**Ibn Battuta – Impressions of Mali, 1532**

**A. Ibn Battuta arrives in Mali**

Thus I reached the city of Mali, the capital of the king of the blacks. I stopped at the cemetery and went to the quarter occupied by the whites, where I asked for Muhammad ibn al-Faqih. I found that he had hired a house for me and went there. His son-in-law brought me candles and food, and next day Ibn al-Faqih himself came to visit me, with other prominent residents. I met the qadi [judge] of Malli, 'Abd ar-Rahman, who came to see me; he is a negro, a pilgrim, and a man of fine character. I met also the interpreter Dugha, who is one of the principal men among the blacks. All these persons sent me hospitality-gifts of food and treated me with the utmost generosity – may God reward them for their kindnesses!

**B. Ibn Battuta meets the King of Mali**

The sultan of Mali is Mansa Sulayman, “mansa” meaning sultan [in Mandingo], and Sulayman being his proper name. He is a miserly king, not a man from whom one might hope for a rich present. [H]e held a banquet in commemoration of our master [the late sultan of Morocco] Abu'l-Hasan, to which the commanders, doctors, qadi [judge] and preacher were invited, and I went along with them. Reading-desks were brought in, and the Koran was read through, then they prayed for our master Abu'l-Hasan and also for Mansa Sulayman. When the ceremony was over I went forward and saluted Mansa Sulayman. The qadi, the preacher, and Ibn al-Faqih told him who I was, and he answered them in their tongue. They said to me, “The sultan says to you 'Give thanks to God,'“ so I said, “Praise be to God and thanks under all circumstances.”

**C. The Sultan**

On certain days the sultan holds audiences in the palace yard, where there is a platform under a tree, with three steps; this they call the “pempi.” It is carpeted with silk and has cushions placed on it. [Over it] is raised the umbrella, which is a sort of pavilion made of silk, surmounted by a bird in gold, about the size of a falcon. The sultan comes out of a door in a corner of the palace, carrying a bow in his hand and a quiver on his back. On his head he has a golden skull-cap, bound with a gold band which has narrow ends shaped like knives, more than a span in length. His usual dress is a velvety red tunic, made of the European fabrics called “mutanfas.”

**D. The character of the people of Mali**

The negroes possess some admirable qualities. They are seldom unjust, and have a greater abhorrence of injustice than any other people. Their sultan shows no mercy to anyone who is guilty of the least act of it. There is complete security in their country. Neither traveller nor inhabitant in it has anything to fear from robbers or men of violence. They do not confiscate the property of any white man who dies in their country, even if it be uncounted wealth. On the contrary, they give it into the charge of some trustworthy person among the whites, until the rightful heir takes possession of it. They are careful to observe the hours of prayer, and assiduous in attending them in congregations, and in bringing up their children to them.

**Questions**1. Why does Ibn Battuta think Mali is such an important city?  
2. What do we learn about Mali from the meeting between Ibn Battuta and the Sultan or Mansa?  
3. What is Ibn Battuta’s opinion of the people of Mali?  
4. There is some disagreement over whether the Kingdom of Mali should be learned about in the global history curriculum. Based on what you read here, what is your opinion? Why?

**Critical Thinking Questions – Sub Saharan Africa**

1. Discuss the significance of Mansa Musa’s pilgrimage to Mecca. How symbolic was this event? Discuss the importance of Islam in sub-Saharan Africa.

2. Examine the east African states. How were they different from their counterparts in western Africa? How and why did they evolve differently?

3. Compare the appearance of Islam and Christianity in sub-Saharan Africa to their spread in other areas studied so far. What are the differences? In what ways did the more traditional African religious beliefs remain?

4. Examine the influence of the Bantu migrations on African history. What concepts did the Bantu pass on to the rest of sub-Saharan Africa?

5. Examine the concept of stateless societies. What were the political and social implications of this system of governing? How does this relate to sub-Saharan Africa?

6. What role did the rise and development of slavery play in sub-Saharan Africa?

7. Examine religion in sub-Saharan Africa. What religions and religious concepts dominated? How did trans-Saharan trade affect African religions?

8. How did geographic and agricultural factors influence early sub-Saharan societies?

9. How did trade influence the development of sub-Saharan Africa? Compare this influence to the role that trade played in other societies studied so far.