

### Questions

1. Identify to whom the king issued this ordinance. How was it to be enforced, by whom, with whose support?
2. What is the significance of this legislation for beggars?
3. Identify the legal categories this document establishes. What are the major groups, and how do they relate to one another?

### Ibn Battuta, Visit to Mombasa and Kilwa, Rhila (c. 1358)

Ibn Battuta (1304–c. 1368) was born in Tangier, Morocco. He studied Islamic law and in 1325 embarked on his first *hajj* to Mecca. The pilgrimage should have taken about a year and half—but Ibn Battuta traveled for twenty-four years, moving through the extensive *Dar-al-Islam* (areas ruled by Muslims) including Africa, Southwest Asia, central Asia, and India. His travels took him to places as diverse as Constantinople, Baghdad, and the Maldiv Islands. He supported himself as a *qadi* (jurist) and so found work in numerous places. When he finally returned to Morocco, the sultan asked him to dictate his adventures. Whether due to the faulty memories of an aging man or deliberate fabrication, some segments of the *Rhila* (travels) do not correlate with other sources. Nevertheless, the work as a whole sheds light on the extensive world of educated, urbane elites connected through a shared belief in Islam. The following selections describe Ibn Battuta's visit to the Swahili coastal towns of East Africa.

Manbasā [Mombasa] is a large island with two days' journey by sea between it and the land of the *Sawāhil*. It has no mainland. Its trees are the banana, the lemon, and the citron. They have fruit which they call the *jammūn*, which is similar to the olive and its

SOURCE: Said Hamdun and Noël King, *Ibn Battuta in Black Africa* (Princeton, N.J.: Markus Wiener, 1975), pp. 21–22, 24–25.

stone is like its stone except that it is extremely sweet. There is no cultivation of grain among the people of this island: food is brought to them from the *Sawāhil*. The greater part of their food is bananas and fish. They are Shāfi'ī [a practice within Sunni Islam] by rite, they are a religious people, trustworthy and righteous. Their mosques are made of wood, expertly built. At every door of the mosques there are one or two wells. The depth of their wells is a cubit or two. They take water from them in a wooden container into which a thin stick of a cubit's length has been fixed. The ground around the well and the mosque is level. He who wants to enter the mosque washes his feet and enters. There is at its gate a piece of thick matting upon which he rubs his two feet. He who wants to make the ablution holds the pot between his thighs and pours water upon his hands and carries out the ablutions. All the people walk barefoot. We spent the night on this island and travelled by sea to the city of Kulwā [Kilwa]. [Kilwa is] a great coastal city. Most of its people are Zunūj, extremely black. They have cuttings on their faces like those on the faces of the Līmiyyīn of Janāda. \* \* \* The city of Kulwā is amongst the most beautiful of cities and most elegantly built. All of it is of wood, and the ceiling of its houses are of *al-dīs* [reeds]. The rains there are great. They are a people devoted to the Holy War because they are on one continuous mainland with unbelieving Zunūj. Their uppermost virtue is religion and righteousness and they are Shāfi'ī in rite.

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### DESCRIPTION OF THE SULTAN OF KULWĀ

Its sultan at the time of my entry into Kulwā was Abū al-Muẓaffar Ḥasan whose *kunya* [honorific title] was Abū al-Mawāhib [father of gifts] because of his many gifts and deeds of generosity. He was much given to razzias upon the land of the Zunūj; he raided them and captured booty. He used to set aside one fifth of it, which he spent in the ways indicated in the book of God the Exalted. He put the share of the kindred [of the prophet, the *sharīfs*] in a treasury by itself. When the *sharīfs* came to him he gave it to them. The *sharīfs* used to come to him from 'Irāq and Ḥijāz and other places. \* \* \*

This sultan is a very humble man. He sits with the poor people [*faqīrs*] and eats with them, and gives respect to people of religion and of prophetic descent.

A STORY CONCERNING THE SULTAN OF KULWĀ'S DEEDS  
OF GENEROSITY

I was present with him on a Friday when he came out from the prayer and was returning to his house. He was confronted on the road by one of the Yemeni *faqīrs*. He said to him, "O father of gifts." He replied, "At your service, O *faqīr*, what is your need?" He said, "Give me these clothes which you are wearing." He replied, "Yes, I will give them to you." He said to him, "This very moment." He said, "Yes, this very moment." He went back to the mosque and went into the house of the preacher [*k̥hatīb*]. He put on other clothes and took off those clothes. He said to the *faqīr*, "Enter and take them." So the *faqīr* went in, tied them in a piece of cloth and put them on his head and went away. The gratitude of the people to the sultan increased at the evidence of his humility and graciousness. His son and heir-apparent took that suit of clothes from the *faqīr* and compensated him for it with ten slaves. When the news reached the sultan of the gratitude of the people to him for that deed he ordered the *faqīr* to be given in addition ten head of fine slaves and two loads of ivory. (The greater part of their gifts are ivory and seldom do they give gold.) When this honourable and generous sultan was gathered to God (may God have mercy on him), his brother Dā'ūd succeeded him. He was the opposite from him. When a beggar came to him he said to him, "He who used to give has died, and he did not leave anything after him to be given."

### Questions

1. This description of the sultan of Kilwa presents a ruler both belligerent and generous. How does Ibn Battuta reconcile these two different facets of a ruler?
2. As in many other passages of the book, Ibn Battuta's description of Mombasa is disjointed, with little apparent connection between the elements he chooses to mention. What captures his attention in Mom-

basa? Why might Ibn Battuta want to tell readers about these features of Mombasa and emphasize different things about Kilwa?

3. What social and religious values does this passage emphasize?

### The Voyages of Zheng He (1405–1433)

The Ming dynasty in China (1368–1644) kept voluminous records, called the Ming Shi-lu (明實錄). They contain considerable information on the seven massive, state-funded naval ventures from 1405 to 1433, led by the explorer Zheng He. Ming officials sent dozens, perhaps hundreds of ships to the ports of what today are known as Southeast Asia, India, and as far away as East Africa. The records were compiled after the death of successive emperors by a history office established by the Grand Secretariat—that is, by court elites. They therefore present the mindset and views, the priorities and prejudices, of those within the imperial government, and they draw on official government records.

The following document addresses Zheng He's fifth and longest voyage (1417–1419). The emperor ordered a voyage to explore Hormuz and the African coast from Somalia to Zanzibar. The expedition provided a return trip to seventeen heads of state from South Asia who had all made their way to China after Zheng He's initial visits to their homelands, to present tribute to the Ming Court. It ventured from Aden to Mogadishu, Brawa (in today's Somalia), and Malindi (in today's Kenya) and returned with ambassadors from those countries as well as considerable tribute.

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YONG-LE: YEAR 14, MONTH 12, DAY 10 (28 DEC 1416)

As the envoys from the various countries of Calicut, Java, Melaka, Champa, Sri Lanka, Mogadishu, Liu-shan, Nan-bo-li, Bula-wa, Aden, Samudera, Ma-lin, La-sa, Hormuz, Cochin, Nan-wu-li,

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SOURCE: Geoff Wade, trans., *Southeast Asia in the Ming Shi-lu: An Open Access Resource* (Singapore: Asia Research Institute and the Singapore E-Press, National University of Singapore, 2005).