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Tropical Africa and Asia, 1200–1500



East African Pastoralists Herding large and small livestock has long been a way of life in drier parts of the tropics.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Tropical Lands and Peoples

New Islamic Empires

Indian Ocean Trade

Social and Cultural Change

DIVERSITY AND DOMINANCE: Personal Styles of Rule in India and Mali

ENVIRONMENT AND TECHNOLOGY: The Indian Ocean Dhow

Sultan Abu Bakr^o customarily offered his personal hospitality to every distinguished visitor to his city of Mogadishu, an Indian Ocean port in northeast Africa. In 1331 he provided food and lodging for Muhammad ibn Abdullah ibn Battuta^o (1304–1369), a young Muslim scholar from Morocco who had set out to explore the Islamic world. Before beginning his tour of the trading cities of the Red Sea and East Africa, Ibn Battuta had completed a pilgrimage to Mecca and had traveled throughout the Middle East. Subsequent travels took him through Central Asia and India, China and Southeast Asia, Muslim Spain, and sub-Saharan West Africa. Logging some 75,000 miles (120,000 kilometers) in twenty-nine years, Ibn Battuta became the most widely traveled man of his times. For this reason the journals he wrote about his travels provide valuable information about these lands.

Other Muslim princes and merchants welcomed Ibn Battuta as graciously as did the ruler of Mogadishu. Hospitality was a noble virtue among Muslims, and they ignored visitors' physical and cultural differences. Although the Moroccan traveler noted that Sultan Abu Bakr had skin darker than his own and spoke a different native language (Somali), that was of little consequence. They were brothers in faith when they prayed together at Friday services in the Mogadishu mosque, where the sultan greeted his foreign guest in Arabic, the common language of the Islamic world: "You are heartily welcome, and you have honored our land and given us pleasure." When Sultan Abu Bakr and his jurists heard cases after the mosque service, they decided them on the basis of the law code familiar in all the lands of Islam.

Islam was not the only thing that united the diverse peoples of Africa and southern Asia. They also shared a tropical environment itself and a network of land and sea trade routes. The variations in tropical environments led societies to develop different specialties, which stimulated trade among them. Tropical winds governed the trading patterns of the Indian Ocean. Older than Islam, these routes were important

for spreading beliefs and technologies as well as goods. Ibn Battuta made his way down the coast of East Africa in merchants' ships and joined their camel caravans across the Sahara to West Africa. His path to India followed overland trade routes, and a merchant ship carried him on to China.

As you read this chapter, ask yourself the following questions:

- How did environmental differences shape cultural differences in tropical Africa and Asia?
- How did cultural and ecological differences promote trade in specialized goods from one place to another?
- How did trade and other contacts promote state growth and the spread of Islam?

TROPICAL LANDS AND PEOPLES

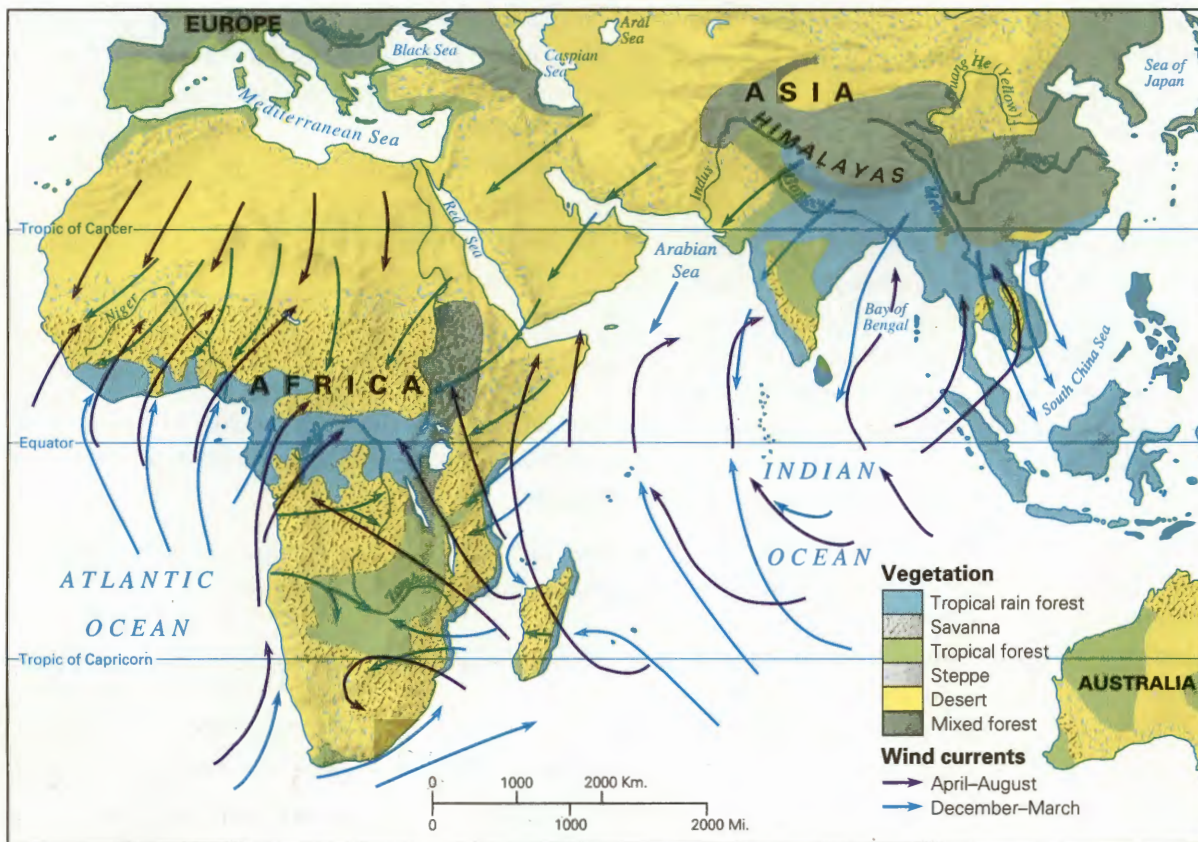
To obtain food, the people who inhabited the tropical regions of Africa and Asia used methods that had proved successful during generations of experimentation, whether at the desert's edge, in grasslands, or in tropical rain forests. Much of their success lay in learning how to blend human activities with the natural order, but their ability to modify the environment to suit their needs was also evident in irrigation works and mining.

The Tropical Environment

Because of the angle of earth's axis, the sun's rays warm the **tropics** year-round. The equator marks the center of the tropical zone, and the Tropic of Cancer and Tropic of Capricorn mark its outer limits. As Map 13.1 shows, Africa lies almost entirely within the tropics, as do southern Arabia, most of India, and all of the Southeast Asian mainland and islands.

Lacking the hot and cold seasons of temperate lands, the Afro-Asian tropics have their own cycle of rainy and dry seasons caused by changes in wind patterns across the surrounding oceans. Winds from a permanent high-pressure air mass over the South Atlantic deliver heavy rainfall to the western coast of Africa during much of the year. In December and January large

Abu Bakr (a-BOO BAK-uhr) **Ibn Battuta** (IB-uhn ba-TOO-tuh)



Map 13.1 Africa and the Indian Ocean Basin: Physical Characteristics Seasonal wind patterns control rainfall in the tropics and produce the different tropical vegetation zones to which human societies have adapted over thousands of years. The wind patterns also dominated sea travel in the Indian Ocean.

high-pressure zones over northern Africa and Arabia produce a southward movement of dry air that limits the inland penetration of the moist ocean winds.

In the lands around the Indian Ocean the rainy and dry seasons reflect the influence of alternating winds known as **monsoons**. A gigantic high-pressure zone over the Himalaya^o Mountains that is at its peak from December to March produces a strong southward air movement (the northeast monsoon) in the western Indian Ocean. This is southern Asia's dry season. Between April and August a low-pressure zone over India creates a northward movement of air from across the ocean (the southwest monsoon) that brings southern Asia its heaviest rains. This is the wet season.

Areas with the heaviest rainfall—coastal West Africa and west-central Africa, Southeast Asia, and much of India—have dense rain forests. Lighter rains produce other

tropical forests. The English word *jungle* comes from an Indian word for the tangled undergrowth in the tropical forests that once covered most of southern India.

Other parts of the tropics rarely see rain at all. The Sahara, the world's largest desert, stretches across northern Africa. This arid zone continues eastward across Arabia and into northwest India. Another desert zone occupies southwestern Africa. Most of the people of tropical India and Africa live between the deserts and the rain forests in lands that are favored with moderate amounts of moisture during the rainy seasons. These lands range from fairly wet woodlands to the much drier grasslands characteristic of much of East Africa.

Altitude produces other climatic changes. Thin atmospheres at high altitudes hold less heat than atmospheres at lower elevations. Snow covers some of the volcanic mountains of eastern Africa all or part of the year. The snowcapped Himalayas rise so high that they block cold air from moving south, thus giving northern

Himalaya (him-uh-LAY-uh)

C H R O N O L O G Y		
	Tropical Africa	Tropical Asia
1200	1230s Mali Empire founded	1206 Delhi Sultanate founded in India
1300	1270 Solomonic dynasty in Ethiopia founded 1324–1325 Mansa Musa's pilgrimage to Mecca	1298 Delhi Sultanate annexes Gujarat
1400	1400s Great Zimbabwe at its peak 1433 Tuareg retake Timbuktu, Mali declines	1398 Timur sacks Delhi, Delhi Sultanate declines
1500		1500 Port of Malacca at its peak

India a more tropical climate than its latitude would suggest. The many plateaus of inland Africa and the Deccan° Plateau of central India also make these regions somewhat cooler than the coastal plains.

The mighty rivers that rise in these mountains and plateaus redistribute water far from where it falls. Heavy rains in the highlands of Central Africa and Ethiopia supply the Nile's annual floods that make Egypt bloom in the desert. On its long route to the Atlantic, the Niger River of West Africa arcs northward to the Sahara's edge, providing waters to the trading cities along its banks. In like fashion, the Indus River provides nourishing waters from the Himalayas to arid northwest India. The Ganges° and its tributaries provide valuable moisture to northeastern India during the dry season. Mainland Southeast Asia's great rivers, such as the Mekong, are similarly valuable.

Human Ecosystems

Thinkers in temperate lands once imagined that surviving in the year-round warmth of the tropics was simply a matter of picking wild fruit off trees. In fact, mastering the tropics' many different environments was a long and difficult struggle. A careful observer touring the tropics in 1200 would have noticed that the many differences in societies derived from their particular ecosystems—that is, how people made use of the plants, animals, and other resources of their physical environments.

Domesticated plants and animals had been commonplace long before 1200, but people in some environments found it preferable to rely primarily on wild food that they obtained by hunting, fishing, and gathering. The small size of the ancient Pygmy° people in the dense forests of Central Africa permitted them to pursue their prey through dense undergrowth. Hunting also continued as a way of life in the upper altitudes of the Himalayas and in some desert environments. According to a Portuguese expedition in 1497, the people along the arid coast of southwestern Africa were well fed from a diet of "the flesh of seals, whales, and gazelles, and the roots of wild plants." Fishing was common along all the major lakes and rivers as well as in the oceans. The boating skills of ocean fishermen in East Africa, India, and Southeast Asia often led them to engage in ocean trade.

Tending herds of domesticated animals was common in areas too arid for agriculture. Unencumbered by bulky personal possessions and elaborate dwellings, they used their knowledge of local water and rain patterns to find adequate grazing for their animals in all but the severest droughts. Pastoralists consumed milk from their herds and traded hides and meat to neighboring farmers for grain and vegetables. The arid and semiarid lands of northeastern Africa and Arabia were home to the world's largest concentration of pastoralists. Like Ibn Battuta's host at Mogadishu, some Somali were urban dwellers, but most grazed their herds of goats and camels in the desert hinterland of the Horn of Africa. The western Sahara sustained

Deccan (de-KAN) Ganges (GAN-jeez)

Pygmy (PIG-mee)

herds of sheep and camels belonging to the Tuareg°, whose intimate knowledge of the desert also made them invaluable as guides to caravans, such as the one **Ibn Battuta** joined on the two-month journey across the desert. Along the Sahara's southern edge the cattle-herding Fulani° people gradually extended their range during this period. By 1500 they had spread throughout the western and central Sudan. Pastoralists in southern Africa sold meat to early Portuguese visitors.

By 1200 most Africans had been making their livelihood through agriculture for many centuries. Favorable soils and rainfall made farming even more dominant in South and Southeast Asia. High yields from intensive cultivation supported dense populations in Asia. In 1200 over 100 million people may have lived in South and Southeast Asia, more than four-fifths of them on the fertile Indian mainland. Though a little less than the population of China, this was triple the number of people living in all of Africa at that time and nearly double the number of people in Europe.

India's lush vegetation led one Middle Eastern writer to call it "the most agreeable abode on earth . . . its delightful plains resemble the garden of Paradise."¹ Rice cultivation dominated in the fertile Ganges plain of northeast India, in mainland Southeast Asia, and in southern China. Farmers in drier areas grew grains—such as wheat, sorghum, millet, and ensete—and legumes such as peas and beans, whose ripening cycle matched the pattern of the rainy and dry seasons. Tubers and tree crops characterized farming in rain-forest clearings.

Many useful domesticated plants and animals spread around the tropics. By 1200 Bantu-speaking farmers (see Chapter 7) had introduced grains and tubers from West Africa throughout the southern half of the continent. Bananas, brought to southern Africa centuries earlier by mariners from Southeast Asia, had become the staple food for people farming the rich soils around the Great Lakes of East Africa. Yams and cocoyams of Asian origin had spread across equatorial Africa. Asian cattle breeds grazed contentedly in pastures throughout Africa, and coffee of Ethiopian origin would shortly become a common drink in the Middle East.

Water Systems and Irrigation

In most parts of sub-Saharan Africa and many parts of Southeast Asia until quite recent times, the basic form of cultivation was extensive rather than intensive. Instead of enriching fields with manure and vegetable compost so

they could be cultivated year after year, farmers abandoned fields every few years when the natural fertility of the soil was exhausted, and they cleared new fields. Ashes from the brush, grasses, and tree limbs that were cut down and burned gave the new fields a significant boost in fertility. Even though a great deal of work was needed to clear the fields initially, modern research suggests that such shifting cultivation was an efficient use of labor in areas where soils were not naturally rich in nutrients.

In other parts of the tropics, environmental necessity and population pressure led to the adoption of more intensive forms of agriculture. A rare area of intensive cultivation in sub-Saharan Africa was the inland delta of the Niger River, where large crops of rice were grown using the river's naturally fertilizing annual floods. The rice was probably sold to the trading cities along the Niger bend.

The uneven distribution of rainfall during the year was one of the great challenges faced by many Asian farmers. Unlike pastoralists who could move their herds to the water, they had to find ways of moving the water to their crops. Farmers in Vietnam, Java, Malaya, and Burma constructed special water-control systems to irrigate their terraced rice paddies. Villagers in southeast India built a series of stone and earthen dams across rivers to store water for gradual release through elaborate irrigation canals. Over many generations these canals were extended to irrigate more and more land. Although the dams and channels covered large areas, they were relatively simple structures that local people could keep working by routine maintenance. Other water-storage and irrigation systems were constructed in other parts of India in this period.

As had been true since the days of the first river-valley civilizations (see Chapter 1), the largest irrigation systems in the tropics were government public works projects. The **Delhi° Sultanate** (1206–1526) introduced extensive new water-control systems in northern India. Ibn Battuta commented appreciatively on one reservoir that supplied the city of Delhi with water. He reported that enterprising farmers planted sugar cane, cucumbers, and melons along the reservoir's rim as the water level fell during the dry season. A sultan in the fourteenth century built a network of irrigation canals in the Ganges plain that were not surpassed in size until the nineteenth century. These irrigation systems made it possible to grow crops throughout the year.

Since the tenth century the Indian Ocean island of Ceylon (modern Sri Lanka°) had been home to the greatest concentration of irrigation reservoirs and canals

Tuareg (TWAH-reg) **Fulani** (foo-LAH-nee)

Delhi (DEL-ee) **Sri Lanka** (sree LAHNG-kuh)

in the world. These facilities enabled the powerful Sinhalese^o kingdom in arid northern Ceylon to support a large population. There was another impressive waterworks in Southeast Asia, where a system of reservoirs and canals served Cambodia's capital city Angkor^o.

These complex systems were vulnerable to disruption. Between 1250 and 1400 the irrigation complex in Ceylon fell into ruin when invaders from South India disrupted the Sinhalese government. The population of Ceylon then suffered from the effects of malaria, a tropical disease spread by mosquitoes breeding in the irrigation canals. The great Cambodian system fell into ruin in the fifteenth century when the government that maintained it collapsed. Neither system was ever rebuilt.

The vulnerability of complex irrigation systems built by powerful governments suggests an instructive contrast. Although village-based irrigation systems could be damaged by invasion and natural calamity, they usually bounced back because they were the product of local initiative, not centralized direction, and they depended on simpler technologies.

Mineral Resources

Throughout the tropics people mined and refined metal-rich ores, which skilled metalworkers turned into tools, weapons, and decorative objects. The more valuable metals, copper and gold, became important in long-distance trade.

Iron was the most abundant and useful of the metals worked in the tropics. Farmers depended on iron hoes, axes, and knives to clear and cultivate their fields and to open up parts of the rain forests of coastal West Africa and Southeast Asia for farming. Iron-tipped spears and arrows improved hunting success. Needles facilitated making clothes and leather goods; nails held timbers together. Indian metalsmiths were renowned for making strong and beautiful swords. In Africa the ability of iron smelters and blacksmiths to transform metal fostered a belief in their magical powers.

Copper and its alloys were of special importance in Africa. In the Copperbelt of southeastern Africa, the refined metal was cast into large X-shaped ingots (metal castings). Local coppersmiths worked these copper ingots into wire and decorative objects. Ibn Battuta described a town in the western Sudan that produced two sizes of copper bars that were used as a currency in place of coins. Skilled artisans in West Africa cast copper and brass (an alloy of copper and zinc) statues and heads that are considered among the masterpieces of world



King and Queen of Ife This copper-alloy work shows the royal couple of the Yoruba kingdom of Ife, the oldest and most sacred of the Yoruba kingdoms of southwestern Nigeria. The casting dates to the period between 1100 and 1500, except for the reconstruction of the male's face, the original of which shattered in 1957 when the road builder who found it accidentally struck it with his pick. (Andre Held, Switzerland)

art. These works were made by the "lost-wax" method, in which molten metal melts a thin layer of wax sandwiched between clay forms, replacing the "lost" wax with hard metal.

Africans exported large quantities of gold across the Sahara, the Red Sea, and the Indian Ocean. Some gold came from stream beds along the upper Niger River and farther south in modern Ghana^o. In the hills south of the

Sinhalese (sin-huh-LEEZ) Angkor (ANG-kor)

Ghana (GAH-nuh)

Zambezi° River (in modern Zimbabwe°) archaeologists have discovered thousands of mine shafts, dating from 1200, that were sunk up to 100 feet (30 meters) into the ground to get at gold ores. Although panning for gold remained important in the streams descending from the mountains of northern India, the gold and silver mines in India seem to have been exhausted by this period. For that reason, Indians imported considerable quantities of gold from Southeast Asia and Africa for jewelry and temple decoration.

Although they are rarely given credit for it, ordinary farmers, fishermen, herders, metalworkers, and others made possible the rise of powerful states and profitable commercial systems. Caravans could not have crossed the Sahara without the skilled guidance of desert pastoralists. The seafaring skills of the coastal fishermen underlay the trade of the Indian Ocean. Cities and empires rested on the food, labors, and taxes of these unsung heroes.

NEW ISLAMIC EMPIRES

The empires of Mali in West Africa and Delhi in South Asia were the largest and richest tropical states of the period between 1200 and 1500. Both utilized Islamic administrative and military systems introduced from the Islamic heartland, but in other ways these two Muslim sultanates were very different. **Mali** was founded by an indigenous African dynasty that had earlier adopted Islam through the peaceful influence of Muslim merchants and scholars. In contrast, the Delhi Sultanate was founded and ruled by invading Turkish and Afghan Muslims. Mali's wealth depended heavily on its participation in the trans-Saharan trade, but long-distance trade played only a minor role in Delhi.

Mali in the Western Sudan

The consolidation of the Middle East and North Africa under Muslim rule during the seventh and eighth centuries (see Chapter 8) greatly stimulated exchanges along the routes that crossed the Sahara. In the centuries that followed, the faith of Muhammad gradually spread to the lands south of the desert, which the Arabs called the *bilad al-sudan*°, “land of the blacks.”

The role of force in spreading Islam south of the Sahara was limited. Muslim Berbers invading out of the

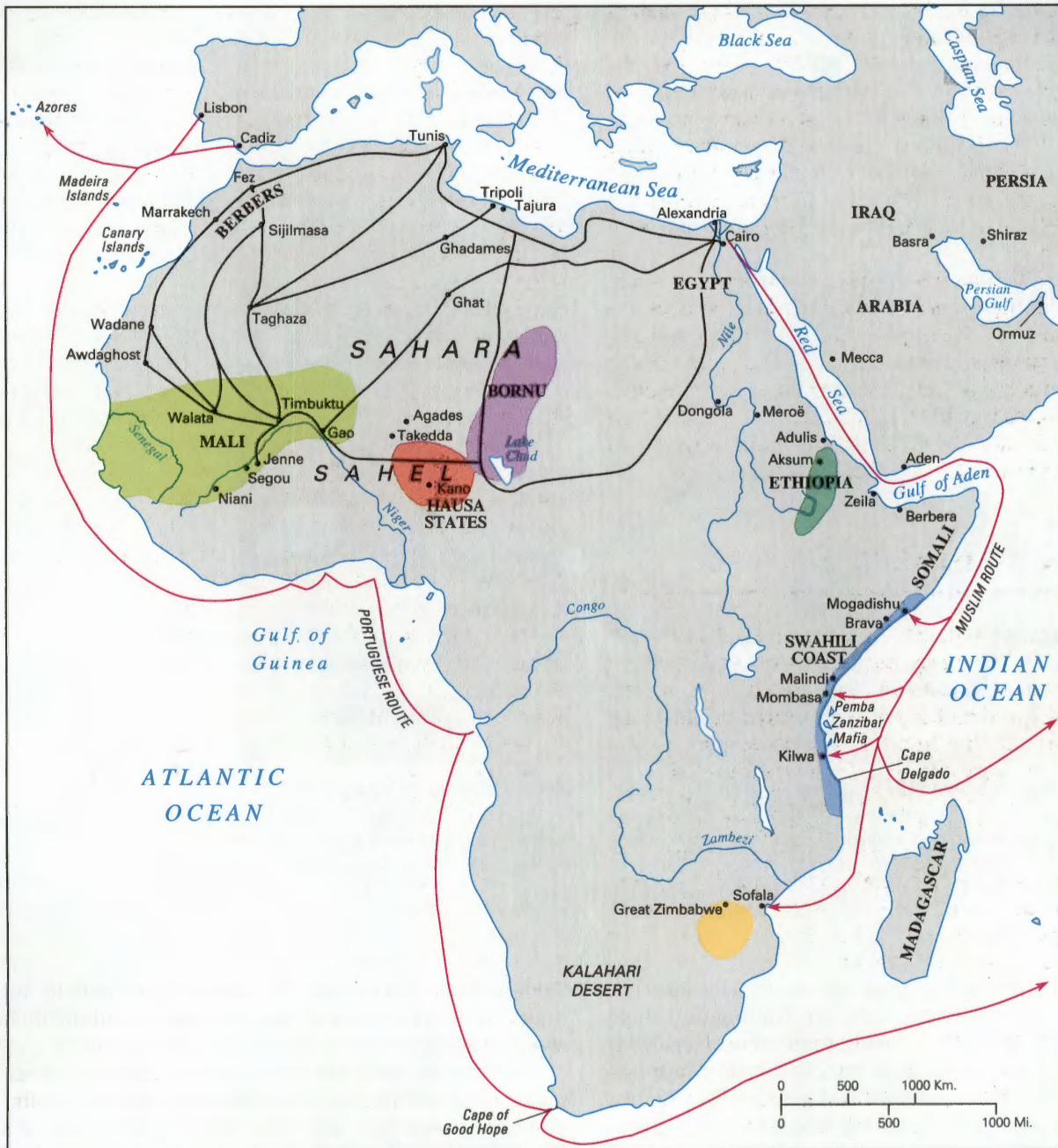
desert in 1076 caused the collapse of Ghana, the empire that preceded Mali in the western Sudan (see Chapter 7), but their conquest did little to spread Islam. To the east, the Muslim attacks that destroyed the Christian Nubian kingdoms on the upper Nile in the late thirteenth century opened that area to Muslim influences, but Christian Ethiopia successfully withstood Muslim advances. Instead, the usual pattern for the spread of Islam south of the Sahara was through gradual and peaceful conversion. The expansion of commercial contacts in the western Sudan and on the East African coast greatly promoted the process of conversion. African converts found the teachings of Islam meaningful, and rulers and merchants found that the administrative, legal, and economic aspects of Islamic traditions suited their interests. The first sub-Saharan African ruler to adopt the new faith was in Takrur° in the far western Sudan, about 1030.

Shortly after 1200 Takrur expanded in importance under King Sumanguru°. Then in about 1240 Sundiata°, the upstart leader of the Malinke° people, handed Sumanguru a major defeat. Even though both leaders were Muslims, the Malinke epic sagas recall their battles as the clash of two powerful magicians, suggesting how much older beliefs shaped popular thought. The sagas say that Sumanguru was able to appear and disappear at will, assume dozens of shapes, and catch arrows in mid-flight. Sundiata defeated Sumanguru's much larger forces through superior military maneuvers and by successfully wounding his adversary with a special arrow that robbed him of his magical powers. This victory was followed by others that created Sundiata's Mali empire (see Map 13.2).

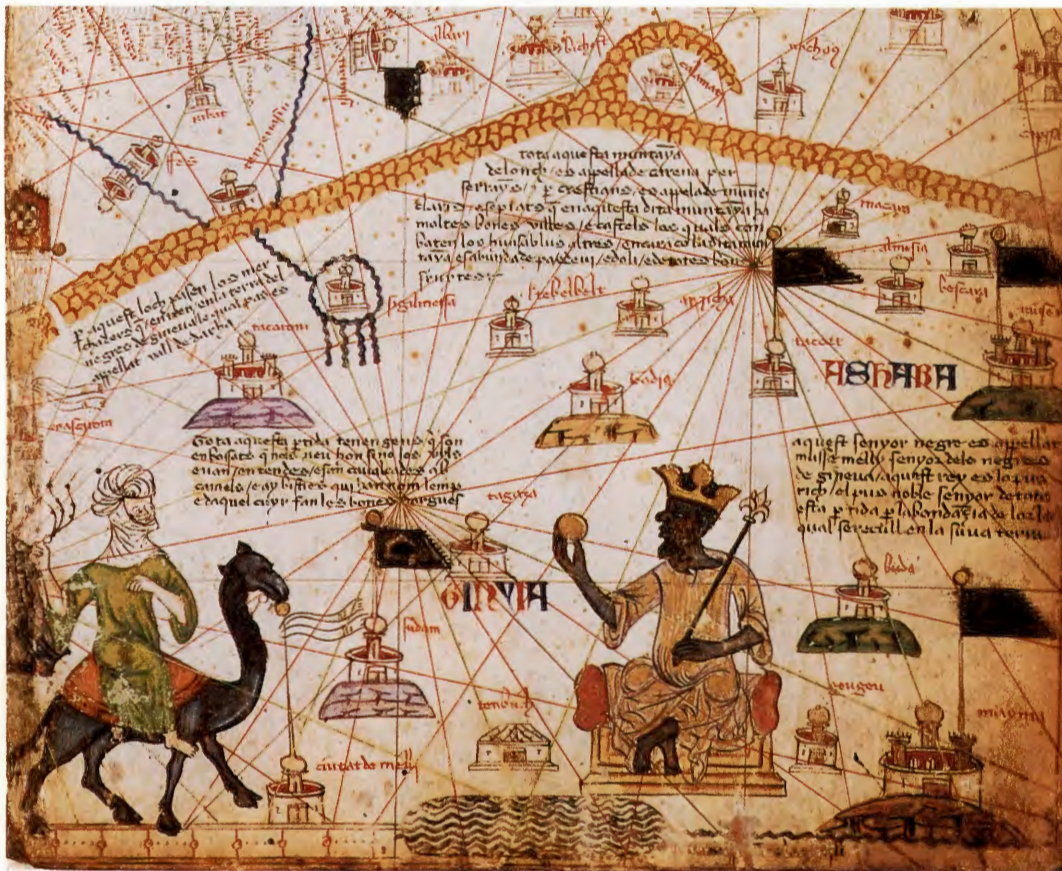
Like Ghana before it, Mali depended on a well-developed agricultural base and control of the lucrative regional and trans-Saharan trade routes. But Mali differed from Ghana in two ways. First, it was much larger. Mali controlled not only the core trading area of the upper Niger but the gold fields of the Niger headwaters to the southwest as well. Second, from the beginning its rulers were Muslims who fostered the spread of Islam among the political and trading elite of the empire. Control of the important gold and copper trades and contacts with North African Muslim traders gave Mali and its rulers unprecedented prosperity. The pilgrimage to Mecca of the ruler **Mansa Kankan Musa**° (r. 1312–1337), in fulfillment of his personal duty as a Muslim, also gave him an opportunity to display Mali's exceptional wealth. As befitted a powerful ruler, he

Zambezi (zam-BEE-zee) **Zimbabwe** (zim-BAHB-way)
bilad al-sudan (bih-LAD uhs-soo-DAN)

Takrur (TAHK-roor) **Sumanguru** (soo-münn-GOO-roo)
Sundiata (soon-JAH-tuh) **Malinke** (muh-LING-kay)
Mansa Kankan Musa (MAHN-suh KAHN-kahn MOO-suh)



Map 13.2 Africa, 1200–1500 Many African states had beneficial links to the trade that crossed the Sahara and the Indian Ocean. Before 1500, sub-Saharan Africa's external ties were primarily with the Islamic world.



Map of the Western Sudan (1375) A Jewish geographer on the Mediterranean island of Majorca drew this lavish map in 1375, incorporating all that was known in Europe about the rest of the world. This portion of the Catalan Atlas shows a North African trader approaching the king of Mali, who holds a gold nugget in one hand and a golden scepter in the other. A caption identifies the black ruler as Mansa Musa, "the richest and noblest king in all the land." (Bibliothèque Nationale de France)

departed in 1324 with a large entourage. Besides his senior wife and 500 of her ladies in waiting and their slaves, according to one account, there were also 60,000 porters and a vast caravan of camels carrying supplies and provisions. For purchases and gifts he took eighty packages of gold each weighing 122 ounces (3.8 kilograms). In addition, 500 slaves each carried a golden staff. Mansa Musa was so lavish with his gifts when the entourage passed through Cairo that the value of gold there remained depressed for years.

After his return from the pilgrimage in 1325, Mansa Musa was eager to promote the religious and cultural influence of Islam in his empire. He built new mosques and opened Quranic schools in the cities along the Niger bend. When Ibn Battuta visited Mali from 1352 to 1354, during the reign of Mansa Musa's successor Mansa

Suleiman° (r. 1341–1360), he praised the Malians for their faithful recitation of Islamic prayers and for their zeal in teaching children the Quran.

Ibn Battuta also had high praise for Mali's government. He reported that "complete and general safety" prevailed in the vast territories ruled by Suleiman and that foreign travelers had no reason to fear being robbed by thieves or having their goods confiscated if they died. (For Ibn Battuta's account of the sultan's court and his subjects' respect see Diversity and Dominance: Personal Styles of Rule in India and Mali.)

Two centuries after Sundiata founded the empire, Mali began to disintegrate. When Mansa Suleiman's successors proved to be less able rulers, rebellions broke out

Mansa Suleiman (MAHN-suh SOO-lay-mahn)

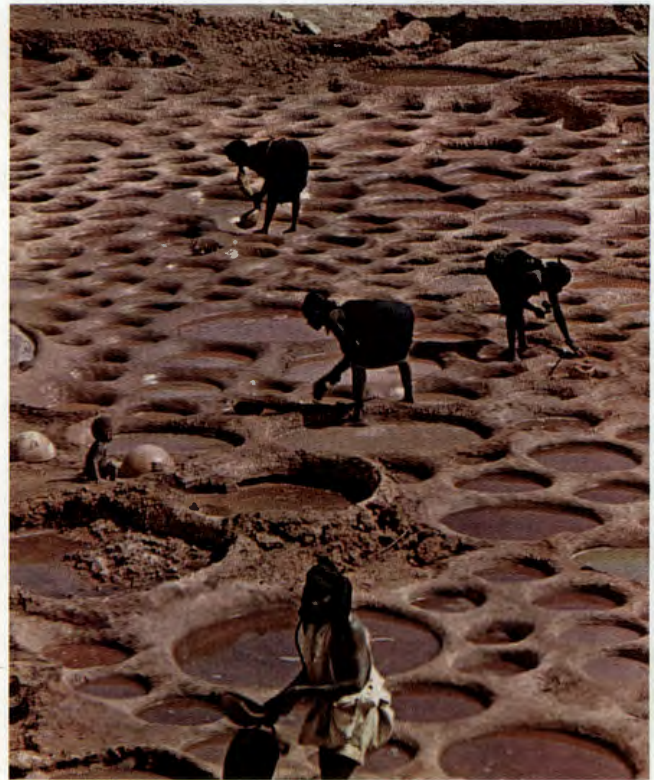
among the diverse peoples who had been subjected to Malinke rule. Avid for Mali's wealth, other groups attacked from without. The desert Tuareg retook their city of Timbuktu° in 1433. By 1500 the rulers of Mali had dominion over little more than the Malinke heartland.

The cities of the upper Niger survived Mali's collapse, but some of the western Sudan's former trade and intellectual life moved east to other African states in the central Sudan. Shortly after 1450 the rulers of several of the Hausa city-states adopted Islam as their official religion. The Hausa states were also able to increase their importance as manufacturing and trading centers, becoming famous for their cotton textiles and leatherworking. Also expanding in the late fifteenth century was the central Sudanic state of Kanem-Bornu°. It was descended from the ancient kingdom of Kanem, whose rulers had accepted Islam in about 1085. At its peak about 1250, Kanem had absorbed the state of Bornu south and west of Lake Chad and gained control of important trade routes crossing the Sahara. As Kanem-Bornu's armies conquered new territories in the late fifteenth century, they also spread the rule of Islam. —

The Delhi Sultanate in India

The arrival of Islam in India was more violent than in West Africa. Having long before lost the defensive unity of the Gupta Empire (see Chapter 6), the divided states of northwest India were subject to raids by Afghan warlords beginning in the early eleventh century. Motivated by a wish to spread their Islamic faith and by a desire for plunder, the raiders looted Hindu and Buddhist temples of their gold and jewels, kidnapped women for their harems, and slew Indian defenders by the thousands.

In the last decades of the twelfth century a new Turkish dynasty mounted a furious assault that succeeded in capturing the important northern Indian cities of Lahore and Delhi. The Muslim warriors could fire powerful crossbows from the backs of their galloping horses thanks to the use of iron stirrups. One partisan Muslim chronicler recorded, "The city [Delhi] and its vicinity was freed from idols and idol-worship, and in the sanctuaries of the images of the [Hindu] Gods, mosques were raised by the worshippers of one God."² The invaders' strength was bolstered by a ready supply of Turkish adventurers from Central Asia eager to follow individual leaders and by the unifying force of their common religious faith. Although Indians fought back bravely, their small states,



Salt Making in the Central Sahara For many centuries, people have extracted salt from the saline soils of places like Tegguida N'Tisent. Spring water is poured into shallow pits to dissolve the salt. The desert sun soon evaporates the water, leaving pure salt behind. (Afrique Photo, Cliché Naud, Paris)

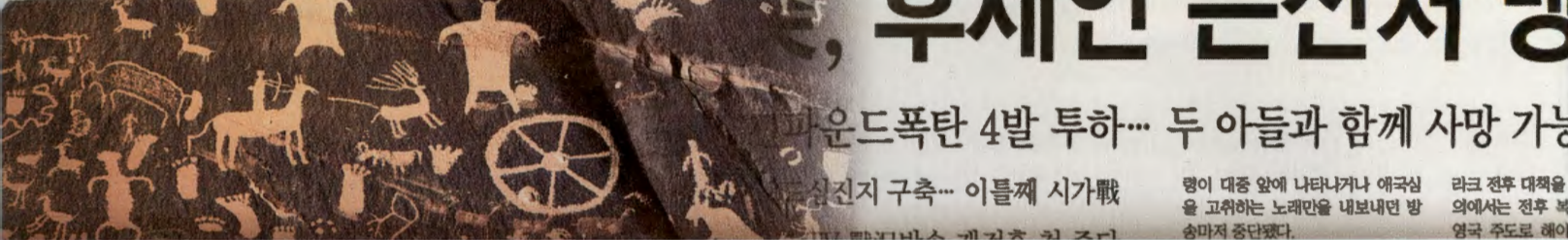
often at war with one another, were unable to present an effective united front.

Between 1206 and 1236, the Muslim invaders extended their rule over the Hindu princes and chiefs in much of northern India. Sultan Iltutmish° (r. 1211–1236) consolidated the conquest of northern India in a series of military expeditions that made his empire the largest state in India (see Map 13.3). He also secured official recognition of the Delhi Sultanate as a Muslim state by the caliph of Baghdad. Although the looting and destruction of temples, enslavement, and massacres continued, especially on the frontiers of the empire, the Muslim invaders gradually underwent a transformation from brutal conquerors to more benign rulers. Muslim commanders accorded protection to the conquered, freeing them from persecution in return for payment of a special tax. Yet Hindus never forgot the intolerance and destruction of their first contacts with the invaders.

Timbuktu (tim-buk-TOO)

Kanem-Bornu (KAH-nuhm-BOR-noo)

Iltutmish (il-TOOT-mish)



우세인 근신서 강
 파운드폭탄 4발 투하... 두 아들과 함께 사망 가능
 삼진지 구축... 이틀째 시가戰
 령이 대중 앞에 나타나거나 애국심
 을 고취하는 노래만을 내보내던 방
 송마저 중단됐다.
 리크 전후 대책을
 의에서는 전후 복
 영국 주도로 해이

DIVERSITY AND DOMINANCE

PERSONAL STYLES OF RULE IN INDIA AND MALI

Ibn Battuta wrote vivid descriptions of the powerful men who dominated the Muslim states he visited. Although his accounts are explicitly about the rulers, they also raise important issues about their relations with their subjects. The following account of Sultan Muhammad ibn Tughluq of Delhi may be read as a treatise on the rights and duties of rulers and ways in which individual personalities shaped diverse governing styles.

Muhammad is a man who, above all others, is fond of making presents and shedding blood. There may always be seen at his gate some poor person becoming rich, or some living one condemned to death. His generous and brave actions, and his cruel and violent deeds, have obtained notoriety among the people. In spite of this, he is the most humble of men, and the one who exhibits the greatest equity. The ceremonies of religion are dear to his ears, and he is very severe in respect of prayer and the punishment which follows its neglect. . . .

When drought prevailed throughout India and Sind, . . . the Sultan gave orders that provisions for six months should be supplied to all the inhabitants of Delhi from the royal granaries. . . . The officers of justice made registers of the people of the different streets, and these being sent up, each person received sufficient provisions to last him for six months.

The Sultan, notwithstanding all I have said about his humility, his justice, his kindness to the poor, and his boundless generosity, was much given to bloodshed. It rarely happened that the corpse of some one who had been killed was not seen at the gate of his palace. I have often seen men killed and their bodies left there. One day I went to his palace and my horse shied. I looked before me, and I saw a white heap on the ground, and when I asked what it was, one of my companions said it was the trunk of a man cut into three pieces. The sovereign punished little faults like great ones, and spared neither the learned, the religious, nor the noble. Every day hundreds of individuals were brought chained into his hall of audience; their hands tied to their necks and their feet bound together. Some of them were killed, and others were tortured, or well beaten

The Sultan has a brother named Masud Khan, [who] was one of the handsomest fellows I have even seen. The king sus-

pected him of intending to rebel, so he questioned him, and, under fear of the torture, Masud confessed the charge. Indeed, every one who denies charges of this nature, which the Sultan brings against him, is put to the torture, and most people prefer death to being tortured. The Sultan had his brother's head cut off in the palace, and the corpse, according to custom, was left neglected for three days in the same place. The mother of Masud had been stoned two years before in the same place on a charge of debauchery or adultery. . . .

One of the most serious charges against this Sultan is that he forced all the inhabitants of Delhi to leave their homes. [After] the people of Delhi wrote letters full of insults and invectives against [him,] the Sultan . . . decided to ruin Delhi, so he purchased all the houses and inns from the inhabitants, paid them the price, and then ordered them to remove to Daulatabad. . . .

The greater part of the inhabitants departed, but [h]is slaves found two men in the streets: one was paralyzed, the other blind. They were brought before the sovereign, who ordered the paralytic to be shot away from a *manjanik* [catapult], and the blind man to be dragged from Delhi to Daulatabad, a journey of forty days' distance. The poor wretch fell to pieces during the journey, and only one of his legs reached Daulatabad. All of the inhabitants of Delhi left; they abandoned their baggage and their merchandize, and the city remained a perfect desert.

A person in whom I felt confidence assured me that the Sultan mounted one evening upon the roof of his palace, and, casting his eyes over the city of Delhi, in which there was neither fire, smoke, nor light, he said, "Now my heart is satisfied, and my feelings are appeased." . . . When we entered this capital, we found it in the state which has been described. It was empty, abandoned, and had but a small population.

In his description of Mansa Suleiman of Mali in 1353, Ibn Battuta places less emphasis on personality, a difference that may only be due to the fact that he had little personal contact with him. He stresses the huge social distance between the ruler and the ruled, between the master and the slave, and goes on to tell more of the ways in which Islam had altered life in Mali's cities as well as complaining about customs that the introduction of Islam had not changed.

The sultan of Mali is *Mansa Suleiman*, *mansa* meaning sultan, and Suleiman being his proper name. He is miserly, not a man from which 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 . . . to which the commanders, doctors, *qadi* and preacher were invited, and I went along with them. . . .

On certain days the sultan holds audiences in the palace yard, where there is a platform under a tree . . . carpeted with silk, [over which] is raised the umbrella, . . . 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 skullcap, 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 [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 and looks round the assembly, then ascends [the platform] 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 at a run to summon the sovereign's deputy and the military commanders, who enter and sit down. . . .

The blacks are of all people the most submissive to their king and the most abject in their behavior before him. They swear by his name, saying *Mansa Suleiman ki* [by Mansa Suleiman's law]. 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 that they did not blind themselves.

Among the admirable qualities of these people, the following are to be noted:

1. The small number of acts of injustice that one finds there; for the blacks are of all people those who most abhor injustice. The sultan pardons no one who is guilty of it.
2. The complete and general safety one enjoys throughout the land. The traveller has no more reason than the man who stays at home to fear brigands, thieves, or ravishers.
3. The blacks do not confiscate the goods of white men [i.e., North Africans and the Middle Easterners] who die in their country, not even when these consist of big

treasure, They deposit them, on the contrary, with a man of confidence among the whites until those who have a right to the goods present themselves and take possession.

4. They make all their prayers punctually; they assiduously attend their meetings of the faithful, and punish their children if these should fail in this. On Fridays, anyone who is late at the mosque will find nowhere to pray, the crowd is so great. . . .
5. The blacks wear fine white garments on Fridays. If by chance a man has no more than one shirt or a soiled tunic, at least he washes it before putting it on to go to public prayer.
6. They zealously learn the Koran by heart. Those children who are neglectful in this are put in chains until they have memorized the Koran by heart. . . .

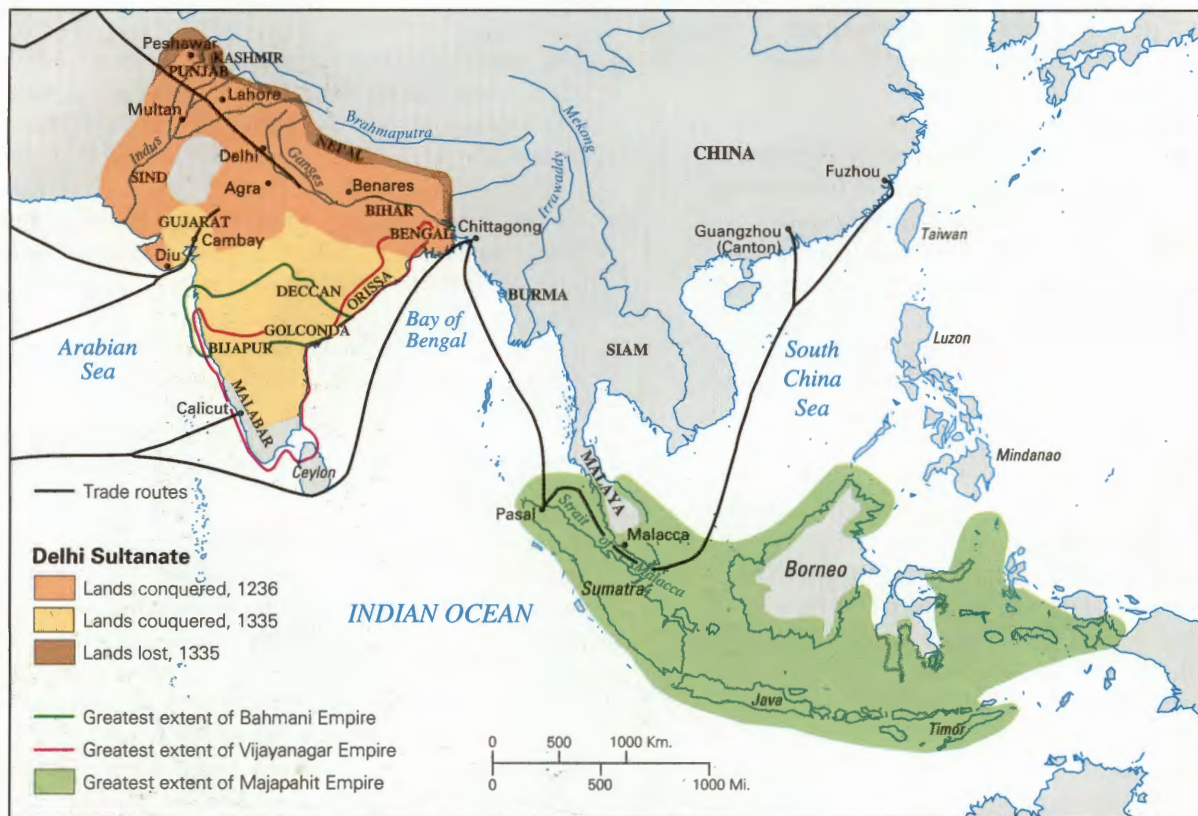
But these people have some deplorable customs, as for example:

1. Women servants, slave women, and young girls go about quite naked, not even covering their sexual parts. I saw many like this during Ramadan. . . .
2. Women go naked in the sultan's presence, too, without even a veil; his daughters also go about naked. On the twenty-seventh night of Ramadan I saw about a hundred women slaves coming out of the sultan's palace with food and they were naked. Two daughters of the sultan were with them, and these had no veil either, although they had big breasts.
3. The blacks throw dust and cinders on their heads as a sign of good manners and respect.
4. They have buffoons who appear before the sultan when his poets are reciting their praise songs.
5. And then a good number of the blacks eat the flesh of dogs and donkeys.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. How would the actions of these rulers have enhanced their authority? To what extent do their actions reflect Islamic influences?
2. Although Ibn Battuta tells what the rulers did, can you imagine how one of their subjects would have described his or her perception of the same events and customs?
3. Which parts of Ibn Battuta's descriptions seem to be objective and believable? Which parts are more reflective of his personal values?

Source: The first excerpt is from Henry M. Elliot, *The History of India as Told by Its Own Historians* (London: Trübner and Co., 1869-1871) 3:611-614. The second excerpt is adapted from H. A. R. Gibb, ed., *Selections from the Travels of Ibn Battuta in Asia and Africa, 1325-1354* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1929), pp. 326-328. Copyright © 1929. Reprinted with permission of the Cambridge University Press.



Map 13.3 South and Southeast Asia, 1200–1500 The rise of new empires and the expansion of maritime trade reshaped the lives of many tropical Asians.

To the astonishment of his ministers, Iltutmish passed over his weak and pleasure-seeking sons and designated his beloved and talented daughter Raziya° as his heir. When they questioned the unprecedented idea of a woman ruling a Muslim state, he said, “My sons are devoted to the pleasures of youth: no one of them is qualified to be king. . . . There is no one more competent to guide the State than my daughter.

In the event, her brother—whose great delight was riding his elephant through the bazaar, showering the crowds with coins—ruled ineptly for seven months before the ministers relented and put Raziya (r. 1236–1240) on the throne.

A chronicler who knew her explained why the reign of this able ruler lasted less than four years:

Sultan Raziya was a great monarch. She was wise, just, and generous, a benefactor to her kingdom, a dispenser of justice, the protector of her subjects, and the leader of her armies. She was endowed with all

the qualities befitting a king, but that she was not born of the right sex, and so in the estimation of men all these virtues were worthless. May God have mercy upon her!³

Doing her best to prove herself a proper king, Raziya dressed like a man and rode at the head of her troops atop an elephant. Nothing, however, could overcome the prejudice against a woman ruler. In the end the Turkish chiefs imprisoned her. Soon after she escaped, she died at the hands of a robber.

After a half-century of stagnation and rebellion, the ruthless but efficient policies of Sultan Ala-ud-din Khalji° (r. 1296–1316) increased his control over the empire’s outlying provinces. Successful frontier raids and high taxes kept his treasury full; wage and price controls in Delhi kept down the cost of maintaining a large army; and a network of spies stifled intrigue. When a Mongol threat from the northeast eased, Ala-ud-din’s forces extended the sultanate’s southern flank, seizing the rich

Raziya (rah-ZEE-uh)

Ala-ud-din Khalji (uh-LAH-uh-DEEN KAL-jee)

Meenakshi Temple, Madurai, India Some 15,000 pilgrims a day visit the large Hindu temple of Meenakshi (the fish-eyed goddess) in the ancient holy city of Madurai in India's southeastern province of Tamil Nadu. The temple complex dates from at least 1000 C.E., although the elaborately painted statues of these gopuram (gate towers) have been rebuilt and restored many times. The largest gopura rises 150 feet (46 meters) above the ground. (Jean Louis NOU/akg-images)



trading state of **Gujarat**° in 1298. Then troops drove southward, briefly seizing the southern tip of the Indian peninsula.

At the time of Ibn Battuta's visit, Delhi's ruler was Sultan Muhammad ibn Tughluq° (r. 1325–1351), who received his visitor at his palace's celebrated Hall of a Thousand Pillars. The world traveler praised the sultan's piety and generosity, but also recounted his cruelties (see Diversity and Dominance: Personal Styles of Rule in India and Mali). In keeping with these complexities, the sultan resumed a policy of aggressive expansion that enlarged the sultanate to its greatest extent. He balanced that policy with religious toleration intended to win the loyalty of Hindus and other non-Muslims. He even attended Hindu religious festivals. However, his successor Firuz Shah° (r. 1351–1388) alienated powerful Hindus by taxing the Brahmins, preferring to cultivate good relations with the Muslim elite. Muslim chroniclers praised

him for constructing forty mosques, thirty colleges, and a hundred hospitals.

A small minority in a giant land, the Turkish rulers relied on terror more than on toleration to keep their subjects submissive, on harsh military reprisals to put down rebellion, and on pillage and high taxes to sustain the ruling elite in luxury and power. Though little different from most other large states of the time (including Mali) in being more a burden than a benefit to most of its subjects, the sultanate never lost the disadvantage of foreign origins and alien religious identity. Nevertheless, over time, the sultans incorporated some Hindus into their administration. Some members of the ruling elite also married women from prominent Hindu families, though the brides had to become Muslims.

Personal and religious rivalries within the Muslim elite, as well as the discontent of the Hindus, threatened the Delhi Sultanate with disintegration whenever it showed weakness and finally hastened its end. In the mid-fourteenth century Muslim nobles challenged the sultan's dominion and successfully established the

Gujarat (goo-juh-RAHT) **Tughluq** (toog-LOOK)
Firuz Shah (fuh-ROOZ shah)

Bahmani° kingdom (1347–1482), which controlled the Deccan Plateau. To defend themselves against the southward push of Bahmani armies, the Hindu states of southern India united to form the Vijayanagar° Empire (1336–1565), which at its height controlled the rich trading ports on both coasts and held Ceylon as a tributary state.

The rulers of Vijayanagar and the Bahmani turned a blind eye to religious differences when doing so favored their interests. Bahmani rulers sought to balance devotion to Muslim domination with the practical importance of incorporating the leaders of the majority Hindu population into the government, marrying Hindu wives, and appointing Brahmins to high offices. Vijayanagar rulers hired Muslim cavalry specialists and archers to strengthen their military forces, and they formed an alliance with the Muslim-ruled state of Gujarat.

By 1351, when all of South India was independent of Delhi's rule, much of north India was also in rebellion. In the east, Bengal successfully broke away from the sultanate in 1338, becoming a center of the mystical Sufi tradition of Islam (see Chapter 8). In the west, Gujarat had regained its independence by 1390. The weakening of Delhi's central authority revived Mongol interests in the area. In 1398 the Turko-Mongol leader Timur (see Chapter 12) seized the opportunity to invade and captured the city of Delhi. When his armies withdrew the next year with vast quantities of pillage and tens of thousands of captives, the largest city in southern Asia lay empty and in ruins. The Delhi Sultanate never recovered.

For all its shortcomings, the Delhi Sultanate was important in the development of centralized political authority in India. It established a bureaucracy headed by the sultan, who was aided by a prime minister and provincial governors. There were efforts to improve food production, promote trade and economic growth, and establish a common currency. Despite the many conflicts that Muslim conquest and rule provoked, Islam gradually acquired a permanent place in South Asia.

INDIAN OCEAN TRADE

The maritime network that stretched across the Indian Ocean from the Islamic heartland of Iran and Arabia to Southeast Asia connected to Europe, Africa, and China. The Indian Ocean region was the world's richest maritime trading network and an area of rapid Muslim expansion.

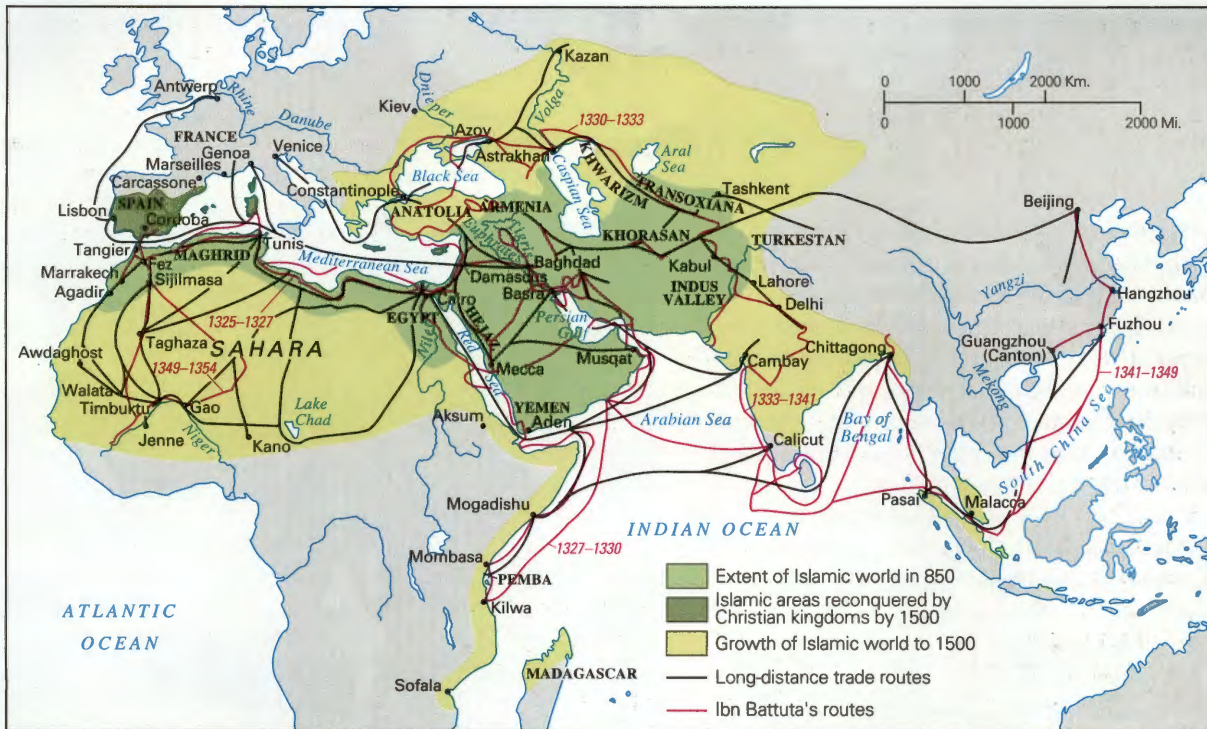
Monsoon Mariners

The rising prosperity of Asian, European, and African states stimulated the expansion of trade in the Indian Ocean after 1200. Some of the growth was in luxuries for the wealthy—precious metals and jewels, rare spices, fine textiles, and other manufactures. The construction of larger ships also made shipments of bulk cargoes of ordinary cotton textiles, pepper, food grains (rice, wheat, barley), timber, horses, and other goods profitable. When the collapse of the Mongol Empire in the fourteenth century disrupted overland trade routes across Central Asia, the Indian Ocean routes assumed greater strategic importance in tying together the peoples of Eurasia and Africa.

Some goods were transported from one end of this trading network to the other, but few ships or crews made a complete circuit. Instead the Indian Ocean trade was divided into two legs: one from the Middle East across the Arabian Sea to India, and the other from India across the Bay of Bengal to Southeast Asia (see Map 13.4).

The characteristic cargo and passenger ship of the Arabian Sea was the **dhow**° (see Environment and Technology: The Indian Ocean Dhow). Ports on the Malabar coast of southwestern India constructed many of these vessels, which grew from an average capacity of 100 tons in 1200 to 400 tons in 1500. On a typical expedition, a dhow might sail west from India to Arabia and Africa on the northeast monsoon winds (December to March) and return on the southwest monsoons (April to August). Small dhows kept the coast in sight. Relying on the stars to guide them, skilled pilots steered large vessels by the quicker route straight across the water. A large dhow could sail from the Red Sea to mainland Southeast Asia in from two to four months, but few did so. Instead, cargoes and passengers normally sailed eastward to India in junks, which dominated travel in the Bay of Bengal and the South China Sea.

The largest, most technologically advanced, and most seaworthy vessel of this time, the junk had been developed in China. Junks were built from heavy spruce or fir planks held together with enormous nails. The space below the deck was divided into watertight compartments to minimize flooding in case of damage to the ship's hull. According to Ibn Battuta, the largest junks had twelve sails made of bamboo and carried a crew of a thousand men, of whom four hundred were soldiers. A large junk might have up to a hundred passenger cabins and could carry a cargo of over 1,000 tons. Chinese junks dominated China's foreign shipping to Southeast Asia



Map 13.4 Arteries of Trade and Travel in the Islamic World, to 1500 Ibn Battuta's journeys across Africa and Asia made use of land and sea routes along which Muslim traders and the Islamic faith had long traveled.

and India, but not all of the junks that plied these waters were Chinese. During the fifteenth century, vessels of this type came from shipyards in Bengal and Southeast Asia and were sailed by local crews.

The trade of the Indian Ocean was decentralized and cooperative. Commercial interests, rather than political authorities, tied several distinct regional networks together (see Map 13.4). Eastern Africa supplied gold from inland areas. Ports around the Arabian peninsula shipped horses and goods from the northern parts of the Middle East, the Mediterranean, and eastern Europe. At the center of the Indian Ocean trade, merchants in the cities of coastal India received goods from east and west, sold some locally, passed others along, and added vast quantities of Indian goods to the trade. The Strait of Malacca, between the eastern end of the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea, was the meeting point of trade from Southeast Asia, China, and the Indian Ocean. In each region certain ports functioned as giant emporia, consolidating goods from smaller ports

and inland areas for transport across the seas. The operation of this complex trading system can best be understood by looking at some of the regions and their emporia in greater detail.

Africa: The Swahili and Zimbabwe

Trade expanded steadily along the East African coast from about 1250, giving rise to between thirty and forty separate city-states by 1500. As a result of this rising prosperity, new masonry buildings, sometimes three or four stories high, replaced many of the mud and thatch African fishing villages. Archaeology reveals the growing presence of imported glass beads, Chinese porcelain, and other exotic goods. As a result of trading contacts, many loan words from Arabic and Persian enriched the language of the coastal Africans, and the first to write in it used Arabic script. The visitors called these people "Swahili," from the Arabic name *sawahil* al-sudan, meaning "shores of the blacks," and the name stuck.

Malacca (meh-LAK-eh)

Swahili (swah-HEE-lee) *sawahil* (suh-WAH-hil)

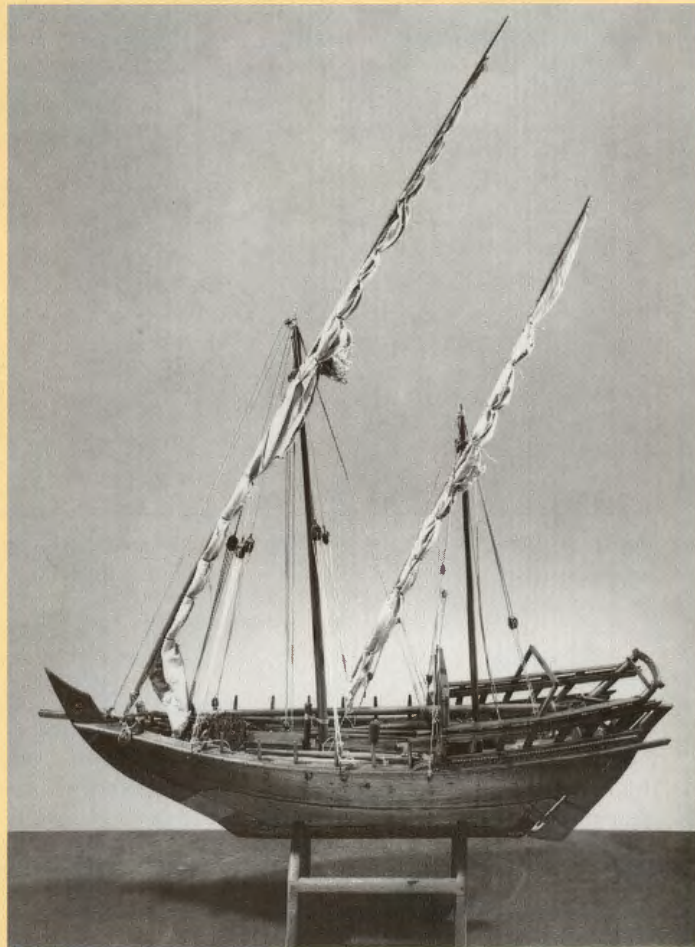
The Indian Ocean Dhow

The sailing vessels that crossed the Indian Ocean shared the diversity of that trading area. The name by which we know them, *dhow*, comes from the Swahili language of the East African coast. The planks of teak from which their hulls were constructed were hewn from the tropical forests of South India and Southeast Asia. Their pilots, who navigated by stars at night, used the ancient technique that Arabs had used to find their way across the desert. Some pilots used a magnetic compass, which originated in China.

Dhows came in various sizes and designs, but all had two distinctive features in common. The first was hull construction. The hulls of dhows consisted of planks that were sewn together, not nailed. Cord made of fiber from the husk of coconuts or other materials was passed through rows of holes drilled in the planks. Because cord is weaker than nails, outsiders considered this shipbuilding technique strange. Marco Polo fancifully suggested that it indicated sailors' fear that large ocean magnets would pull any nails out of their ships. More probable explanations are that pliant sewn hulls were cheaper to build than rigid nailed hulls and were less likely to be damaged if the ships ran aground on coral reefs.

The second distinctive feature of dhows was their triangular (lateen) sails made of palm leaves or cotton. The sails were suspended from tall masts and could be turned to catch the wind.

The sewn hull and lateen sails were technologies developed centuries earlier, but there were two innovations between 1200 and 1500. First, a rudder positioned at the stern (rear end) of the ship replaced the large side oar that formerly had controlled steering. Second, shipbuilders increased the size of dhows to accommodate bulkier cargoes.



Dhow This modern model shows the vessel's main features. (National Maritime Museum, London)



Royal Enclosure, Great Zimbabwe Inside these oval stone walls the rulers of the trading state of Great Zimbabwe lived. Forced to enter the enclosure through a narrow corridor between two high walls, visitors were meant to be awestruck. (Courtesy of the Department of Information, Rhodesia)

At the time of Ibn Battuta's visit, the southern city of Kilwa had displaced Mogadishu as the **Swahili Coast's** most important commercial center. The traveler declared Kilwa "one of the most beautiful and well-constructed towns in the world." He noted that its dark-skinned inhabitants were devout and pious Muslims, and he took special pains to praise their ruler as a man rich in the traditional Muslim virtues of humility and generosity.

Swahili oral traditions associate the coast's commercial expansion with the arrival of Arab and Iranian merchants, but do not say what had attracted them. In Kilwa's case the answer is gold. By the late fifteenth century the city was exporting a ton of gold a year. The gold was mined by inland Africans much farther south. Much of it came from or passed through a powerful state on the plateau south of the Zambezi River, whose capital city is known as **Great Zimbabwe**. At its peak in about 1400, the city, which occupied 193 acres (78 hectares), may have had 18,000 inhabitants.

Between about 1250 and 1450, local African craftsmen built stone structures for Great Zimbabwe's rulers, priests, and wealthy citizens. The largest structure, a walled enclosure the size and shape of a large football stadium, served as the king's court. Its walls of un-mortared stone were up to 17 feet (5 meters) thick and 32 feet (10 meters) high. Inside the walls were many buildings, including a large conical stone tower. The stone ruins of Great Zimbabwe are one of the most famous historical sites in sub-Saharan Africa.

Mixed farming and cattle-herding was Great Zimbabwe's economic base, but, as in Mali, the state's wealth came from long-distance trade. Trade began regionally with copper ingots from the upper Zambezi Valley, salt, and local manufactures. The gold exports into the Indian Ocean in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries brought Zimbabwe to the peak of its political and economic power. However, historians suspect that the city's residents depleted nearby forests for firewood while their

cattle overgrazed surrounding grasslands. The resulting ecological crisis hastened the empire's decline in the fifteenth century.

Arabia: Aden and the Red Sea

The city of **Aden**^o had a double advantage in the Indian Ocean trade. Most of the rest of Arabia was desert, but monsoon winds

brought Aden enough rainfall to supply drinking water to a large population and to grow grain for export. In addition, Aden's location (see Map 13.2) made it a convenient stopover for trade with India, the Persian Gulf, East Africa, and Egypt. Aden's merchants sorted out the goods from one place and sent them on to another: cotton cloth and beads from India, spices from Southeast Asia, horses from Arabia and Ethiopia, pearls from the Red Sea, luxurious manufactures from Cairo, slaves, gold, and ivory from Ethiopia, and grain, opium, and dyes from Aden's own hinterland.

After visiting Mecca in 1331, Ibn Battuta sailed down the Red Sea to Aden, probably wedged among bales of trade goods. His comments on the great wealth of Aden's leading merchants include a story about the slave of one merchant who paid the fabulous sum of 400 dinars for a ram in order to keep the slave of another merchant from buying it. Instead of punishing the slave for this extravagance, the master freed him as a reward for outdoing his rival. Ninety years later a Chinese Muslim visitor, Ma Huan, found "the country . . . rich, and the people numerous," living in stone residences several stories high.

Common commercial interests generally promoted good relations among the different religions and cultures of this region. For example, in the mid-thirteenth century a wealthy Jew from Aden named Yosef settled in Christian Ethiopia, where he acted as an adviser. South Arabia had been trading with neighboring parts of Africa since before the time of King Solomon of Israel. The dynasty that ruled Ethiopia after 1270 claimed descent from Solomon and from the South Arabian princess Sheba. Solomonic Ethiopia's consolidation was associated with a great increase in trade through the Red Sea port of Zeila^o, including slaves, amber, and animal pelts, which went to Aden and on to other destinations.

Friction sometimes arose, however. In the fourteenth century the Sunni Muslim king of Yemen sent materials for the building of a large mosque in Zeila, but the local Somalis (who were Shi'ite Muslims) threw the stones into the sea. The result was a year-long embargo of Zeila ships in Aden. In the late fifteenth century Ethiopia's territorial expansion and efforts to increase

control over the trade provoked conflicts with Muslims who ruled the coastal states of the Red Sea.

India: Gujarat and the Malabar Coast

The state of Gujarat in western India prospered as its ports shared in the expanding trade of the Arabian Sea and the rise of the Delhi Sultanate. Blessed

with a rich agricultural hinterland and a long coastline, Gujarat attracted new trade after the Mongol capture of Baghdad in 1258 disrupted the northern land routes. Gujarat's forcible incorporation into the Delhi Sultanate in 1298 had mixed results. The state suffered from the violence of the initial conquest and from subsequent military crackdowns, but it also prospered from increased trade with Delhi's wealthy ruling class. Independent again after 1390, Gujarat's Muslim rulers extended their control over neighboring Hindu states and regained their preeminent position in the Indian Ocean trade.

The state derived much of its wealth from its export of cotton textiles and indigo to the Middle East and Europe, largely in return for gold and silver. Gujaratis also dominated the trade from India to the Swahili Coast, selling cotton cloth, carnelian beads, and foodstuffs in exchange for ebony, slaves, ivory, and gold. During the fifteenth century traders expanded their trade from Gujarat eastward to the Strait of Malacca. These Gujarati merchants helped spread the Islamic faith among East Indian traders, some of whom even imported specially carved gravestones from Gujarat.

Unlike Kilwa and Aden, Gujarat was important for its manufactures as well as its commerce. According to the thirteenth-century Venetian traveler Marco Polo, Gujarat's leatherworkers dressed enough skins in a year to fill several ships to Arabia and other places and also made beautiful sleeping mats for export to the Middle East "in red and blue leather, exquisitely inlaid with figures of birds and beasts, and skilfully embroidered with gold and silver wire," as well as leather cushions embroidered in gold. Later observers considered the Gujarati city of Cambay the equal of cities in Flanders and northern Italy (see Chapter 14) in the size, skill, and diversity of its textile industries.

Gujarat's cotton, linen, and silk cloth, as well as its carpets and quilts, found a large market in Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia. Cambay also was famous for its polished gemstones, gold jewelry, carved ivory, stone beads, and both natural and artificial pearls. At the height of its prosperity in the fifteenth century, this substantial city's well-laid-out streets and open places boasted fine stone houses with tiled roofs. Al-

Aden (AY-den) **Zeila** (ZEYE-luh)

though most of Gujarat's overseas trade was in the hands of its Muslim residents, members of its Hindu merchant caste profited so much from related commercial activities that their wealth and luxurious lives were the envy of other Indians.

More southerly cities on the Malabar Coast duplicated Gujarat's importance in trade and manufacturing. Calicut^o and other coastal cities prospered from their commerce in locally made cotton textiles and locally grown grains and spices, and as clearing-houses for the long-distance trade of the Indian Ocean. The Zamorin^o (ruler) of Calicut presided over a loose federation of its Hindu rulers along the Malabar Coast. As in eastern Africa and Arabia, rulers were generally tolerant of other religious and ethnic groups that were important to commercial profits. Most trading activity was in the hands of Muslims, many originally from Iran and Arabia, who intermarried with local Indian Muslims. Jewish merchants also operated from Malabar's trading cities.

Southeast Asia: The Rise of Malacca

At the eastern end of the Indian Ocean, the principal passage into the South China Sea was through the Strait of Malacca between the Malay

Peninsula and the island of Sumatra (see Map 13.3). As trade increased in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, this commercial choke point became the object of considerable political rivalry. The mainland kingdom of Siam gained control of most of the upper Malay Peninsula, while the Java-based kingdom of Majapahit^o extended its dominion over the lower Malay Peninsula and much of Sumatra. Majapahit, however, was not strong enough to suppress a nest of Chinese pirates who had gained control of the Sumatran city of Palembang^o and preyed on ships sailing through the strait. In 1407 a fleet sent by the Chinese government smashed the pirates' power and took their chief back to China for trial.

Weakened by internal struggles, Majapahit was unable to take advantage of China's intervention. The chief beneficiary of the safer commerce was the newer port of **Malacca** (or Melaka), which dominated the narrowest part of the strait. Under the leadership of a prince from Palembang, Malacca had quickly grown from an obscure fishing village into an important port by means of a series of astute alliances. Nominally subject to the king of Siam, Malacca also secured an alliance with China that was sealed by the visit of the imperial fleet in 1407. The

conversion of an early ruler from Hinduism to Islam helped promote trade with the Gujarati and other Muslim merchants who dominated so much of the Indian Ocean commerce. Merchants also appreciated Malacca's security and low taxes.

Malacca served as the meeting point for traders from India and China as well as an emporium for Southeast Asian trade: rubies and musk from Burma, tin from Malaya, gold from Sumatra, cloves and nutmeg from the Moluccas (or Spice Islands, as Europeans later dubbed them) to the east. Shortly after 1500, when Malacca was at its height, one resident counted eighty-four languages spoken among the merchants gathered there, who came from as far away as Turkey, Ethiopia, and the Swahili Coast. Four officials administered the large foreign merchant communities: one official for the very numerous Gujaratis, one for other Indians and Burmese, one for Southeast Asians, and one for the Chinese and Japanese. Malacca's wealth and its cosmopolitan residents set the standard for luxury in Malaya for centuries to come.

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CHANGE

State growth, commercial expansion, and the spread of Islam between 1200 and 1500 led to many changes in the social and cultural life of tropical peoples. The political and commercial elites at the top of society grew more numerous, as did the slaves who served their needs. The spread of Islamic practices and beliefs affected social and cultural life—witness words of Arabic origin like *Sahara*, *Sudan*, *Swahili*, and *monsoon*—yet local traditions remained important.

Architecture, Learning, and Religion

Social and cultural changes typically affect cities more than rural areas. As Ibn Battuta observed, wealthy merchants and the ruling elite spent lavishly on new mansions, palaces, and places of worship.

Places of worship from this period exhibit fascinating blends of older traditions and new influences. African Muslims strikingly rendered Middle Eastern mosque designs in local building materials: sun-baked clay and wood in the western Sudan, coral stone on the Swahili Coast. Hindu temple architecture influenced the design of mosques, which sometimes incorporated pieces of older structures. The congregational mosque at Cambay, built in 1325, was assembled out of pillars,

Calicut (KAL-ih-cut) **Zamorin** (ZAH-much-ruhn)
Majapahit (mah-jah-PAH-hit) **Palembang** (pah-lem-BONG)



Church of Saint George, Ethiopia King Lalibela, who ruled the Christian kingdom of Ethiopia between about 1180 and 1220, had a series of churches carved out of solid volcanic rock to adorn his kingdom's new capital (also named Lalibela). The church of Saint George, excavated to a depth of 40 feet (13 meters) and hollowed out inside, has the shape of a Greek cross. (S. Sassoon/Robert Harding Picture Library)

porches, and arches taken from sacked Hindu and Jain° temples. The culmination of a mature Hindu-Muslim architecture was the congregational mosque erected at the Gujarati capital of Ahmadabad° in 1423. It had an open courtyard typical of mosques everywhere, but the surrounding verandas incorporated many typical Gujarati details and architectural conventions.

Even more unusual than these Islamic architectural amalgams were the Christian churches of King Lalibela° of Ethiopia, constructed during the first third of the thirteenth century. As part of his new capital, Lalibela directed Ethiopian sculptors to carve eleven churches out of solid rock, each commemorating a sacred Christian site in Jerusalem. These unique structures carried on an old Ethiopian tradition of rock sculpture, though on a far grander scale.

Mosques, churches, and temples were centers of education as well as prayer. Muslims promoted literacy among their sons (and sometimes their daughters) so

that they could read the religion's classic texts. Ibn Battuta reported seeing several boys in Mali who had been placed in chains until they finished memorizing passages of the Quran. In sub-Saharan Africa the spread of Islam was associated with the spread of literacy, which had previously been confined largely to Christian Ethiopia. Initially, literacy was in Arabic, but in time Arabic characters were used to write local languages.

Islam affected literacy less in India, which had an ancient heritage of writing. Arabic served primarily for religious purposes, while Persian became the language of high culture and was used at court. Eventually, **Urdu**° arose, a Persian-influenced literary form of Hindi written in Arabic characters. Muslims also introduced papermaking in India.

Advanced Muslim scholars studied Islamic law, theology, and administration, as well as works of mathematics, medicine, and science, derived in part from ancient Greek writings. By the sixteenth century in the West African city **Timbuktu**, there were over 150 Quranic

Jain (jine) **Ahmadabad** (AH-muhd-ah-bahd)
Lalibela (LAH-lee-BEL-uh)

Urdu (ER-doo)

schools, and advanced classes were held in the mosques and homes of the leading clerics. So great was the demand for books that they were the most profitable item to bring from North Africa to Timbuktu. At his death in 1536 one West African scholar, al-Hajj Ahmed of Timbuktu, possessed some seven hundred volumes, an unusually large library for that time. In Southeast Asia, Malacca became a center of Islamic learning from which scholars spread Islam throughout the region. Other important centers of learning developed in Muslim India, particularly in Delhi, the capital.

Even in conquered lands, such as India, Muslim rulers generally did not impose their religion. Example and persuasion by merchants and Sufis proved a more effective way of making converts. Many Muslims were active missionaries for their faith and worked hard to persuade others of its superiority. Islam's influence spread along regional trade routes from the Swahili Coast, in the Sudan, in coastal India, and in Southeast Asia. Commercial transactions could take place between people of different religions, but the common code of morality and law that Islam provided attracted many local merchants.

Marriage also spread Islam. Single Muslim men who journeyed along the trade routes often married local women and raised their children in the Islamic faith. Since Islam permitted a man to have up to four legal wives and many men took concubines as well, some wealthy men had dozens of children. In large elite Muslim households the many servants, both free and enslaved, were also required to be Muslims. Although such conversions were not fully voluntary, individuals could still find personal fulfillment in the Islamic faith.

In India Islamic invasions practically destroyed the last strongholds of long-declining Buddhism. In 1196 invaders overran the great Buddhist center of study at Nalanda^o in Bihar^o and burned its manuscripts, killing thousands of monks or driving them into exile in Nepal and Tibet. With Buddhism reduced to a minor faith in the land of its birth (see Chapter 7), Islam emerged as India's second most important religion. Hinduism was still India's dominant faith in 1500, but in most of maritime Southeast Asia Islam displaced Hinduism.

Islam also spread among the pastoral Fulani of West Africa and Somali of northeastern Africa, as well as among pastoralists in northwest India. In Bengal Muslim religious figures oversaw the conversion of jungle into farmland and thereby gained many converts among low-caste Hindus who admired the universalism of Islam.

The spread of Islam did not simply mean the replacement of one set of beliefs by another. Islam also adapted to the cultures of the regions it penetrated, developing African, Indian, and Indonesian varieties.

Social and Gender Distinctions

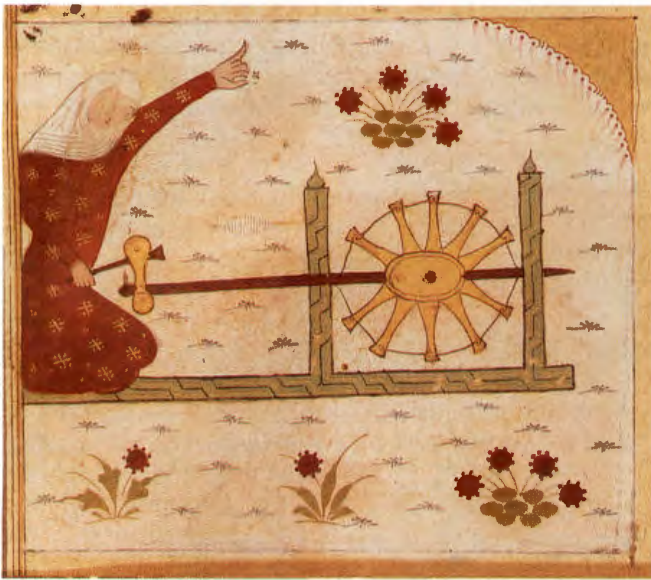
The conquests and commerce brought new wealth to some and new hardships to others. The poor may not have become poorer, but a significant growth in slavery accompanied the rising prosperity of the elite. According to Islamic sources, military campaigns in India reduced hundreds of thousands of Hindu "infidels" to slavery. Delhi overflowed with slaves. Sultan Ala-ud-din owned 50,000; Firuz Shah had 180,000, including 12,000 skilled artisans. Sultan Tughluq sent 100 male slaves and 100 female slaves as a gift to the emperor of China in return for a similar gift. His successor prohibited any more exports of slaves, perhaps because of reduced supplies in the smaller empire.

Mali and Bornu sent slaves across the Sahara to North Africa, including young maidens and eunuchs (castrated males). Ethiopian expansion generated a regular supply of captives for sale to Aden traders at Zeila. About 2.5 million enslaved Africans may have crossed the Sahara and the Red Sea between 1200 and 1500. Other slaves were shipped from the Swahili Coast to India, where Africans played conspicuous roles in the navies, armies, and administrations of some Indian states, especially in the fifteenth century. A few African slaves even found their way to China, where a Chinese source dating from about 1225 says that rich families preferred gatekeepers whose bodies were "black as lacquer."

With "free" labor abundant and cheap, most slaves were trained for special purposes. In some places, skilled trades and military service were dominated by hereditary castes of slaves, some of whom were rich and powerful. Indeed, the earliest rulers of the Delhi Sultanate rose from military slaves. A slave general in the western Sudan named Askia Muhammad seized control of the Songhai Empire (Mali's successor) in 1493. Less fortunate slaves, like the men and women who mined copper in Mali, did hard menial work.

Wealthy households in Asia and Africa employed many slaves as servants. Eunuchs guarded the harems of wealthy Muslims; female slaves were in great demand as household servants, entertainers, and concubines. Some rich men aspired to have a concubine from every part of the world. One of Firuz Shah's nobles was said to have two thousand harem slaves, including women from Turkey and China.

Nalanda (nuh-LAN-duh) **Bihar** (bee-HAHR)



Indian Woman Spinning, ca. 1500 This drawing of a Muslim woman by an Indian artist shows the influence of Persian styles. The spinning of cotton fiber into thread—women’s work—was made much easier by the spinning wheel, which the Muslim invaders introduced. Men then wove the threads into the cotton textiles for which India was celebrated. (British Library, Oriental and Indian Office Library, Or 3299, f. 151)

Sultan Ala-ud-din’s campaigns against Gujarat at the end of the thirteenth century yielded a booty of twenty thousand maidens in addition to innumerable younger children of both sexes. The supply of captives became so great that the lowest grade of horse sold for five times as much as an ordinary female slave destined for service, although beautiful young virgins destined for the harems of powerful nobles commanded far higher prices. Some decades later, when Ibn Battuta was given ten girls captured from among the “infidels,” he commented: “Female captives [in Delhi] are very cheap because they are dirty and do not know civilized ways. Even the educated ones are cheap.” It would seem fairer to say that such slaves were cheap because the large numbers offered for sale had made them so.

Hindu legal digests and commentaries suggest that the position of Hindu women may have improved somewhat overall. The ancient practice of *sati*—in which an upper-caste widow threw herself on her husband’s funeral pyre—remained a meritorious act strongly ap-

proved by social custom. But Ibn Battuta believed that *sati* was strictly optional, an interpretation reinforced by the Hindu commentaries that devote considerable attention to the rights of widows.

Indian parents still gave their daughters in marriage before the age of puberty, but consummation of the marriage was supposed to take place only when the young woman was ready. Wives were expected to observe far stricter rules of fidelity and chastity than were their husbands and could be abandoned for many serious breaches. But women often were punished by lighter penalties than men for offenses against law and custom.

A female’s status was largely determined by the status of her male master—father, husband, or owner. Women usually were not permitted to play the kind of active roles in commerce, administration, or religion that would have given them scope for personal achievements. Even so, women possessed considerable skills within those areas of activity that social norms allotted to them.

Besides child rearing, one of the most widespread female skills was food preparation. So far, historians have paid little attention to the development of culinary skills, but preparing meals that were healthful and tasty required much training and practice, especially given the limited range of foods available in most places. One kitchen skill that has received greater attention is brewing, perhaps because men were the principal consumers. In many parts of Africa women commonly made beer from grains or bananas. These mildly alcoholic beverages, taken in moderation, were a nutritious source of vitamins and minerals. Socially they were an important part of male rituals of hospitality and relaxation.

Throughout tropical Africa and Asia women did much of the farm work. They also toted home heavy loads of food, firewood, and water for cooking, balanced on their heads. Other common female activities included making clay pots for cooking and storage and making clothing. In India the spinning wheel, introduced by the Muslim invaders, greatly reduced the cost of making yarn for weaving. Spinning was a woman’s activity done in the home; the weavers were generally men. Marketing was a common activity among women, especially in West Africa, where they commonly sold agricultural products, pottery, and other craftwork in the markets.

Some free women found their status improved by becoming part of a Muslim household, while many others were forced to become servants and concubines. Adopting Islam did not require accepting all the social customs of the Arab world. Ibn Battuta was appalled that Muslim women in Mali did not completely cover their

sati (suh-TEE)

bodies and veil their faces when appearing in public. He considered their nakedness an offense to women's (and men's) modesty. In another part of Mali he berated a Muslim merchant from Morocco for permitting his wife to sit on a couch and chat with a male friend of hers. The husband replied, "The association of women with men is agreeable to us and part of good manners, to which no suspicion attaches." Ibn Battuta's shock at this "laxity" and his refusal to ever visit the merchant again reveal the patriarchal precepts that were dear to most elite Muslims. So does the fate of Sultan Raziya of Delhi.

CONCLUSION

Tropical Africa and Asia contained nearly 40 percent of the world's population and over a quarter of its habitable land. Between 1200 and 1500 commercial, political, and cultural expansion drew the region's diverse peoples closer together. The Indian Ocean became the world's most important and richest trading area. The Delhi Sultanate brought South Asia its greatest political unity since the decline of the Guptas. In the western Sudan, Mali extended the political and trading role pioneered by Ghana. This growth of trade and empires was closely connected with the enlargement of Islam's presence in the tropical world along with the introduction of greater diversity into Islamic practice.

But if change was an important theme of this period, so too was social and cultural stability. Most tropical Africans and Asians never ventured far outside the rural communities in which their families had lived for generations. Their lives followed the familiar pattern of the seasons, the cycle of religious rituals and festivals, and the stages from childhood to elder status. Custom and necessity defined occupations. Most people engaged in food production by farming, herding, and fishing; some specialized in crafts or religious leadership. Based on the accumulated wisdom about how best to deal with their environment, such village communities were remarkably hardy. They might be ravaged by natural disaster or pillaged by advancing armies, but over time most recovered. Empires and kingdoms rose and fell in these centuries, but the villages endured.

In comparison, social, political, and environmental changes taking place in the Latin West, described in the next chapter, were in many ways more profound and disruptive. They would have great implications for tropical peoples after 1500.

Key Terms

tropics	dhow
monsoon	Swahili Coast
Ibn Battuta	Great Zimbabwe
Delhi Sultanate	Aden
Mali	Malacca
Mansa Kankan Musa	Urdu
Gujarat	Timbuktu

Suggested Reading

The trading links among the lands around the Indian Ocean have attracted the attention of recent scholars. A fine place to begin is Patricia Risso, *Merchants and Faith: Muslim Commerce and Culture in the Indian Ocean* (1995). More ambitious but perhaps more inclined to overreach the evidence is Janet Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony: The World System, A.D. 1250–1350* (1989), which may usefully be read with K. N. Chaudhuri, *Asia Before Europe: Economy and Civilization of the Indian Ocean from the Rise of Islam to 1750* (1991). Students will find clear summaries of Islam's influences in tropical Asia and Africa in Ira Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*, 2d ed. (2002), part II, and of commercial relations in Philip D. Curtin, *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History* (1984).

Greater detail about tropical lands is found in regional studies. For Southeast Asia see Nicholas Tarling, ed., *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia*, vol. 1 (1992); John F. Cady, *Southeast Asia: Its Historical Development* (1964); and G. Coedes, *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia*, ed. Walter F. Vella (1968). India is covered comprehensively by R. C. Majumdar, ed., *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, vol. 4, *The Delhi Sultanate*, 2d ed. (1967); with brevity by Stanley Wolpert, *A New History of India*, 6th ed. (1999); and from an intriguing perspective by David Ludden, *A Peasant History of South India* (1985). For advanced topics see Tapan Raychaudhuri and Irfan Habib, eds., *The Cambridge Economic History of India*, vol. 1, c. 1200–c. 1750 (1982).

A great deal of new scholarship on Africa in this period is summarized in chapters 6 and 7 of Christopher Ehret's *The Civilizations of Africa: A History to 1800* (2002). See also the latter parts of Graham Connah's *African Civilizations: Precolonial Cities and States in Tropical Africa: An Archaeological Perspective* (1987), and, for greater depth, D. T. Niane, ed., *UNESCO General History of Africa*, vol. 4, *Africa from the Twelfth to the Sixteenth Century* (1984), and Roland Oliver, ed., *The Cambridge History of Africa*, vol. 3, c. 1050 to c. 1600 (1977).

For accounts of slavery and the slave trade see Salim Kidwai, "Sultans, Eunuchs and Domesticity: New Forms of Bondage in Medieval India," in *Chains of Servitude: Bondage and Slavery in India*, ed. Utsa Patnaik and Manjari Dingwaney (1985), and the first two chapters of Paul E. Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa*, 2d ed. (2000).

Three volumes of Ibn Battuta's writings have been translated by H. A. R. Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Battuta, A.D. 1325–1354* (1958–1971). Ross E. Dunn, *The Adventures of Ibn Battuta: A Muslim of the 14th Century* (1986), provides a modern retelling of his travels with commentary. For annotated selections see Said Hamdun and Noël King, *Ibn Battuta in Black Africa* (1995).

The most accessible survey of Indian Ocean sea travel is George F. Hourani, *Arab Seafaring*, expanded ed. (1995). For a Muslim Chinese traveler's observations see Ma Huan, *Ying-yai Sheng-lan, "The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shore" [1433]*, trans. and ed. J. V. G. Mills (1970). Another valuable contemporary account of trade and navigation in the Indian Ocean is G. R. Tibbetts, *Arab Navigation in the Indian Ocean Before the*

Coming of the Portuguese, Being a Translation of the Kitab al-Fawa'id . . . of Ahmad b. Majidal-Najdi (1981).

Notes

1. Tarikh-i-Wassaf, in Henry M. Elliot, *The History of India as Told by Its Own Historians*, ed. John Dowson (London: Trübner and Co., 1869–1871), 2:28.
2. Hasan Nizami, Taju-l Ma-asir, in Elliot, *The History of India as Told by Its Own Historians*, 2:219.
3. Minhaju-s Siraj, Tabakat-i Nasiri, in Elliot, *The History of India as Told by Its Own Historians*, 2:332–333.

Document-Based Question

Environment and Culture in Tropical Africa, 1200–1500

Using the following documents, analyze the environmental factors that shaped culture in tropical Africa from 1200 to 1500

DOCUMENT 1

East African Pastoralists (p. 324)

DOCUMENT 2

Map 13.1 Africa and the Indian Ocean Basin: Physical Characteristics (p. 326)

DOCUMENT 3

Map 13.2 Africa, 1200–1500 (p. 331)

DOCUMENT 4

Map of the Western Sudan (1375) (photo, p. 332)

DOCUMENT 5

Excerpt from Ibn Battuta on Mansa Suleiman of Mali (Diversity and Dominance, pp. 334–335)

DOCUMENT 6

Royal Enclosure, Great Zimbabwe (photo, p. 341)

DOCUMENT 7

Church of Saint George, Ethiopia (photo, p. 344)

How do Documents 6 and 7 illustrate the human ability to modify the natural environment? What additional types of documents would help you understand the environmental factors that shaped culture in tropical Africa from 1200 to 1500?