CH 8: Document Study - Marco Polo & Ibn Battuta’s Travels
Reveals both great admiration and shock. Shocked by women’s freedom to interact with men, even in private, as well as their clothing, or more precisely their relative lack of clothing. Also shocked by the persistence of local ceremonies, and the eating of dogs, asses, and carrion.

Battuta was surprised by the gifts give to him by the sultan of Mali, & the court ceremony in Mali, especially the dress of court poets on feast days.

He appreciated the piety & good practice of local Muslims; the safety of the roads; the justness of the population; the justice & security that he found in the kingdom; the cleanliness of clothing, especially that worn for Friday prayers; & the size and provisioning of some cities.
He is very much attached to **Islamic culture** that he lived in, & is **not inclined to** accept the differences he **finds** in Mali. He **sees himself as a significant figure**, as indicated by his **expectation that the Mali ruler would entertain & provide gifts to him.**
Islam was practiced with fervor as evidenced by Battuta’s description of Friday Prayers in Mali, & that there were Muslims who had made the pilgrimage to Mecca.

Elements of continuing West African cultural traditions include the dress & demeanor of women; Relationships between women & men who are not members of the same family or household; Court ritual surrounding the pempi; & the court poetry recited by costumed men on feast days.
What specifically does Ibn Battuta find shocking about the women he encountered on his travels in West Africa?

Particularly shocking to Battuta is that in Iwalatan, women are shown more respect than men, & men figure their lineage through their mother’s brother.

Women show no bashfulness before men & do not veil themselves.

Men & women have “friends” & ”companions” of the opposite sex who are not members of their own families or households.

In Mali, he notes that women servants, slave girls, & young girls go about in front of everyone naked.
Ibn Battuta notes that the **trade routes are safe & well policed**. In the villages along trade routes, **local women are ready to sell foodstuffs** to travelers in exchange for salt & glass ornaments.

There is a **quarter for foreigners in the city of Mali**, & the **Mali kings do not confiscate the property of foreigners** who die in their kingdom.

The **Mali king wore a red tunic on ceremonial occasions made of the European fabrics called “mutanfas.”**

The **buying and selling in Gawgaw** is done using **cowry shells**.
“Crossing the World”
(during the post-classical/pre-Columbian era)

Role-playing exercise (small group).
Your group is comprised of followers of Ibn Battuta in the 14th century.
You want to travel from:
Timbuktu (West Africa) to Cholas (India)
How would you do it?

Consider:
Various means of transportation you would need
Your probable route
How long your journey would probably take
Along with Marco Polo and Zheng He, Ibn Battuta is one of history’s great explorers. He set out from his native Tangier in 1325, when he was just 21. By the time he returned home for good almost 30 years later, he had covered some 120,000 km and nearly every part of the Islamic world.