

## Post – Classical (600 C.E. to 1450 C.E.)

something utterly unlawful! But since the thing is done, I give you council; if you are willing, receive me as your king. Have recourse to *me* and put yourselves under *my* protection.

The Ripuarian Franks of Cologne welcomed these words with loud applause, and with the clashing of their shields. They lifted Chlodovocar upon a shield, and proclaimed him king over them.....

Daily did God cause Chlodovocar's enemies to fall into his hand, and increased his kingdom;

seeing that he went about *with his heart right before the Lord*, and did that which was pleasing in His eyes.

From: William Stearns Davis, ed., *Readings in Ancient History: Illustrative Extracts from the Sources*, 2 Vols., (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1912-1913), pp. 331-337

Scanned by Jerome S. Arkenberg, Cal. State Fullerton. The text may have been modernized by Prof. Arkenberg.

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## Ibn Battuta in Mali

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*Born in Algiers, Ibn Battuta (1304–1368) was the premier world traveler of the Middle Ages. Although Marco Polo's adventures are better known in the West, never did Polo travel as far or see as many different countries as this indefatigable Berber did. In 1325, Ibn Battuta made the first of four visits to the Holy City of Mecca, thereby beginning an itinerary of 75,000 miles. Later in life, this devout Muslim would dictate to a Moroccan scribe an account of his journeys.*

*For nearly thirty years, Ibn Battuta traveled continuously throughout Africa, the Middle East, Persia, Russia, India, China, and Spain. He made it a rule, if possible, never to travel the same road twice, and he frequently paid the price of taking the less-traveled road. He often was stranded or overcome by disease. His African editors note: "He seems to have experienced most travellers' diseases from Lahore sore to Delhi belly. Only the fact that the New World had not been discovered saved him from Montezuma's revenge."<sup>1</sup>*

*The following selection illustrates the range of Ibn Battuta's travels and also suggests that, by the fourteenth century, Islamic civilization, spanning four continents, was truly the "world" civilization. In 1344, Ibn Battuta left the Malabar coast of India and sailed south to the Maldiv Islands, where for eighteen months he served as a judge of Islamic sacred law.*

*Later, after journeys to Ceylon, China, and Syria, he returned to Algiers. In 1352, on his last journey, he set off on foot across the Sahara to visit the African kingdoms of the Niger basin. His account of this experience is one of the primary records of the social customs in the Kingdom of Mali, particularly the city of Iwalatan (Walata).*

*In reporting on Black Africa, Ibn Battuta's accounts are basically favorable, but his enthusiasm over the devout acceptance of Islam is offset by reservations about non-Islamic elements in living customs.*

### Questions:

1. Why was Ibn Battuta so troubled by his African hosts' methods of tracing genealogy? Are there political implications of this genealogical system?
2. How would you compare Ibn Battuta's observations of Africa with those of Gomes Eannes de Azurara?

*Source: From Ibn Battuta, Voyages D'Ibn Batoutah, trans. from the Arabic by C. Defrémery and B.R. Sanguinetti (Paris: Imprimerie Impériale, 1858), IV, 387–90, 421–24. Trans. Philip F. Riley.*

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The condition of these people [of Iwalatan] is strange and their manners are bizarre. As for their men, there is no sexual jealousy about them. None of them is named after his father, but each traces his genealogy from his maternal uncle. A man's inheritance is not passed to his own sons but to the sons of his sister. I have never seen such a thing in any other part of the world except among the infidels who live on the Malabar coast of India. These people are Muslims who follow exactly the prescribed laws for prayer, study the laws of Islam, and know the Koran by heart. Their women are not modest in the presence of men; despite reciting their prayers punctually, they do not veil their faces. Any male who wishes to marry one of them can do so very easily, but the women do not travel with their husbands for her family would not allow it. In this country, the women are permitted to have male friends and companions among men who are not members of her family. So too for men; they are permitted to have female companions among women who are not members of his family. It happens quite often that a man would enter his own house and find his wife with one of her own friends and would not rebuke her.

#### **ANECDOTE**

One day I entered the home of a judge in Iwalatan after he had given his permission, and I found him with a very young and beautiful woman. Immediately I thought it best to leave, but she laughed at me and was not at all embarrassed. The judge asked me "Why would you want to leave? She is my friend." I was astonished at the conduct of these two. He was a judge and had made a pilgrimage to Mecca. Later I learned that he has asked permission of the Sultan to go on a pilgrimage to Mecca that year with his female friend. Whether it was this one or another I do not know, but the Sultan refused to let him go.

#### **A SIMILAR ANECDOTE**

One day I entered the home of Abou Mohammed Yandecán, a man of the Mesoûfah tribe. He was sitting on a rug while in the middle of his house was a bed covered with a canopy. On it was his wife in conversation with another man sitting at her side. I said to Abou Mohammed "Who is this woman?"—"She is my wife," he responded—"And who is the man with her?" I asked. "He is her friend," replied the judge. I asked how he, who knew the divine law on such matters, could permit such a thing. He replied that "The companionship of women with men in this country is proper and honorable: It does not inspire suspicion. Our women are not like the women of your country." I was shocked at his stupid answer and immediately left his home and never returned. . . .

#### **GOOD AND BAD QUALITIES**

Among their good qualities we can cite the following:

1. There is a small amount of crime, for these people obey the law. Their sultan does not pardon criminals.
2. Travelers and natives alike are safe from brigands, robbers, and thieves.
3. The natives do not confiscate the property of white men who die in this country, even if they are very wealthy; instead they entrust it to another, respected white man to dispose of it properly.
4. The prayers are offered punctually and with fervor. Children who neglect their prayers are beaten. If you do not come to the mosque early on a Friday you cannot find a place to pray because the crowds are so large. Quite often they send their slaves to the mosque with a

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prayer rug to find and hold a place for their masters. These prayer rugs are made from the leaves of trees similar to palm trees, but one that bears no fruit.

5. White garments are worn on Fridays. If by chance one does not have a proper white garment, regular clothing is washed and cleaned to wear for public prayer.

6. They are committed to learn by heart the sublime Koran. Children who fail to learn the Koran by heart have their feet shackled and these shackles are not removed until they memorize the Koran. On a feast day I visited a judge who had his children in chains. I said to him, "Why don't you release them?" He said, "I will not do so until they know the Koran by heart." Another day I passed a handsome young black man dressed superbly, but shackled by a heavy chain on his feet. I asked my companion, "What has this young man done? Is he a murderer?" The handsome young black man laughed and my companion told me, "He has been chained so that he will learn the Koran by heart."

Among their bad qualities we can cite the following:

1. Their female servants, slave women and small daughters appear before men completely naked, exposing their private parts. Even during the month of Ramadan [a period of fast], military commanders broke their fast in the palace of the Sultan. Twenty or more naked servant girls served them food.
2. Nude women without veils on their faces enter the palace of the Sultan. On the twenty-seventh night of Ramadan, I saw about a hundred naked female slaves coming out of the palace of the Sultan with food. Two of the Sultan's daughters, who have large breasts, were with them and they were naked.
3. These natives put dust and ashes on their head to show their education and as a sign of respect.
4. They laugh when poets recite their verse before the Sultan.
5. Finally, they eat impure meat such as dogs and donkeys.

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## Kingdom of Ghana

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*The following description of the Kingdom of Ghana was written by Al-Bakri, a member of a prominent Spanish Arab family who lived during the 11<sup>th</sup> century.*

*Questions:*

*What can you tell about religion in Ghana?*

*What was the basis of Ghana's wealth?*

*Is there any example of ethnocentrism in this account?*

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The city of Ghana consists of two towns situated on a plain. One of these towns, which is inhabited by Muslims, is large and possesses twelve mosques, in which they assemble for the Friday prayer. There are salaried imams and muezzins, as well as jurists and scholars. In the environs are wells with sweet water, from which they drink and with which they grow

vegetables. The king's town is six miles distant from this one....

Between these two towns are continuous habitations. ...In the king's town, and not far from his court of justice, is a mosque where the Muslims who arrive at his court pray. Around the king's town are domed buildings and groves and thickets where the sorcerers of these