The Decision to Leave Home

I set out alone, having neither fellow-traveler in whose companionship I might find cheer, nor caravan whose party I might join, but swayed by an overmastering impulse within me, and a desire long-cherished in my bosom to visit these illustrious sanctuaries [of Mecca and Medina]. So I braced my resolution to quit all my dear ones...and forsook my home as birds forsake their nests. My parents being yet in the bonds of life, it weighed sorely upon me to part from them, and both they and I were afflicted-with sorrow at this separation.

Why was Ibn Battuta willing to leave his family?

In the Holy City of Mecca

We saw before our eyes the illustrious Kaaba, like a bride displayed on the bridal chair of majesty and the proud mantles of beauty.... We made the seven-fold circulation of arrival and kissed the Holy [Black] Stone. We performed the prayer of two bowings at the Station of Abraham and clung to the curtains of the Kaaba between the door and the Black Stone, where prayer is answered. We drank of the water of the well of Zamzam which, if you drink it seeking restoration from illness, God restores you; if you drink it for satiation from hunger, God satisfies you; if you drink it to quench your thirst, God quenches it.... Praise be to God Who has honored us by visitation to this Holy House.

How were merchants treated on arrival in Mogadishu? Why do you think they did this?

The East African Trading Town of Mogadishu

On leaving Zayla we sailed for fifteen days and came to Maqdashaw (Mogadishu), which is an enormous town. It’s inhabitants are merchants… When a vessel reaches port, it is met by sumbuqs, which are small boats, in each of which are a number of young men, each carrying a covered dish containing food. He presents this to one of the merchants on the ship saying, “this is my guest,” and all others do the same. Each merchant on disembarking goes only to the house of the young man who is his host… The host then sells his goods for him and buys for him, and if anyone buys anything from him at too low a price, or sells to him in the absence of his host, the sale is regarded by them as invalid.

What is Ibn Battuta describing? How can you tell?

Directions: Read each document and answer each related question
The Massufa of Walata in West Africa

The conditions of these people is strange and their manners outlandish… None of them derives his geneology from his father but, on the contrary, from his maternal uncle. A man does not pass on inheritance except to the sons of his sister to the exclusion 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… among the Indians.

What kind of descent system is being described?

Court Ceremony of Mansa Sulayman

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

Why did they act this way in front of the king?

A Gift from the King of Mali

Ibn al-Faqih came hurrying out of his house barefooted, and entered my room saying, "Stand up; here comes the sultan's stuff and gift to you." So I stood up thinking--since he had called it "stuff"--that it consisted of robes of honour and money, and lo!, it was three cakes of bread, and a piece of beef fried in native oil, and a calabash of sour curds. When I saw this I burst out laughing, and thought it a most amazing thing that they could be so foolish and make so much of such a paltry matter.

Why did Ibn Battuta laugh at the king’s gift?

Do you agree with Ibn Battuta’s reaction?

Judgment of the Malians

The negroes possess some admirable qualities. They are seldom unjust, and have a greater abhorrence of injustice than any other people… On Fridays, if a man does not go early to the mosque, he cannot find a corner to pray in, on account of the crowd… Neither traveller nor inhabitant in it has anything to fear from robbers or men of violence… Among their bad qualities are the following. The women servants, slave-girls, and young girls go about in front of everyone naked, without a stitch of clothing on them. Women go into the sultan's presence naked and without coverings, and his daughters also go about naked.

Do you find this passage surprising? Why (not)?