

Part I: Ottoman Empire

Notes

Primary Source Analysis

Part II: Ibn Sina

Notes

Primary Source Analysis

Part III: Ibn Battuta

Notes

Primary Source Analysis

Part IV: Mughal Empire

Notes

Primary Source Analysis

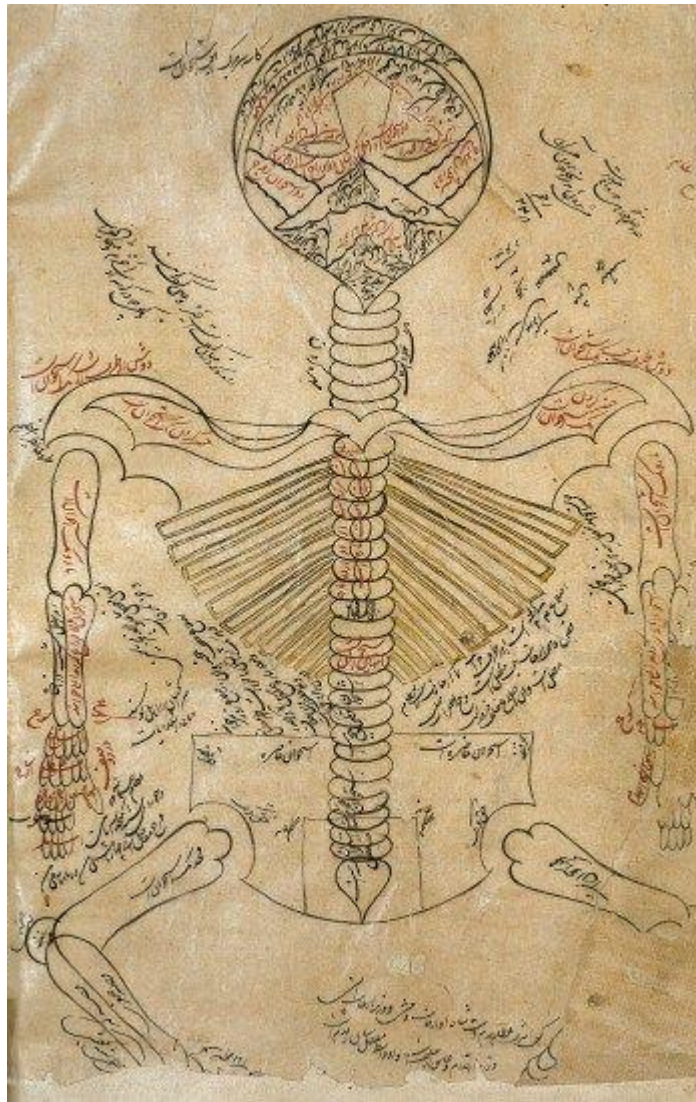
**A Visit to the Wife of Suleiman the Magnificent (Translated from a Genoese Letter),
c. 1550**

When I entered the kiosk in which she lives, I was received by many eunuchs in splendid costume blazing with jewels, and carrying scimitars in their hands. They led me to an inner vestibule, where I was divested of my cloak and shoes and regaled with refreshments. Presently an elderly woman, very richly dressed, accompanied by a number of young girls, approached me, and after the usual salutation, informed me that the Sultana Asseki was ready to see me. All the walls of the kiosk in which she lives are covered with the most beautiful Persian tiles and the floors are of cedar and sandalwood, which give out the most delicious odor. I advanced through an endless row of bending female slaves, who stood on either side of my path. At the entrance to the apartment in which the Sultana consented to receive me, the elderly lady who had accompanied me all the time made me a profound reverence, and beckoned to two girls to give me their aid; so that I passed into the presence of the Sultana leaning upon their shoulders. The Sultana, who is a stout but beautiful young woman, sat upon silk cushions striped with silver, near a latticed window overlooking the sea. Numerous slave women, blazing with jewels, attended upon her, holding fans, pipes for smoking, and many objects of value.

When we had selected from these, the great lady, who rose to receive me, extended her hand and kissed me on the brow, and made me sit at the edge of the divan on which she reclined. She asked many questions concerning our country and our religion, of which she knew nothing whatever, and which I answered as modestly and discreetly as I could. I was surprised to notice, when I had finished my narrative, that the room was full of women, who, impelled by curiosity, had come to see me, and to hear what I had to say.

The Sultana now entertained me with an exhibition of dancing girls and music, which was very delectable. When the dancing and music were over, refreshments were served upon trays of solid gold sparkling with jewels. As it was growing late, and I felt afraid to remain longer, lest I should vex her, I made a motion of rising to leave. She immediately clapped her hands, and several slaves came forward, in obedience to her whispered commands, carrying trays heaped up with beautiful stuffs, and some silver articles of fine workmanship, which she pressed me to accept. After the usual salutations the old woman who first escorted me into the imperial presence conducted me out, and I was led from the room in precisely the same manner in which I had entered it, down to the foot of the staircase, where my own attendants awaited me.

Part II – Ibn Sina Primary Source: (One of Ibn Sina’s medical sketches)



Part III – Ibn Battuta:

Ibn Battuta arrives at the city of Mali, capital of the kingdom of Mali p 323-335.

Thus I reached the city of Malli [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 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!

Ten days after our arrival we ate a gruel made of a root resembling colocasia, which is preferred by them to all other dishes. We all fell ill--there were six of us--and one of our number died. I for my part went to the morning prayer and fainted there. I asked a certain Egyptian for a loosening remedy and he gave me a thing called "baydar," made of vegetable roots, which he mixed with aniseed and sugar, and stirred in water. I drank it off and vomited what I had eaten, together with a large quantity of bile. God preserved me from death but I was ill for two months.

Ibn Battuta meets the king of Mali

The sultan of Malli is Mansa Sulayman, "mansa" meaning [in Mandingo] sultan, and Sulayman being his proper name. He is a miserly king, not a man from whom one might hope for a rich present. It happened that I spent these two months

without seeing him, on account of my illness. Later on he held a banquet in commemoration of our master [the late sultan of Morocco] Abu'l-Hasan, to which the commanders, doctors, qadi 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." When I withdrew the [sultan's] hospitality gift was sent to me. It was taken first to the qadi's house, and the qadi sent it on with his men to Ibn al-Faqih's house. Ibn al-Faqih came hurrying out of his house barefooted, and entered my room saying, "Stand up; here comes the sultan's stuff and gift to you." So I stood up thinking--since he had called it "stuff"--that it consisted of robes of honour and money, and lo!, it was three cakes of bread, and a piece of beef fried in native oil, and a calabash of sour curds. When I saw this I burst out laughing, and thought it a most amazing thing that they could be so foolish and make so much of such a paltry matter.

The court ceremonial of king Sulayman of Mali

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." The sultan is preceded by his musicians, who carry gold and silver guimbris [two-stringed guitars], and behind him come three hundred armed slaves. He walks in a leisurely fashion, affecting a very slow movement, and even stops from time to time. On reaching the pempi he stops and looks round the assembly, then ascends it in the sedate manner of a preacher ascending a mosque-pulpit. As he takes his seat the drums, trumpets, and bugles are sounded. Three slaves go out at a run to summon the sovereign's deputy and the military commanders, who enter and sit down. Two saddled and bridled horses are brought, along with two goats, which they hold to serve as a protection against the evil eye. Dugha stands at the gate and the rest of the people remain in the street, under the trees.

The negroes are of all people the most submissive to their king and the most abject in their behaviour before him. They swear by his name, saying "Mansa Sulayman ki" [in Mandingo, "the emperor Sulayman has commanded"]. If he summons any of them while he is holding an audience in his pavilion, the person summoned takes off his clothes and puts on worn garments, removes his turban and dons a dirty skullcap, and enters with his garments and trousers raised knee-high. He goes forward in an attitude of humility and dejection and knocks the ground hard with his elbows, then stands with bowed head and bent back listening to what he says. If anyone addresses the king and receives a reply from him, he uncovers his back and throws dust over his head and back, for all the world like a bather splashing himself with water. I used to wonder how it was they did not blind themselves. If the sultan delivers any remarks during his audience, those present take off their turbans and put them down, and listen in silence to what he says.

Sometimes one of them stands up before him and recalls his deeds in the sultan's service, saying, "I did so-and-so on such a day," or, "I killed so-and-so on such a day." Those who have knowledge of this confirm his words, which they do by plucking the cord of the bow and releasing it [with a twang], just as an archer does when shooting an arrow. If the sultan says, "Truly spoken," or thanks him, he removes his clothes and "dusts." That is their idea of good manners.

Ibn Battuta judges 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.

Their piety

On Fridays, if a man does not go early to the mosque, he cannot find a corner to pray in, on account of the crowd. It is a custom of theirs to send each man his boy [to the mosque] with his prayer-mat; the boy spreads it out for his master in a place befitting him [and remains on it] until he comes to the mosque. Their prayer-mats are made of the leaves of a tree resembling a date-palm, but without fruit.

Another of their good qualities is their habit of wearing clean white garments on Fridays. Even if a man has nothing but an old worn shirt, he washes it and cleans it, and wears it to the Friday service. Yet another is their zeal for learning the Koran by heart. They put their children in chains if they show any backwardness in memorizing it, and they are not set free until they have it by heart. I visited the qadi in his house on the day of the festival. His children were chained up, so I said to him, "Will you not let them loose?" He replied, "I shall not do so until they learn the Koran by heart."

Part IV – Mughal Empire:

