1254-1324). In the drama, the Italian traveler visits Tangier when Ibn Battuta is a teenager. They meet and talk about Marco Polo's adventures, and the young Moroccan shows much curiosity about the world.

## E. EXTENSION ACTIVITIES ON IBN BATTUTA AND HIS RIHLA

The lesson may be extended by having students work individually or in groups on research projects such as:

1. Construct a mural illustrating Ibn Battuta's twenty-nine years of adventure. Write an accompanying report below each section.

2. Visit a local mosque or invite a speaker to talk about Islam. Students who are Muslims may be happy to explain basic aspects of their religion. Students should be aware of the fact that Islam, like Christianity and Judaism, has a fundamental unitary teaching but embraces a wide range of local beliefs, practices, and cultural habits.

3. Choose a trade product and trace its movement from its point of origin somewhere in the world to its point of consumption somewhere else. What goods moved in the opposite direction? Groups can be assigned different products and different trade routes. (For example, silk moved on ocean routes and various land routes; salt was carried to Mali in exchange for gold.)

4. Compare and contrast two regions or localities within Dar al-Islam that had different cultural traditions during Ibn Battuta's time.

5. Research the importance of a city that Ibn Battuta visited. Explain its geographic significance of the city and describe daily life there.

6. Write and illustrate a tourist guide to a city visited by Ibn Battuta.

7. Research and illustrate the architecture of mosques in different regions that Ibn Battuta visited. How might the form and shape of the mosque, building materials used, and style of decoration reflect or express cultural styles of the region?

8. Check the index of *Aramco Magazine* or *National Geographic* for articles focusing on relevant topics such as the Silk Route, the Dome of the Rock, or the *hajj.* Write a report on one of the topics. (See the bibliography at the end of this unit for the reference to the article on Ibn Battuta in *National Geographic,* Dec. 1991.)

9. Research the lives of rulers-African, Asian, or European-contemporary to Ibn Battuta.

10. Analyze customary relations between men and women in Islam. Compare and contrast regional differences, differences before and after the introduction of Islam, differences between Ibn Battuta's time and today.

11. Visit a museum to look for artifacts which are contemporary with Ibn Battuta. Research the importance of these items.

12. Research the Crusades and the interaction of Muslims and Christians in Granada, Morocco, Egypt, Syria, and the Byzantine Empire. How did both sides view each other? To What extent was there cultural, political, and economic exchange?

13. Compare and contrast the life of a student in a madrasa (Muslim college of law and the religious sciences) with that of a student in a medieval European university.

14. Research the conquests of the Mongols under Chinggis (Genghis) Khan. Compare and contrast the development and decline of the empires of the Ilkhanate of Persia and Iraq, Kipchak (the Golden Horde), and the Delhi Sultanate. How did change to sedentary life or urban life affect these nomadic peoples?

15. Draw two maps, one showing the effects of the monsoons on the Indian Ocean in summer and one on the monsoons in winter. Analyze how the winds affected trade between the west coast of India and the east coast of Africa. Why do you think ships were able to sale between western India and the Persian Gulf almost any time of year? How did the design of ships in the Indian Ocean take advantage of the monsoon pattern?

16. Research the city of Delhi during the time of the Delhi Sultanate. Compare fourteenth-century Delhi with Venice, Genoa, or London of the same period in terms of size, population, architecture, economic life, international trade, religious, or other factors.

## Ibn Battuta: Who and why important?

Ibn Battuta was born in 1304 in Tangier, Morocco. He died in his homeland, probably in 1368. In the *Rihla,* the account of his travels, he gives his full name as Abu 'Abdallah Muhammad ibn 'Abdallah ibn Muhammad ibn Ibrahim al-Lawati al-Tanji. "AlTanji" means that he came from the city of Tangier. In any case he was commonly known as Abu Abdallah ibn Battuta. We know nothing of his physical appearance except that as an adult he had a beard, which virtually all Muslim scholars did. During his lifetime he traveled more than 73,000 miles, the equivalent of going around the world three times! Where and why did he travel? How was he received? How do we know about him and his adventures? What is the importance of his travels?

The most important thing to know about Ibn Battuta is that he lived at a time when Islam was expanding into vast new areas of Afro-Eurasia. He was welcomed as a guest in the places he visited because he was a fellow Muslim. More importantly, he was an educated Muslim who had studied Islamic law, called the *shari'a.* As a Muslim and scholar, he was given shelter, food, and whatever he needed on his adventures. In centers of learning he was given the opportunity to study. In Mecca and Medina, the Holy Cities of Arabia, he was looked after so that he might be free to study. In areas new to Islam, his talents of literacy and scholarship were in demand, so he found employment as a judge.

Islam was and is a unifying force. The religion stresses the unity of the universe under God. In human society there are no separations between the political, economic, and social aspects of life. This means that Muslims, no matter who or where they are, should regard one another as equals and be treated with respect. This does not mean that distinctions of class, wealth, and power did not exist in Islam. Certainly they did. But the faith put much emphasis on egalitarian behavior in human relations and on the sanctity of any kind of legal or moral contract between individuals.

Most of the time, Ibn Battuta could travel safely in any Muslim region. One of the five pillars of Islam requires charity. This alms-giving often included welcoming and showing hospitality to traveling scholars and pilgrims. Ibn Battuta was free to travel where he liked-to make the *hajj,* study at Islamic centers, visit Muslim sages, or simply visit regions he had not seen before. The fact that he was educated in Islamic law gave him additional stature in lands which had newly adopted the faith. Though unity of Islam did not and does not mean unity in all cultural institutions and practices, regions new to Islam wanted to understand the sacred law and proper ways of worship. Ibn Battuta was a model of the pious, sophisticated Muslim scholar. He offered his services to leaders in the frontier regions of Islam who needed such "role models" to help them govern and live up to Muslim ideals.

## The Life of Ibn Battuta

Abu ‘Abdallah Ibn Battuta has been rightly celebrated as the greatest traveler of premodern times. He was born into a family of Muslim legal scholars in Tangier, Morocco, in 1304 during the era of the Marinid dynasty. He studied law as a young man and in 1325 left his native town to make the pilgrimage, or *hajj,* to the sacred city of Mecca in Arabia. He took a year and a half to reach his destination, visiting North Africa, Egypt, Palestine, and Syria along the way. After completing his first *hajj* in 1326, he toured Iraq and Persia, then returned to Mecca. In 1328 (or 1330) he embarked upon a sea voyage that took him down the eastern coast of Africa as far south as the region of modern Tanzania. On his return voyage he visited Oman and the Persian Gulf and returned to Mecca again by the overland route across central Arabia.

In 1330 (or 1332) he ventured to go to India to seek employment in the government of the Sultanate of Delhi. Rather than taking the normal ocean route across the Arabian Sea to the western coast of India, he traveled north through Egypt and Syria to Asia Minor. After touring that region, he crossed the Black Sea to the plains of West Central Asia. He then, owing to fortuitous circumstances, made a westward detour to visit Constantinople, capital of the Byzantine Empire, in the company of a Turkish princess. Returning to the Asian steppes, he traveled eastward through Transoxiana, Khurasan, and Afghanistan, arriving at the banks of the Indus River in September 1333 (or 1335).

He spent eight years in India, most of that time occupying a post as a *qadi,* or judge, in the government of Muhammad Tughluq, Sultan of Delhi. In 1341 the king appointed him to lead a diplomatic mission to the court of the Mongol emperor of China. The expedition ended disastrously in shipwreck off the southwestern coast of India, leaving Ibn Battuta without employment or resources. For a little more than two years he traveled about southern India, Ceylon, and the Maldive Islands, where he served for about eight months as a *qadi* under the local Muslim dynasty. Then, despite the failure of his ambassadorial mission, he resolved in 1345 to go to China on his own. Traveling by sea, he visited Bengal, the coast of Burma, and the island of Sumatra, then continued on to Canton. The extent of his visit to China is uncertain but was probably limited to the southern coastal region.

In 1346-47 he returned to Mecca byway of South India, the Persian Gulf, Syria, and Egypt. After performing the ceremonies of the *hajj* one last time, he set a course for home. Traveling by both land and sea, he arrived in Fez, the capital of Morocco, late in 1349. The following year he made a brief trip across the Strait of Gibraltar to the Muslim kingdom of Granada.

Then, in 1353, he undertook his final adventure, a journey by camel caravan across the Sahara Desert to the Kingdom of Mali in the West African Sudan. In 1355 he returned to Morocco to stay. In the course of a career on the road spanning almost thirty years, he crossed the breadth of the Eastern Hemisphere, visited territories equivalent to about 44 modern countries, and put behind him a total distance of approximately 73,000 miles.

Early in 1356 Sultan Abu'Inan, the Marinid ruler of Morocco, commissioned Ibn Juzayy, a young literary scholar, the Marinid ruler of Morocco, to record Ibn Battuta's experiences, as well as his observations about the Islamic world of his day, in the form of a *rihla,* or book of travels. As a type of Arabic literature, the *rihla* attained something of a flowering in North Africa between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries. The best known examples of the genre recounted a journey from the Maghrib to Mecca, informing and entertaining readers with rich descriptions of the pious institutions, public monuments, and religious personalities of the great cities of Islam. Ibn Battuta and Ibn Juzayy collaborated for about two years to compose their work, the longest and in terms of its subject matter the most complex rihla to come out of North Africa in the medieval age. His royal charge completed, Ibn Battuta retired to a judicial post in a Moroccan provincial town. He died in 1368 . . . .

**Source:** Ross E. Dunn, *The Adventures of Ibn Battuta: A Muslim Traveler of the 14th Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), pp. 1-4. Reprinted without footnotes with author's permission.

## The *Rihia:* How do we know about Ibn Battuta?

Today you can read a travelogue or journal about places in the world you may want to visit. Frequently these travel descriptions stress the places, not the personal life of the one who wrote the descriptions. The story Ibn Battuta tells is not an autobiography; it is about the places he visited and his adventures. At the end of his travels he was asked by the sultan, or ruler of Morocco to dictate his story to Ibn Juzayy, a young literary scholar. Working together, the two men took two years, 1356 to 1357, to compose the book, which was written in Arabic. The result was a *rihla,* which refers to both the journey itself, with Ibn Battuta's pilgrimages to Mecca as the centerpiece, and to the description of lands that he visited. The book told educated readers about religious institutions, monuments, cultural practices, economic conditions, political events, rulers, scholars, and Sufi mystics that the journeyer encountered. Ibn Juzayy edited Ibn Battuta's account of his experiences and crafted it into a polished work in the Arabic literary tradition of the time.

It is likely that in the *Rihla* Ibn Battuta mentions visiting a few places that he did not actually see. It is possible that Ibn Juzayy wanted to include almost every region within Dar al-Islam that a Muslim could visit. Scholars copying the manuscript in later years might have added passages. We also know that a few extended passages in the *Rihla* were copied from the accounts of earlier travelers. None of this discredits Ibn Battuta in general; it simply means that we must analyze the book keeping in mind the literary rules and practices of the fourteenth century.

Ibn Battuta's book was not known outside of Islamic circles until two German scholars translated portions of it in the early nineteenth century. Parts of the narrative were translated into English in 1829. Two French priests translated the complete manuscript into their language in the 1850's. Today complete translations exist in many languages, including English, Spanish, Russian, and Persian. The *Rihla* stands as the only eye-witness primary document providing information on some regions of the world in the fourteenth century. These include Sub-Saharan West Africa, Asia Minor, and the Maldive Islands.

## Ibn Battuta: What was his early background and education?

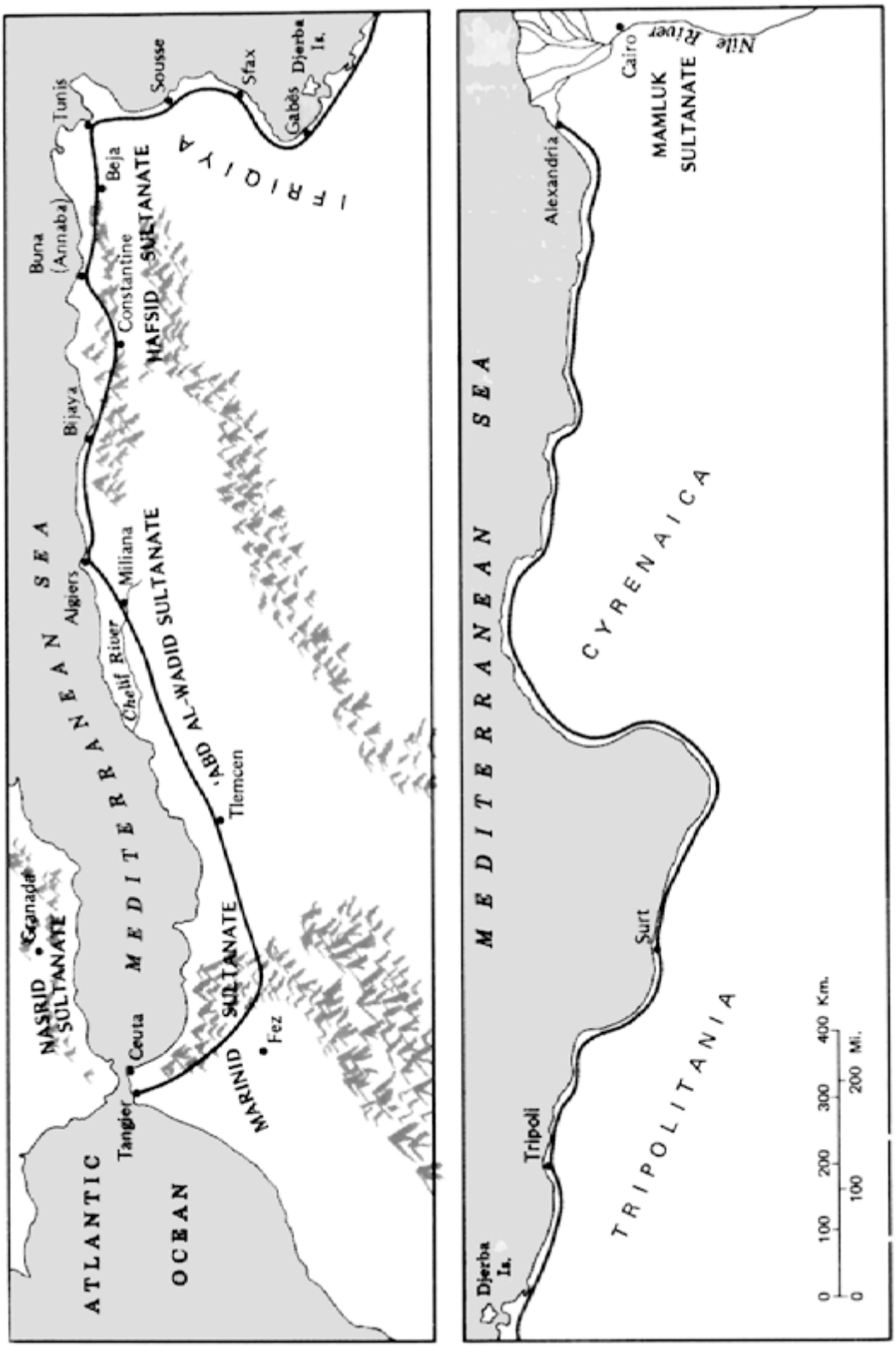
Born in Tangier, Morocco in 1304 Ibn Battuta was a member of a scholarly family. He received his early education in a city that was located on the western fringe of the Muslim world. As a child and young man, he would have sat at the feet of teachers in the city's mosques to memorize the entire Qur'an and to study a variety of religious and legal texts. The goal of education in those days was to impart the established wisdom, moral values, and cultural rules of Muslim society. In addition Ibn Battuta was taught to be a gentleman and to read and write Arabic, the language of the Qur'an.

One of the first things a Muslim child learned was the essential practices of Islam, known as the Five Pillars. The first pillar is the *shahada,* the witness or testimony that there is no god but God (Allah in Arabic) and Muhammad is the messenger of God. This is a declaration of firm belief in one god, or monotheism, and that Muhammad is the final Prophet of God and the perfect model for all Muslims. The second pillar is prayer, or *salat.* Muslims are required to face toward Mecca and pray five times a day. Mecca became the spiritual center of this new religion. The third pillar requires all Muslims to share their wealth and give alms *(zakat)* to support the indigent, orphans, and the needy. The fourth pillar is the requirement to fast from sunrise to sunset during the month of Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic year. For sincere Muslims, Ramadan is a time of introspection and rededication to God. The fifth pillar obligates every Muslim who can to make a pilgrimage *(hajj)* to Mecca at least once in his or her life. The pilgrimage is a reaffirmation of spiritual values and the worldwide unity of the Muslim community.

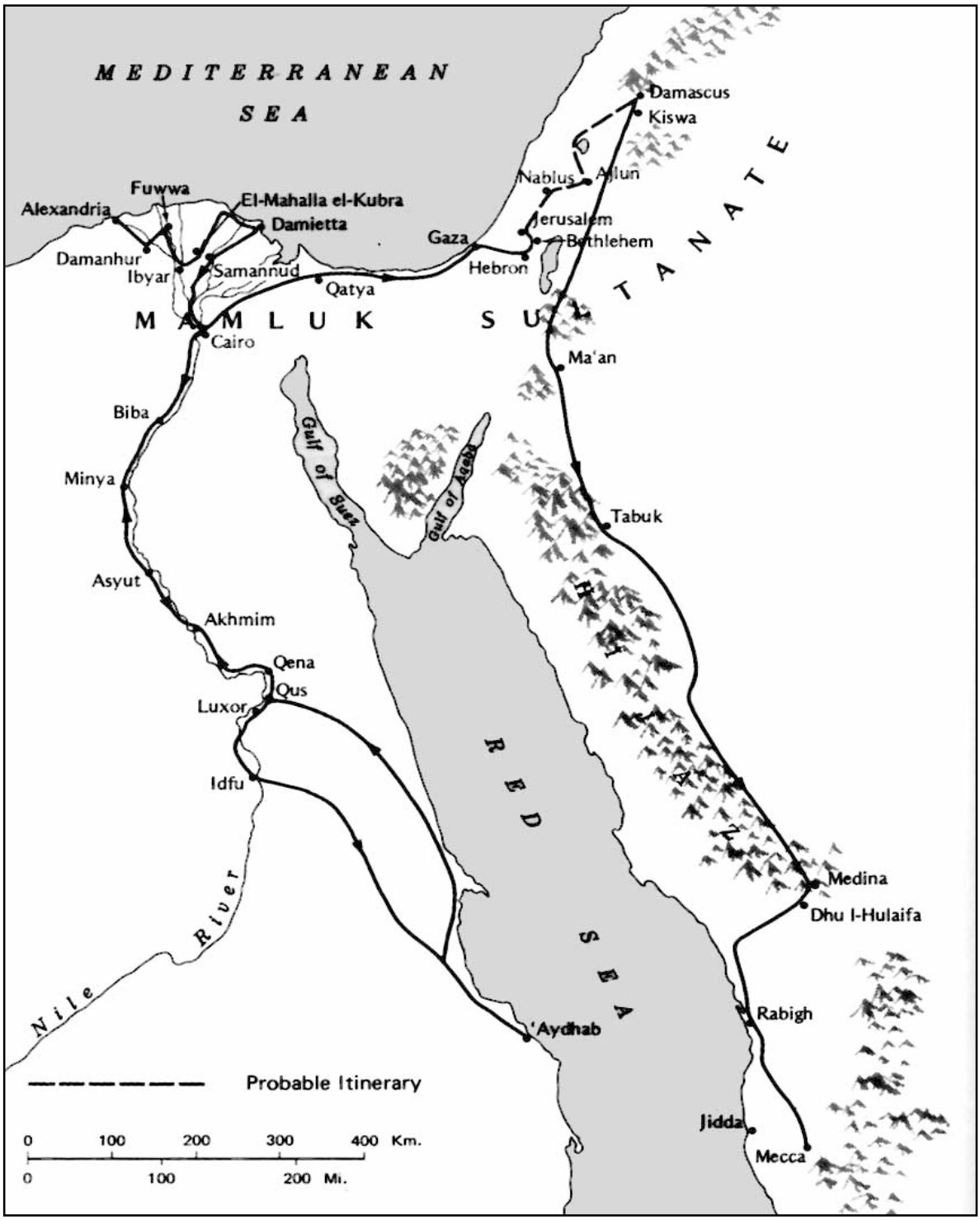
Beyond learning the pillars of the faith and other spiritual and moral basics, Ibn Battuta received training in Islamic law. The *shari'a* was the basis for all legal transactions and provided guidance to Muslims in most aspects of day-to-day life. The legal system included almost all spheres from moral training to marriage, taxation, and slavery. It is still the basis for laws in many Islamic countries today.

Sufism was another influence on the young scholar. This dimension of Islam emphasized the mystical side of religion, the ways to know God and draw closer to Him. An individual of particularly holy merit, known as a *wali* or murabit, usually guided Sufi disciples along a "path" to God through study, prayer, and spiritual exercises. The teacher, regarded as a living saint or "friend of God," often maintained a spiritual center or lodge where people came to be close to him and to form a spiritual community. When Ibn Battuta left Morocco, he was already a devotee of the ascetic practices surrounding Sufism. He was not drawn away from a worldly life, but as a sort of part-time Sufi he periodically took time from his travels to retreat from the world to spiritually reinforce himself.

**Map 3: Ibn Battuta's Itinerary in Northern Africa, 1325-26**



**Map 4: Ibn Battuta's Itinerary in Egypt, Syria, and Arabia, 1325–26**



## The Hajj: Travel through Egypt, Syria, and Arabia

At the age of twenty-one Ibn Battuta left Tangier to make the *hajj.* For him this was both a holy journey and an adventure. He left with sadness at the realization that he would not return any time soon, if ever, but stories of things unseen must have lured him on. The trip by land from Tangier to Mecca meant a 3,000 mile journey across the coastal plains, deserts, and mountains of Mediterranean Africa. Even though the journey was dangerous, pious Muslim scholars made the trek both to perform the pilgrimage and to study in mosques and colleges of Egypt, Syria, and Arabia. He set off all alone, but after three weeks he joined a caravan and spent eight to nine months reaching Egypt. During this time he visited many dignitaries, who gave him gifts.

In Egypt he took the opportunity to visit Cairo and tour the Nile Valley. Cairo was one of the most important centers of Islamic learning and the largest city in the world west of China. Egypt was ruled by the Mamluks, warriors who made up an aristocratic elite. They maintained firm political power and were not afraid to use physical force. Mamluks were young men taken as slaves from the steppes north of the Black Sea and Caspian Sea. They were converted to Islam and trained to fight on horseback. When his training was complete a Mamluk was legally freed and given a military or political position in the ruling class. Ibn Battuta would have seen the symbol of Mamluk power, the Citadel, an imposing palace complex on a rocky mound above Cairo. Like most ruling groups in medieval times, the Mamluks could be cruel. But they saved Syria and Egypt from the ravages of a Mongol invasion by defeating them in battle. The Mamluks enforced peace, allowed international trade to flow, created a haven for scholars, and sponsored the building of beautiful mosques, colleges, hospitals, and tombs.

In Cairo Ibn Battuta probably took time to sit in on lessons on the *shari'a* at the madrasas, or colleges for the study of law and the religious sciences. He also toured the Nile valley and observed the dense populations that hugged the river. One day he entered a bathhouse in a town on the river and discovered men completely undressed. Our visitor, whose upbringing was notably pious and straight-laced, immediately went to the governor to report the transgression. The governor called for the operators of all bathhouses to require patrons to wear waist coverings.

Unable to cross to the Red Sea to Jidda on the Arabian coast because of a rebellion in Upper Egypt, Ibn Battuta returned downstream and crossed the Sinai peninsula by way of Gaza. Then, he visited Hebron and Jerusalem. Hebron was important to Muslims, Christians, and Jews alike because it was the burial place of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, founders of the shared monotheistic tradition. Jerusalem was a small town of 10,000 at the time. It was filled with shrines, which attracted numerous pilgrims and scholars. For Jews the center of religious focus was the ancient

Temple, for Christians it was the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, for Muslims it was the Haram al-Sharif. Within the Haram were (and still are) several holy sites, the most important being the Dome of the Rock where Muhammad, according to Muslim belief, was miraculously transported to the Seventh Heaven of Paradise to stand in the presence of God. Our pilgrim visited the Haram and received a cloak from a Sufi master.

Moving on to Damascus, Ibn Battuta prepared for the *hajj.* Damascus was the Mamluk capital in Southwest Asia. Stationed there were commanders and soldiers who defended the city. It was set in a lush oasis and served as a transshipment center for trade from Iraq, the Persian Gulf, Asia Minor, the Black Sea, and the Mediterranean. Our traveler listened to learned scholars give lectures in the law. Some of these teachers were immigrants who had fled Mongol invasions further east. Ibn Battuta became ill in Damascus, but he still took time to marry the daughter of a Moroccan living there. He soon divorced his wife, however, to join a pilgrimage caravan, which probably numbered several thousand. Every member of the *hay* party had to carry most of his or her own supplies southward across the Arabian desert. A generous donor provided Ibn Battuta with a camel and money for the pilgrimage. The difficult and dangerous journey from Damascus to Medina was about 820 miles and took 45 to 50 days. In this case the trip was made safely.

Medina is the second most holy city for Muslims. It was Muhammad's home for a time, and he is buried there with his wife Fatima. The pilgrims rejoiced to be on sacred ground. While in Medina, Ibn Battuta must have visited many holy places. Today, the trip from Medina to Mecca can be made quickly in chartered buses along paved highways. In the fourteenth century the trek was a dusty journey across 200 miles of desert. Not far from Mecca, male pilgrims entered a state of spiritual readiness and ritual purity by shedding their ordinary clothes and putting on two large flat sheets of cloth to form a garment called the ihram. One cloth was wrapped around the waist and reached the ankles. The other was wrapped around the upper body and draped over the left shoulder. Women dressed modestly, without jewelry and without their faces covered. All this preparation was symbolic of entering a state of sanctity in which there was to be no arguing, cutting of hair or nails, killing of animals, or sexual intercourse. Today, the purification rituals are essentially the same as they were then.

Continuing on to Mecca, the pilgrims were filled with prayers and rejoicing. They arrived at the city before dawn and went immediately to the grand mosque called the Haram or Sanctuary. Here they worshiped by performing the tawaf, that is, walking seven times counterclockwise around the Ka'ba, the great stone cube that stands in the center of the mosque. This granite block is covered by a black veil, which is encircled with an inscription in golden Arabic letters. The interior of the Ka'ba is simply furnished and contains a copy of the Qur'an. On the exterior at the eastern corner, is embedded

the Black Stone, which Muhammad is said to have kissed. It is about twelve inches in diameter and is set in silver. Qur'anic tradition has it that the Ka'ba was originally built by Abraham to acclaim the one God. Later, the polytheistic tribe of the region made it into a house of idols. Then, in the seventh century Muhammad rededicated it to God.

Ibn Battuta circled the Ka'ba, while prayers were said, then went to a small shrine called the Maqam Ibrahim. Here there is a rock, which, according to Muslim tradition, has a footprint of the Prophet, made when he was reconstructing the Ka'ba. Ibn Battuta prostrated himself twice and prayed. He then went to a nearby well to drink the water. According to tradition, the Angel Gabriel formed a spring at the site of the well to give water to Hagar and her son Ismail (Isaac in the Jewish and Christian traditions) after Hagar's husband Abraham left to go into the desert.

During the next three weeks Ibn Battuta met new people from all around the Muslim world who had also gathered for the hajj. He would have wandered the streets of the city and sat under the roofed portion of the Grand Mosque where the faithful prayed, recited the Qur'an, and conducted lessons. Many poor pilgrims lived in the mosque while they were in Mecca. They ate, slept, and prayed there, although cooking was not allowed. The mosque was busy day and night with worshipers.

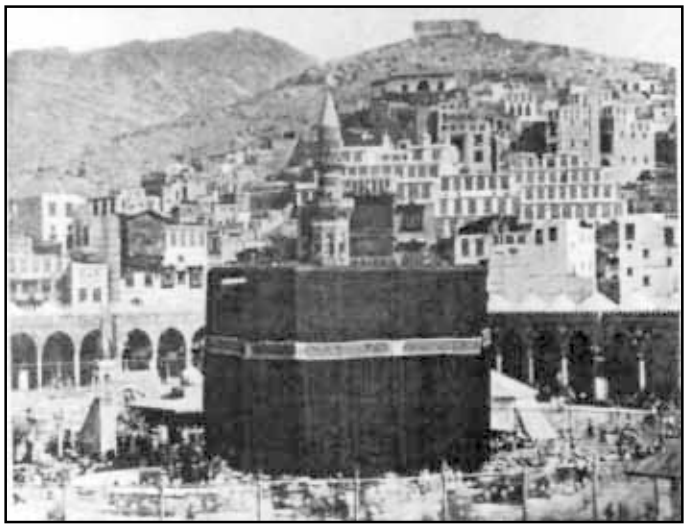
In order to complete the *hajj* Ibn Battuta joined other pilgrims to journey east of the city through desert ravines to the plain of Arafat. On the ninth day of the month of the *hajj,* he stood facing the Mount of Mercy, where Adam is said to have prayed and where Muhammad gave his farewell sermon to his faithful followers. The ceremonies in the desert make up the heart of the annual *hajj* or Greater Pilgrimage. Some rich people rode camels to the plain of Arafat, but most pilgrims walked, some pious people barefoot. Many Muslims spent a night at Mina, a settlement east of Mecca. In the morning they went on to the plain where they formed a circle around the Mount of Mercy. Tents were set up and prayer mats were opened. At noon began the Standing, the crucial event in the *hajj.* Muslims listened to sermons and prayed for submission to the will of God.

At exactly sunset the Standing ended and the faithful went back to Muzdalifah, three miles along the road to Mina. By tradition, the white clad pilgrims rushed as quickly as possible to be there for evening prayer. At Muzdalifah many bedded down for the night, while women, children, and the ill went ahead to Mina. In the morning, everyone assembled for the Feast of the Sacrifice. At Mina were three stone pillars, which stood at intervals east to west along the valley. Each pilgrim picked up seven stones and threw them at the western pillar in the way that Abraham cast stones at the devil to repulse him when he tried to convince this prophet to disregard God's command to sacrifice his son Ismail. The pilgrims threw the stones as a personal reminder to fight evil. Ibn Battuta

would then have bought a sheep or goat, turned it toward Mecca, and sacrificed it by slitting its throat. This recalls God's saving Abraham from having to sacrifice Ismail.

The pilgrimage was now officially over. Ibn Battuta would have found a barber, had his head shaved or at least a lock of hair cut. He was now free to change to regular clothes, return to Mecca, and make the tawaf again. Then all regulations except that against sexual intercourse were lifted. From the tenth to the thirteenth day of the month religious rites gave way to celebration and friendship. The many faithful returned to Mina to throw additional stones at the three pillars, to sacrifice more animals, and to visit with one another. On the twelfth day, pilgrims began to make a final tawaf and to leave the city. After completing the rites of the Greater Pilgrimage, a person could adopt the title *al-Hajj.* Today, all Muslims follow the same practices with minor exceptions, and this is the great unifying event of Islam.

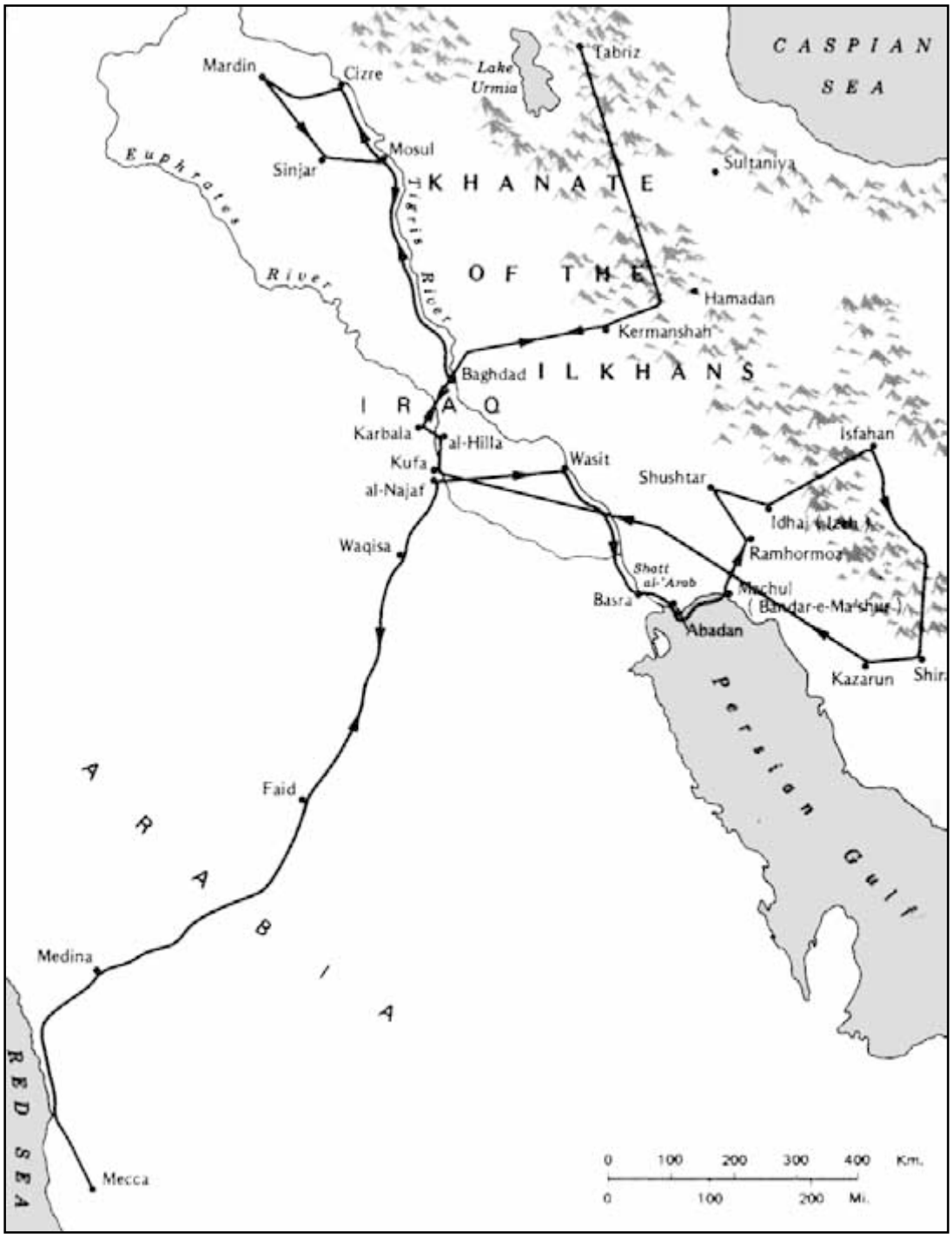
Many pilgrims soon returned home to their ordinary lives. For Ibn Battuta, it was an end and a beginning. He had earned the title *al-Hay,* which would give him respect in learned circles. But he had no intentions of returning to Morocco. He now was ready to continue his travels within Dar al-Islam. He vowed, he tells us in the *Rihla,* to choose his routes so that he would never retrace his own steps! He did not quite achieve this goal, but he came close.



*The Haram and the Ka 'ba, Mecca*
Library of Congress

**QUESTIONS:** Why did Ibn Battuta leave home? What major cities did he visit on this leg of this journey? How did he spend his time in these cities? Why is the *hajj* both a religious and an enlightening experience for Muslims?

**Map 5: Ibn Battuta's Itinerary in Persia and Iraq, 1326–27**



**Map 6: Ibn Battuta's Itinerary in Arabia and East Africa, 1328–30 (1330–32)**

## Travels to Iraq, Persia, Arabia, and East Africa

In 1326 Ibn Battuta left Mecca in a caravan. The company marched even at night with the aid of torches which, Ibn Battuta observed, made night seem like day. After forty-four days they reached Mesopotamia (Iraq). Our traveler went to Basra on the Persian Gulf where he hired a boat then proceeded to explore the marshes of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. In this region of Iraq, and scattered throughout Persia (Iran) he encountered settlements of Shi'a Muslims. The Shi'a make up a number of sects within Islam. They believe that a leader-messiah, a descendant of 'Ali (Muhammad's son-in-law) known as the Imam, will one day return and reveal himself. He will make the earth truthful and righteous until the time of the Last Judgment. Until then a spiritual leader will help guide the Muslim community and interpret the Qur'an.

Ibn Battuta was a Sunni Muslim. Sunnis believe that 'Ali was important but that Qur'anic revelation was to be interpreted by consensus of the community, not by a leader with special knowledge and wisdom. Our traveler was not too sympathetic toward the Shi'a and believed they were in error in their beliefs. Ibn Battuta was also interested in Sufism, though sometimes Sufi practice was too excessive for him. Stopping to visit a shrine in a village in Iraq he had a chance to observe a Sufi ecstatic event in which devotees danced and twirled to the beat of drums. Some Sufi brethren danced barefoot on hot coals. Others took large snakes and bit off their heads with their teeth. Ibn Battuta never looked with favor upon this sort of religious fervor.

Traveling on to Baghdad, Ibn Battuta found a city still recovering from the Mongol invasion of 1258. Mosques were being restored and scholarly learning was progressing. The Mongols had conquered the Persians, but in a sense the Persians ended up conquering the Mongols by converting them to Islam and Persian culture. Ibn Battuta was invited to travel with the Il-khan, or Sultan of Persia and his huge retinue. He then joined a general of the Il-khan to go to Tabriz, a city in northwestern Persia inhabited by two to three hundred thousand people. This town was the main intersection for the Mediterranean, Central Asian, and Indian Ocean trade routes. Returning to Baghdad, Ibn Battuta decided to make the hajj again. He became ill in Mecca and was so sick that he had to make some of the Great Pilgrimage tied to a horse. Remaining in the Holy City for three years, he was supported as a pilgrim in residence thanks to the generosity of alms-givers and learned patrons.

In 1330, Ibn Battuta reports that he went to the Red Sea port of Jidda and boarded a ship of a type called a dhow. These vessels had wooden hulls made of planks tied together with cords of fiber. Their sails were of triangular shape and known in Europe as "latine" sails. Ibn Battuta soon became seasick and asked to be put ashore. After that, he traveled to Aden, the great commercial port at the junction of the Red and Arabian Seas.

Trade was important to Arabs and other Muslims because of the location of Southwest Asia as a hub connecting Africa, Asia, and Europe. Goods moving among these regions had to pass through the Southwest Asia bottleneck. Our voyager took advantage of this trade activity by joining a group of Muslim merchants setting sail from Aden for ports along the East African coast.

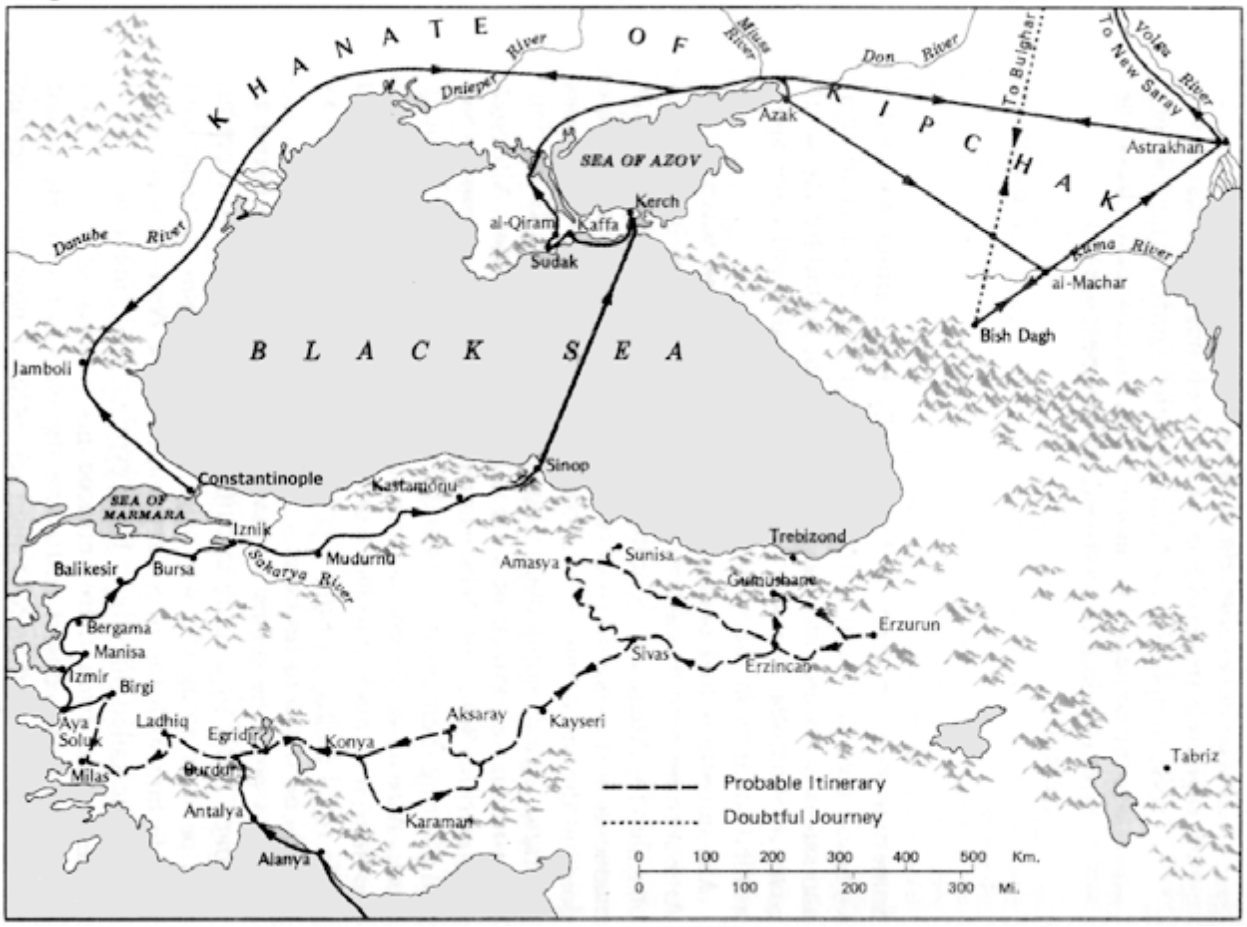
For Ibn Battuta, going into the Indian Ocean meant leaving lands dominated by Muslims dedicated to practicing the shari'a as the basis for legal and moral actions. The regions beyond Southwest Asia had a varied international social flavor. Ibn Battuta was now visiting a region where Islam was not the dominant belief. Muslims living in coastal areas of the Indian Ocean were very aware of interregional market conditions. They were tied to this broad market, and they coordinated trade from the interior non-Muslim populations with Southwest Asia.

The dhow he traveled on sailed under winter monsoon winds, which blew the ship southward. The dhow was able to reach the port of Mogadishu (today the capital of Somalia) in fifteen days. Ships coming to this city imported porcelain, silk, glassware, books, paper, and tools. Brought from the interior of Africa for exchange at the port were ivory, gold, frankincense, myrrh, animal skins, ambergris, rice, mangrove poles, and slaves. In Mogadishu, the local religious scholars treated Ibn Battuta to a meal of stew with chicken, fish, and vegetables served over rice and cooked in ghee (unclarified butter.) They also ate unripe bananas in milk and a dish of sour milk with green ginger, mangoes, pickled lemons, and chilies. After being treated well bythe Sultan, Ibn Battuta boarded his ship to visit the land of Zanj and the city of Kilwa. This region lay south of the equator. It was nearly as far down the coast as Muslim trade went. Kilwa was the center of the East African gold trade. Here on the edge of Dar al-Islam, Ibn Battuta was delighted to find stone houses with sunken courtyards and indoor plumbing. The well-to-do people wore silk and fine jewelry. They ate from porcelain dishes.

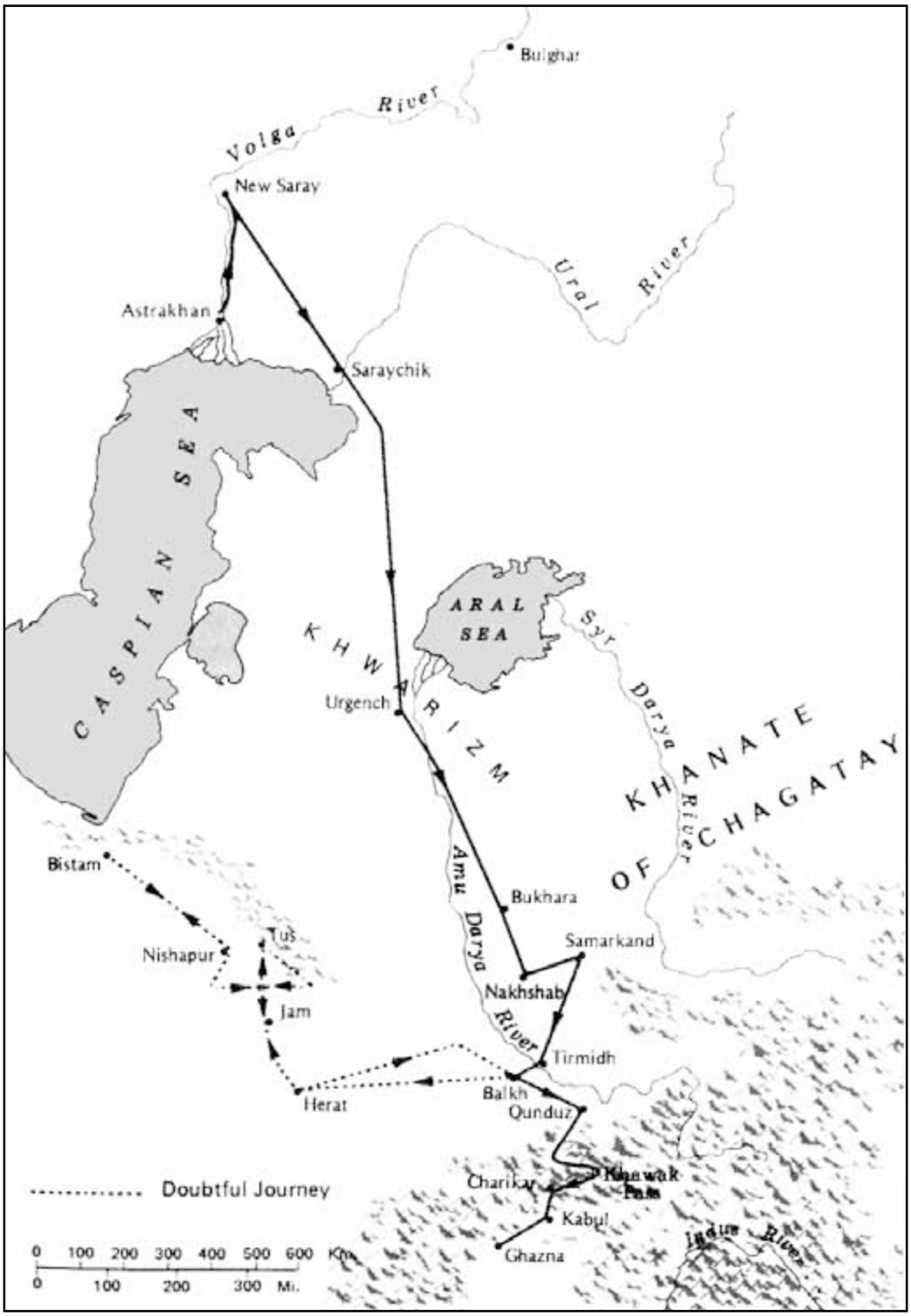
Thanks to the summer monsoons, which blow off the African continent toward Asia, our traveler returned quickly to the southern shore of Arabia. There, he hired a guide to take him from the city of Zafar northeastward along the coast to Qalhat. Unfortunately, the guide turned nasty. When Ibn Battuta thought the man was going to try to drown him, he brandished a sword. He escaped the guide, hid at night, and finally reached Qalhat exhausted and with terribly swollen feet. After recovering from this disaster, he crossed the rugged heartland of Oman and returned once again to Mecca.

**QUESTIONS:** How do the basic beliefs of the Shi'a and Sunni sects differ? In what ways are the pillars of Islam reflected in this reading? How important was trade in the fourteenth-century Muslim world? How did trade promote interregional contact?

**Map 7: Ibn Battuta's Itinerary in Anatolia and the Black Sea Region, 1330–32 (1332–34)**



**Map 8: Ibn Battuta's Itinerary in Central Asia and Afghanistan 1332–33 (1334–35)**



## Travels to Anatolia and the Asian Steppe

Anatolia, known in ancient times as Asia Minor and today as Turkey, was the next land Ibn Battuta toured. He called it one of the finest regions in the world. The people were cleanly dressed, the food delicious, and the men handsome. The region was also in a state of political and cultural transition. Muslim Turkish warriors were in the process of defeating the Byzantine Empire and already looking to invade southeastern Europe. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries the Seljuk Turks, who had migrated into Anatolia from Central Asia, drove the Byzantines nearly back to Constantinople. In the thirteenth century, the Mongols and Turkish allies established domination over eastern and central Anatolia. The Mongols tightly regulated the vast areas they controlled. The result was the Pax Mongolica, or period of peace in the region. Anatolia was a center of far-ranging trade for metal wares, leather, silk, woolens, grain, fur, timber, and slaves.

Ibn Battuta was well received in Anatolia, hosted at the courts of Turkish princes and welcomed into fraternal societies of young men who fought one another for the privilege of entertaining him. Here on the frontier of Islam he was honored as a religious and legal scholar. The Turkish rulers, all descendants of rough-hewn warriors, were anxious to acquire the fine points of their new faith and the sacred law. One ruler, Sultan Orkhan, asked our traveler to write down traditions of the Prophet. These were then translated into Turkish and put on display. Ibn Battuta also asserted his religious prestige by chastising a Jewish physician for placing himself above the Qur'anic readers at a banquet. After traveling throughout Anatolia, he reached the Black Sea. Thanks to gifts from Turkish benefactors, he now owned fine clothes, horses, money, slaves, and concubines.

Crossing the Pontic Mountains in winter, he and his entourage encountered problems. They started to follow a Turkish horse woman and her servant across what they thought was a ford in a river. The woman fell from her horse. Her servant tried to help her, but both were swept away. They were finally pulled from the river. The woman survived, but the servant died. Ibn Battuta and his friends went further downstream, loaded their possessions on a raft, and were pulled across the stream.

Higher in the mountains, heavy snow began to fall. The group's guide threatened to leave them if they did not give him money. The guide got the money but then left the group stranded. They nearly froze to death. Finally, in desperation, Ibn Battuta rode ahead on his thoroughbred horse. He found a lodge of Sufi devotees and an Arabicspeaking man, who turned out to be a former acquaintance! A party was immediately sent out to rescue the rest of the travelers.

Ibn Battuta's adventures now took him to another frontier of his safe world. He was leaving areas steeped in the traditions of Islam and venturing into a land only recently converted. Here, Muslim leaders were striving to legitimize their rule by becoming more civilized and better educated in the shari'a. Ibn Battuta could use his credentials as a scholar to take advantage of a ready welcome. He was also entering the domain of the Mongol *khans of* Kipchak and Chagatay. They controlled a vast territory stretching from the grain-growing Volga River Valley to the northern Caucasus and from to the alluvial delta of the Amu Darya (Oxus) River to the plains of Russia and the Ukraine.

To enter this new world, our traveler crossed the Black Sea on a ship bound for the Crimea. Three nights out a storm arose. After several days of near catastrophe, the ship and its passengers came to land. Ibn Battuta asked to be put ashore on a rural coast. He made his way to Kaffa, which had a large community of Christian merchants from Genoa. In the middle of the night he heard church bells ring. As a Muslim, he considered bells to be one of the more devilish forms of sacrilege practiced by Christians. Determined to counteract this thunderous noise, he bounded up the stairs of a mosque to the top of the minaret and began loudly chanting the Qur'an and the call to prayer. The local *qadi* rushed to the mosque with sword in hand, fearing the visitors might provoke hostility with the Europeans. The reaction of the inhabitants is unknown, but fortunately Ibn Battuta did not create a major incident between Christians and Muslims.

The Moroccan traveler then continued to Al-Quram, the provincial capital of the Kipchak territory, the kingdom known in European history as the Golden Horde. AlQuram was a staging area for trans Asian caravans. Here Ibn Battuta purchased three wagons equipped with round tents called yurts. These were the equivalent of American prairie schooners, and an unusual form of transportation for Ibn Battuta. Muslims from North Africa and Southwest Asia traveled by animal, not wheeled vehicles. These wagons were perfect transport for the broad rolling steppes. The caravan he joined was like a small town, vast numbers of carts moving slowly across the plain.

When the caravan found Ozbeg Khan, the Mongol ruler of Kipchak, he was seated in a huge golden yurt on a silver throne surrounded by his four wives, or *khatuns.* Ibn Battuta was struck by the equality Turkish and Mongol women enjoyed with men. He was taken aback by unveiled women who accompanied their husbands to the bazaars. He even noted that the husbands seemed liked servants to their wives. The *khatuns* owned lands of their own and sometimes made administrative decisions or signed decrees. When the senior *khatun* entered the golden tent, the *khan* went to the entrance of the pavilion, greeted her, escorted her to her couch, and did not sit himself until she was seated. Unlike the secluded women of Southwest Asia, the *khatun was* in

full view and unveiled! Each *khatun* had three hundred wagons which carried chests, money, food, robes, and furnishings. An additional one hundred wagons carried four servant girls each.

One *khatun* was the daughter of the Byzantine Emperor. Hers was an arranged marriage, designed to improve relations between the Mongols and the Christian Byzantines. This princess received permission to return to Constantinople to give birth to a child in her father's palace. Ibn Battuta asked and received permission to go with her. He tells us that the caravan consisted of 5,000 horsemen, 500 troops, 200 slave girls, 20 Greek and Indian pages, 400 wagons, 2,000 horses, and 500 oxen and camels. To their detriment, the peasants in the surrounding areas had to supply food to the entire entourage.

As soon as the *khatun* entered Byzantine territory, she changed her behavior. She left behind the Islamic prayers, drank wine, and ate pork (a meat forbidden by the Qur'an). After reaching Constantinople, the *khan's* wife stayed with her father. Ibn Battuta visited all the sights of the city, including the church of Hagia Sophia, which he did not enter because he would have had to prostrate himself before the cross. He then toured the nearby Genoese colony of Galata. Leaving the princess in Constantinople, he returned to the steppe as winter set in. He wore three fur coats, two pairs of trousers, two pairs of socks, and boots lined with bear skin. His beard froze when he washed his face. He had to be helped onto his horse because he had on so many clothes. Traveling this way, he reached the *khan* at his capital of New Saray.

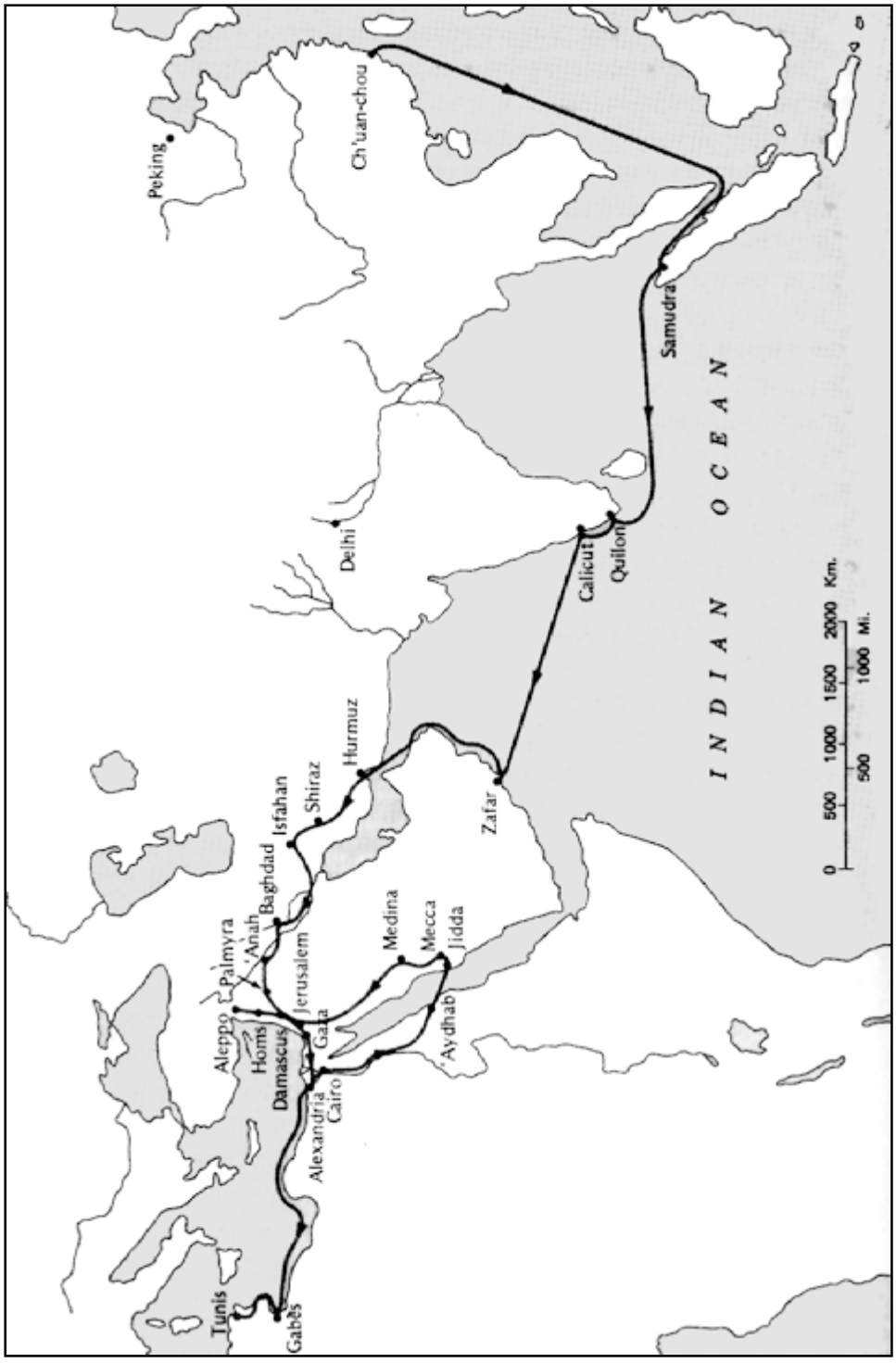
Restless as always, Ibn Battuta decided to make his way to India. He led an entourage south across the steppe, then crossed the Hindu Kush, where the snow was so deep that felt cloths had to be spread in front of the camels so they could walk. When he descended into the Indus Valley, he joined other Muslims who looked to India and the Muslim ruler there for employment. Though the date is unclear, he appears to have arrived in India in 1333.

**QUESTIONS:** How was Ibn Battuta treated during his residency in Anatolia? What were Ibn Battuta's impressions of the Byzantine capital? How does this reading illustrate differences in cultural beliefs within Dar al-Islam?

**Map 9: Ibn Battuta's Itinerary in India, Ceylon, and the Maldive Islands, (1334–35)**

**Map 10: Ibn Battuta's Itinerary in Southeast Asia and China, (1345–46)**

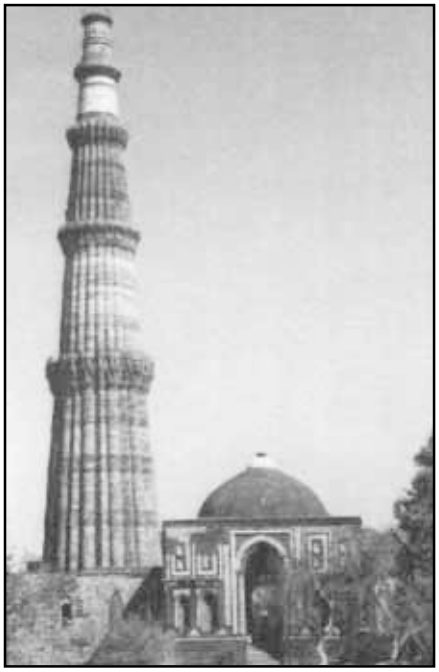
**Map 11: Ibn Battuta's Return Itinerary from China to North Africa (1346–49)**



## Travels to India and China

Muslim Turks operating from Afghanistan had conquered a large part of India in the previous century. By 1333 Muslims formed a ruling elite on top of a stratified Hindu society. Muhammad Ibn Tughluq, the Turkish sultan, politically united all north and central India for the first time since the Gupta empire of the fifth century. Ibn Tughluq defended India against the Mongols and attempted to keep strong control of his kingdom through harsh and eccentric measures. On one hand, he encouraged high culture and the arts. On the other hand, he terrorized and repressed those he ruled. If he liked you he bestowed great favors, if not, great punishments.

The sultan made Ibn Battuta a judge. Since the Moroccan could not speak Persian fluently, Ibn Tughluq assigned two scholars to handle his cases and give him documents to sign. His salary was 12,000 silver dinars a year. The average Hindu family earned 5 dinars a month. The taxes from two and a half Hindu villages supported his salary. Also asked to care for a mausoleum of a former sultan, Ibn Battuta used funds from this center to set up a school, a home for visitors, and a place to aid the poor. A terrible famine was raging in Northern India, and he tried to help care for the starving.



*The Qutb Minar, a* Muslim Monument in Delhi
Ray Smith

Trouble arose when he visited the hermitage of a Sufi leader who later defied the sultan. Ibn Battuta was consequently put under house arrest. He fasted and prayed for his life, fearing that the sultan might have him skinned alive or thrown to elephants with swords attached to their tusks. Finally, the sultan allowed him to enter a Sufi refuge, where he donned the clothes of a beggar and fasted for five months. Then, in order to escape India, he requested and received permission to make the hay again. But shortly afterward, Muhammad Tughluq changed his mind and asked Ibn Battuta to lead an official delegation, including fifteen Chinese envoys, on a sea voyage to China to present gifts from the sultan to Mongol emperor of that huge land.

Toghon Temur, the Chinese emperor, was a Mongol and a descendant of Kublai Khan. He had earlier sent Ibn Tughluq gifts of one hundred slaves, plus textiles, robes, dishware, and swords. The sultan ordered Ibn Battuta to return the favor by taking to China two hundred Hindu slaves, fifteen pages, and one hundred thoroughbred horses, not to mention textiles, robes, dishware, and swords. When the caravan was about seventy-five miles south of Delhi, however, it was attacked by Hindu bandits. Ibn Battuta escaped on horseback and managed to hide. He was eventually captured but escaped after bribing a guard by giving away his tunic. He wandered the countryside for seven days. On the eighth day a Muslim found him, and soon his traveling companions came to his rescue.

Once on the coast of the Arabian Sea, our adventurer hired four ships, whose crew included African spearmen and bowmen, people who had a long tradition of serving on ships in the Indian Ocean. The ships landed in southern India where pepper was grown. In Calicut, Muslims and Hindus greeted the diplomatic mission with drums, trumpets, and horns. Arrangements were made for the group and their belongings to sail on one large junk, or Chinese-style vessel and a smaller ship. The Chinese ambassadors were to sail on a separate junk. This type of ship was made of double timbers, attached together with nails. The hull was divided into compartments, which would keep the ship from sinking if pierced below the waterline. A junk could have five masts or more, stern rudders, up to five decks, enclosed cabins, private lavatories, fire fighting equipment, steward service, lifeboats, and common rooms.

Ibn Battuta boarded a large junk, then transferred at the last minute to a smaller one. A storm came up while he was still on shore, and the ships had to leave the harbor. The junk Ibn Battuta was to sail on sank. No one survived. The Chinese envoys, who were on another junk, did survive and returned home without the Moroccan diplomat.

Ibn Battuta still hoped to reach China, but he decided to make a trip to the Maldive Islands first. The Maldives are a group of atolls that lie southwest of India. Their economy was important for coir and cowrie shells. Coir, or coconut fiber, was used to stitch together the hulls of ships. Cowrie shells were used as currency as far east as

Malaysia and as far west as West Africa. The story goes that the people of the islands had been converted to Islam when a Berber holy man from North African rid the land of a terrible demon who came out of the sea to ravish and kill young virgins. The Berber saved the maidens by holding up a copy of the Qur'an.

In the Maldives the monarch was a woman, but her husband held the real power. When the royal court discovered that Ibn Battuta was a jurist, he was invited to be a *qadi,* or judge. Besides taking a judicial post, he married four women, the maximum allowed under Islamic law. These women were daughters or relatives of influential officials. As a result he became quite influential. Here is another case of his success on the frontier of Dar al-Islam.

As a *qadi,* he tried to strictly enforce the *shari'a.* He seems to have thought the Maldivians were lax. He ordered that anyone who did not attend Friday prayer be whipped. He tried to abolish the custom requiring a divorced woman to stay in the house of her former husband until she married again. He also ordered that a thief have his right hand cut off, the proper punishment under the *shari'a* if the person were convicted. He was not always successful in his reform efforts. Most of the Maldivian women, he tells us, went about clothed only around the waist. He could not change this tradition, except to require that a woman's body be covered in his courtroom.

After he ran into an argument with an official, he resigned his post, divorced his wives, and left the island on which he was living. He stopped at another island for a time where he married two more wives. When he left that place, he presumably divorced those wives also.

The island of Ceylon (today the nation of Sri Lanka) was sacred to Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists. Ibn Battuta went there to make a pilgrimage to the top of Adam's peak. Near the top of the mountain is a depression in the surface of the rock, resembling an enormous foot. Buddhists regard the depression as the footprint of Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha. Hindus believe it is a trace of the Great God, Shiva. Some Christians believe it is the footprint of St. Thomas. The Muslim tradition is that God cast Adam and Eve from the seventh heaven in disgrace. Adam made a hard landing on Ceylon and left his footprint on the holy mount. He remained on the island for a thousand years, until led to Arabia where Eve had been. Adam and Eve then returned to Ceylon to create the human race. Climbing Adam's peak required Ibn Battuta to haul himself up a set of vertical cliffs by stirrups attached to chains, suspended by iron pegs. He remained at the holy site for three days of prayer.

Leaving Ceylon and heading by ship to Ma'bar in southern India, a storm came up. Ibn Battuta had to be rescued by Hindu villagers from the mainland. He also became ill with what may have been malaria. Returning then to Quilon on the Malabar coast, he

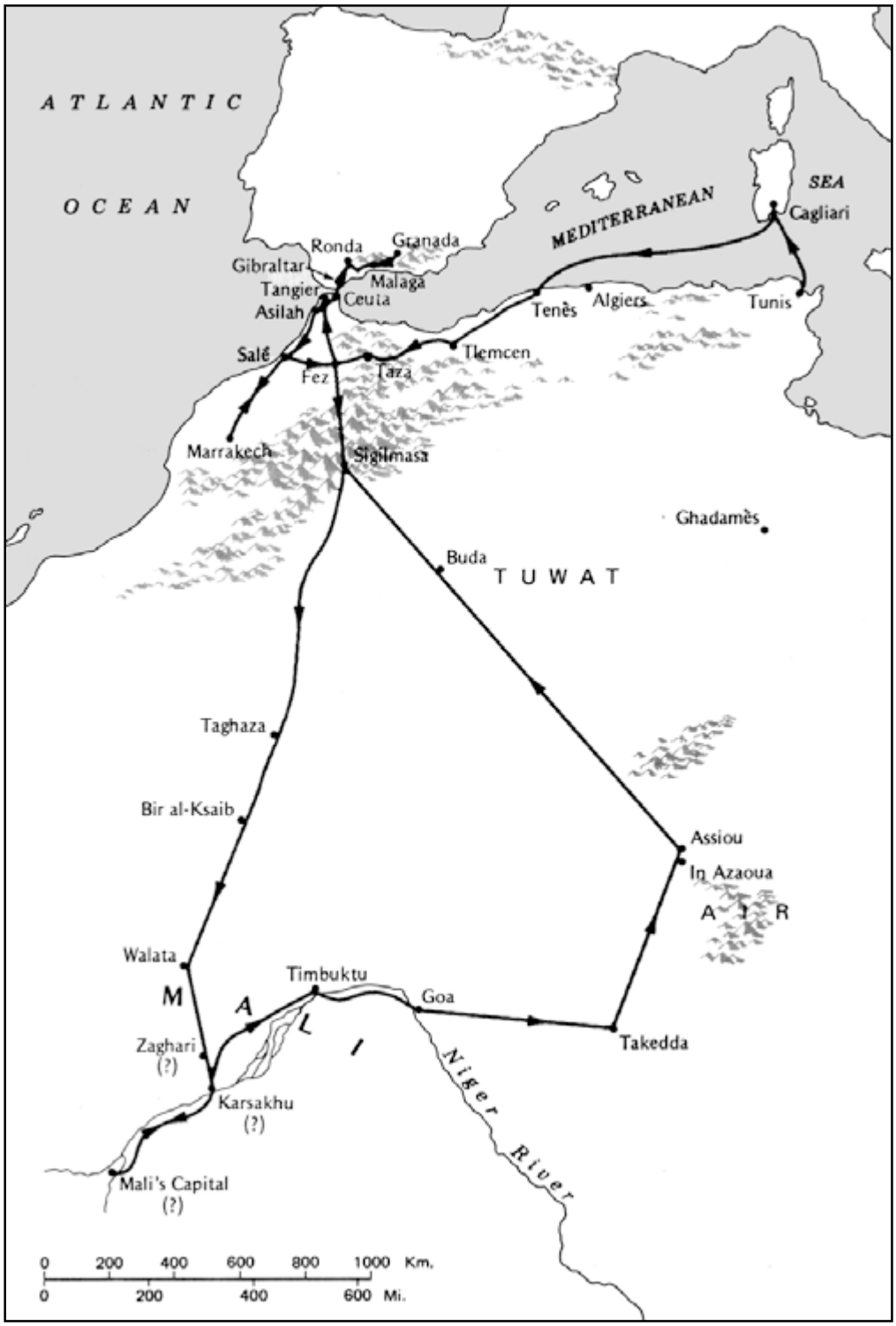
hoped to wait for the monsoons to sail to the Bay of Bengal, then on to China. However, pirates attacked his vessel. He survived but found himself dumped on shore with nothing but his life. After a brief return trip to the Maldives to see a son born after he had left, he sailed around India to Bengal. He visited a holy man in Chittagong, a city that is now the main port of Bangladesh. He noted the heavy population in the region, the lush gardens, and successful conversions to Islam.

Did Ibn Battuta visit China, or did he not? The Rihla describes the journey, but some scholars debate the authenticity of the voyage because of the murky way it is described. The voyage is possible but in doubt. The trip was possible because the Mongol dynasty was ruling, and it favored international trade. Cities on China's southern coast teemed with Muslim merchants, some of them Chinese converts. Ibn Battuta would have found a welcoming community.

He claims to have sailed from the Malay Peninsula to Sumatra, then around the Strait of Malacca to the Chinese harbor city of Ch'uan-chou. He saw silks, porcelains, and a variety of foods. He thought the Chinese clever for using paper money and found the travel safe, but he was uncomfortable. Living among Chinese who were not interested in being Muslims was not Ibn Battuta's idea of a good time. He was upset that the Chinese were heathens, worse than the Christians because they did not recognize any of the prophets nor care about the Muslim world view. He asserts that he traveled to Canton and finally to Hang-chou and Beijing by way of the grand canal. Most historians, however, doubt that he really went any further than the southern coastal cities.

**QUESTIONS:** How did Ibn Battuta show his concern for people suffering from famine in Northern India? Why was he imprisoned by the Sultan? How did he attempt to enforce the *shari'a* while serving as *qadi* in the Maldives? What evidence can be given to support the belief that Ibn Battuta traveled to China?

**Map 12: Ibn Battuta's Itinerary in North Africa, Spain, and West Africa, 1349–54**



## Travels to Morocco, Spain, and Mali

In 1346 he turned homeward. Sailing from China to India and then to Hurmuz on the Persian Gulf, he went overland to Damascus. There, he once again married and divorced. While in Damascus, he learned his father had died fifteen years earlier. Traveling through Aleppo, Syria, he learned of a plague that was making its way toward Syria. Buboes, or inflamed swellings on the body, were accompanied by nausea, insomnia, delirium and pain in the head, stomach and limbs. If a person spit blood and developed pneumonia, he almost always died.

Ibn Battuta returned to Damascus to find people dying all over the place. Mosques were filled with people praying. Everyone-Muslims, Christians and Jewsprayed to God. While the Moroccan had been traveling to China, the Black Death was spreading westward across the steppes to the Black Sea. It was rapidly becoming a pandemic, that is, a disease not limited to a single region. The plague may have developed among ground burrowing rodents on the inner Asian steppe. Humans caught the disease from the bite of fleas that had been in the fur of infected animals. Because both rats and fleas were carried on caravans along with trade goods, the plague easily infected people who were moving from town to town. In this way, it spread.

By the end of 1350, about one third of all Europeans were dead. Muslims in North Africa and Southwest Asia suffered just as much. They blamed the disease on polluted winds from the steppes. People were urged to live in fresh air, sprinkle their homes with rose water and vinegar, sit motionless, or eat pickled onions and fresh fruit. The disease was to be treated by applying egg yolks to the sores, spreading fresh flowers on the sickbed, and above all by prayer. Ibn Battuta escaped the Black Death, but how? We do not know. People were dying everywhere he went. After making the hajj one more time, he decided to return to Tangier. At forty-five years of age, he missed his family, friends, and home. On the way he learned his mother had died of the plague just several months earlier.

In Morocco, he visited the royal capital of Fez, stopped briefly in Tangier, then made his way to Ceuta where people from Spain were coming to flee the plague. After recovering from what was probably malaria, he joined volunteers who were defending Gibraltar against Christian attack. All fighting between Christians and Muslims had stopped because of the Black Death, so Ibn Battuta did not have to fight. He took the occasion to visit the mountainous Muslim sultanate of Granada. There, he met Ibn Juzayy, a young literary scholar who would later record his adventures.

Returning to Morocco, he went back to Fez but then decided to accept one last challenge. He set forth on a journey to cross the Sahara Desert. His visit to Mali would complete his travels through virtually all parts of Dar al-Islam.

*Outer Walls of the Alhambra Palace,* Granada, Spain
Ross E. Dunn

In 1324, Mansa Musa, Sultan of Mali, passed through Cairo on his way to complete the hajj. The amount of gold he spent and distributed as alms was so great that it depressed the value of gold in Egypt for two years. The source of the gold came from three alluvial deposits in West Africa. This same gold became the major factor in spurring trans-Saharan trade with North Africa when camels began to be used in caravans. Why the camel? It is a disagreeable animal, but it can carry a load of 125 to 150 kilograms, can go at least 10 days without water, and moves quickly. The kingdom of Mali controlled the upper valleys of the Senegal and Niger Rivers, the heartland of the gold bearing region. As it expanded in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, its sultans taxed trade in the western Sudan and supplied a large part of the Afro-Eurasian gold supply.

Besides gold, other important commodities leaving West Africa included ivory, ostrich feathers, kola nuts, ambergris, hides, and slaves. In return, textiles, copper, silver, books, paper, swords, ironware, perfumes, jewelry, spices, wheat, dried fruit, and horses came south from Mediterranean Africa. The most important items of

southbound trade were cowrie shells from the Maldive islands and salt from mines in the north central Sahara. Cowrie shells were used like money. Salt was an essential supplement for the diet of people of the sub-Saharan region.

Along with goods, Islamic scholars accompanied the southbound caravans. Islam was the official state religion in an area where the majority of people held animist and polytheistic beliefs. In order to strengthen Muslim faith and law, Mansa Sulayman, a devout Muslim and Mansa Musa's successor, welcomed scholars from abroad. Such a setting was perfect for our opportunistic traveler and jurist. Ibn Battuta crossed the High Atlas Mountains in late 1351 and joined a trans-Saharan caravan at the important commercial city of Sijilmasa on the northern edge of the desert. Advancing across the desert, the caravan followed a set routine. The caravaners loaded the camels at dawn and traveled until mid day, when the heat became severe. The loads were then put down, awnings were stretched for shade, and everyone rested until the sun began to decline. Then they set off again until nightfall when they set up camp.

After twenty-five days, the caravan reached the settlement of Taghaza, a salt mining center. It was a grim place where salt slabs were exchanged for gold. Slaves dug the salt and loaded it onto the camels. The place was filled with flies. Ibn Battuta slept in a house made completely of salt except for the camel-skinned roof. All the food had to be imported. Loaded with salt slabs, the caravan left Taghaza and traversed five hundred miles of sand desert where only one watering point was to be found. The members of the caravan stayed close together, especially after one man lagged behind and was never seen again.

Finally they reached Walata, a town of mud brick houses and a few palms. The community of two to three thousand people included a number of scholars, who welcomed the North African lawyer. Ibn Battuta was not happy there, however. He had trouble accepting the blend of Islamic and local rules. He was offended by the lack of segregation for women. Upon entering the reception room of a Muslim's home, he was shocked to find a woman visiting with a man who was not her husband but merely a friend. He abruptly left that house and refused to return.

After several weeks, he traveled to the capital of Mali, the location of which is unsure. He fainted during dawn prayers after eating yams or some root that had not been cooked long enough to remove the natural poison. He remained ill for two months. When he finally recovered, he attended a memorial ceremony for a Moroccan sultan at the palace of Mansa Sulayman. The sultan entered the pavilion, preceded by three hundred slaves, two saddled and bridled horses, and two rams as defense against the evil eye. When Ibn Battuta was introduced to the ruler, he received to his dismay a measly gift of three loves of bread, a piece of beef, and a gourd filled with yogurt. He was used to being treated as a more important person than that!

It was another two months before Ibn Battuta could again speak to Sulayman. When he did, he complained of his treatment. The ruler then gave him a house and some gold. Our traveler continued to think of Sulayman as a miser, but he did have respect for the ruler's government and his devotion to the Muslim population. Perhaps Sulayman was not impressed with Ibn Battuta, his large ego, or his righteous complaints about the presence of naked female slaves in the royal court.

In February 1353, Ibn Battuta went by camel to Timbuktu, which was just then developing as a trade center. Moving on to Gao, a source of copper, he became ill again and was cared for by a Moroccan. Shortly after, he received a request from the sultan of Morocco to return home, he did so. We do not know why the sultan called for him.

When he arrived in Fez and became known in educated circles, the sultan commanded him to set down an account of his fabulous travels. He did this with the literary assistance of Ibn Juzayy, the young scholar he had met in Granada. After dictating his story, Ibn Battuta may well have remained in Morocco, leading a quiet life. He died in 1368 or 1369, perhaps in Tangier.

**QUESTIONS:** What caused the Black Death? How did it spread? How serious was the plague in Southwest Asia and North Africa? How important was the salt trade? Some historian believe that the Sultan of Morocco sent Ibn Battuta to Mali to visit Mansa Sulayman and gather intelligence information. Why might the Sultan want information about Mali?

# Lesson Two:
# The Geography of Afro-Eurasia and Dar al-Islam
# Circa 1330

## A. OBJECTIVES

1. Students will better understand the topographic and climatic factors that united Afro-Eurasia.

2. Students will identify the major land and water connections that united AfroEurasia.

3. Students will identify how geography, long-distance trade, and the expansion of Islam are related.

## B. LESSON ACTIVITIES (Completion Time: two days)

1. Give students a folder for their map and written work on this unit. Give the students a work map of Afro-Eurasia (page 52) on which are shown the major land masses and bodies of water. Ask them to identify why this land mass may be viewed as one unit, or "supercontinent," rather than as three separate continents. Point out that the largest seas, including the Mediterranean, are like "lakes" connecting regions rather than barriers to communication.

2. Have students use an atlas or textbook to label the major land features, such as seas and oceans, major mountain chains, deserts, steppes, plateaus, rivers, and marshes. Are the major deserts of Afro-Eurasia interconnected? Students should be tested on the map features. It will help to give the class a list of important names.

3. Make a transparency of a climatic map of Afro-Eurasia from an encyclopedia or a textbook. Using an overhead projector, have students copy the climatic divisions onto a plastic overlay using felt tip pens.

4. Divide the class into groups. Ask each one to identify the relationship of a particular climatic type to latitude, closeness to water, wind patterns, topography, and altitude. Have the class discuss the findings. A recorder should list the answers on the board. Conclude the lesson by summarizing the concepts. For homework students should write their findings and cite specific examples from their maps to support their conclusions.

5. Again, divide the class into groups. Ask each group to identify the geographic and climatic factors that may have facilitated the expansion of Islam. What are possible reasons for the geographic limits to the expansion? A recorder should again list the answers on the board. Summarize the findings.

6. Using an overhead projector, historic atlas, or textbook ask the students to label on the plastic overlay important cities and trade routes of Ibn Battuta's time. Working in groups or as a class, hypothesize about the interrelationship of the location of cities, trade routes, topography, and climate to Dar al-Islam and its growth.

**Outline Map of Afro-Eurasia**

# Lesson Three:
# Why Can't Everyone be Like Me?

## A. OBJECTIVES

1. Students will read and critically analyze the primary source documents.

2. Students will identify evidence of bias in the statement, interpret the meaning of bias, and describe ways that experience with unfamiliar societies and surroundings make us feel uncomfortable.

3. Students will improve writing skills by developing essays describing and analyzing how personal perceptions may affect an understanding of peoples and places encountered for the first time.

## B. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

See **Lesson One, Group Four Handout** (pages 37-40).

## C. LESSON ACTIVITIES (Completion Time: one day)

1. Have the students read **Primary Source: Ibn Battuta in China** (**Student Handout 5**.)

2. Give one or two examples of how Ibn Battuta felt about China and the Chinese? To what extent were Ibn Battuta's feelings related to (1) the fact that things were strange to him in China and (2) his religious convictions and his being outside Dar al-Islam? Could he have been homesick? Explain. If Ibn Battuta had stayed in China for a longer period, how well do you think he would have adjusted?

3. How might Ibn Battuta have felt about having his portrait painted without his knowing it and then seeing his picture hung publicly on the walls of the bazaar?

4. Describe an event that made you uncomfortable when you traveled away from home. How did you adjust after this event? What advice might you have for Ibn Battuta traveling in a strange land?

## D. SUGGESTED RESEARCH ACTIVITY

Research the political and economic conditions in China at the time of Toghon Temur, the Yuan emperor. What conditions encouraged or discouraged trade with the rest of the world, in particular trade with the Islamic lands?

## PRIMARY SOURCE: IBN BATTUTA IN CHINA

*The Chinese are infidels. They worship idols and bum their dead as the Indians do. The king is a Tatar of the lineage of Tankiz Khan [Chinggis Khan]. In every city in China is a quarter where the Muslims live separately and have mosques for their Friday prayers and other assemblies. They are highly regarded and treated with respect. The Chinese infidels eat the meat of pigs and dogs and sell it in the bazaars. They live comfortably and in affluence but take little care about their food and clothing. You will see an important merchant whose wealth is beyond reckoning wearing a tunic of coarse cotton. All the Chinese pay attention only to gold and silver vessels.*

*The Chinese are of all peoples the most* skillful *in crafts and attain the greatest perfection in them. . . . No one, whether Greek or any other, rivals them in mastery of painting. They have prodigious facility in it. One of the remarkable things I saw in this connection is that if I visited one of their cities, and then came back to it, I always saw portraits of me and my companions painted on the walls and on paper in the bazaars. I went to the Sultan's city, passed through the painters' bazaar, and went to the Sultan's palace with my companions. We were dressed as Iraqis. When I retumed from the palace in the evening I passed through the said bazaar. I saw my and my companions' portraits painted on paper and hung on the walls. We each one of us looked at the portrait of his companion; the resemblance was correct in all respects. I was told the Sultan had ordered them to do this, and that they had come to the palace while we were there and had begun observing and painting us without our being aware of it. It is their custom to paint everyone who comes among them. They go so far in this that if a foreigner does something that obliges him to flee from them, they circulate his portrait throughout the country and a search made for him. When someone resembling the portrait is found, he is arrested.*

*When we had crossed the sea [to China] the first city to which we came was Zaitun [Chu'an-chou] . . . . The Muslims live in a separate city. On the day I arrived I saw there the amir [high official] who had been sent to India as ambassador with the present, had been in our company and had been in the junk which sank. He greeted me and informed the head of the customs about me, and he installed me in handsome lodgings. . . . As these merchants live in infidel country they are delighted when a Muslim arrives among them. They say: "He has come from the land of Islam . . . . "*

*China, for all its magnificence, did not please me. I was deeply depressed by the prevalence of infidelity and when I left my lodging I saw many offensive things which distressed me so much that I stayed at home and went out only when it was necessary.*

Source: H.A.R. Gibb, trans. and ed. (trans. completed with annotations by C.F. Beckingham), *The Travels of Ibn Battuta A.D. 1325-1354, Translated with revisions and notes from the Arabic text edited by C. Defremery and B.R. Sanguinetti, vol. 4* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1994), 889–890, 891–892, 894–895, 900.

# Lesson Four: The Historian's Dilemma
# To What Extent Can Primary Documents be Trusted?

## A. OBJECTIVES

1. Students will analyze a primary source for its meaning, veracity, author's intentions, and relationship to the larger document of which it is a part.

2. Students will better understand the need to interpret a source within its larger context of time, place, authorship, and intent.

3. Students will develop critical reading skills.

## B. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND MATERIAL FOR TEACHERS

Refer back to the section in the summary account of Ibn Battuta's travels regarding the writing of the Rhila (**Lesson One: Student Handout 3**, page 16). This exercise will give students the opportunity to be historians and to think critically. Remember that Ibn Battuta did not write the Rihla as a diary or journal as he traveled, and we have no evidence that he returned home carrying sheaves of notes. Rather, the Rihla is a literary work that, with the assistance of Ibn Juzayy, he compiled in Fez at the end of his traveling days. As the traveler talked with Ibn Juzayy, he interwove descriptive observations of the places he had visited with the account of his own personal experience. Ibn Juzayy interjected short editorial comments into the manuscript here and there, including a few lines of poetry. But the young collaborator claims that he generally stayed true to the structure of Ibn Battuta's verbal narrative.

## C. LESSON ACTIVITIES (Completion Time: one day)

Have the students read **Student Handout 6: Primary Source: Can We Believe Everything We Read?**

1. Do the stories of the monk and the slave who kills himself have to be taken with "a grain of salt?"

2. Why did Ibn Battuta include the story of the monk in the *Rihla* when he did not even see this man? Should he have told this questionable story? Do you think that Ibn Battuta actually saw a man cut off his own head? What might be a moral point of the suicide story?

3. Relate a story by someone today in which the truth is stretched.

4. Ibn Juzayy, Ibn Battuta's collaborator, writes: ". . . he [Ibn Battuta] dictated upon these subjects, a narrative which gave entertainment to the mind and delight to the ears and eyes, with a variety of curious particulars by the exposition of which he gave edification and of marvelous things by adverting to which he aroused interest." (Gibb, Travels, 6) Is what Ibn Juzayy says a good reason to include the stories of the monk and the slave? Explain.

5. If the two stories are unbelievable, is the *Rihla* believable? Explain, citing evidence from the primary document selections.

6. What are some of the problems a historian has in figuring out what is the truth about the past as seen through Ibn Battuta's eyes?

7. Ibn Juzayy's statement (see the first paragraph of the Primary Source, **Student Handout 6**) regarding the composing of the *Rihla is* somewhat ambiguous. Can we know precisely how much of the work is to be credited to Ibn Battuta and how much to his young collaborator? Is the author of the *Rihla* Ibn Battuta, or is it Ibn Juzayy? Can Ibn Juzayy be described as a "ghost writer?" What sort of people do ghost writers often collaborate with today?

## PRIMARY SOURCE:
## CAN WE BELIEVE EVERYTHING WE READ?

*A gracious direction was transmitted that he [Ibn Battuta] should dictate an account of the cities which he had seen in his travel, and of the interesting events which had clung to his memory, and that he should speak of those whom he had met of the rulers of countries of their distinguished men of learning, and of their pious saints. Accordingly, he dictated upon these subjects, a narrative which gave entertainment to the mind and delight to the ears and eyes, with a variety of curious particulars by the exposition of which he gave edification and of marvelous things by adverting to which he aroused interest . . . . [The sultan of Morocco instructed me to] assemble that which [Ibn Battuta] had dictated on these subjects into a compilation which should comprehend what was of profit in them and ensure the full attainment of their objects, giving care to the pruning and polishing of its language and applying himself to its clarification and adaptation to the taste [of readers], that they might find enjoyment in these curiosities and that the profit to be derived from their pearls should be increased in stripping them from their shell . . . . I have rendered the sense of the narrative . . . in language which adequately expresses the purposes that he had in mind and sets forth clearly the ends which he had in view. Frequently I have reported his words in his own phrasing, without omitting either root or branch. I have related all the anecdotes and historical narratives which he related, without applying myself to investigate their truthfulness or to test them . . . .*

**Source** (From Ibn Juzayy's introduction):

H.A.R. Gibb, trans. and ed. (trans. completed with annotations by C.F. Beckingham), *The Travels of Ibn Battuta A.D. 1325-1354, Translated with revisions and notes from the Arabic text edited by C. Defremery and B.R. Sanguinetti, vol. 1* (London: Cambridge University Press for the Hakluyt Society, 1958), 6-7.

*We then hired a wagon and traveled to the city of al-Qiram [on the Crimean Peninsula at the north end of the Black Sea]. . . . We lodged in a hospice, whose shaikh . . . welcomed us and treated us honorably and generously. . . . This shaikh Zada told me that outside this city there was a Christian monk living in a monastery, who devoted himself to ascetic exercises and used frequently to fast, and that he eventually reach the point of being able to fast for forty days at a stretch, after which he would break his fast with a single bean; also that he had the faculty of revealing secret things. He desired me to go with him to visit the man, but I refused, although afterwards I regretted not having seen him and found out the truth of what was said about him.*

—Gibb, *Travels, vol. 2, 471-472.*

*We disembarked and went to the city of Qaqula [in Southeast Asia]. . . . The Sultan welcomed me and ordered a cloth to be spread for me to sit on. . . . In this Sultan's assembly I saw a man with a knife like a bill hook. He laid it on his neck and spoke at length what I did not understand. Then he took the knife in both hands and cut his own throat. His head fell to the ground because the knife was so sharp and his grip of it so strong. I was astounded at what he had done. The Sultan said: "Does anyone do this among you?" I said: "I have never seen this anywhere."He laughed and said: "These are our slaves and they kill themselves for love of us." He ordered the body to be carried away and burnt.*

—Gibb, *Travels, vol. 4, 883.*

# Lesson Five:
# The Realities of Dar Al-Islam

## A. OBJECTIVES

1. To ensure that students comprehend the scope and complexity of the Islamic community that constituted Ibn Battuta's cultural and social world in the fourteenth century.

2. To provide students with a greater understanding of how essential compliance with the *shari'a* was important for Muslims regardless of their ethnic identities or geographic origins, and to show how the daily lives and encounters of Muslims reflected the fundamental unity of Dar al-Islam, which stretched nearly across the Eastern Hemisphere.

## B. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND MATERIAL FOR TEACHERS

Travel has been an important part of Islam since its founding in the seventh century. Mecca was then an entrepot for trade and Muhammad was a merchant. Trade was an important factor in the spread of Islam and therefore in the establishment of the Islamic community, which included a wide range of peoples, regions, and political structures. Islam supported and encouraged travel for trade, and the *shari'a* set restrictions and mandates on equity and fair trade practices. Islam also encouraged travel to make the *hajj* and to seek knowledge. By encouraging and nourishing contact among Muslims over long distances, travel supported the idea of a common Muslim heritage belonging to the entire community.

Ibn Battuta traveled as a pilgrim, a juridical scholar, and a member of the learned elite. He also sought adventure, as his side-trip to Constantinople shows. In India and the Maldive islands he enjoyed wealth and high status as a judge in the employ of the government. He experienced the physical reality of Dar al-Islam as well as its cultural and spiritual unity. His journeys intensified both his sense of his own identity as a Muslim and his recognition of the cultural differences that existed among peoples who lived under the *shari'a.* The cultural language of Islam helped him transcend the difficulties he experienced in understanding local languages or customs.

In this section we have included excerpts from Ibn Battuta's account of his travels to help illustrate this idea of an international community united under Islam.

## C. LESSON ACTIVITIES (Completion Time: 2 days)

1. Have students re-examine their maps of Afro-Eurasia from Lesson Two with the added information that Ibn Battuta traveled about 73,000 miles and visited the equivalent of more than fifty modern-day nation states. Have them note the areas through which he traveled and ask them to list the kingdoms and empires they can identify as well as the ethnic groups that inhabited many of these areas.

2. Have students read **Student Handout 7, Primary Source: Ibn Battuta's Welcome across Dar al-Islam** in order to consider the meaning of cultural unity (shared language, laws, customs, expectations, and conventions).

3. Have students list experiences or observations from the documents that illustrate specific examples of the spiritual and cultural unity of Dar al-Islam. Ask them to note references to any of the Five Pillars they see in the documents.

4. Have students work in groups to speculate about the values held by the Islamic community and to determine how these values might help to maintain a sense of unity within an area of such broad geographical scope.

5. Ask students to review the documents to look for differences in the way Ibn Battuta relates his experiences in different regions of the Islamic world. If they find differences, can they account for them?

6. What do we mean by a "cosmopolitan society?" Was the society within which Ibn Battuta traveled cosmopolitan? Was he a cosmopolitan individual? What sort of people today are the most cosmopolitan?

7. Have students analyze why Ibn Battuta wrote an account of his travels. What purposes might it have served him? Who might have read his account and for what purpose? Of what value is it to students of history today?

## PRIMARY SOURCE:
## IBN BATTUTA'S WELCOME ACROSS DAR AL-ISLAM

*[The city of Wasit in Iraq] is famed for its . . . teachers. . . . Most of them can recite the Holy Qur'an from memory and are expert in the art of its melodious recitation . . . . All those . . . who wish to learn this art come to them, and in the caravan . . . with which we traveled there were a number of students who had come for the purpose of learning the manner of reciting the Qur'an from the shaikhs [religious leaders] in this city. It has a large and magnificent college with about three hundred cells, where strangers who have come to leam the Qur'an are lodged.*

—*Gibb,* Travels, vol. 2, 272

*The people of al-Basra [Iraq] are of generous nature, hospitality to the stranger and readily doing their duty by him, so that no stranger feels lonely amongst them. They hold the Friday prayers in the mosque of the Commander of the Faithful Ali (God be pleased with him). . . . This is one of the finest of mosques. Its court is of immense extent. . . .*

—*Gibb,* Travels, vol. 2, 276–277

*At the end of each stage of this journey [through Persia] there was a hospice at which every traveler was supplied with bread, meat, and sweetmeats. . . . In each hospice there is a shaikh, a prayer-leader, a muezzin [prayer caller], and a servitor of the poor brethren, together with slaves and servants who cook the food.*

—*Gibb,* Travels, vol. 2, 283–284

*On my entry into the city of Shiraz [in southern Persia] . . . I arrived at the madrasa . . . I found there the men of law and principal inhabitants of the city awaiting [the judge]; then he came out to attend the afternoon prayer. . . . When I saluted him, he embraced me and took me by the hand until he came to his prayer-mat, then let go my hand and signed to me to pray alongside him, and I did so. After he had prayed the afternoon prayer... the notables of the city came forward to salute him . . . and questioned me about the Maghrib, Egypt, Syria and al-Hijaz, to all of which I answered.*

—*Gibb,* Travels, vol. 2, 300

*We sailed on for fifteen nights and came to Maqdashaw [Mogadishu on the East African coast], which is a town of enormous size. Its inhabitants are merchants possessed of vast resources. . . . The Sultan . . . knows the Arabic language. . . . When I arrived . . . at the Sultan's residence, one of the servingboys came out and saluted the qadi, who said to him "Take word to the intendant's office and inform the Shaikh [sultan] that this man has come from the land of al-Hijaz. "So he took the message, then retumed bringing a plate on which were some leaves of betel and areca nuts . . . and said "Our master commands that he be lodged in the students' house," and this being a building equipped for the entertainment of students of religion. The qadi took me by the hand and we went to this house, . . .*

—*Gibb,* Travels, vol. 2, 373-375

*Never have I seen in all the lands of the world men more excellent in conduct than the Khwarizmians [Khwarizm in the delta of the Amu Darya, or Oxus River], more generous in soul, or more friendly to strangers. They have a praiseworthy custom in regard to [the observance of] prayer-services namely that each of the muezzins in theirmosques goes round the houses of those persons neighboring his mosque, giving them notice of the approaching hour of prayer. Anyone who absents himself from the communal prayers is beaten by the imam [who leads the prayers] in the presence of the congregation, and in every mosque there is a whip hanging for this purpose. He is also fined five dinars, which go towards the expenses of upkeep of the mosque, or supplying food to the poor and destitute. . . . [We] lodged in a newly built college in which no one was living [as yet]. After the dawn prayer, the qadi . . . visited us, and together with him a number of the principal men of the city. . . . They are men of generous nature and virtuous character.*

—*Gibb,* Travels, vol. 3, 542, 543

*This hospice [in Bukhara] where we lodged. . . . is a large institution with vast endowment from which food is supplied to all comers. . . . [The] shaikh hospitably entertained me in his residence, and invited all the leading men of the city. The Qur'an readers recited with beautiful modulations, . . . they then sang melodiously in Turkish and Persian, and [altogether] we passed there an exquisite and most delightful night.*

—*Gibb,* Travels, vol. 3, 554

*I went one day to the dawn prayer in the mosque, following my usual practice and when I finished the prayer one of those present mentioned to me that the sultan was in the mosque [Sultan Ala al-Din Tarmashirin of Oxianiana, one of Chinggis Khan's descendants]. Accordingly, when he rose up from his prayer carpet, I went forward to salute him. The shaikh Hasan and the legist Husain al -Din al- Yaghi came up, and told him about me and my arrival some days before. Then he said to me in Turkish, . . . "Blessed is your arrival.". . . After I had saluted him, he questioned me about Mecca and al-Madina, Jerusalem . . . Damascus and Cairo . . . and the lands of the non-Arabs. . . . When I resolved to proceed on my journey after staying at this sultan's camp for fifty-four days, the sultan gave me seven hundred silver dinars and a sable coat worth a hundred dinars.*

—*Gibb,* Travels, vol. 3, 557, 558, 560

*The Sultan of India, to whose capital we had come, was absent from it at the time. . . . The vizier [sultan's minister] sent his officers to receive us, designating for the reception of each of us a person of his own rank . . . . He wrote to inform the Sultan of our arrival . . . . Thereafter the qadis, jurists, and shaikhs and some of the amirs [military officers] came out to meet us.*

—*Gibb,* Travels, vol. 3, 617, 618

*On arrival at the mansion which had been prepared for my occupation [in Delhi] I found in it everything that was required in the way of furniture, carpets, mats, vessels, and bed. . . . They told us to take from the [miller and butcher] so much flour and . . . so much meat--the exact weights I do not remember now. It is their custom that the meal which they give is equal to the weight of the flour and this which we have described was the hospitality gift of the Sultan's mother. . . . Next day we rode to the Sultan's palace and saluted the vizier who gave me two purses, each containing a thousand silver dinars, saying "This is sarshushti" which means "for washing your head" [a measure of welcome to honored guests], and in addition gave me a robe of fine goat hair.*

—*Gibb,* Travels, vol. 3, 737, 738

*Then I went in and found the Sultan [Muhammad ibn Tughluq] on the terrace of the palace with his back leaning on the [royal] couch. . . . When I saluted him the "great king" said to me "Do homage, for the Master of the World has appointed you qadi of the royal city of Dihli and has fixed your stipend at 12, 000 dinars a year, . . . and commanded for you 12, 000 dinars in cash. . . . Do not think that the office of qadi of Dihli is one of the minor functions; it is the highest*

*of functions in our estimation." I understood what he said though I could not speak [in Persian] fluently, but the Sultan understood Arabic although he could not speak it fluently. . . .*

—*Gibb,* Travels, vol. 3, 747

[The Sultan of Delhi appointed Ibn Battuta to lead an important diplomatic mission to China. But shortly after leaving the capital, he was involved in a battle and subsequently captured by Hindu bandits. He escaped but found himself alone on the hot Indian plain.]

*On the eighth day I was consumed with thirst and I had no water at all . . . . While I was . . . wondering what to do, a person appeared before me ... carrying a jug and a staff in his hand, and a wallet on his shoulder. He gave me [the Muslim] greeting: "Peace be upon you. " . . . [He] opened his wallet and brought out a handful of black chick-peas fried with a little rice. After I had eaten some of this and drunk, he made his ablutions and prayed two prostrations and I did the same .... I could not keep my eyes open . . . . Then I woke up, but found no trace of the man and lo! I was in an inhabited village. . . . The [Muslim] governor provided a horse to take me to his house and gave me hot food, and I washed . . . . The same night I wrote to my friends at Kuwil to inform them of my safety, and they came, bringing me a horse and clothes and rejoiced at my escape.*

—*Gibb,* Travels, vol. 4, 780–782

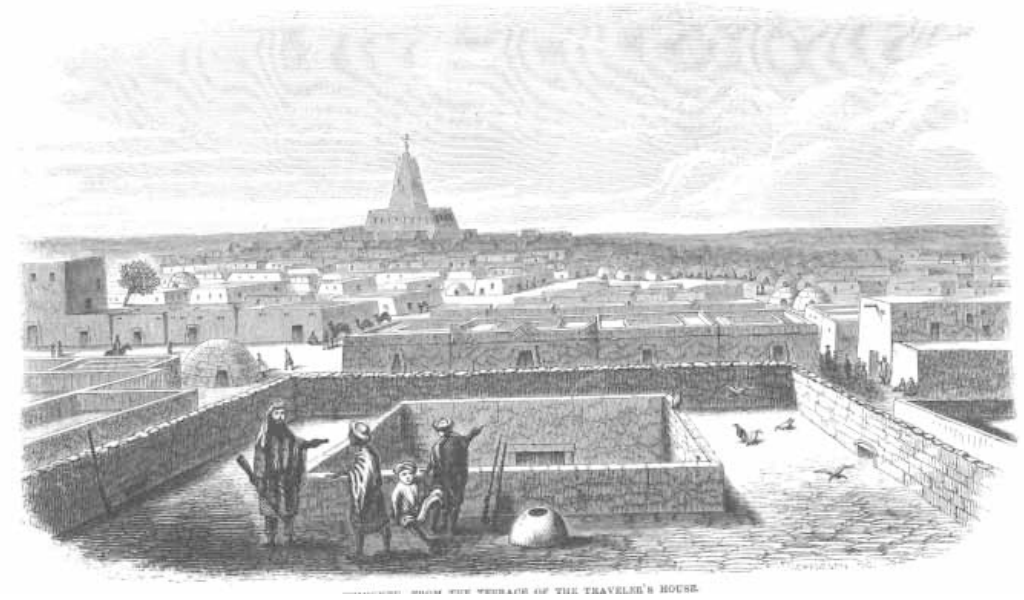
*[In West Africa] I met the qadi of Malli [Mali), Abd al-Rahman, who came to see me: he is a black, has been on the pilgrimage, and is a noble person with good qualities of character. He sent me a cow as his hospitality gift. I met the interpreter Dugha, a noble black and a leader of theirs. He sent me a bull . . . . They performed their duty towards me [as a guest] most perfectly may God bless and reward them for their good deeds!*

—Said Hamdun and Noel King, eds., *Ibn Battuta in Black Africa (Princeton: Markus Wiener,* 1994), 44.

*I was present at Malli [Mali] for two festivals-the Feast of Sacrifices and the Feast of Fast-breaking. The people came out to the Place of Prayer which is near the sultan's palace wearing good white clothes. The sultan was riding; he had the tailasan on his head, and the blacks do not wear the tailasan except at festivals, although the qadi and the preacher and the faqihs do indeed wear this headdress on other days. On a festival they precede the sultan and declare the oneness and greatness of God. Before the sultan are carried red banners made of silk. Near the Place of Prayer a tent has been set up. The sultan goes into it,*

*puts himself in order, then he comes out to the Place of Prayer, the prayer is performed, and a sermon delivered. The preacher comes down from the pulpit and sits down before the sultan. He makes a long speech. There is there a man with a spear in his hand who explains the things said by the preacher to the people in their tongue. The speech is made up of exhortation, reminder (of the hereafter), praise for the sultan, encouragement to remain obedient, and to give respect* as is *appropriate.*

—*Hamdun and King,* Ibn Battuta in Black Africa, 50–2



Timbuktu, from the Terrace of
the Traveler's House

**Illustration Source:** Heinrich Barth, *Travels and Discoveries in North and Central Africa,* vol. 3 (New York, 1857)

# Lesson Six:
# Ibn Battuta's Trip to Mali

## A. OBJECTIVES

1. Students will understand the hardships of travel from northern Africa across mountains and desert to Sub-Saharan Africa in the fourteenth century.

2. Students will learn what Ibn Battuta experienced in Mali, analyze his reactions to Malian culture and society, and identify bias in a primary source document.

3. Students will understand the idea that historical knowledge is a social construct and that the student of history must always take into consideration the author's cultural orientation, social class, ethnic identity, and other factors in analyzing a source document.

## B. LESSON ACTIVITIES (Completion Time: 2 days)

1. Using both the map (in this unit) of Ibn Battuta's route to Mali and excerpts from his text attesting to the difficulties encountered, have students write three different diary entries recording their own journey by camel caravan across the Sahara.

2. Using documents illustrating Ibn Battuta's impression of buildings, customs, and people he met in Mali (**Student Handout 8**), ask students to piece together what he saw and how he reacted to it. Ask them to list what he liked and what he objected to, then have them speculate on the reasons for his positive and negative reactions.

3. Have a number of students write an essay on why Ibn Battuta reacted the way he did to the people and culture in Mali. Ask other students to illustrate one or more of the events described. The illustration could be done in the continuous narrative style characteristic of India in the medieval period.

4. Ask students to read the illustrated article on Ibn Battuta in the December 1991 issue of *National Geographic.* What does the article tell us about travel across the Sahara Desert and in other regions in the fourteenth century? What theme or approach does Thomas Abercrombie, the author of the article, use to unify the text, illustrations, and captions. What is his opinion of Ibn Battuta?

5. Ask students to draw comparisons between Mali and East Africa in terms of Ibn Battuta's experiences and reactions to society and culture.

6. Ibn Battuta journeyed from his home in Morocco to the capital of the Empire of Mali in four stages. Follow his trip on the route map in this unit. Using a world or regional atlas, trace his route on a physical map of the northwestern part of Africa. Connect places on the maps to his experiences as described in the excerpts that follow. Write three descriptive diary entries chronicling his trip.

A Modern Market Scene near the Ruins of Sijilmasa, Southern Morocco

Ross E. Dunn

## PRIMARY SOURCE: IBN BATTUTA'S JOURNEY TO MALI

In the fall of 1351, Ibn Battuta traveled from Fez across the Atlas Mountains to Sijilmasa, a major transshipment center for goods moving north and south across the Sahara Desert. In Sijilmasa he purchased camels and waited four months for the departure of a caravan to Mali. Starting out in February 1352, the caravan traveled for nearly a month to reach Taghaza, an important salt mining town in the north central Sahara:

> *There were a number of merchants from Sijilmasa and other places in the caravan. After twenty-five days we reached Taghaza. It is a village with no attractions. A strange thing about it is that its houses and mosque are built of blocks of salt and roofed with camel skins. There are no trees, only sand in which is a salt mine. They dig the ground and thick slabs are found in it, lying on each other as if they had been cut and stacked under the ground. A camel carries two slabs. The only people living there are the slaves . . . who dig for the salt . . . .*
>
> —Gibb, *Travels, vol.* 4, 946–947

According to al-Idrisi, a twelfth-century geographer, the Sahara crossing was a dangerous thousand-mile jaunt:

> *They load their camels at late dawn, and march until the sun has risen, its light has become bright in the air, and the heat on the ground has become severe. Then they put their loads down, hobble their camels, unfasten their baggage and stretch awnings to give some shade from the scorching heat and the hot winds of midday . . . . When the sun begins to decline and sink in the west, they set* off. *They march for the rest of the day, and keep going until nightfall, when they encamp at whatever place they have reached . . . . Thus the traveling of the merchants who enter the country of the Sudan is according to this pattern. They do not deviate from it, because the sun kills with its heat those who run the risk of marching at midday.*
>
> —Al-Idrisi, quoted in Dunn, *Adventures,* 296–297

> *In those days we used to go in front of the caravan and when we found a suitable place we pastured the beasts there. We went on doing this till a man called Ibn Ziri was lost in the desert. After that I did not go ahead or fall behind the caravan .... We met a caravan on the way. They told us that some men had become separated from them; they had found one of them dead underone of the*

*bushes that grow in the sand. He had his clothes on him and a whip in his hand. There was water about a mile away.*

—Gibb, *Travels, vol. 4, 948*

The caravan finally reached Walata [Iwalatan], the first major town on the southern edge of the desert.

*Then we arrived at the town of Iwalatan [Walatal] at the beginning of the month of Rabi'i alAwwal after a joumey of two whole months from Sijilmasa. It is the first district of the blacks [that is, a province of Mali] and the representative of the sultan in it was Farba Husain .... When we arrived there, the merchants placed their goods in an open place and the blacks undertook to look after them. They went to the Farba. He was sitting on a mat in a roofed open hall and his helpers were before him with spears and bows in their hands and the elders of the Massufa (a desert people) behind him. The merchants stood in front of him and he spoke to them through an interpreter in spite of their nearness to him, in derision of them .... The Overseer of Iwalatan, whose name was Mansha Ju, invited those who had come in the caravan to his hospitality . . . . The meal was brought out: a concoction of anli [a grain] mixed with a drop of honey and milk, which they placed in a half calabash like a deep wooden bowl. Those present drank and went away. I said to them, "Was it for this the black invited us?" They said, "Yes, this is great entertainment in their country."/ became sure that there was no good to be expected from them.*

—Hamdun and King, *Ibn Battuta in Black Africa,* 36–7

*My residence in Iwalatan was about fifty days. Its people were generous to me and entertained me. Among my hosts was its qadi, Muhammad ibn 'Abu Allah ibn Yanumar and his brother .... The town of Iwalatan is veryhotand there are in it a few small date palms in whose shade they plant melons. They obtain water from the ground which exudes it. Mutton is obtainable in quantity there. The clothes of its people are of fine Egyptian material. Most of the inhabitants belong to the Massufa, and as for their women-they are very beautiful and are more important than the men.*

–Hamdun and King, *Ibn Battuta in Black Africa,* 37

*The condition of these people is strange and theirmanners outlandish. As for their men, there is no sexual jealousy in them. And none of them derives his genealogy from his father but, on the contrary, from his matemal uncle. A man does not pass on inheritance except to the sons of his sister to the exclusions of his own sons. Now that is a thing I never saw in any part of the world except in the country of the unbelievers of the land of [Malabar]... With regard to their women, they are not modest in the presence of men, they do not veil themselves in spite of their perseverance in the* prayers. *He who wishes to many among them can marry, but the women do not travel with the husband, and if one of them wanted to do that, she would be prevented by her family. The women there have friends and companions amongst men outside the prohibited degrees of marriage [i. e., other than brothers, fathers etc.]. Likewise for the men . . . . One day I entered upon the qadi in lwalatan after he had given his permission for me to enter. I found with him a woman-young in age and very beautiful. When I saw her, I was taken aback and wanted to retrace my steps. The qadi said to me, "Why are you retreating? She is only my companion." I was astonished at their conduct-for he was from the faqih class and had performed the pilgrimage.*

–Hamdun and King, *Ibn Battuta in Black Africa, 37-38*

Ibn Battuta continued on his journey and arrived in the Malian capital July *28, 1352.*

*The seat of Mansa Sulayman [the sultan] was a sprawling, unwalled town set in a "verdant and hilly" country. The sultan had several enclosed palaces there. Mansa Musa had built one under the direction of Abu Ishaq al-Sahili, an Andalusian architect and poet who had accompanied him home from the hay. AI-Sahili surfaced the building with plaster, an innovation in the Sudan [West Africa], and "covered it with colored pattems so that it turned out to be the most elegant of buildings." Surrounding the palaces and mosques were the residences of the citizenry, mudwalled houses roofed with domes of timber and reed.*

—Dunn, *Adventures, 301*

*When it is a festival day... the poets called the jula'. . . come. Each one of them has got inside a costume made of feathers to look like a thrush with a wooden head made for it and a red beak as if it were the head of a bird. They stand before the sultan in that ridiculous attire and recite poetry.*

–Hamdun and King, *Ibn Battuta in Black Africa, 53*

*Amongst their good qualities is the small amount of injustice amongst them, for of all people they are the furthest from it. Their sultan does not forgive anyone in any matter to do with injustice. . . . There is also the prevalence of peace in their country, the traveler is not afraid in it nor is he who lives therein fear of the thief or of the robber by violence. They do not interfere with the property of the white man who dies in their country even though it may consist of great wealth, but rather they entrust it to the hand of someone dependable among the white men until it is taken by the rightful claimant.*

Another of the good habits among them is the way they meticulously observe the times of the prayers and attendance at them . . . .

*When it is Friday, if a man does not come early to the mosque he will not find a place to pray because of the numbers of the crowd. It is their custom for every man to send his boy with his prayer mat. He spreads it for him in a place commensurate with his position and keeps the place until he comes to the mosque. Their prayer-mats are made of the leaves of a tree like a date palm but it bears no fruit.*

*Among their good qualities is theirputting on of good white clothes on Friday. If a man among them has nothing except a tattered shirt, he washes and cleans it and attends the Friday prayer in it. Another of their good qualities is their concern for learning the sublime Qur'an by heart. They make fetters for their children when they appear on their part to be falling short in their learning of it by heart, and they are not taken off from them till they do learn by heart. I went in to visit the qadi on an 'Id day (religious holiday) and his children were tied up. I said to him, "Why do you not release them?" He said, "I shall not do so until they learn the Qur'an by heart."*

–Hamdun and King, *Ibn Battuta in Black Africa, 58–59*

*Among the bad things which they do-their serving women, slave women and little daughters appear before people naked . . . . I used to see many of them in this state in Ramadan [the month of fasting] . . . . Women will go into the presence of the sultan naked .... Another of their bad customs is their putting of dust and ashes on their heads as a sign of respect. And another is the laughing matter I mentioned of their poetic recitals. And another is that many of them eat animals not ritually slaughtered, and dogs and donkeys.*

–Hamdun and King, *Ibn Battuta in Black Africa, 59*

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