

Ibn Battuta - Rihla

Ibn Battuta left **Tangier** on his travels when he was 20 years old in 1325. His main reason to travel was to go on a Hajj, or a Pilgrimage to Mecca, as all good Muslims want to do. But his traveling went on for about 29 years and he covered about 75,000 miles which were then mostly under the governments of Muslim leaders of the World of Islam, or "Dar al-Islam".

Ibn Battuta traveled overland at first alone riding a donkey. Then for protection he joined a caravan with other pilgrims and traders. The group left **Tunis** in a larger caravan of pilgrims and Ibn Battuta was even appointed qadi (judge and settler of disputes) for the hajj caravan. Along the way across Libya, Ibn Battuta entered into a marriage contract with the daughter of a Tunisian official in the pilgrim caravan.

Sometime in 1326, the caravan reached **Alexandria** at the western end of the Nile Delta. Ibn Battuta was very impressed with Alexandria. Later he said it was one of the five most magnificent places he ever visited. It was here that he tells of achievements and miracles of several scholars and mystics - include a Sufi mystic who predicted that the young pilgrim would travel and meet fellow Sufis in India and China.

Ibn Battuta next arrived in **Cairo** and stayed about one month, but he decided to proceed to Mecca on his own.

Ibn Battuta left Cairo and headed toward Damascus, Syria along the Royal Road. He passed through **Jerusalem** and Bethlehem. Continuing northward he visited and described more holy places, many towns destroyed by the crusades, such as Tyre and Acre, and he described many castles. He continued on toward **Damascus** and arrived there during the Holy Month of Ramadan, 1326. He also tells about more holy men, but also of assassins with poisoned knives, wars, suicides, and political intrigues, all part of the history of this area.

The distance from Damascus south to Medina was about 820 miles, and the caravan normally covered it in 45 to 60 days. Without any serious incidents, the caravan arrived at **Medina**. The caravan camped outside the city walls.

Then traveling for several more days and visiting more holy sites, they came close to **Mecca**.

Ibn Battuta stayed in Mecca for three weeks making visits to other sites, meeting with holy men, and studied with them. Now Ibn Battuta had "graduated" to the status of "**al-Hajji**" - one who had been on the Hajj. He had taken a year and a half to reach his destination of Mecca from his homeland of Morocco.

On Nov. 17, 1326, Ibn Battuta left Mecca and joined a caravan of pilgrims in an official caravan of the Persian state. He was treated to a half of a "double camel litter" by a rich official who was impressed with Ibn Battuta's learning and friendly personality. They marched at night by torchlight "so that you saw the countryside gleaming with light and the darkness turned into radiant day." The entire journey from Mecca to Mesopotamia took approximately 44 days.

Ibn Battuta continued on separately from the caravan and one of his first stops was **Basra** - a famous city at the top of the Persian Gulf. Unimpressed, he continued on by taking a small sailboat up the Tigris River to the city of Abadan.

In **Isfahan**, in central Persia, he lodged for two weeks in a large Sufi center and saw the sights and met with religious and legal scholars.

Next, Ibn Battuta visited **Shiraz** after traveling another 300 miles south.

Ibn Battuta continued on with other traveling companions and arrived at **Baghdad**, the one-time capital of the whole Abbasid Empire. Because of the Mongol attack, Baghdad was no longer an important stop on a Middle Eastern tour. Even though most colleges were in ruins, one college built in 1234 was still operating.

Ibn Battuta then decided to join a part of a caravan that was going north to **Tabriz**, one of the most important cities in northern Persia.

Ibn Battuta spent almost no time exploring Tabriz because he had to get back to Baghdad to join another hajj caravan. He was expecting an easy return trip, but unfortunately on the way he again became sick with diarrhea. During the long journey he had to get down from his litter many times a day. By the time he got to **Mecca**, he was very weak.

From Mecca, he went to **Jidda** on the Red Sea coast where he and other pilgrims were crammed onto a small ship.

This was Ibn Battuta's first time at sea travel and he probably wasn't looking forward to it. The Red Sea was not easy to navigate with coral reefs and rocks just under the waterline. Storms were common, as were pirates. Eventually the ship had to head for shore, and fortunately Ibn Battuta and the other seasick passengers were able to rent camels and continue south on land.

Ibn Battuta was able to visit Yemen. He continued down to the coastal city of **Aden** which guards the entrance to the Red Sea.

From Aden Ibn Battuta decided to have another adventure before settling down to a permanent job - down the coast of East Africa this time. Ships could travel during the winter months south with the monsoon winds. Then in the summer the winds reverse direction and ships could easily travel north.

His first stop was **Zeila**, a port of the Christian kingdom of Ethiopia with a large Muslim community. He felt Zeila "the dirtiest, most disagreeable, and most stinking town in the world. The reason for its stink is the quantity of fish and the blood of the camels they butcher in its alleyways."

He continued southward and fifteen days later they reached **Mogadishu**, the busiest and richest port of the coast. Spoken here were Arabic and Persian from earlier traders, and developing was **Swahili**, a mixture of an African language (Bantu) with Arabic and Persian.

Since Ibn Battuta was a real scholar of Islam religion and law now, he was made a welcomed guest of the sheik. This feasting and meeting of important people continued for about a week before the ship continued southward to Zanj and then Mombasa. They continued on to the islands of Pemba and Zanzibar, and finally arrived at **Kilwa**. Kilwa was important as a trading city for gold and its citizens enjoyed a high standard of living.

Ibn Battuta stayed in Kilwa about two weeks and with the changes in the monsoon winds, the ship changed direction and went north. A month later he was back in South Arabia. From here he decided on another short adventure - this time to take a small ship to the Gulf of Oman. Because he disliked the crew of his ship, Ibn Battuta and a friend decided to continue to **Qalhat**, on the eastern tip of the Arabian Peninsula, on foot. This decision almost cost them their lives! A guide that they hired plotted to kill them and take their clothes and valuables. Fortunately, Ibn Battuta was carrying a spear and was able to control the would-be robber and finally - after becoming sick and thirsty and walking with swollen bloody feet - they arrived at Qalhat.

From Qalhat Ibn Battuta continued to the Straits of Hormuz. In the bazaars he observed Indian merchants, and along the coast he saw pearl fishing boats.

Ibn Battuta returned to **Mecca** - his third visit. Traveling mostly by land now, he reached Mecca in the winter of 1330.

In 1330 he went to the town of **Jeddah** on the Red Sea. He traveled back into **Egypt** where he met a friend, and they went by caravan to **Damascus**, Syria.

Ibn Battuta's small group left Syria on a large galley belonging to the Genoese (from Italy) and arrived at **Alanya** on the southern coast of Anatolia. This town was a busy trading port, especially known for its wood which was shipped to Egypt and Syria.

In every town that Ibn Battuta visited, he was welcomed into a fraternity of Muslim brothers. They provided him with food and shelter, and even competed with other fraternities for the honor of entertaining their guests.

In November of 1331, Ibn Battuta and three friends, two slave boys and a slave girl and with several horses and gifts from governors and hosts, started out toward the Black Sea. He had benefited greatly from the generosity of the Turks. But this next part of the trip was difficult. He was caught in a raging river; misled by a guide who got the party lost and demanded money; and then almost froze to death in the wilderness. But they arrived at the port of **Sinop** on the Black Sea and were ready to leave to the steppe lands - the home of the "Golden Horde".

After waiting more than a month for good weather, Ibn Battuta and his small party boarded a ship and began to cross the Black Sea. They reached **Kaffa** on the Crimea peninsula. When they arrived in al-Qiram, they heard some good news! They had arrived just in time to make the 700-mile trip to the Volga River under the protection of the King of the Golden Horde who was traveling only a few days ahead. So they bought three wagons and animals to pull them and rushed to catch up.

When they reached **Astrakhan** on the north coast of the Caspian Sea, Ibn Battuta learned that the third wife of the Khan was pregnant. The Khan gave her permission to go back to her father - the King of the Byzantine Empire - to have her baby in Constantinople. Ibn Battuta asked the Khan if he could go along and also got permission.

After traveling about 75 days they arrived in **Constantinople**.

Ibn Battuta stayed in Constantinople for more than a month. He even got to meet the emperor, Andronicus III. Ibn Battuta and the royal escorts returned to the steppe just as the terrible Asian winter was beginning. They continued northward to **New Saray**, a city up the now-frozen Volga River 100 miles north of the Caspian.

New Saray was in the frontier of Dar al-Islam.

Ibn Battuta left the Volga River colony and headed south, generally toward India. In the spring of 1333, Ibn Battuta continued with others on a caravan into the mountain passes into Afghanistan. After a four-month journey they rode into India. It was here that Ibn Battuta hoped to settle down and get a high paying job.

In late 1334, Ibn Battuta went to **Delhi** to seek official employment and he signed a contract agreeing that he would stay in India. He cleverly assembled gifts for the sultan: arrows, several camels, thirty horses, and several slaves and other goods. Everyone knew that the Muhammad Tughluq would give to his visitor's gifts of far greater value in return!

Ibn Battuta had feared for his life working as a judge under the moody and tyrannical Sultan of India, Muhammad Tughluq. But the Sultan had a task in mind, one that Ibn Battuta found fascinating. He wanted to make Ibn Battuta his ambassador to the Mongol court of China. He would accompany 15 Chinese messengers back to their homeland and carry shiploads of gifts to the emperor. Now he could get away from Muhammad Tughluq and visit more lands of Dar al-Islam in a grand style!

After a few days rest they continued to the coastal city of **Cambay**, on the north India coast, filled with foreign traders who lived in fine homes. Within days the group boarded four ships.

Using the monsoon winds to propel them, the four ships headed south and arrived in the port of **Calicut**. In the same harbor were 13 Chinese junks, much larger ships than his dhows. Ibn Battuta admired these huge ships with their luxury accommodations - private cabins with lavatories

But before he got on his ship, a terrible event occurred. A violent storm came up. Ibn Battuta waited helplessly on the beach all night and the next morning watched in horror as two ships were pushed onto shore, broke apart, and sank. Some

of the crew on one of the junks were saved, but no one survived from the other ship - the one that he was supposed to be on. "The slaves, pages, and horses were all drowned, and the precious wares either sank or washed up on the beach, where soldiers struggled to prevent the townsfolk from making off with the loot."

And so he planned to continue on to China on his own. Again, he decided to take the long way - this time to make a brief tour of the **Maldives Islands**, and then continue to **Sri Lanka**. From here he got on a Chinese junk and continued on his trip to China.

From Sri Lanka Ibn Battuta and some traveling companions sailed to **Chittagong**, now the chief port of Bangladesh, a Muslim country next to India. He tells us that Chittagong was a city filled with food, but smelled bad - "a hell crammed with good things." Everything there was cheap, including slaves. He bought "an extremely beautiful" slave girl and a friend bought a young boy slave for a couple of gold dinar.

The Malay rulers recognized the advantages of becoming Muslims, and many of them converted. As Muslim rulers, they could enter into the larger networks of trade and participate in the Dar al-Islam. A Malay prince, ruler of **Samudra** on the coast of Sumatra, had converted to Islam in the late 13th century.

At last he arrived in the busy sea port of **Ch'uan-zhou** (Quanzhou) on the coast of Fukien (Fujian) Province.

****Ibn Battuta describes a trip on the Grand Canal to Beijing, capital of Mongol China. But his description is so vague that most historians believe that he didn't really make the trip.*

When Ibn Battuta got back to Quanzhou he found a junk belonging to the Sultan of Samudra ready to go back. So he got on board and began his return home.

The winter monsoons carried Ibn Battuta's sailing junk south from China. He returned to **Samudra** where he stayed again with the sultan, this time for a few weeks. He continued on to **Quilon**, India and then up to **Calicut**.

Ibn Battuta decided to go on another hajj to Mecca, and so he caught the monsoon winds going westward. He sailed for 28 days and arrived at **Zafar** on the southern coast of the Arabian Peninsula. With changes in the wind of the early summer monsoons, he sailed north. He arrived at **Hormuz**.

Ibn Battuta continued quickly through Persia. Ibn Battuta returned to **Baghdad** and from there crossed over the Syrian Desert on the camel route. At last he arrived in **Damascus** in the winter of 1348.

He next went to **Aleppo** the northern capital of Syria.

Ibn Battuta continued on to **Palestine** and over to **Cairo**. Then he went up the Nile. Crossing the Red Sea he arrived at **Jidda**, and continued on to **Mecca**. He stayed in Mecca for more than four months.

He was 45 years old and had been gone for 24 years. He again headed west back toward Morocco. He left **Egypt** on a small ship and went to **Tunisia** where he then traveled overland. He made a brief trip to the Christian lands of **Sardinia**, but he heard rumors that the people there were pirates who would hold him for ransom. So he left immediately.

After ten days at sea he arrived at **Tenes**. From there he went overland to Morocco. Here he learned that his mother had died only several months earlier. He arrived in his family's home of **Tangier** and visited his mother's grave. He met with friends and family and shared his tales of his travels to all parts of Dar al-Islam.

But restless again after only a few days, he decided to go to the harbor city of **Ceuta**. He crossed the straight of Gibraltar.

He traveled to **Málaga** and continued into the mountains of southern Spain, passed through Alhama and on to **Granada**.

Ibn Battuta returned to Morocco. He had traveled throughout much of the Islamic World, but he had never seen much of his homeland, Morocco. So for the next several months he was a traveler again. He went down the Atlantic coast to Asilah, visited Salé, and then rode south across the coastal plains to **Marrakech**, a capital of the earlier sultans. When Ibn Battuta returned to Fez the second time, it was in the fall of 1351.

Ibn Battuta set out from Fez in the autumn of 1351 and crossed the Atlas Mountains. After traveling for eight or nine days he arrived at a town called **Sijilmasa** on the Oasis of Tafilalt. And so he set out south across the Sahara Desert in a camel caravan in February, 1352. They traveled in the early morning and late afternoon and rested under awnings to avoid the scorching midday heat.

Twenty-five days later the caravan reached the settlement of **Taghaza**, the main salt-mining center of the Western Sahara. Here workers loaded great slabs of salt which was in great demand in Mali.

On his return trip, Ibn Battuta continued to explore parts of Mali. He went to **Timbuktu**, a town that was just beginning to flower as a center of Islamic scholarship and trade. But Ibn Battuta was evidently not very impressed with Timbuktu - a city that would become great in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

The caravan went northward for 18 days through **Sijilmasa** where he stayed about two weeks. Then he went over the High Atlas Mountains in the dead of winter. "I have seen difficult roads and much snow, but I never saw a road more difficult than that."

At last he arrived in the capital **Fez**. It was 1354. He was home - this time for good. Sultan of Morocco listened to his report on Mali. He also listened to Ibn Battuta's other adventures, and ordered him to stay in Fez. He wanted to have these stories written down for the amusement of his family and others. So Ibn Battuta was commanded to "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." The Sultan hired a young writer - Ibn Juzayy - the young man Ibn Battuta had met in Granada three years earlier.

And so began the retelling of his adventures that had begun twenty-nine years before. Ibn Battuta wove his observations and hearsay, history and odds and ends into his story. Ibn Juzayy added poetry here and there, but generally he kept to Ibn Battuta's telling. Ibn Juzayy borrowed descriptions of Mecca, Medina and Damascus from a twelfth century traveler named Ibn Jubayr, and perhaps descriptions of other places from other travelers, too. And so the book grew.

Bibliography

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2. Gibb, H.A.R., [The Travels of Ibn Battuta, Vols. I, II, III](#), Hakluyt Society, Syndics of the Cambridge University Press, London, 1956. A translation and notes from the Arabic "Rihla" of Ibn Battuta. (The fourth and final part is still being translated by Professor C. F. Beckingham.)
3. Said Hamdun & Noel King, [Ibn Battuta in Black Africa](#) (with a foreword by Ross Dunn), Markus Wiener Publishers, Princeton, 1975.
4. Prepared by : Nick Bartel, teacher Horace Mann Middle School, 3351 23rd Street , San Francisco, California 94110 , nbartel@muse.sfusd.k12.ca.us
5. Many thanks to Ross Dunn, author of [The Adventures of Ibn Battuta](#) for his support. For Educational Purposes Only
6. Text: Copyright, 1999 by Nick Bartel
7. Notes based on reading from Said Hamdun & Noel King, [Ibn Battuta in Black Africa](#) (Princeton, NJ & New York: Markus-Wiener Publishing, Inc., 1994), 27-75.

Africa: Mansa Musa, an Independent Study

MENTAL MAP:

A. Label the following on your Mental Map:

- Niger River
- Sofala
- Great Zimbabwe
- Mogadishu.

B. Lightly Shade in the West African Kingdoms of Ghana, Mali and Songhay. Add to your key.

C. Map Mansa Musa's hajj. Consider the trade routes when determining how he crossed the desert.

READINGS

D. Read the two primary documents on Mansa Musa and answer the following questions on another sheet of paper.

- What are the areas of agreement in the two documents?
- What motivates Mansa Musa to go on hajj?
- What impact did the hajj have in Cairo?
- What impact did the hajj have on Mansa Musa?
- What did you learn about Mansa Musa from Al Omari?

An African Pilgrim to Mecca

Andrea, Alfred, et al. The Human Record. Volume 1. Houghton Mifflin. Boston. 2001

Mahmud Kali, *THE CHRONICLE OF THE SEEKER*

The following document describes the famous pilgrimage that Mansa (King) Musa (Moses) of Mali (r. 1312-1327) made to Mecca in 1324-1325. The sheer size of Mansa Musa's entourage and the generosity this king of sub-Saharan West Africa exhibited to Muslims along the route guaranteed that the memory of his pilgrimage would not be lost. Several written accounts exist. This particular record is ascribed to the family of Mahmud Kali (1468?-1593), a native scholar and Islamic judge of Timbuktu. Kali, who according to tradition lived for 125 years, began to compose his history around 1519 and continued it until his death almost 75 years later.

"We shall now relate some of what we have been able to discover about the history of the Mali-koy Kankan (Mansa) Musa.

This Mali-koy was an upright, godly, and devout sultan. His dominion stretched from the limits of Mali as far as Sibiridugu, and all the peoples in these lands, Songhay and others, obeyed him. Among the signs of his virtue are that he used to emancipate a slave every day, that he made the pilgrimage to the sacred house of God, and that in the course of his pilgrimage he built the great mosque of Timbuktu as well as the mosques of Dukurey, Gundam, Ditey, Wanko, and Bako,

His mother Kankan was a native woman, though some say she was of Arab origin, The cause of his pilgrimage was related to me as follows by the scholar Muhammad Quma, may God have mercy on him, who had memorized the traditions of the ancients. He said that the Mali-koy Kankan Musa had killed his mother, Nana Kankan, by mistake. For this he felt deep regret and remorse and feared retribution. In expiation he gave great sums of money in alms and resolved on a life-long fast.

He asked one of the ulama (teachers) of his time what he could do to expiate this terrible crime, and he replied, "You should seek refuge with the Prophet of God, may God bless and save him. Flee to him, place yourself under his protection, and ask him to intercede for you with God, and God will accept his intercession.

That is my view. Kankan Musa made up his mind that very day and began to collect the money and equipment needed for the journey. He sent proclamations to all parts of his realm asking for supplies and support and went to one of his shaykhs (elder) and asked him to choose the day of his departure. "You should wait," said the shaykh, "for the Saturday which falls on the twelfth day of the month. Set forth on that day, and you will not die before you return safe and sound to your residence, please God."

He therefore delayed and waited until these two coincided, and it was not until nine months later that the twelfth of the month fell on a Saturday. He set forth when the head of his caravan had already reached Timbuktu, while he himself was still in his residence in Mali.

Since that time travelers of that people believe it is lucky to set out on a journey on a Saturday which falls on the twelfth of a month. It has become proverbial that when a traveler returns in a had state, they say of him, "Here is one who did not set out on the Mali-koy's Saturday of departure"

Kankan Musa set out in force, with much money and a numerous army. A scholar told me that he heard from our shaykh, the very learned qadi Abu Abbas Sidi Ahmad ibn Ahmad ibn Anda-ag-Muhammad, may God have mercy on him and be pleased with him, that on the day when the pasha (chief) (Mansa Musa) left for Twat, announcing that he was going on the pilgrimage to Mecca, he asked how many persons were going with him and was told that the total number of armed men the pasha had with him was about 8000. When Askia Muhammad made the pilgrimage later with 800 men, that is, one-tenth of that. Third after them came Ali ibn Abd al-Qadir, with 80 men, one-tenth of 800."

Kankan Musa went on his journey, about which there are many stories. Most of them are untrue and the mind refuses to accept them, One such story is that in every town where he stopped on Friday between here and Egypt he built a mosque on that very day. It is said that the mosques of Gundam and Dukurey were among those he built. Both at lunch and at dinner, from when he left his residence until he returned, he ate fresh fish and fresh vegetables.

I was told that his wife, called Inari Konte, went with him, accompanied by 500 of her women and serving women.

Our shaykh, the Moti Bukar ibn Salih. . . may God have mercy on him, told me that Kankan Musa took forty mule-loads of gold with him when he went on his pilgrimage and visited the tomb of the Prophet. (Mecca)

It is said that he asked the shaykh of the noble and holy city of Mecca, may Almighty God protect it, to give him two, three, or four *sharifs* (*learned ones*) of the kin of the Prophet of God, may God bless him and save him, to go with him to his country, so that the people of these parts might be blessed by the sight of them and by the blessing of their footsteps in these lands. But the shaykh refused, it being generally agreed that such things should be prevented and refused out of respect and regard for the noble blood of the *sharifs*, and for fear lest one of them fall into the hands of the infidels and be lost or go astray. But he persisted in his request and urged them very strongly, until the shaykh said, "I will not do it, but I will neither command nor forbid it. If anyone wishes, let him follow you. His fare is in his own hands, I am not responsible."

The Mali-koy then sent a crier to the mosques to say, "Whoever wishes to have a thousand *mithqals* (a weight of gold that varied by regions) of gold, let him follow me to my country, and the thousand is ready for him." Four men of the tribe of Quraysh (Muhammad's tribe) came to him, but it is claimed that they were freedmen (former slaves) of Quraysh and not real Qurayshis. He gave them 4,000, 1,000 each, and they followed him, with their families, when he returned to his country.

When the Mali-koy reached Timbuktu on his way back, he collected ships and small boats on which he transported their families and luggage, together with his own women, as far as his country, for the riding animals were too exhausted to use. When the ships carrying the *sharifs* from Mecca reached the town of Kami, the Dienne-koy (a vassal of Mansa Musa) . . . attacked the ships and plundered all that they contained. They took the *sharifs* ashore and revolted against the Mali-koy. But when the people of the ships told them about the *sharifs* and informed them of their high station, they attended them, and installed them in a nearby palace called Shinshin. It is said that the *sharifs* of the town of Kay are descended from them.

This is the end of the story of the pilgrimage of the Mali-koy Kankan Musa. . . .

AL OMARI: Mali in the Fourteenth Century

Reilly, Kevin. Worlds of History. Bedford and Martin. 2000.

The world of Islam extended across the Indian Ocean and the Sahara desert. In 1324 while making a pilgrimage to Mecca, the king of Mali, Mansa Musa, stopped in Cairo. The presence of his five-hundred member entourage, each carrying a four-pound staff of gold, was vividly recalled by Cairenes (people of Cairo) for years after his departure. One of those witnesses was the sultan's welcoming official, who here tells the historian Al Omari about that memorable visit. Al Omari also writes about Mansa Musa's Mali and its capital city, Niane.

Traveling through Cairo

"During my first journey to Cairo and sojourn there I heard talk of the arrival of the Sultan Musa and I found the Cairenes very glad to talk of the large expenditures of those people. I questioned the Emir Abu'l 'Abbas Ahmed ben Abi'l Haki, el Mehmendar, who spoke of the sultan's noble appearance, dignity, and trustworthiness. "When I went out to greet him in the name of the glorious Sultan el Malik en Nasir [of Egypt]," he told me, "he gave me the warmest of welcomes and treated me with the most careful politeness. But he would talk to me only through an interpreter although he could speak perfect Arabic. He carried his imperial treasure in many pieces of gold, worked or otherwise."

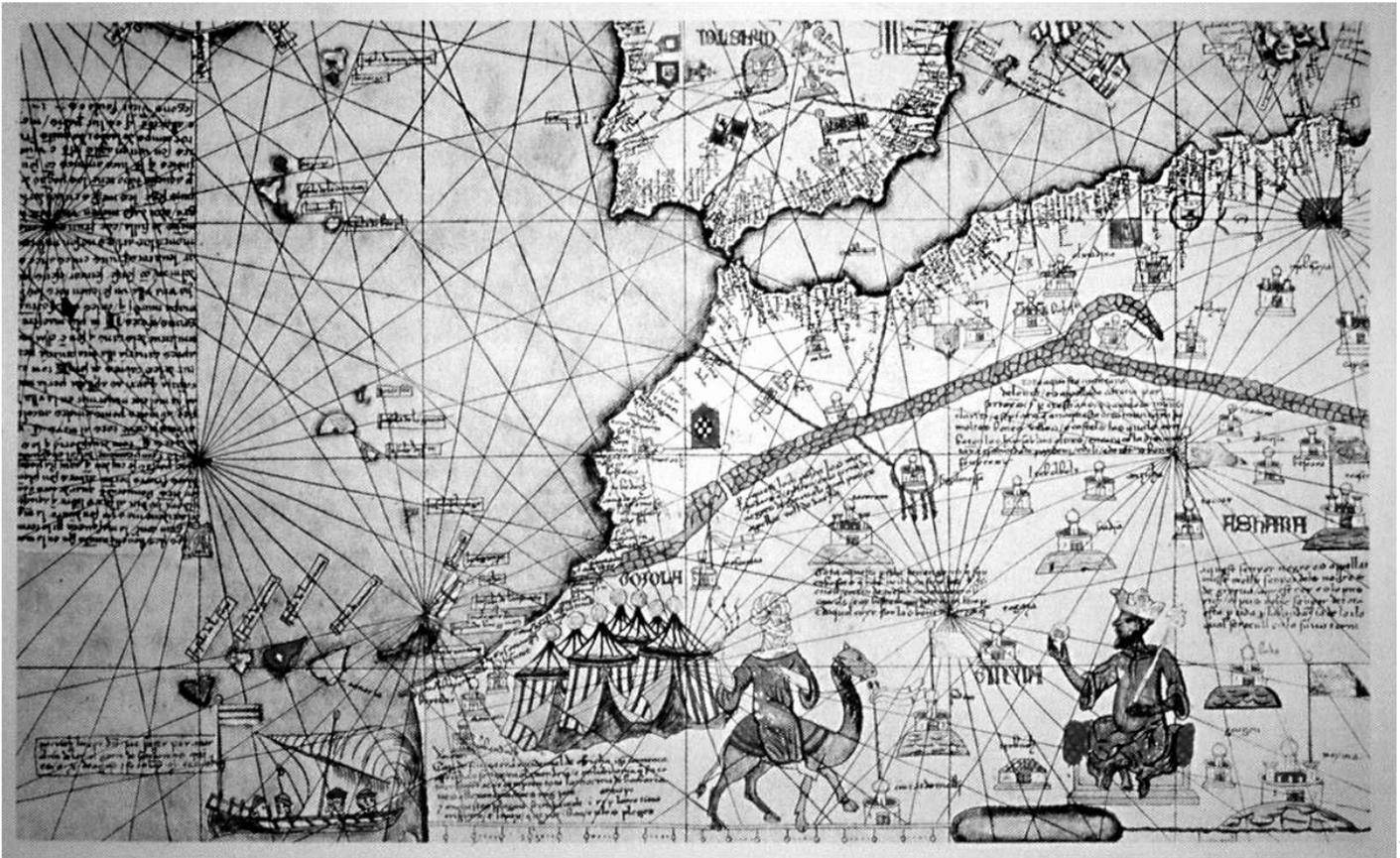
I suggested that he should go up to the palace and meet the Sultan [of Egypt]. But he refused, saying: 'I came for the pilgrimage, and for nothing else, and I do not wish to mix up my pilgrimage with anything else.' He argued about this. However, I well understood that the meeting was repugnant to him because he was loath to kiss the ground before the Sultan or to kiss his hand. I went on insisting, and he went on making excuses. But imperial protocol obliged me to present him, and I did not leave him until he had agreed. When he came into the Sultan's presence we asked him to kiss the ground. But he refused and continued to refuse, saying: 'However can this be?' Then a wise man of his suite whispered several words to him that I could not understand. 'Very well,' he thereupon declared, 'I will prostrate myself before Allah who created me and brought me into the world.' Having done so he moved toward the Sultan. The latter rose for a moment to welcome him and asked him to sit beside him; then they had a long conversation. After Sultan Musa had left the palace the Sultan of Cairo sent him gifts of clothing for himself, his courtiers, and all those who were with him; saddled and bridled horses for himself and his chief officers. . .

"When the time of pilgrimage arrived, [the Sultan of Egypt] sent him a large quantity of drachmas, luggage camels, and choice riding camels with saddles and harness. [the Sultan of Egypt] caused abundant quantities of foodstuffs to be bought for his suite and his followers, established posting-stations for the feeding of the animals, and gave to the emirs of the pilgrimage a written order to look after and respect [the *Emperor* of Mali]. When the latter returned it was I who went to greet him and settle him into his quarters. . ."

"This man," el Mehmendar also told me, "spread upon Cairo the flood of his generosity: There was no person, officer of the [Cairo] court or holder of any office of the [Cairo] sultanate who did not receive a sum in gold from him. The people of Cairo earned incalculable sums from him, whether by buying and selling or by gifts. So much gold was current in Cairo that it ruined the value of money. . ."

"Let me add that gold in Egypt had enjoyed a high rate of exchange up to the moment of their arrival. The gold *mitqal* that year had not fallen below twenty-five drachmas. But from that day onward, its value dwindled; the exchange was ruined, and even now it has not recovered. The *mitqal* scarcely touches twenty-two drachmas. That is how it has been for twelve years from that time, because of the great amounts of gold they

brought to Egypt and spent there.



The

Empire of Mali

The sultan of this country has sway over the land of the "desert of native gold," whence they bring him gold every year. The inhabitants of that land are savage pagans whom the sultan would subject to him if he wished. But the sovereigns of this kingdom have learned by experience that whenever one of them has conquered one of these gold towns, established Islam there, and sounded the call to prayer, the harvest of gold dwindles and falls to nothing, meanwhile it grows and expands in neighboring pagan countries. When experience had confirmed them in this observation, they left the gold country in the hands of its pagan inhabitants, and contented themselves with assuring their obedience and paying tribute.

The Importance of Horses

Arab horses are brought for sale to the kings of this country, who spend considerable sums in this way. Their army numbers one hundred thousand men, of whom there are about ten thousand horse-mounted cavalry. The others are infantry, having neither horses nor any other mounts. They have camels in this country but do not know the art of riding them with a saddle. . .

The officers of this king, his soldiers, and his guard receive gifts of land and presents. Some among the greatest of them receive as much as fifty thousand *mitqals* of gold a year, besides which the king provides them with horses and do thing. He is much concerned with giving them fine garments and making his cities into capitals.

Royal Bureaucracy

It is one of their customs that whenever someone charged with a certain task of important affair reports to the king, the latter questions him on everything that has happened from the time of his departure to the time of his return, and in great detail. Legal cases and appeals also go up to the sovereign who examines them himself. Generally he writes nothing; but gives his orders, most of the time, orally. He has *qadis*, secretaries, and

offices.

