

## Lesson 1

### *Student Handout 1.1—Excerpt from Ibn Fadlan: Observations on the Vikings and Russians (Tenth Century)*

#### Background

In the year 921 CE, Ibn Fadlan set out with a party on a journey from Baghdad to the north as ambassadors of the Abbasid Caliph (Khalifa) al-Muqtadir (908-932 CE) to the King of the Slavs, in the cold, forested land of long rivers that is now northern Russia. The Caliph had received a letter from that king, asking him to send someone who could teach them about Islam, along with funds to help build a *masjid* (mosque). The head of the expedition was Nadir al-Harami, a scholar. Ibn Fadlan was to be the secretary. What brought these groups, who lived about 1,500 miles apart, in contact was the network of trade routes that ran from the northern forests and arctic seacoasts down the great Dneiper and Volga rivers to the Black and Caspian Seas. Along these routes, Viking ships carried amber, furs, honey, and handicrafts, trading these goods for textiles, pottery, spices, metal, and glassware from Muslim and Byzantine lands. Owing to this trade, many Arabic coins have been found in archaeological sites in Scandinavia. Vikings traded and settled in these lands. They and their descendants intermarried with Slavic- and Turkic-speaking communities, producing the population that became known as the Rus (from which we get the word Russia). The knowledge that Ibn Fadlan gathered during his journey sheds light on those lands. Aside from his text, most of what we know about Rus society in the tenth century comes from graves or other archaeological finds.

I saw the Rus as they arrived with their wares and camped on the banks of the River Itil [the Volga]. I had never seen people of such tall stature—they are as tall as palm trees, blond, and ruddy of complexion. They do not wear shirts or caftans[robes]. Their custom is to wear a length of coarse cloth that they wrap around their sides and throw over the shoulder so that one arm remains bare. Each of them carries with him an ax, a dagger and a sword. They are never seen without these weapons. Their swords are broad with wavy stripes on the blade, and of Frankish [European] manufacture. On one side, from the point to the handle, it is covered with figures and trees and other decorations. The women fasten to their bodice a locket of iron, copper, silver or gold, according to the wealth and position of her husband. On the locket is a ring, and on that is a knife, also fastened to the front of their bodice. They wear silver and gold chains around their necks. If the man possesses ten thousand dirhams [silver coins], he has a chain made for his wife; and if he has twenty thousand, she gets two necklaces; and so she receives one more each time he becomes ten thousand richer. In this way the Rus woman acquires a great number of necklaces. Their most valued jewelry consists of green glass beads like the kind found on the ships. They exaggerate in this, paying a dirham for one such bead and stringing them into necklaces for their women. . . .

They come out of their country, anchor their ships in the Itil, which is a great river, and build great wooden houses on its banks. Ten or twenty, more or less, live in such a house together. Each of them has a bed or bench on which he and his women sit, as well as the beauties determined for sale. . . .

As soon as their ships arrive at anchorage, each of them goes on land with his bread, meat, onions, milk and intoxicating drink with him, and betakes himself to a high, upright wooden post

carved with the face of a human and surrounded by small statues, behind which other posts are standing. He goes up to the highest of the wooden figures, throws himself prostrate on the ground in front of it and speaks: 'O my Lord! I am come from a faraway land, and bring with me so-and-so many maids, and of sable furs so-and-so many skins'; and when he has named in this way all of the trade goods he brought with him, he continues: 'I have brought you this offering'; and lays down at the feet of the wooden statue what he has brought and says: 'I wish that you bless me with a buyer who has plenty of gold and silver pieces, who buys all that I desire him to buy, and meets all of my demands.' Having said this, he then goes away. If his trade goes poorly and his stay drags on too long, then he returns bringing a second, and sometimes a third offering [to the statue]. If he still experiences difficulty in fulfilling his wishes [or getting what he wants], then he brings each of the small statues an offering, and asks for intercession, saying: 'These are the sons and daughters of our Lord.' And so he continues, going up to each individual statue, pleading for intercession, bowing himself humbly before it. After that, perhaps his trade goes well and easily, and he sells all of the wares he has brought. . . .

Excerpted from *Mujam al Buldan, or Compendium of Countries* (10<sup>th</sup> century CE), in *Beyond A Thousand and One Nights: A Sampler of Literature from Muslim Civilization* (Fountain Valley, CA: Council on Islamic Education), 147-148. Reprinted by permission.

## Lesson 1

### *Handout 1.2—The Travels of Ibn Jubayr (twelfth century)*

#### Background

Ibn Jubayr was a scholar and resident of al-Andalus, or Muslim Spain, during the twelfth century CE. His journey was the result of an unfortunate incident at the court of the ruler. It seems that to make a joke, the ruler forced the pious Ibn Jubayr to taste an alcoholic beverage. Ibn Jubayr was so disturbed by this that the ruler regretted his actions. To make up for the outrage, he gave Ibn Jubayr a quantity of gold. The scholar in turn determined to atone for his sin of weakness by using the money to make the *hajj*, or pilgrimage to Mecca (Makkah). He did that and also made a tour of several other places around the Mediterranean. His travel account is especially interesting because he was an excellent observer of his times.

#### Baghdad

We now return to our description of Baghdad... As we have said, this city has two parts, an eastern and a western, and the Tigris passes between them. Its western part is wholly overcome by ruin. It was the first part to be populated, and the eastern part was but recently inhabited. Nevertheless, despite the ruins, it contains seventeen quarters, each quarter being a separate town. Each has two or three baths, and in eight of them is a congregational mosque where the Friday prayers are said. The largest of these quarters is al-Qurayah, where we lodged in a part called al-Murabba (the Square) on the banks of the Tigris and near to the bridge. This bridge had been carried away by the river in its flood, and the people had turned to crossing by boats. These boats were beyond count; the people, men and women, who night and day continuously cross in recreation are likewise numberless. Ordinarily, and because of the many people, the river had two bridges, one near the palaces of the Caliph, and the other above it. The crossings in the boats are now ceaseless.

Then (comes the quarter of) al-Karkh, a noted city, then that of Bab al-Basrah (the Basra Gate), which also is a suburb and has in it the mosque of al-Mansur—may God hold him in His favor. It is a large mosque, anciently built, and embellished. Next is (the quarter) al-Shari, also a city. These are the four largest quarters. Between the al-Shari and Bab al-Basrah quarters is the Suq al-Maristan (the Market of the Hospital), which itself is a small city and contains the famous Baghdad Hospital. It is on the Tigris, and every Monday and Thursday physicians visit it to examine the state of the sick, and to prescribe for them what they might need. At their disposal are persons who undertake the preparation of the foods and medicines. The hospital is a large palace, with chambers and closets and all the appurtenances of a royal dwelling. Water comes into it from the Tigris. It would take long to name the other quarters, like al-Wasitah, which lies between the Tigris and a canal which branches off the Euphrates and flows into the Tigris and on which is brought all the produce of the parts watered by the Euphrates. Another canal passes by Bab al-Basrah, whose quarter we have already mentioned, and flows as well into the Tigris... Another quarter is that called al-Attabyiah, where are made the clothes from which it takes its name, they being of silk and cotton in various colors. Then comes al-Harbiyyah, which is the highest (on the river bank) and beyond which is nothing but the villages outside Baghdad. Other quarters there are that it would take too long to mention. . . .

The eastern part of the city has magnificent markets, is arranged on a grand scale and enfold a population that none could count save God Most High, who computes all things. It has three congregational mosques, in all of which the Friday prayers are said. The Caliph's mosque, which adjoins the palace, is vast and has large water containers and many and excellent conveniences—conveniences, that is, for the ritual ablutions and cleansing. The Mosque of the Sultan is outside the city, and adjoins the palaces also named after the Sultan known as the Shah-in Shah. He had been the controller of the affairs of the ancestors of this Caliph and had lived there, and the mosque had been built in front of his residence. The (third) mosque, that of al-Rusafah, is in the eastern part, and between it and the mosque of the Sultan lies about a mile. In al-Rusafah is the sepulchre of the Abbasid Caliphs—may God's mercy rest upon their souls. The full number of congregational mosques in Baghdad, where Friday prayers are said, is eleven. . . .

The baths in the city cannot be counted, but one of the town's shaykhs told us that, in the eastern and western parts together, there are about two thousand. Most of them are faced with bitumen, so that the beholder might conceive them to be of black, polished marble; and almost all the baths of these parts are of this type because of the large amount of bitumen they have. ... The (ordinary) mosques in both the eastern and the western parts cannot be estimated, much less counted. The colleges are about thirty, and all in the eastern part; and there is not one of them that does not out-do the finest palace. The greatest and most famous of them is the Nizamiyah, which was built by Nizam al-Mulk and restored in 504 [hijri, or Islamic dating system]. These colleges have large endowments and tied properties that give sustenance to the faqihs (legal scholars) who teach in them, and are dispensed on the scholars. A great honor and an everlasting glory to the land are these colleges and hospitals. God's mercy on him who first erected them, and on those who followed in that pious path.

### **Aleppo**

As for the town, it is massively built and wonderfully disposed, and of rare beauty, with large markets arranged in long adjacent rows so that you pass from a row of shops of one craft into that of another until you have gone through all the urban industries. These markets are all roofed with wood, so that their occupants enjoy an ample shade, and all hold the gaze from their beauty, and halt in wonder those who are hurrying by. Its qaysariyah (market for luxury goods) is as a walled-in garden in its freshness and beauty, flanked, as it is, by the venerated mosque. He who sits in it yearns for no other sight even were it paradisaical. Most of the shops are in wooden warehouses of excellent workmanship, a row being formed of one warehouse divided by wooden railings richly carved that all open on (separate) shops. The result is most beautiful. Each row is connected with one of the gates of the venerated mosque. This is one of the finest and most beautiful of mosques. Its great court is surrounded by large and spacious porticos that are full of doors, beautiful as those of a palace, that open on to the court. Their number is more than fifty, and they hold the gaze from their fine aspect. In the court there are two wells fed by springs. The south portico has no maqsurah (private space for the ruler), so that its amplitude is manifest and most pleasing to look upon. The art of ornamental carving had exhausted itself in its endeavors on the pulpit, for never in any city have I seen a pulpit like it or of such wondrous workmanship. The woodwork stretches from it to the mihrab (prayer niche), beautifully adorning all its sides in the same marvelous fashion. It rises up, like a great crown, over the mihrab, and then climbs until it reaches the heights of the roof. The upper part of the mosque is in the form of an arch furnished with wooden merlons, superbly carved and all inlaid with ivory and ebony. This

marquetry extends from the pulpit to the mihrab and to that part of the south wall which they adjoin without any interval appearing, and the eyes consider the most beautiful sight in the world. The splendor of this venerated mosque is greater than can be described. At its west side stands a Hanafite college which resembles the mosque in beauty and perfection of work. Indeed in beauty they are like one mausoleum beside another. This school is one of the most ornamental we have seen, both in construction and in its rare workmanship. One of the most graceful things we saw was the south side, filled with chambers and upper rooms, whose windows touched each other, and having, along its length, a pergola covered with grape-bearing vines. Each window had bunches of grapes that hung before it, and each occupant could, by leaning forward, stretch forth his arm and pluck the fruit without pain or trouble.

Besides this college the city has four or five others, and a hospital. Its state of splendor is superb, and it is a city fit to be the seat of the Caliph. But its magnificence is all within, and it has nothing on the outside save a small river that flows from north to south and passes through the suburb that surrounds the city; for it has a large suburb containing numerable khans. On this river there are mills contiguous with the town, and in the middle of the suburb are gardens that stretch along its length. But whatever may be its state, inside or out, Aleppo is one of the cities of the world that have no like, and that would take long to describe. We lodged in its suburb, in a khan [hotel] called the “Khan of Abu al-Shukr”, where we stayed four days.”

Excerpted from *Beyond A Thousand and One Nights: A Sampler of Literature from Muslim Civilization* (Fountain Valley, CA: Council on Islamic Education), 160-163. Reprinted by permission.

## Lesson 1

### *Student Handout 1.3—From Marco Polo, The Travels (13<sup>th</sup> Century)*

#### Background

Marco Polo was born in 1254 to a Venetian merchant family. In 1271, he joined his father for a journey to China, which his father had already visited once. The two spent the next twenty years on travels in the service of Kublai Khan, the Mongol ruler of China. They returned to Italy in 1292. Imprisoned in 1298, Marco met a romance writer named Rusticello, who helped Marco write an account of his travels to China.

On the banks of a great river in the province of Cathay there stood an ancient city of great size and splendor which was named Khan-balik, that is to say in our language “the Lord’s City” [Beijing]. Now the Great Khan . . . had a new city built next to the old one, with only the river in between. And he removed the inhabitants of the old city and settled them in the new one. . . . Taidu is built in the form of a square with all its sides of equal length and a total circumference of twenty-four miles. . . . The city is full of fine mansions, inns and dwelling-houses. All the way down the sides of every main street there are booths and shops of every sort. . . . In this city there is such a multitude of houses and of people, both within and without, that no one could count their number. Actually, there are more people outside the walls in the suburbs than in the city itself. There is a suburb outside every gate, such that one touches the neighboring suburbs on either side. They extend in length for three or four miles. And in every suburb or ward, at about a mile’s distance from the city, there are many fine hostels which provide lodging for merchants coming from different parts; a particular hostel is assigned to every nation. . . . Merchants and others come here on business in great numbers, both because it is the Khan’s residence and because it affords a profitable market. And the suburbs have as fine houses and mansions as the city, except of course for the Khan’s palace. . . .

You may take it for a fact that more precious and costly wares are imported into Khan-balik than into any other city in the world. Let me give you particulars. All the treasures that come from India – precious stones, pearls, and other rarities – are brought here. So too are the choicest products of Cathay itself and every other province. This is on account of the Great Khan himself, who lives here, and of the lords and ladies and the enormous multitude of hotel-keepers and other residents and of visitors who attend the courts held here by the Khan. That is why the volume and value of the imports and of the internal trade exceed those of any other city in the world. It is a fact that every day more than 1,000 cart-loads of silk is woven here. So it is not surprising that it is the center of such traffic as I have described. . . .

It is in this city of Khan-balik that the Great Khan has his mint; and it is so organized that you might well say he has mastered the art of alchemy. I will demonstrate this to you here and now. You must know that he has money made for him by the following process, out of the bark of trees—to be precise, from mulberry trees (the same whose leaves furnish food for silk-worms). The fine bast between the bark and the wood of the tree is stripped off. Then it is crumbled and pounded and flattened out with the aid of glue into sheets of cotton paper, which are all black. When they are made, they are cut up into rectangles of various sizes, longer than they are broad. The smallest is worth half a small tornesel (a small coin); the next an entire such tornesel; the next half a silver groat; the next an entire silver groat, equal in value to a silver groat of Venice;

and there are others equivalent to two, five, and ten groats and one, three, and as many as ten gold bezants. And all these papers are sealed with the seal of the Great Khan. The procedure of issue is as formal and authoritative as if they were made of pure gold or silver. On each piece of money several specially appointed officials write their names, each setting his own stamp. When it is completed in due form, the chief of the officials deputed by the Khan dips in cinnabar the seal or bull assigned to him and stamps it on the top of the piece of money so that the shape of the seal in vermillion remains impressed upon it. And then the money is authentic. And if anyone were to forge it, he would suffer the extreme penalty.

Of this money the Khan has such quantity made that with it he could buy all the treasure in the world. With this currency he orders all payments to be made throughout every province and kingdom and region of his empire. And no one dares refuse it on pain of losing his life. And I assure you that all the peoples and populations who are subject to his rule are perfectly willing to accept these papers in payment, since wherever they go they pay in the same currency, whether for goods of for pearls or precious stones or gold or silver. With these pieces of paper they can buy anything and pay for anything. And I can tell you that the papers that reckon as ten bezants do not weigh one.

Several times a year parties of traders arrive with pearls and precious stones and gold and silver and other valuables, such as cloth of gold and silk, and surrender them all to the Great Khan.

The Khan then summons twelve experts, who are chosen for the task and have special knowledge of it, and bids them examine the wares that the traders have brought and pay for them what they judge to be their true value. The twelve experts duly examine the wares and pay the value in paper currency of which I have spoken. The traders accept it willingly because they can spend it afterwards on the various goods they buy throughout the Great Khan's dominions. And I give you my word that the wares brought in at different times during the year mount up to a value of fully 400,000 bezants, and they are all paid for in this paper currency.

Let me tell you further that several times a year a fiat goes forth through the towns that all those who have gems and pearls and gold and silver must bring them to the Great Khan's mint. This they do, and in such abundance that it is past all reckoning; and they are all paid in paper money...

Here is another fact well worth relating. When these papers have been so long in circulation that they are growing torn and frayed, they are brought to the mint and changed for new and fresh ones at a discount of 3 per cent. And here again...if a man wants to buy gold or silver to make his service of plate or his belts or other finery, he goes to the Khan's mint with some of these papers and gives them in payment for the gold and silver which he buys from the mint-master. And all the Khan's armies are paid with this sort of money.

I have now told you how it comes about that the Great Khan must have, as indeed he has, more treasure than anyone else in the world...

Quoted from Ronald Latham, translator, *The Travels of Marco Polo* (New York: Penguin Books, 1988), 128-129, 130; 147-148, 149.

## Lesson 1

### *Student Handout 1.4—Excerpt from Chen Pu, A Record of Musings on the Eastern Capital of the Song Empire [Hangzhou] (thirteenth century)*

#### **Background**

In the early twelfth century, people of the steppe overran northern China. They established a dynasty called the Jin (1115-1234), which built its capital city at Beijing. In response, the Song royal court moved south to the port city of Hangzhou near the Yangzi River. The Song ruled over what was left of their empire until the Mongols captured the city in 1276 and established another dynasty.

By the twelfth century, Hangzhou was more than just a center of government. By the thirteenth century, it had a population of more than one million people living in a city about eight square miles in size, one of the biggest and wealthiest cities in the world. The following excerpt is from the description of an anonymous traveler, who wrote it in 1235 to describe the city and its activities.

#### **Markets**

“During the morning hours, markets extend from Tranquility Gate of the palace all the way to the north and south sides of the New Boulevard. Here we find pearl, jade, talismans, exotic plants and fruits, seasonal catches from the sea, wild game - all the rarities of the world seem to be gathered here. The food and commodity markets at the Heavenly-View Gate, River Market Place, Central Square, Ba Creek, the end of Superior Lane, Tent Place, and Universal Peace Bridge are all crowded and full of traffic.

In the evening, with the exception of the square in front of the palace, the markets are as busy as during the day. The most attractive one is at Central Square, where all sorts of exquisite artifacts, instruments, containers, and hundreds of varieties of goods are for sale. In other marketplaces, sales, auctions, and exchanges go on constantly. In the wine shops and inns business also thrives. Only after the fourth drum<sup>1</sup> does the city gradually quiet down, but by the fifth drum, court officials already start preparing for audiences and merchants are getting ready for the morning market again. This cycle goes on all year round without respite...

On the lot in front of the wall of the city building, there are always various acting troupes performing, and this usually attracts a large crowd. The same kind of activity is seen in almost any vacant lot, including those at the meat market of the Great Common, the herb market at Charcoal Bridge, the book market at Orange Grove, the vegetable market on the east side of the city, and the rice market on the north side. There are many more interesting markets, such as the candy center at the Five Buildings, but I cannot name them all.

#### **Commercial Establishments**

In general, the capital attracts the greatest variety of goods and has the best craftsmen. For instance, the flower company at Superior Lane does a truly excellent job of flower arrangement, and its caps, hairpins, and collars are unsurpassed in craftsmanship. Some of the most famous specialties of the capital are the sweet-bean soup at the Miscellaneous Market, the pickled dates of the Ge family, the thick soup of the Guang family at Superior Lane, the fruit at the Great

Commons marketplace, the cooked meats in front of Eternal Mercy Temple, Sister Song's fish broth at Penny Pond Gate, the juicy lungs at Flowing Gold Gate, the "lamb rice" of the Zhi family at Central Square, the boots of the Peng family, the fine clothing of the Xuan family at Southern Commons, the sticky rice pastry of the Zhang family the flutes made by Gu the Fourth, and the Qiu family's Tatar whistles at the Great Commons.

### **Wine Shops**

Among the various kinds of wine shops, the tea-and-food shops sell not only wine, but also various foods to go with it. However, to get seasonal delicacies not available in these shops, one should go to the inns, for they also have a menu from which one can make selections. The pastry-and-wine shops sell pastries with duckling and goose fillings, various fixings of pig tripe, intestines and blood, fish fat and spawn; but they are rather expensive. The mansion-style inns are either decorated in the same way as officials' mansions or are actually remodeled from such mansions. The garden-style inns are often located in the suburbs, though some are also situated in town. Their decoration is usually an imitation of a studio-garden combination. ...

The expenses incurred on visiting an inn can vary widely. If you order food, but no drinks, it is called "having the lowly soup-and-stuff" and is quite inexpensive. If your order of wine and food falls within the range of 100-5,000 cash, it is called a small order. However, if you ask for female company, then it is most likely that the girls will order the most expensive delicacies. You are well advised to appear shrewd and experienced, so as not to be robbed. One trick, for instance, in ordering wines is to give a large order, of say, ten bottles, but open them one by one. In the end, you will probably have used only five or six bottles of the best. You can then return the rest....

### **Teahouses**

In large teahouses there are usually paintings and calligraphies by famous artists on display. In the old capital, only restaurants had them, to enable their patrons to while away the time as the food was being prepared, but now it is customary for teahouses as well to display paintings and the like....

Often many young men gather in teahouses to practice singing or playing musical instruments. To give such amateur performances is called "getting posted."

A "social teahouse" is more of a community gathering place than a mere place that sells tea. Often tea-drinking is but an excuse, and people are rather generous when it comes to the tips...

### **Specialty Stores**

The commercial area of the capital extends from the old Qing River Market to the Southern Commons on the south and to the border on the north. It includes the Central Square, which is also called the Center of Five Flowers. From the north side of the Five Buildings to South Imperial Boulevard, there are more than one hundred gold, silver, and money exchanges. On the short walls in front of these stores, there are piles of gold, silver, and copper cash: these are called "the money that watches over the store."

Around these exchanges there are also numerous gold and silversmiths. The pearl marts are situated between the north side of Cordial Marketplace and Southtown Marketplace. Most deals

made here involve over 10,000 cash. A score of pawnshops are scattered in between, all owned by very wealthy people and dealing only in the most valuable objects.

Some famous fabric stores sell exquisite brocade and fine silk which are unsurpassed elsewhere in the country. Along the river, close to the Peaceful Ford Bridge, there are numerous fabric stores, fan shops, and lacquerware and porcelain shops. Most other cities can only boast of one special product; what makes the capital unique is that it gathers goods from all places.

Furthermore, because of the large population and busy commercial traffic, there is a demand for everything. There are even shops that deal exclusively in used paper or in feathers, for instance.

### **Warehouses**

Today, having been the "temporary capital" for more than a hundred years, the city has over a million households. The suburbs extend to the south, west, and north; all are densely populated and prosperous in commerce as well as in agriculture. The size of the suburbs is comparable to a small county or prefecture, and it takes several days to travel through them. This again reflects the prosperity of the capital.

In the middle of the city, enclosed by the Northern Pass Dam, is White Ocean Lake. Its water spreads over several tens of *li*.<sup>5</sup> Wealthy families have built scores of warehouse complexes along this waterfront. Each of these consists of several hundred to over a thousand rooms for the storage needs of the various businesses in the capital and of traveling merchants. Because these warehouses are surrounded by water, they are not endangered by fires or thieves, and therefore they offer a special convenience.”

From E-Source 18: CHEN PU

<http://www.bakeru.edu/faculty/jrichards/World%20Civ%20II/E-Sources/E19Hangzhou.htm>

## Lesson 1

### *Student Handout 1.5—From Ibn Battuta, The Rihlah (travels in East Africa, fourteenth century CE)*

#### Background

Ibn Battuta was born in 1304 CE in Tangier, Morocco, to a family of legal scholars. He entered that profession as well, but in 1325, he decided to make the hajj (Islamic pilgrimage) to Mecca (Makkah). This began a remarkable journey that lasted nearly 30 years and covered thousands of miles. His journeys, extending as far north as the Volga River, as far South as the coast of East Africa, and as far east as China, demonstrated the amazing diversity and cosmopolitan unity of the Dar al-Islam (House of Islam) during the fourteenth century. The *Rihlah*, the travel account that was prepared with the help of Ibn Juzayy in 1356, is an excellent historical and geographic source on the period.

We sailed . . . for fifteen nights [from the horn of Africa] and came to Maqdashaw [Mogadishu], which is a town of enormous size. Its inhabitants are merchants, possessed of vast resources; they own large numbers of camel, of which they slaughter hundreds every day [for food], and also have quantities of sheep. In this place are manufactured the woven fabrics called after it, which are unequalled and exported from it to Egypt and elsewhere. It is the custom of the people of this town that, when a vessel reaches the anchorage, the sumbuqs, which are small boats, come out to it. In each sumbuq there are a number of young men of the town, each one of whom brings a covered platter containing food and presents it to one of the merchants on the ship saying ‘This is my guest,’ and each of the others does the same. The merchant, on disembarking, goes only to the house of his host among the young men, except those of them who have made frequent journeys to the town and have gained some acquaintance with its inhabitants; these lodge where they please. When he takes up residence with his host, the latter sells his goods for 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, that sale is held invalid by them. This practice is profitable one for them.

#### Account of the Sultan of Maqdashaw

The sultan of Maqdashaw is, as we have mentioned, called only by the title of ‘the Shaykh’. His name is Abu Bakr, son of the shaykh Umar; he is by origin of the Barbara (Berbers) and he speaks in Maqdishu, but knows the Arabic language. One of his customs is that, when a vessel arrives, the sultan’s sumbuq (patrol ship) goes out to it, and enquires are made as to the ship, whence it has come, who is its owner and its rubban (that is, its captain), what is its cargo, and who has come on it of merchants and others. When all of this information has been collected, it is presented to the sultan, and if there are any person [of such quality] that the sultan should assign a lodging to him as his guest, he does so.

When I arrived with the qadi I have mentioned, who was called Ibn al-Burhan, an Egyptian by origin, at the sultan’s residence, one of the serving-boys came out and saluted the qadi, who said to him “Take word to the intendant’s office and inform the Shaykh that this man has come from the land of al-Hijaz.” So he took the message, then returned bringing a plate on which were some leaves of betel and areca nuts. He gave me ten leaves along with a few of the nuts, the same to the qadi, and what was left on the plate to my companions and the qadi’s students. He brought

also a jug of rose-water of Damascus, which he poured over me and over the qadi [i.e. over our hands], and said “Our master commands that he be lodged in the students’ house,” this being a building equipped for the entertainment of students of religion. The qadi took me by the hand and we went to this house, which is in the vicinity of the Shaykh’s residence, and furnished with carpets and all necessary appointments.

Later on the serving boy brought food from the Shaykh’s residence. With him came one of his viziers, who was responsible for the care of the guests, and who said “Our master greets you and says to you that you are heartily welcome.” He then set down the food and we ate. Their food is rice cooked with ghee (clarified butter), which they put into a large wooden platter, and on top of this they set platters of kushan. This is the seasoning made of chickens, meat, fish and vegetables. They cook unripe bananas in fresh milk and put this in one dish, and in another dish they put curdled milk, on which they place pieces of pickled lemon, bunches of pickled pepper steeped in vinegar and slated, green ginger, and mangos. These resemble apples, but have a stone; when ripe they are exceedingly sweet and are eaten like other fruit, but before ripening they are acid like lemons, and they pickle them in vinegar. When they take a mouthful of rice, they eat some of these salted and vinegar conserves after it. A single person of the people of Maqdashaw eats as much as a whole company of us would eat, as a matter of habit, and they are corpulent and fat in the extreme.

On the fourth day, which was a Friday, the qadi and students and one of the Shaykh’s viziers came to me, bringing a set of robes; these [official] robes of theirs consist of a silk wrapper which one ties round his waist in place of drawers (for they have no acquaintance with these), a tunic of Egyptian linen with an embroidered border, a furred mantle of Jerusalem stuff, and an Egyptian turban with an embroidered edge. They also brought robes for my companions suitable to their position. We went to the congregational mosque and made our prayers behind the maqsura [area restricted for the ruler]. When the Shaykh came out of the door of the maqsura I saluted him along with the qadi; he said a word of greeting, spoke in their tongue with the qadi, and then said in Arabic “You are heartily welcome, and you have honored our land and given us pleasure.”

Excerpted from *Beyond A Thousand and One Nights: A Sampler of Literature from Muslim Civilization* (Fountain Valley, CA: Council on Islamic Education), 154-155. Reprinted by permission.

## Lesson 1

### *Student Handout 1.6— From Ibn Battuta, The Rihlah (travels in West Africa, fourteenth century)*

The date of my arrival at Malli was 14<sup>th</sup> Jumada I seven hundred and fifty-three [after Hijra 28 June 1352]...I was accompanied by a merchant called Abu Bakr ibn Ya'qub. We took the Mima road. I had a camel which I was riding because horses are expensive, and cost a hundred *mithqals* each. We came to a wide channel which flows out of the Nile [meaning the Niger River] and can only be crossed by boats. The place is infested with mosquitoes, and no one can pass that way except by night. On reaching it I saw sixteen beasts with enormous bodies...so I said to Abu Bakr, "What kind of animals are these?" He replied, "They are hippopotami. . . ."

We halted near this channel at a large village, which had as a governor a negro, a pilgrim, and man of fine character, named Farba Magha. He was one of the negroes who made the pilgrimage in the company of Mansa Musa. . . . We continued our journey from this village which is by the channel and came to the town of Quri Mansa. At this point the camel which I was riding died...I sent two lads whom I had hired for my service to buy me a camel at Zaghari, and waited at Quri Mansa for six days until they returned with it. . . . Thence we went on to Tumbuktu, which stands four miles from the river. Most of its inhabitants are of the Massufa tribe, wearers of the face-veil. . . . From Tumbuktu I sailed down the Nile [Niger] on a small boat, hollowed out of a single piece of wood. We used to go ashore every night at the villages and buy whatever we needed in the way of meat and butter in exchange for salt, spices and glass beads. . . .

I went on from there to Gawgaw [Gogo], which is a large city on the Nile [Niger], and one of the finest towns in the Negrolands. It is also one of their biggest and best provisioned towns, with rice in plenty, milk and fish, and there is a species of cucumber there called inani which has no equal. The buying and selling of its inhabitants is done with cowrie-shells, and the same is the case at Malli. I stayed there about a month, and then set out in the direction of Taghadda by land with a large caravan of merchants from Wuchin, which means "wolf". . . . I had a riding camel and a she-camel to carry my provisions.

We pushed on rapidly with our journey until we reached Taghadda. The houses at Taghadda are built of red stone, and its water runs by the copper mines, so that both its color and taste are affected. There are no grain crops there except a little wheat, which is consumed by merchants and strangers. The inhabitants of Taghadda have no occupation except trade. They travel to Egypt every year, and import quantities of all the fine fabrics to be had there and of other Egyptian wares. . . . The copper mine is in the outskirts of Taghadda. They dig the ore out of the ground, bring it to the town and cast it in their houses. This work is done by their male and female slaves. When they obtain the red copper, they make it into bars a span and a half in length, some thin and others thick. The thick bars are sold at the rate of six or seven hundred to the *mithqal*. They serve also as their medium of exchange; with the thin bars they buy meat and firewood, and with the thick, slaves male and female, millet, butter, and wheat. The copper is exported from Taghadda to the town of Kubar, in the regions of the heathens, to Zaghay, and to the country of Barnu, which is forty days' journey from Taghadda. The people of Barnu are Muslims, and have a king called Idris. . . .

Excerpted from H. A. R. Gibb, translator, *Ibn Battuta: Travels in Asia and Africa, 1325-1354*  
London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1929, 331-336