Ibn Battuta’s Travels Begin:

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

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

Ibn Battuta travels overland from Algiers to Tunis:

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

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

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

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

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

**Ibn Battuta and his party arrive at Tunis**

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

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

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

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

**Arrival at Alexandria**

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

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

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

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

A dream of travels to come

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

Ibn Battuta leaves for Cairo via Damietta

We rode from here to Damietta through a number of towns, in each of which we visited the principal men of religion. Damietta lies on the bank of the Nile, and the people in the houses next to the river draw water from it in buckets. Many of the houses have steps leading down to the river. Their sheep and goats are allowed to pasture at liberty day and night; for this reason the saying goes of Damietta "Its walls are sweetmeats and its dogs are sheep." Anyone who enters the city may not afterwards leave it except by the governor's seal. Persons of repute have a seal stamped on a piece of paper so that they may show it to the gatekeepers; other persons have the seal stamped on their forearms. In this city there are many seabirds with extremely greasy flesh, and the milk of its buffaloes is unequalled for sweetness and pleasant taste. The fish called buri is exported thence to Syria, Anatolia, and Cairo. The present town is of recent construction; the old city was
that destroyed by the Franks in the time of al Malik as as-Salih.

From here I went to Samannud, whence I journeyed upstream to Cairo, between a continuous succession of towns and villages. The traveller on the Nile need take no provision with him because whenever he desires to descend on the bank he may do so, for ablutions, prayers, provisioning, or any other purpose. There is an uninterrupted chain of bazaars from Alexandria to Cairo, and from Cairo to Assuan [Aswan] in Upper Egypt.

**Arrival in Cairo**

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

**A pleasure garden**

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

**The great river Nile**

The Egyptian Nile surpasses all rivers of the earth in sweetness of taste, length of course, and utility. No other river in the world can show such a continuous series of towns and villages along its banks, or a basin so intensely cultivated. Its course is from South to North, contrary to all the other great rivers. One extraordinary thing about it is that it begins to rise in the extreme hot weather at the time when rivers generally diminish and dry up, and begins to subside just when rivers begin to increase and overflow. The river Indus resembles it in this feature. . . . Some distance below Cairo the Nile divides into three streams, none of which can be crossed except by boat, winter or summer. The inhabitants of every township have canals led off the Nile; these are filled when the river is in flood and carry the water over the fields.

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

Camels, Hyenas, and Bejas

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

Back downriver to Cairo; from Cairo to Syria and Jerusalem

We sailed thence down the Nile (it was at the flood time) and after an eight days' journey reached Cairo, where I stayed only one night, and immediately set out for Syria. This was in the middle of July, 1326. My route lay through Bilbays and as-Salihiya, after which we entered the sands and halted at a number of stations. At each of these there was a hostelry which they call a khan, where travellers alight with their beasts. Each khan has a water wheel supplying a fountain and a shop at which the traveller buys what he requires for himself and his beast.

Crossing the border into Syria

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

**On the road to Jerusalem: Hebron and Bethlehem**

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

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

**Jerusalem and its holy sites**

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

The Christian holy places

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

Ibn Battuta arrives at Damascus

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

The Plague of 1348

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

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

The good and pious works of the Damascenes

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

Ibn Battuta leaves Damascus with the annual pilgrim caravan

When the new moon of the month Shawwal appeared in the same year [1st September 1326], the Hijaz caravan left Damascus and I set off along with it. At Bosra the caravans usually halt for four days so that any who have been detained at Damascus by business affairs may make up on them.

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

Ibn Battuta visits the holy sites of Medina

That same evening [the third day after leaving al-Ula, on the route from Syria and Damascus] we entered the holy sanctuary and reached the illustrious mosque, halting in
salutation at the Gate of Peace; then we prayed in the illustrious "garden" between the tomb of the Prophet and the noble pulpit, and reverently touched the fragment that remains of the palm-trunk against which the Prophet stood when he preached. Having paid our meed of salutation to the lord of men from first to last, the intercessor for sinners, the Prophet of Mecca, Muhammad, as well as to his two companions who share his grave, Abu Bakr and 'Omar, we returned to our camp, rejoicing at this great favour bestowed upon us, praising God for our having reached the former abodes and the magnificent sanctuaries of His holy Prophet, and praying Him to grant that this visit should not be our last and that we might be of those whose pilgrimage is accepted.

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

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

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

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

**The cleanliness of the people of Mecca**

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

The customs of the Ahmadi dervishes at Umm 'Ubayda

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

The kindness and ignorance of the inhabitants of Basra

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

Ibn Battuta describes the city of Baghdad

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

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

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

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

**After visiting Persia, Ibn Battuta sails along the east coast of Africa**

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

**The town of Mogadishu in Somalia**

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

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

Kulwa on the African mainland

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

Ibn Battuta returns to Yemen

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

Banana, betel, and coconut trees

In the neighbourhood of the town there are orchards with many banana trees. The bananas are of immense size; one which was weighed in my presence scaled twelve ounces and was pleasant to the taste and very sweet. They grow also betel-trees and coco-palms, which are found only in India and the town of Dhafari. Since we have mentioned these trees, we shall describe them and their properties here.

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

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

The many uses of the coconut

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

Later in his travels, the sultan of Birgi shows Ibn Battuta an asteroid

As we were sitting there, he said to me "Have you ever seen a stone that has fallen from the sky?" I replied "No, nor ever heard of one." "Well," he said, "a stone fell from the sky outside this town," and thereupon called for it to be brought. A great black stone was brought, very hard and with a glitter in it, I reckon its weight was about a hundredweight. The sultan sent for stone breakers, and four of them came and struck it all together four times over with iron hammers, but made no impression on it. I was amazed, and he ordered it to be taken back to its place.
We stayed altogether fourteen days with this sultan. Every night he sent us food, fruit, sweetmeats and candles, and gave me in addition a hundred pieces of gold, a thousand dirhems, a complete set of garments and a Greek slave called Michael, as well as sending a robe and a gift of money to each of my companions. All this we owed to the professor Muhyi ad-Din—may God reward him with good!

**Ibn Battuta buys a slave girl**

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

**Turkish women**

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

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

**Ibn Battuta leaves the steppe kingdom of Uzbeg Khan with the retinue of Uzbeg's wife the khatun Bayalan, a Byzantine princess**

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

The procession reaches Constantinople

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

Our entry into Constantinople the Great was made about noon or a little later, and they rang their bells until the very skies shook with the mingling of their sounds. When we reached the fist gate of the king's palace we found there about a hundred men, with an officer on a platform, and I heard them saying "Sarakinu, Sarakinu," ["Saracen, Saracen"] which means Muslims. They would not let us enter, and when those who were with the khatun said that we belonged to their party, they answered "They cannot enter except by permission," so we stayed at the gate. One of the khatun's party sent a messenger to tell her of this while she was still with her father. She told him about us and he gave orders that we should enter, and assigned us a house near the khatun's house. He wrote also on our behalf an order that we should not be abused wheresoever we went in the city, and this order was proclaimed in the bazaars.

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

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

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

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

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

**Ibn Battuta describes Constantinople**

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

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

**Hagia Sophia**

Of the great church I can only describe the exterior, for I did not see its interior. It is called by them Aya Sufiya [Hagia Sophia], and the story goes that it was built by Asaph, the son of Berechiah, who was Solomon's cousin. It is one of the greatest churches of the Greeks, and is encircled by a wall so that it looks as if it were a town. It has thirteen gates and a sacred enclosure, which is about a mile long and closed by a great gate. No one is prevented from entering this enclosure, and indeed I went into it with the king's father; it resembles an audience-hall paved with marble, and is traversed by a stream which issues from the church. Outside the gate of this hall are platforms and shops, mostly of wood, where their judges and the recorders of their bureaux sit. At the gate of the church there are porticoes where the keepers sit who sweep its paths, light its lamps and close its gates. They allow none to enter it until he prostrates himself to the huge cross there, which they
claim to be a relic of the wood upon which the pseudo-Jesus was crucified. This is over the gate of the church, set in a golden case whose height is about ten cubits, across which a similar golden case is placed to form a cross. This gate is covered with plaques of silver and gold and its two rings are of pure gold.

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

**On Christian communities of religious**

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

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

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

**The former emperor now a monk**

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

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

After leaving the king I entered the bazaar of the scribes, where I was noticed by the judge, who sent one of his assistants to ask the Greek about me. On learning that I was a Muslim scholar he sent for me and I went up to him. He was an old man with a fine face and hair, wearing the black garments of a monk, and had about ten scribes in front of him writing. He rose to meet me, his companions rising also, and [he] said, "You are the king's guest and we are bound to honour you." He then asked me about Jerusalem, Syria, and Egypt, and spoke with me for a long time. A great crowd gathered round him, and he said, "You must come to my house that I may entertain you." After that I went away, but I did not see him again.