

Abu Ubaydallah al-Bakri, -- THE BOOK OF ROUTES AND REALMS

Located south of the Sahara Desert is a broad expanse of grasslands, or *savanna*, that stretches across the breadth of the African continent, from the Atlantic Ocean to the Red Sea. To the Arabs this region was known as *Bilad al-Sudan* (the country of the blacks). Arab and Berber merchants were especially interested in West Africa's Sudan because its inhabitants were advantageously located between the markets of North Africa and cultures farther south toward the tropical rain forests of the coast. From the southern peoples of the Niger and Senegal River Valleys the inhabitants of the savanna obtained gold and slaves, which they traded for manufactured goods, horses, and salt with Berber and Arab merchants, who arrived in camel caravans from the north. In time, this trans-Saharan commerce became the basis for the development of a series of large trading states in the region that connected West Africa's gold fields with the cities of Mediterranean North Africa.

One of the earliest important trading empires to emerge was *Ghana* (not to be confused with its modern namesake, the nation of Ghana), which was located essentially in territory encompassed today by the nations of Mauritania and Mali. The origins of Ghana as an organized entity are lost in the shadows of the past but go back at least as far as the fifth century **C.E.**, when the introduction of the camel made it easier for outsiders to penetrate across the Sahara into the land of the *Soninke* people.

Coming as traders and as raiders, the nomadic *Berber* people of the western Sahara apparently helped stimulate the formation of a Soninke kingdom organized for commerce and defense. In time that kingdom would become known as *Ghana* — a term that originated as a royal title. During the course of the eighth and ninth centuries Arab merchants inhabiting the coastal cities of North Africa began to enter the lucrative trans-Saharan trading system, thereby gaining direct access to the region they called *the land of gold* — a land then dominated by the well-established state of Ghana.

In 1067/1068 Abu Ubaydallah al-Bakri (d. 1094), a resident of the city of Cordova in what is today Spain but was then the Muslim land of *al-Andalus*, composed a detailed description of this fabled region. Although he never traveled to nearby Africa and probably never even left his native land, al-Bakri provides us with one of the most important sources for the early history of the western Sudan. As was the accepted practice among Muslim geographers of his era, al-Bakri drew heavily from the writings of predecessors, many of whose

works are now otherwise lost, and he also interviewed merchants who had traveled to the area. These interviews made it possible for al-Bakri to present up-to-date information on Ghana at a crucial moment in its history.

During the latter portion of the eleventh century the rulers and leading families of Ghana were increasingly adopting the faith and attendant culture of Islam.

However, Muslims from the north brought not only the peaceful message of universal submission to the Word of God, they also brought war. A fundamentalist Islamic group of Berbers known as the *Almoravids* waged holy war, or jihad, against the Soninke of Ghana. It is unclear whether the Almoravids prevailed in this war, but apparently the conflict disrupted trade and weakened Ghana's economic base. In addition, the heartland of Ghana was becoming far less able to support its population, due to an environmental crisis brought about by overfarming and excessive grazing. Large numbers of farmers and townspeople were forced to move away. With these combined losses, the recently converted monarchs of Ghana lost their ability to hold together their loosely organized and still predominantly non-Islamic empire. By the early thirteenth century Ghana had disintegrated. Hegemony over the markets of the western Sudan briefly passed to the kingdom of *Sosso* and then to the state of *Mali*, which reached its greatest territorial extent under Mansa Musa (r.1312-27).

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. To whom did a monarch pass his royal power? What does this tradition of royal succession suggest about Ghanaian society?
2. Describe the city of Ghana. What does its physical environment, especially its two centers, suggest about eleventh-century Ghanaian culture?
3. How do we know that the empire of Ghana was not the only state in the western Sudan?
4. How would you characterize the authority and sources of power of the rulers of Ghana?
5. What role did Islam play in Ghanaian society? What does your answer suggest about the way in which Islam entered the western Sudan?
6. What does the story of the conversion of the king of Malal suggest about the process of Islamisation in the western Sudan?

The Land of Ghana: Eleventh-Century Western Sudan

Ghana is a title given to their kings; the name of the region is Awkar, and their king today, namely in the year 460, is Tunka Manin. He ascended the throne in 455. The name of his predecessor was Basi and he became their ruler at the age of 85. He led a praiseworthy life on account of his love of justice and friendship for the Muslims. At the end of his life he became blind, but he concealed this from his subjects and pretended that he could see. When something was put before him he said: "This is good" or "This is bad." His ministers deceived the people by indicating to the king in cryptic words what he should say, so that the commoners could not understand. Basi was a maternal uncle of Tunka Manin. This is their custom and their habit, that the kingship is inherited only by the son of the king's sister. He has no doubt that his successor is a son of his sister, while he is not certain that his son is in fact his own, and he is not convinced of the genuineness of his relationship to him. This Tunka Manin is powerful, rules an enormous kingdom, and possesses great authority.

The city of Ghana consists of two towns situated on a plain.³ One of these towns, which is inhabited by Muslims, is large and possesses twelve mosques, in one of which they assemble for the Friday prayer. There are salaried imams and muezzins, as well as jurists and scholars. In the environs are wells with sweet water, from which they drink and with which they grow vegetables. The king's town is six miles distant from this one and bears the name of Al-Ghaba. Between these two towns there are continuous habitations. The houses of the inhabitants are of stone and acacia wood. The king has a palace and a number of domed dwellings all surrounded with an enclosure like a city wall. In the king's town, and not far from his court of justice, is a mosque where the Muslims who arrive at his court pray. Around the king's town are domed buildings and groves and thickets where the sorcerers of these people, men in charge of the religious cult, live. In them too are their idols and the tombs of their kings. These woods are guarded and none may enter them and know what is there. In them also are the king's prisons. If somebody is imprisoned there no news of him is ever heard. The king's interpreters, the official in charge of his treasury and the majority of his ministers are Muslims. Among the people who follow the king's religion only he and his heir apparent (who is the son of his sister) may wear sewn clothes. All other people wear robes of cotton, silk, or brocade, according to their means. All of them shave their beards, and women shave their heads. The king adorns himself like a woman, wearing necklaces round his neck and bracelets on his forearms, and he puts on a high cap decorated with gold and

wrapped in a turban of fine cotton. He sits in audience or to hear grievances against officials in a domed pavilion around which stand ten horses covered with gold-embroidered materials. Behind the king stand ten pages holding shields and swords decorated with gold, and on his right are the sons of the vassal kings of his country wearing splendid garments and their hair plaited with gold. The governor of the city sits on the ground before the king and around him are ministers seated likewise. . . . When people who profess the same religion as the king approach him they fall on their knees and sprinkle dust on their heads, for this is their way of greeting him. As for the Muslims, they greet him only by clapping their hands.

Their religion is paganism and the worship of idols. When their king dies they construct over the place where his tomb will be an enormous dome of wood. Then they bring him on a bed covered with a few carpets and cushions and place him beside the dome. At his side they place his ornaments, his weapons, and the vessels from which he used to eat and drink, filled with various kinds of food and beverages. They place there too the men who used to serve his meals. They close the door of the dome and cover it with mats and furnishings. Then the people assemble, who heap earth upon it until it becomes like a big hillock and dig a ditch around it until the mound can be reached at only one place.

They make sacrifices to their dead and make offerings of intoxicating drinks.

On every donkey-load of salt when it is brought into the country their king levies one golden diriar, and two dinars when it is sent out. From a load of copper the king's due is five mithqals, and from a load of other goods ten mithqals. The best gold found in his land comes from the town of Ghiyaru, which is eighteen days' traveling distant from the king's town over a country inhabited by tribes of the Sudan whose dwellings are continuous.

The nuggets found in all the mines of his country are reserved for the king, only this gold dust being left for the people. But for this the people would accumulate gold until it lost its value. The nuggets may weigh from an ounce to a pound. It is related that the king owns a nugget as large as a big stone.

The king of Ghana, when he calls up his army, can put 200,000 men into the field, more than 40,000 of them archers.

On the opposite bank of the Nil is another great kingdom, stretching a distance of more than eight days' marching, the king of which has the title of *Daw*. The inhabitants of this region use arrows when fighting. Beyond this country lies

another called Malal,' the king of which is known as *al-musulmani*. He is thus called because his country became afflicted with drought one year following another; the inhabitants prayed for rain, sacrificing cattle till they had exterminated almost all of them, but the drought and the misery only increased. The king had as his guest a Muslim who used to read the Qur'an and was acquainted with the Sunna.' To this man the king complained of the calamities that assailed him and his people. The man said:
'O King, if you believed in God (who is exalted) and testified that He is One, and testified as to the prophetic mission of Muhammad (God bless him and give him peace) and if you accepted all the religious laws of Islam, I would pray for your deliverance from your plight and that God's mercy would envelop all the people of your country and that your enemies and adversaries might envy you on that account." Thus he continued to press the king until the latter accepted Islam and

became a sincere Muslim. The man made him recite from the Qur'an some easy passages and taught him religious obligations and practices which no one may be excused from knowing. Then the Muslim made him wait till the eve of the following Friday,' when he ordered him to purify himself by a complete ablution, and clothed him in a cotton garment which he had. The two of them came out towards a mound of earth, and there the Muslim stood praying while the king, standing at his right side, imitated him. Thus they prayed for a part of the night, the Muslim reciting invocations and the king saying "Amen." The dawn had just started to break when God caused abundant rain to descend upon them. So the king ordered the idols to be broken and expelled the sorcerers from his country. He and his descendants after him as well as his nobles were sincerely attached to Islam, while the common people of his kingdom remained polytheists. Since then their rulers have been given the title of *al-musulmani*.

Leo Africanus: Description of Timbktu from *The Description of Africa* (1526)

El Hasan ben Muhammed el-Wazzan-ez-Zayyati was born in the Moorish city of Granada in 1485, but was expelled along with his parents and thousands of other Muslims by Ferdinand and Isabella in 1492. Settling in Morocco, he studied in Fez, and as a teenager accompanied his uncle on diplomatic missions throughout North Africa and to the Sub-Saharan kingdom of Ghana. Still a young man, he was captured by Christian pirates and presented as an exceptionally learned slave to the great Renaissance pope, Leo X. Leo freed him, baptised him under the name "Johannis Leo de Medici," and commissioned him to write in Italian the detailed survey of Africa which provided most of what Europeans knew about the continent for the next several centuries. At the time he visited the Ghanaian city of Timbuktu, it was somewhat past its peak, but still a thriving Islamic city famous for its learning. "Timbuktu" was to become a byword in Europe as the most inaccessible of cities, but at the time Leo visited, it was the center of a busy trade in African products and in books. Leo is said to have died in 1554 in Tunis, having reconverted to Islam.

What evidence does he provide that suggests the importance of learning in Timbuktu?

The name of this kingdom is a modern one, after a city which was built by a king named Mansa Suleyman in the year 610 of the hegira [1232 CE] around twelve miles from a branch of the [Niger River](#). (1)

The houses of Timbuktu are huts made of clay-covered wattles with thatched roofs. In the center of the city is a temple built of stone and mortar, built by [an architect named Granata](#), (2) and in addition there is a large palace, constructed by the same architect, where the king lives. The shops of the artisans, the merchants, and especially weavers of cotton cloth are very

numerous. Fabrics are also imported [from Europe to Timbuktu, borne by Berber merchants](#). (3)

The women of the city maintain the custom of veiling their faces, except for the slaves who sell all the foodstuffs. The inhabitants are very rich, especially the strangers who have settled in the country; so much so that [the current king](#) (4) has given two of his daughters in marriage to two brothers, both businessmen, on account of their wealth. There are many wells containing sweet water in Timbuktu; and in addition, when the Niger is in flood canals deliver the water to the city. Grain and animals are abundant, so that the consumption of milk and butter is

considerable. But salt is in very short supply because it is carried here from Tegaza, some 500 miles from Timbuktu. I happened to be in this city at a time when a load of salt sold for eighty ducats. The king has a rich treasure of coins and gold ingots. One of these ingots weighs [970 pounds. \(5\)](#)

The royal court is magnificent and very well organized. When the king goes from one city to another with the people of his court, he rides a camel and the horses are led by hand by servants. If fighting becomes necessary, the servants mount the camels and all the soldiers mount on horseback. When someone wishes to speak to the king, he must kneel before him and bow down; but this is only required of those who have never before spoken to the king, or of ambassadors. The king has about 3,000 horsemen and infinity of foot-soldiers armed with bows made of wild fennel [?] which they use to shoot poisoned arrows. This king makes war only upon neighboring enemies and upon those who do not want to pay him tribute. When he has gained a victory, he has all of them--even the children--sold in the market at Timbuktu.

Only small, poor horses are born in this country. The merchants use them for their voyages and the courtiers to move about the city. But the good horses come from Barbary. They arrive in a caravan and, ten or twelve days later, they are led to the ruler, who takes as many as he likes and pays appropriately for them.

The king is a declared enemy of the Jews. He will not allow any to live in the city. If he hears it said that a Berber merchant frequents them or does business with them, he confiscates his goods. There are in Timbuktu numerous judges, teachers and priests, all properly appointed by the king. He greatly honors learning. Many hand-written books imported from Barbary are also sold. There is more profit made from this commerce than from all other merchandise.

Instead of coined money, pure gold nuggets are used; and for small purchases, [cowrie shells which have been carried from Persia. \(6\)](#) and of which 400 equal a ducat. Six and two-thirds of their ducats equal [one Roman gold ounce. \(7\)](#)

The people of Timbuktu are of a peaceful nature. They have a custom of almost continuously walking about the city in the evening (except for those that sell gold), between 10 PM and 1 AM, playing musical instruments and dancing. The citizens have at their service many slaves, both men and women.

The city is very much endangered by fire. At the time when I was there on [my second voyage, \(8\)](#) half the city burned in the space of five hours. But the wind was violent and the inhabitants of the other half of the city began to move their belongings for fear that the other half would burn.

There are no gardens or orchards in the area surrounding Timbuktu.

Translated by Paul Brians

- (1) Mansa Suleyman reigned 1336-1359. The city was in fact probably founded in the 11th century by Tuaregs, but became the chief city of the king of Mali in 1324.
- (2) Ishak es Sahili el-Gharnati, brought to Tinbuktu by Mansa Suleyman.
- (3) By camel caravan across the Sahara Desert from NorthAfrica.
- (4) 'Omar ben Mohammed Naddi, not in fact the king, but representative of the ruler of the kingdom of Songhai.
- (5) Such fabulous nuggets are commonly mentioned by Arab writers about Africa, but their size is probably grossly exaggerated.
- (6) Cowrie shells, widely used for money in West Africa, sometimes came in fact from even farther away, from the Maladive Islands of Southeast Asia.
- (7) A Sudanese gold ducat would weigh .15 oz.
- (8) Probably in 1512.

IBN BATTUTA – Travels Through Africa

Ibn Battuta (1304—1369) was born in Morocco. He traveled for almost thirty years in Asia, Europe, and Africa. His accounts of Africa are extremely valuable; no really comparable sources exist for the period. Ibn Battuta visited several parts of Africa, mainly through contacts with existing Arab communities—the whites—in what was an established part of the Muslim world and its trading zone. This was a brave traveler, with some biases and a definite love of comfort, but also with an eager curiosity about the places he visited.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. What did Ibn Battuta admire most about these people? What did he find hardest to accept? Why?
 2. Did Ibn Battuta understand fully all he encountered? Can you find any evidence of cultural or racial tension?
 3. In what ways were the cultures of the people whom Ibn Battuta encountered a mixture of native African and Muslim elements?
 4. How organized and controlled does the state of Mali appear to be?
 5. Compare fourteenth-century Mali with eleventh-century Ghana. What are their similarities and differences? Which seem more significant? What do you conclude from that answer?
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... I went to the house of ibn Baddā', an excellent man of the people of Salā. I had written to him to rent a house for me and he had done that. Then the Overseer of Iwālātan, whose name was Manshā Jū, invited those who had come in the caravan to his hospitality. I refused to attend that affair, but my friends insisted very much; so I went with the rest. Then the meal was brought out: a concoction of *anlī* mixed with a drop of honey and milk, which they placed in a half calabash like a deep wooden bowl. Those present drank and went away. I said to them, 'Was it for this the black invited us?' They said, 'Yes, this is great entertainment in their country.' I became sure then that there was no good to be expected from them. I wanted to travel back with the pilgrims of Iwālātan. Then it seemed good to me to go to see the capital [or: residence, presencel of their King. My residence in Iwālātan was about fifty days. Its people were generous to me and entertained me. Among my hosts was its *qadī*, Muhammad ihn 'Abd Allāh ibn Yanūmar and his brother, the *faqīh* (qādī and faqīh were Muslim legal authorities) and teacher Yahyā. The town of Iwālātan is very hot and there are in it a few small date palms in whue shade they plant melons. They obtain water from the ground which exudes it. Mutton is obtainable in quantity there. The clothes of its people are of fine Egyptian material. Most of the inhabitants belong to the Massūfa. and as for their women—they are extremely beautiful and are more important than the men.

Anecdote concerning the Massūfa Who Inhabit Iwālātan

The condition of these people is strange and their manners outlandish. As for their men there is no sexual jealousy in them. And none of them derives his genealogy

from his father but, on the contrary, from his maternal uncle. A man does not pass on inheritance except to the sons of his sister to the exclusion of his own sons. Now that is a thing I never saw in any part of the world except in the country of the unbelievers of the land of Mulaṭbār [Malabar] among the Indians. As to the former [the Massūfa], they are Muslims keeping to the prayers, studying *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) and learning the Qur'an by heart. With regard to their women, they are r modest in the presence of men, they do not veil themselves in spite of their perseverance in the prayers. He who wishes to marry among them can marry, hut the women do not travel with the husband, and if one of them wanted to do that, she would he prevented by her family. The women there have friends and companions amongst men outside the prohibited degrees of marriage [i.e., other than brothers, fathers, etc.]. Likewise for the men, there are companions from amongst women outside the prohibited degrees. One of them would enter his house to find his wife her companion and would not disapprove of that conduct...

The sultan [emperor of Mali] has a raised cupola which is entered from inside his house. He sits in it a great part of the time. It has on the audience side a chamber with three wooden arches, the woodwork is covered with sheets of beaten silver and beneath these, three more covered with beaten gold, or, rather, it is silver covered with gilt. The windows have woollen curtains which are raised on a day when the sultan will be in session in his cupola: thus it is known that he is holding a session. When he sits, a silken cord is put out from the grill of one of the arches with a scarf of Egyptian embroidery tied to it. When the people see the scarf, drums are beaten and bugles sounded. Then from the door of the palace come

out about three hundred slaves. Some have bows in their hands and some small spears and shields. Some of the spearmen stand on the right and some on the left, the bowmen sit likewise. Then they bring two mares saddled and bridled, and with them two rams. They say that these are effective against the evil eye. When the sultan has sat down three of his slaves go out quickly to call his deputy, Qanjā Mūsā. The *farāriyya* [commanders] arrive, and they are the *amīrs* [officers], and among them are the preacher and the men of *fiqh*, who sit in front of the armed men on the right and left of the place of audience. The interpreter Dūghā stands at the door of the audience chamber wearing splendid robes of *zardkhuāna* [commanders] and others. On his head is a turban which has fringes, they have a superb way of tying a turban. He is girt with a sword whose sheath is of gold, on his feet are light hoots and spurs. And nobody wears boots that day except he. In his hands there are two small spears, one of gold and one of silver with points of iron. The soldiers, the district governors, the pages and the Massūfa and others are seated outside the place of audience in a broad street which has trees in it. Each *farāri* [commander] has his followers before him with their spears, bows, drums and bugles made of elephant tusks. Their instruments of music are made of reeds and calabashes, and they heat them with sticks and produce a wonderful sound. Each *farāri* has a quiver which he places between his shoulders. He holds his bow in his hand and is mounted on a mare. Some of his men are on foot and some on mounts.

Inside the audience chamber under the arches a man is standing; he who wants to speak to the sultan speaks to Dūghā, Dūghā speaks to the man who is standing, and he speaks to the sultan.

An Account of the Sessions in the Place of Audience

The sultan sits on certain days in the palace yard to give audience. There is platform under a tree with three steps which they call *banbī*. It is covered with silk and has pillows placed on it. The *shatr* [umbrella] is raised, this is a shelter made of silk with a golden bird like a sparrowhawk above it. The sultan comes out from a gate in the corner Of the palace, bow in hand, his quiver between his shoulders, and on his head a cap of gold tied with a golden band which has fringes like thin-bladed knives more than a span long. He often wears a robe which is soft and red, made from Roman cloth called *muṭānfas*. The singers go out before him carrying gold and silver *qanābir* [guitars] and behind him come three hundred armed slaves. The sultan walks slowly and pauses often and sometimes he stops completely. When he comes to the *banbī* he stops and looks at the people. Then he mounts the steps with dignity in the manner of a preacher getting into the pulpit. When he sits down they beat the drums, blow the bugles and the horns,

and three of the slaves go out in haste and call the deputy and the *farāriyya* [commanders]. They enter and sit down. The two mares are brought in with the two, rams. Damughā stands at the door while the rest of the people are in the street under the tree. The blacks are the most humble of men before their king and the most extreme in their self-abasement before him. They swear by his name, saying, ‘Mansā Sulaimānki’ [the law of Mansā Sulaimān]. When he calls one of them while he is in session in his cupola which we described above, the man invited takes off his clothes and wears patched clothes, takes off his turban, puts on a dirty cap, and goes in raising his clothes and trousers up his legs half-way to his knees. He advances with humility looking like a beggar. He hits the ground with his elbows, he hits it hard. He stands bowed, like one in the ruku’ position in prayer, listening to what the king says. When one of them speaks to the sultan and he gives him an answer, he removes his clothes from his back and throws dust on his head and back, as a person does when bathing with water. I used to wonder how they do not blind their eyes. When the sultan speaks in his council, at his word those present take their turbans off their heads and listen to the speech. .

Amongst their good qualities is the small amount of injustice amongst them, for of all people the’ are the furthest from it. Their sultan does not forgive anyone in an’ matter to do with injustice. Among these qualities there is also the prevalence of peace in their country, the traveller is not afraid in it nor is he who lives there in fear of the thief or of the robber by violence. They do not interfere with the property of the white man who dies in their country even though it may consist of great wealth hut rather they entrust it to the hand of someone dependable among the white men until it is taken by the rightful claimant.

Another of the good habits amongst them is the way they meticulously observe the times of the prayers and attendance at them, so also it is with regard to their congregational services and their beating of their children to instill these things in them.

When it is Friday, if a man does not come early to the mosque he will not find a place to pray because of the numbers of the crowd. It is their custom for every man to send his boy with his prayer mat. He spreads it for him in a place commensurate with his position and keeps the place until he comes to the mosque. Their prayer-mats are made of the leaves of a tree like a date palm but it bears no fruit.

Among the bad things which they do—their serving women, slave women and little daughters appear before people naked, exposing their private parts. I used to see many of them in this state of Ramadan, for it was the custom of the *fārarzyya* [commanders] to break the fast in the sultan's house. Everyone of them has his food carried in to him by twenty or more of his slave girls and they are naked, every one. Also among their bad customs is the way women will go into the presence of the sultan naked, without any covering; and the nakedness of the sultan's daughters— on the night of the twenty-seventh of Ramadan, I saw about a hundred slave girls coming out of his palace with food, with them were two of his daughters, they had full breasts and no clothes on, Another of their bad customs is their putting of dust and ashes on their heads as a sign of respect. And another is the laughing matter I mentioned of their poetic recitals. And another is that many of them eat animals not ritually slaughtered, and dogs and donkeys.

Customs in the Mali Empire

Long-distance travelers often encountered unfamiliar customs unforeseen societies. The Moroccan traveler Ibn Battuta approved heartily when staying with hosts who honored the values of his own Muslim society, but he had little tolerance for those who did not. Here he describes what he witnessed at the sultan's court in the Mali empire.

The blacks are the most humble of men before their king and the most extreme in their self-abasement before him. They swear by his name, saying 'Mansā

Sulaimānki' [the law of Mansā Sulaimān., the Mali sultan]. When he calls one of them while he is in session . . . the man invited takes off his clothes and wears patched clothes, takes off his turban, puts on a dirty cap, and goes in raising his clothes and trousers up his legs half-way to his knees. He advances with humility looking like a beggar. He hits the ground with his elbows, he hits it hard. He stands bowed, like one . . . in prayer, listening to what the king says. When one of them speaks to the sultan and he gives him an answer, he removes his clothes from his back and throws dust on his head and back, as a person does when bathing with water. I used to wonder how they do not blind their eyes.

Sometimes one of them would stand before him and recall what he had done in his [the sultan's] service, saying, "I did such and such on such a day," and, "I killed so and so on such a day." Those who know this confirm that he is telling the truth. Their confirmation is by pulling the strings of their bows and letting them go, as one does when one is shooting. If the sultan says to him the he has spoken the truth or thanks him, he takes off his clothes and dusts. This is good manners among them....

SOURCE: From Said Hamdum and Noel King, eds., *Ibn Battuta in Black Africa* (London: Rex Collings, 1994), 27—29, 36—39, 47—50, 58-59. Reprinted by permission of Markus Wiener Publications, Inc.