# Dar al-Islam Primary Source Activity (for DBQ)

# Ibn Battuta, Rihla (c. 1325–1354)

Ibn Battuta, a Muslim legal scholar from Morocco, traveled for almost thirty years across the Islamic world. In his account of visiting Delhi in the 1330s, he described how the sultan employed qadis (judges) and scholars to enforce Islamic law. He also wrote about cities like Kilwa and Calicut, where merchants from Arabia, Africa, and India met to exchange gold, spices, and textiles. Ibn Battuta often commented on the generosity of rulers who supported travelers and the presence of madrasas (schools) that trained students in religious law. His observations reveal how shared institutions and practices—such as Islamic law, pilgrimage routes, and mosques—helped knit together distant regions into one cultural sphere. The causes of this integration included both state sponsorship of scholars and the economic pull of Indian Ocean trade. The effects were clear: a Moroccan scholar could feel at home in East Africa, South Asia, or the Middle East because of familiar customs. Ibn Battuta’s testimony shows how religion and commerce reinforced each other, strengthening the cohesion of Dar al-Islam.

## Causation Sentence

## Guiding Questions

1. What developments or processes does Ibn Battuta identify in his travels?

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1. What were the causes of integration across Dar al-Islam according to this source?

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1. What were the effects of these shared practices and institutions?

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# Ibn Khaldun, Muqaddimah (1377)

Ibn Khaldun, a North African historian and thinker, wrote the Muqaddimah as an introduction to world history. One of his most famous ideas was ʿasabiyyah, or group solidarity. He argued that nomadic groups, bound together by loyalty and shared struggle, could conquer wealthier but weaker states. Over time, however, ruling families lost this unity, became corrupt, and collapsed—only to be replaced by new groups with stronger cohesion. Ibn Khaldun’s theory identified a process of dynastic rise and fall. The cause of political growth, in his view, was social solidarity rooted in simple living and shared values. The cause of decline was luxury and division, which weakened rulers’ ability to resist challenges. The effects of these cycles were constant change in leadership across the Islamic world. His analysis helps historians explain why great dynasties—such as the Almohads in North Africa or later the Mongol-Ilkhanids in Persia—rose to power and then faded. Ibn Khaldun’s writing is a powerful example of how Muslim intellectuals in this era sought to explain the causes of political and social change.

## Causation Sentence

## Guiding Questions

1. What concept does Ibn Khaldun introduce to explain political change?

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1. What does he identify as the causes of political growth and decline?

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1. What effects of these processes does he describe?

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# Al-ʿUmari on Mansa Musa (c. 1340s)

Al-ʿUmari, a Syrian scholar in Cairo, never met Mansa Musa, the ruler of Mali, but collected stories of his famous pilgrimage to Mecca in 1324. According to Al-ʿUmari, Musa’s caravan was so vast—thousands of attendants and camels carrying gold—that when he passed through Cairo, he spent freely and gave gifts to the poor. The sudden flood of West African gold caused the price of gold in Egypt to drop for over a decade, weakening Cairo’s economy. This account reveals important causes and effects. The cause of Musa’s display was Mali’s control of the trans-Saharan trade routes, which brought in enormous wealth from gold and salt. The effect was both economic disruption in Cairo and heightened prestige for Mali in the Islamic world. Diplomats, scholars, and merchants began to view West Africa as a significant part of Dar al-Islam. Al-ʿUmari’s record shows how pilgrimage and trade linked distant regions, demonstrating how the actions of one ruler could cause lasting changes in economies and cultural connections across the Islamic world.

## Causation Sentence

## Guiding Questions

1. What caused Mansa Musa’s immense wealth and ability to spend lavishly in Cairo?

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1. What were the short- and long-term effects of his pilgrimage on Egypt and Mali?

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1. How does this document show connections between Africa and the wider Islamic world?

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# Ibn al-Athir on the Mongols (1220–1221)

The historian Ibn al-Athir lived in Mosul and wrote a universal history. When he described the Mongol invasions in the early 1200s, his words were filled with grief. He explained that entire cities were destroyed, people slaughtered, and institutions of learning and worship reduced to rubble. He called the Mongol onslaught a catastrophe “the like of which has never been seen.” His account highlights the causes and effects of this crisis. The cause was the Mongols’ military campaign into Islamic lands, fueled by their desire for expansion and conquest. The immediate effects included mass death, the collapse of dynasties, and the disruption of trade routes. Yet his chronicle also points indirectly to long-term effects: later Mongol rulers converted to Islam and sponsored scholarship, reshaping the Islamic world in unexpected ways. Ibn al-Athir’s account provides students with firsthand evidence of how invasion and violence can cause both immediate devastation and set the stage for new developments.

## Causation Sentence

## Guiding Questions

1. What immediate effects of the Mongol invasion does Ibn al-Athir describe?

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1. What caused the Mongols to attack Islamic lands?

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1. What long-term changes might this invasion have led to, beyond destruction?

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# Rashid al-Din, Jāmiʿ al-Tawārīkh (early 1300s)

Rashid al-Din, a Persian Jewish convert to Islam, served as vizier to the Mongol Ilkhanate rulers in Persia. At the Mongol court, he compiled a massive world history, the Jāmiʿ al-Tawārīkh (“Compendium of Chronicles”), which included illustrated manuscripts. He described not only Islamic dynasties but also Chinese, Indian, and European peoples, reflecting the Mongols’ vast empire. The cause for this project was the Ilkhanate rulers’ desire to legitimize their authority and present themselves as part of the wider Islamic and global story. The effect was a remarkable synthesis of knowledge that documented cultural and scientific achievements from across Eurasia. The artwork and texts show how Mongol patronage caused new forms of scholarship and artistic production to flourish in Persia. For students, Rashid al-Din’s work illustrates how conquest could both destroy (as seen in Ibn al-Athir) and create, causing intellectual and artistic exchanges that shaped the Islamic world during this period.

## Causation Sentence

## Guiding Questions

1. Why did Rashid al-Din compile such a wide-ranging world history?

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1. What does this document suggest about the causes of cultural and scholarly production?

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1. What effects did Mongol patronage have on the Islamic world?

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# Al-Maqrizi on the Black Death (mid-14th to 15th c.)

Al-Maqrizi, an Egyptian historian, lived through the economic upheavals of the Mamluk Sultanate. In his writings on the Black Death, he described entire neighborhoods of Cairo being emptied by plague and fields left untilled. He also analyzed how coin debasement and poor economic policies worsened the crisis. The causes, in his eyes, were both natural (the plague spreading along trade routes) and human (bad governance). The effects were depopulation, labor shortages, rising food prices, and social unrest. Al-Maqrizi’s testimony allows students to see how environmental and political factors combined to cause economic change. It also demonstrates the process of a historian trying to connect disease and policy decisions to larger social consequences. His reflections highlight how crises could reshape Islamic societies in both immediate suffering and long-term restructuring of economies.

## Causation Sentence

## Guiding Questions

1. What natural and human causes does Al-Maqrizi identify for the crisis in Egypt?

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1. What were the major effects of the Black Death according to this account?

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1. How does this source show the link between disease, governance, and society?

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# Ma Huan, Ying-yai Sheng-lan (1430s)

Ma Huan was a Chinese Muslim interpreter who traveled with Admiral Zheng He’s voyages in the early 15th century. In Calicut (on India’s west coast), he observed thriving markets where merchants from Arabia, India, and China exchanged spices, horses, and textiles. He noted that the local ruler welcomed Muslim merchants and that mosques and Islamic schools stood alongside Hindu temples. Ma Huan emphasized the diversity and coexistence of peoples drawn by trade. The cause of this flourishing city was its strategic position on the Indian Ocean trade routes, combined with the patronage of rulers who encouraged commerce. The effects included the spread of Islam, the blending of cultural practices, and the economic prosperity of the region. His observations demonstrate how maritime trade caused cross-cultural interactions and contributed to the cohesion of Dar al-Islam, even in places ruled by non-Muslim kings. For students, Ma Huan’s account shows how global connections shaped the Islamic world during this era.

## Causation Sentence

## Guiding Questions

1. What caused Calicut to become such a thriving trade city?

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1. What effects of Indian Ocean trade does Ma Huan observe?

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1. How does this document illustrate cultural coexistence in the Indian Ocean world?

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