

Group Project for Global Interactions (3 days): The Travels and Journals of Ibn Battuta

by Clinton Grant, Uniondale High School, based on "Ibn Battuta: A View of the fourteenth-Century World," by Joan Arno and Helen Grady, National Center for History in the Schools, UCLA

Aim: How do the 14th century journals of Ibn Battuta document increasing global interaction?

Materials: Maps and Reading passages

Main Ideas: 14th century Islamic civilization in Southwest Asia and North Africa played a pivotal role in integrating Africa, Asia and Europe into a network of trade and cultural exchange that stimulated global exploration and the transformation of the world; expanding trade and cultural exchange increased cultural diffusion; religion has played a key role in the spread of trade and culture and in the organization of other social institutions, especially government.

Do Now: Copy chronology

Chronology of the life and travels of Ibn Battuta

(All dates are estimates. Note that suggested dates for expeditions overlap.)

1304	Born Tangier, North Africa
1325-26	Travels from Tangiers to Egypt, Syria and Arabia
1326-32	Travels from Mecca to Iraq, Persia, Arabia and East Africa
1330-35	Travels to Anatolia, the Black Sea region, and the Asian Steep
1333-45	Travels to India and Ceylon
1345-46	Travels to Southeast Asia and maybe China
1349-54	Travels in North Africa, Spain and western Africa
1368	Ibn Battuta dies, probably in Tangiers, North Africa

Motivation: If a relative from another country came to visit your family, what local sites would you want to show them? What local customs do you think they would find most curious?

Activities:

1) Read passage. Who was Ibn Battuta?

Why do you think the ruler of Morocco had Ibn Battuta record his adventures?

In your opinion, could Ibn Battuta have had these adventures if he were not Islamic? Why?

Examine Map 1. North Africa, 1325-1326

Where did Ibn Battuta start his travels?

What is the geographical importance of this city?

2) Introduce group projects for days 2 and 3.

Day 2 will be used for research. Day 3 will be used for presentations.

Summary Question: What role did the Islamic religion play in the 14th century?

Homework: Write a "fictional" newspaper account of one of the events described by Ibn Battuta. Include an interview with Ibn Battuta. The article must be consistent with historical facts. Sample headlines -- "Plague Comes to Damascus"; "Justice in Northern India."

Group Project Guidelines:

Each group will examine a different reading passage on the life of Ibn Battuta and his travels.

1. Make an outline of the important information in the reading passage. Highlight evidence of global interaction.

2. Answer the questions that accompany your reading passage.

3. If you were interviewing Ibn Battuta about his trip, what questions would you ask him (between three and five questions)?

4. Groups will report on the travels of Ibn Battuta to the class focusing on evidence of global interaction in the 14th century.

Summary Question Day 3: What forces led to expanding global interaction during the 14th century?

Activity Sheet 1 - Who was Abu Abdallah Ibn Battuta?

The years from 1000 to 1500 CE were a period of expansion for Islam in Asia, Europe and Africa. Islamic armies conquered other peoples. Followers of Islam migrated to new lands and spread their religious beliefs. Islamic merchants introduced their religion to other parts of the world as they established new trade routes.

Abu Abdallah Ibn Battuta was born in Tangiers in North Africa in 1304. About the same time the Mongol military rulers of Persia and west central Asia were converting to Islam. This meant that when he reached adulthood, Ibn Battuta was free to travel widely under the protection of his religion.

As a young man, Abu Abdallah Ibn Battuta studied law. In 1325, he left his home own and made a holy pilgrimage, or *haji*, to Mecca and Medina. During his life time, he traveled widely. He had the opportunity to study different Islamic religious beliefs, including Sufism, which emphasizes love and devotion to God. Ibn Battuta became a scholar and visited Islamic centers of learning and traveled to new areas seeking employment, adventure and honor.

In 1356, the ruler of Morocco had a young scholar record Ibn Battuta's experiences and observations about the Islamic world. They worked for two years and produced a *rihla*, or book of travels. After completing the book, Abu Abdallah Ibn Battuta became a judge in a small Moroccan town. As far as we know, he never traveled again. Ibn Battuta died in 1368.

Countries like we have today did not exist in the fourteenth century. Ibn Battuta did not consider himself a citizen of Morocco. He would have described himself as a Muslim, part of the large group of people who identified with the teachings of Mohammed and the Holy Qur'an.

Group (1) The Hajj: Travel through Egypt, Syria and Arabia

Edited from "Ibn Battuta: A View of the Fourteenth-Century World," by Joan Arno and Helen Grady, National Center for History in the Schools, UCLA

At the age of 21 Ibn Battuta left Tangier to make the *hajj*. For him this was both a holy journey and an adventure. The trip by land from Tangier to Mecca meant a 3,000 mile journey across the coastal plains, deserts, and mountains of Mediterranean Africa. Even though the journey was dangerous, pious Muslim scholars made the trek both to perform the pilgrimage and to study in the mosques and colleges of Egypt, Syria, and Arabia. Ibn Battuta set off all alone, but after three weeks he joined a caravan and spent eight to nine months reaching Egypt. During this time he visited many dignitaries, who gave him gifts.

In Egypt, Ibn Battuta took the opportunity to visit Cairo and tour the Nile Valley. Cairo was one of the most important centers of Islamic learning and the largest city in the world west of China. While in Cairo, Ibn Battuta probably took time to sit in on lessons on the *shari'a* at the *madrasas*, or colleges for the study of law and the religious sciences. He also toured the Nile valley and observed the dense populations that hugged the river. One day he entered a bathhouse in a town on the river and discovered men completely undressed. Our visitor, whose upbringing was notably pious and straight-laced, immediately went to the governor to report the transgression. The governor called for the operators of all bathhouses to require patrons to wear waist coverings.

Unable to cross to the Red Sea to Jidda on the Arabian coast because of a rebellion in Upper Egypt, Ibn Battuta returned downstream and crossed the Sinai peninsula by way of Gaza. Then, he visited Hebron and Jerusalem. Hebron was important to Muslims, Christians, and Jews alike because it was the burial place of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, founders of the shared monotheistic tradition. Jerusalem was a small town of 10,000 at the time. It was filled with shrines, which attracted numerous pilgrims and scholars. For Jews the center of religious focus was the ancient Temple, for Christians it was the church of the Holy Sepulcher, for Muslims it was the Haram al-Sharif. Within the Haram were (and still are) several holy sites, the most important being the dome of the Rock where Mohammed, according to Muslim belief, was miraculously transported to the Seventh Heaven of Paradise to stand in the presence of God. Our pilgrim visited the Haram and received a cloak from a Sufi master.

Moving on to Damascus, Ibn Battuta prepared for the hajj. Damascus was the Mamluk capital in Southwest Asia. Ibn Battuta became ill in Damascus, but he still took time to marry the daughter of a Moroccan living there. He soon divorced his wife, however, to join a pilgrimage caravan, which probably numbered several thousand. Every member of the hajj party had to carry most of his or her own supplies southward across the Arabian desert. A generous donor provided Ibn Battuta with a camel and money for the pilgrimage. The difficult and dangerous journey from Damascus to Medina was about 820 miles and took 45 to 50 days. In this case the trip was made safely.

Medina is the second most holy city for Muslims. It was Mohammed's home for a time, and he is buried there with his wife Fatima. The pilgrims rejoiced to be on sacred ground. While in Medina, Ibn Battuta must have visited many holy places. In the 14th century, the trek was a dusty journey across 200 miles of desert. Not far from Mecca, male pilgrims entered a state of spiritual readiness and ritual purity by shedding their ordinary clothes and putting on two large flat sheets of cloth to form a garment called the *ihram*. One cloth was wrapped around the upper body and draped over the left shoulder. Women dressed modestly, without jewelry and without their faces covered. All this preparation was symbolic of entering a state of sanctity in which there was to be no arguing, cutting of hair or nails, killing of animals or sexual intercourse.

Continuing on to Mecca, the pilgrims were filled with prayers and rejoicing. They arrived at the city before dawn and went immediately to the grand mosque called the Haram or Sanctuary. Here they worshipped by performing the *tawaf*, that is, walking seven times counterclockwise around the *Ka'ba*, the great stone cube that stands in the center of the mosque. This granite block is covered by a black veil, which is encircled with an inscription in golden Arabic letters. The interior of the *Ka'ba* is simply furnished and contains a copy of the Qur'an. On the exterior of the eastern corner, is embedded the Black Stone, which Mohammed is said to have kissed. It is about 12 inches in diameter and is set in silver. Qur'anic tradition has it that the *Ka'ba* was originally built by Abraham to acclaim the one God. Later, the polytheistic tribe of the region made it into a house of idols. Then, in the seventh century Mohammed rededicated it to God.

Ibn Battuta met new people from all around the Muslim world who had also gathered for the hajj. Many poor pilgrims lived in the mosque while they were in Mecca. They ate, slept, and prayed there, although cooking was not allowed. The mosque was busy day and night with worshippers.

In order to complete the hajj, Ibn Battuta joined other pilgrims to journey east of the city through desert ravines to the plain of Arafat. The ceremonies in the desert make up the heart of the annual hajj or Greater Pilgrimage.

Many pilgrims soon returned home to their ordinary lives. For Ibn Battuta, it was an end and a beginning. He had earned the title al-Hajj, which would give him respect in learned circles. But he had no intentions of returning to Morocco. He now was ready to continue his travels with Dar al-Islam. He vowed, he tells us in the *Rihla*, to choose his routes so that he would never retrace his own steps! He did not quite achieve this goal, but he came close.

Group (1) Questions

1. Why did Ibn Battuta leave his home in Tangier?
2. What major cities did he visit on this leg of the journey?
3. How did he spend his time in these cities?
4. Why is the Ka'ba in Mecca considered a holy site?
5. Why is the hajj an important experience for Muslims?
6. What evidence did Ibn Battuta report of global interaction?
7. In your opinion, what would have been the most surprising discovery on this trip for Ibn Battuta? Why?

Group (2) Travels to Iraq, Persia, Arabia, and East Africa

Edited from "Ibn Battuta: A View of the Fourteenth-Century World," by Joan Arno and Helen Grady, National Center for History in the Schools, UCLA

In 1326 Ibn Battuta left Mecca in a caravan. The company marched even at night with the aid of torches which, Ibn Battuta observed, made night seem like day. After 44 days they reached Mesopotamia (Iraq). Our traveler went to Basra on the Persian Gulf where he hired a boat and then proceeded to explore the marshes of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. In this region of Iraq, and scattered throughout Persia (Iran) he encountered settlements of Shi'a Muslims. The Shi'a make up a number of sects within Islam. They believe that a leader-messiah, a descendant of 'Ali (Mohammed's son-in-law) known as the Imam, will one day return and reveal himself. He will make the earth truthful and righteous until the time of the Last Judgment. Until then a spiritual leader will help guide the Muslim community and interpret the Qur'an.

Ibn Battuta was a Sunni Muslim. Sunnis believe that 'Ali was important but that Qur'anic revelation was to be interpreted by consensus of the community, not by a leader with special knowledge and wisdom. Our traveler was not too sympathetic toward the Shi'a and believed they were in error in their beliefs. Ibn Battuta was also interested in Sufism, though sometimes Sufi practice was too excessive for him. Stopping to visit a shrine in a village in Iraq he had a chance to observe a Sufi ecstatic event in which devotees danced and twirled to the beat of drums. Some Sufi brethren danced barefoot on hot coals. Others took large snakes and bit off their heads with their teeth. Ibn Battuta never looked with favor upon this sort of religious fervor.

Traveling on to Baghdad, Ibn Battuta found a city still recovering from the Mongol invasion of 1258. Mosques were being restored and scholarly learning was progressing. The Mongols had conquered the Persians, but in a sense the Persians ended up conquering the Mongols by converting them to Islam and Persian culture. Ibn Battuta was invited to travel with the Il-khan, or Sultan of Persia and his huge retinue. He then joined a general of the Il-khan to go to Tabriz, a city in northwestern Persia inhabited by two to three hundred thousand people. This town was the main intersection for the Mediterranean, Central Asia and Indian Ocean trade routes.

In 1330, Ibn Battuta reports that he went to the Red Sea port of Jidda and boarded a ship of a type called a *dhow*. These vessels had wooden hulls made of planks tied together with cords of fiber. Their sails were of triangular shape and known in Europe as "latine" sails. Ibn Battuta soon became seasick and asked to be put ashore. After that, he traveled to Aden, the great commercial port at the junction of the Red and Arabian Seas.

Trade was important to Arabs and other Muslims because of the location of Southwest Asia as a hub connecting Africa, Asia and Europe. Goods moving among these regions had to pass through the Southwest Asia bottleneck.

Our voyager took advantage of this trade activity by joining a group of Muslim merchants setting sail from Aden for ports along the East African coast.

The dhow he traveled on sailed under winter monsoon winds, which blew the ship southward. The dhow was able to reach the port of Mogadishu (today the capital of Somalia) in 15 days. Ships coming to this city imported porcelain, silk, glassware, books, paper and tools. Brought from the interior of Africa for exchange at the port were ivory, gold, frankincense, myrrh, animal skins, ambergris, rice, mangrove poles, and slaves. In Mogadishu, the local religious scholars treated Ibn Battuta to a meal of stew with chicken, fish, and vegetables served over rice and cooked in ghee (unclarified butter). They also ate unripe bananas in milk and a dish of sour milk with green ginger, mangoes, pickled lemons, and chilies. After being treated well by the Sultan, Ibn Battuta boarded his ship to visit the land of Zanj and the city of Kilwa. This region lay south of the equator. It was nearly as far down the coast as Muslim trade went. Kilwa was the center of the East African gold trade. Here on the edge of Dar al-Islam, Ibn Battuta was delighted to find stone houses with sunken courtyards and indoor plumbing. The well-to-do people wore silk and fine jewelry. They ate from porcelain dishes.

Thanks to the summer monsoons, which blow off the African continent toward Asia, our traveler returned quickly to the southern shore of Arabia. There, he hired a guide to take him from the city of Zafar northeastward along the coast to Qalhat. Unfortunately, the guide turned nasty. When Ibn Battuta thought the man was going to try to drown him, he brandished a sword. He escaped the guide, hid at night, and finally reached Qalhat exhausted and with terribly swollen feet. After recovering from this disaster, he crossed the rugged heartland of Oman and returned once again to Mecca.

Group (2) Questions

1. How do the basic beliefs of the Shi'a and Sunni sects differ?
2. How are the pillars of Islamic belief illustrated in this reading?
3. How does Ibn Battuta describe Baghdad?
4. How did Ibn Battuta travel on the Red Sea?
5. What evidence do you have of the importance of trade in the 14th century Muslim world?
6. What evidence did Ibn Battuta report of global interaction?
- 7.- In your opinion, what would have been the most surprising discovery on this trip for Ibn Battuta? Why?

Group (3) Travels to Anatolia and the Asian Steppe

Edited from "Ibn Battuta: A View of the Fourteenth-Century World," by Joan Arno and Helen Grady, National Center for History in the Schools, UCLA

Anatolia, known in ancient times as Asia Minor and today as Turkey, was the next land Ibn Battuta toured. He called it one of the finest regions in the world. The people were cleanly dress, the food delicious, and the men handsome. The region was also in a state of political and cultural transition. Muslim Turkish warriors were in the process of defeating the Byzantine Empire and already looking to invade southeastern Europe. In the 11th and 12th centuries the Seljuk Turks, who had migrated into Anatolia from Central Asia, drove the Byzantines nearly back to Constantinople. In the 13th century, the Mongols and Turkish allies established domination over eastern and central Anatolia. The Mongols tightly regulated the vast areas they controlled. The result was the Pax Mongolica, or period of peace in the region. Anatolia was a center of arranging trade for metal wares, leather, silk woolens, grain, fur, timber and slaves.

Ibn Battuta was well received in Anatolia, hosted at the courts of Turkish princes and welcomed into fraternal societies of young men who fought one another for the privilege of entertaining him. Here on the frontier of Islam he was honored as a religious and legal scholar. The Turkish rulers, all descendants of rough-hewn warriors, were anxious to acquire the fine points of their new faith and the sacred law. One ruler, Sultan Orkhan, asked our traveler to write down traditions of the Prophet. These were then translated into Turkish and put on display. Ibn Battuta also asserted his religious prestige by chastising a Jewish physician for placing himself above the Qur'anic readers at a banquet. After traveling throughout Anatolia, he reached the Black Sea. Thanks to gifts from Turkish benefactors, he now owned fine clothes, horses, money, slaves and concubines.

Ibn Battuta's adventures now took him to another frontier of his safe world. To enter this new world, our traveler crossed the Black Sea on a ship bound for the Crimea. Three nights out a storm arose. After several days of near catastrophe, the ship and its passengers came to land. Ibn Battuta asked to be put ashore on a rural coast. He made his way to Kaffa, which had a large community of Christian merchants from Genoa. In the middle of the night he heard church bells ring. As a Muslim, he considered bells to be one of the more devilish forms of sacrilege practiced by Christians. Determined to counteract this thunderous noise, he bounded up the stairs of a mosque to the top of the minaret and began loudly chanting the Qur'an and the call to prayer. The local *qadi* rushed to the mosque with sword in hand, fearing the visitors might provoke hostility with the Europeans. The reaction of the inhabitants is unknown, but fortunately Ibn Battuta did not create a major incident between Christians and Muslims.

The Moroccan traveler then continued to Al-Quram, the provincial capital of the Kipchak territory, the kingdom known in European history as the Golden Horde. Al-Quaram was a staging area for trans-Asian caravans. Here Ibn Battuta purchased three wagons equipped with round tents called *yurts*. These were the equivalent of American prairie schooners, and an unusual form of transportation for Ibn Battuta. Muslims from North Africa and southwest Asia traveled by animals, not wheeled vehicles. These wagons were perfect transport for the broad rolling steppes. The caravan he joined was like a small town, vast numbers of carts moving slowly across the plain.

When the caravan found Ozbeg Khan, the Mongol ruler of Kipchak, he was seated in a huge golden yurt on a silver throne surrounded by his four wives, or *khatuns*. Ibn Battuta was struck by the equality Turkish and Mongol women enjoyed with men. He was taken aback by unveiled women who accompanied their husbands to the bazaars. He even noted that the husbands seemed like servants to their wives. The khatuns owned lands of their own and sometimes made administrative decisions or signed decrees. When the senior khatun entered the golden tent, the khan went to the entrance of the pavilion, greeted her, escorted her to her couch, and did not sit himself until she was seated. Unlike the secluded women of Southwest Asia, the khatun was in full view and unveiled! Each khatun had 300 wagons which carried chests, money, food, robes, and furnishings. An additional 100 wagons carried four servant girls each.

One khatun was the daughter of the Byzantine Emperor. Hers was an arranged marriage, designed to improve relations between the Mongols and the Christian Byzantines. This princess received permission to return to Constantinople to give birth to a child in her father's palace. Ibn Battuta asked and received permission to go with her. He tells us that the caravan consisted of 5,000 horsemen, 500 troops, 200 slave girls, 20 Greek and Indian pages, 400 wagons, 2,000 horsemen, and 500 oxen and camels. To their detriment, the peasants in the surrounding area had to supply food to the entire entourage.

As soon as the khatun entered Byzantine territory, she changed her behavior. She left behind the Islamic prayers, drank wine, and ate pork (a meat forbidden by the Qur'an). After reaching Constantinople, the khan's wife stayed with her father. Ibn Battuta visited all the sights of the city, including the church of Hagia Sophia, which he did not enter because he would have to prostrate himself before the cross. He then toured the nearby Genoese colony of Galata. Leaving the princess in Constantinople, he returned to the steppe as winter set in. He wore three fur coats, two pairs of trousers, two pairs of socks, and boots lined with bear skin. His beard froze when he washed his face. He had to be helped onto his horse because he had on so many clothes. Traveling this way, he reached the khan at his capital of New Saray.

Restless as always, Ibn Battuta decided to make his way to India. He led an entourage south across the steppe, then crossed the Hindu Kush, where the snow was so deep that felt cloths had to be spread in front of the camels so they could walk. When he descended into the Indus Valley, he joined other Muslims, who looked to India and the Muslim ruler there for employment. Though the date is unclear, he appears to have arrived in India in 1333.

Group (3) Questions

1. Why is this period in Anatolia called Pax Mongolica?
2. How was Ibn Battuta treated while he lived in Anatolia?
3. How does Ibn Battuta describe the Byzantine capital?
4. What does Ibn Battuta believe about Christian church bells?
5. How does the reading show differences in cultural beliefs within the Islamic world?
6. What evidence did Ibn Battuta report of global interaction?

7. In your opinion, what would have been the most surprising discovery on this trip for Ibn Battuta? Why?

Group (4) Travels to India and China

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Muslim Turks operating from Afghanistan had conquered a large part of India in the previous century. By 1333 Muslim formed a ruling elite on top of a stratified Hindu society. Mohammed Ibn Tughluq, the Turkish sultan, politically united all north and central India for the first time since the Gupta empire of the 5th century. Ibn Tughluq defended India against the Mongols and attempted to keep strong control of his kingdom through harsh and eccentric measures. On one hand, he encouraged high culture and the arts. On the other hand, he terrorized and repressed those he ruled. If he liked you he bestowed great favors, if not, great punishments.

The sultan made Ibn Battuta a judge. Since the Moroccan could not speak Persian fluently, Ibn Tughluq assigned two scholars to handle his cases and give him documents to sign. His salary was 12,000 silver dinars a year. The average Hindu family earned 5 dinars a month. The taxes from two and a half Hindu villages supported his salary. Also asked to care for a mausoleum of a former sultan, Ibn Battuta used funds from this center to set up a school, a home for visitors, and a place to aid the poor. A terrible famine was raging in Northern India, and he tried to help care for the starving.

Trouble arose when he visited the hermitage of a Sufi leader who later defied the sultan. Ibn Battuta was consequently put under house arrest. He fasted and prayed for his life, fearing that the sultan might have him skinned alive or thrown to elephants with swords attached to their tusks. Finally, the sultan allowed him to enter a Sufi refuge, where he donned the clothes of a beggar and fasted for five months. Then, in order to escape India, he requested and received permission to make the hajj again. But shortly afterward, Mohammed Tughluq changed his mind and asked Ibn Battuta to lead an official delegation, including 15 Chinese envoys, on a sea voyage to China to present gifts from the sultan to Mongol emperor of that huge land.

Toghon Temur, the Chinese emperor, was a Mongol and a descendant of Kublai Khan. He had earlier sent Ibn Tughluq gifts of 100 slaves, plus textiles, robes, dishware, and swords. The sultan ordered Ibn Battuta to return the favor by taking to China 200 Hindu slaves, 15 pages, and 100 thoroughbred horses, not to mention textiles, robes, dishware, and swords. When the caravan was about 75 miles south of Delhi, however, it was attacked by Hindu bandits. Ibn Battuta escaped on horseback and managed to hide. He was eventually captured but escaped after bribing a guard by giving away his tunic. He wandered the countryside for seven days. On the eighth day a Muslim found him, and soon his traveling companions came to his rescue.

Once on the coast of the Arabian Sea, our adventurer hired four ships, whose crew included African spearmen and bowmen, people who had a long tradition of serving on ships in the Indian Ocean. The ships landed in southern India where pepper was grown. In Calicut, Muslims and Hindus greeted the diplomatic mission with drums, trumpets and horns. Arrangements were made for the group and their belongings to sail on one large junk, or Chinese-style vessel and a smaller ship. The Chinese ambassadors were to sail on a separate junk. This type of ship was made of double timbers, attached together with nails. The hull was divided into compartments, which would keep the ship from sinking if pierced below the waterline. A junk could have five masts or more, stern rudders, up to five decks, enclosed cabins, private lavatories, fire fighting equipment, steward service, lifeboats and common rooms.

Ibn Battuta boarded a large junk, then transferred at the last minute to a smaller one. A storm came up while he was still on shore, and the ships had to leave the harbor. The junk Ibn Battuta was to sail on sank. No one survived. The Chinese envoys, who were on another junk, did survive and returned home without the Moroccan diplomat.

Did Ibn Battuta visit China, or did he not? The Rihla describes the journey, but some scholars debate the authenticity of the voyage because of the murky way it is described. The voyage is possible but in doubt. The trip was possible because the Mongol dynasty was ruling, and it favored international trade. Cities on China's southern coast teemed with Muslim merchants, some of them Chinese converts. Ibn Battuta would have found a welcoming community.

He claims to have sailed from the Malay Peninsula to Sumatra, then around the Strait of Malacca to the Chinese harbor city of Ch'uan-chou. He saw silks, porcelains, and a variety of foods. He thought the Chinese clever for using paper money and found the travel safe, but he was uncomfortable. Living among Chinese who were not interested in being Muslims was not Ibn Battuta's idea of a good time. He was upset that the Chinese were heathens, worse than

the Christians because they did not recognize any of the prophets nor care about the Muslim world view. He asserts that he traveled to Canton and finally to Hang-chou and Beijing by way of the grand canal. Most historians, however, doubt that he really went any further than the southern coastal cities.

Group (4) Questions

1. How had political stability developed in northern India?
2. How did Ibn Battuta show concern for people suffering from famine in Northern India?
3. Why was Ibn Battuta imprisoned by Sultan Mohammed Ibn Tughluq?
4. Why was Ibn Battuta sent on a voyage to China?
5. Why is there debate on whether Ibn Battuta arrived in China?
6. What evidence did Ibn Battuta report of global interaction?
7. In your opinion, what would have been the most surprising discovery on this trip for Ibn Battuta? Why?

Group (5) Travels to Morocco, Spain and Mali

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Ibn Battuta returned to Damascus to find people dying all over the place. Mosques were filled with people praying. Everyone -- Muslims, Christians and Jews -- prayed to God. While the Moroccan had been traveling to China, the Black Death was spreading westward across the steppes to the Black Sea. It was rapidly becoming a pandemic, that is, a disease not limited to a single region. The plague may have developed among ground burrowing rodents on the inner Asian steppe. Humans caught the disease from the bit of fleas that had been in the fur of infected animals. Because both rats and fleas were carried on caravans along with trade goods, the plague easily infected people who were moving from town to town. In this way, it spread.

By the end of 1350, about one third of all Europeans were dead. Muslims in North Africa and Southwest Asia suffered just as much. They blamed the disease on polluted winds from the steppes. People were urged to live in fresh air, sprinkle their homes with rose water and vinegar, sit motionless, or eat pickled onions and fresh fruit. The disease was to be treated by applying egg yolks to the sores, spreading fresh flowers on the sickbed, and above all by prayer. Ibn Battuta escaped the Black Death, but how? We do not know. People were dying everywhere he went. After making the hajj one more time, he decided to return to Tangier. At 45 years of age, he missed his family, friends and home. On the way he learned his mother had died of the plague just several months earlier.

In Morocco, he visited the royal capital of Fez, stopped briefly in Tangier, then made his way to Ceuta where people from Spain were coming to flee the plague. After recovering from what was probably malaria, he joined volunteers who were defending Gibraltar against Christian attack. All fighting between Christians and Muslims had stopped because of the Black Death, so Ibn Battuta did not have to fight. He took the occasion to visit the mountainous Muslim sultanate of Grenada. There, he met Ibn Juzayy, a young literary scholar who would later record his adventures.

Returning to Morocco, he went back to Fez but then decided to accept one last challenge. He set forth on a journey to cross the Sahara Desert. His visit to Mali would complete his travels through virtually all parts of Dar al-Islam.

In 1324, Mansa Musa, Sultan of Mali, passed through Cairo on his way to complete the hajj. The amount of gold he spent and distributed as alms was so great that it depressed the value of gold in Egypt for two years. Besides gold, other important commodities leaving West Africa included ivory, ostrich feathers, kola nuts, ambergris, hides and slaves. In return, textiles, copper, silver, books, paper, swords, ironware, perfumes, jewelry, spices, wheat, dried fruit and horses came south from Mediterranean Africa. The most important items of southbound trade were cowrie shells from the Maldive islands and salt from mines in the north central Sahara. Cowrie shells were used like money. Salt was an essential supplement for the diet of people of the sub-Saharan region.

Along with goods, Islamic scholars accompanied the southbound caravans. Islam was the official state religion in an area where the majority of people held animist and polytheistic beliefs. In order to strengthen Muslim faith and law, Mansa Sulayman, a devout Muslim and Mansa Musa's successor, welcomed scholars from abroad. Such a

setting was perfect for our opportunistic traveler and jurist. Ibn Battuta crossed the High Atlas Mountains in late 1351 and joined a trans-Saharan caravan at the important commercial city of Sijilmasa on the northern edge of the desert.

After 25 days, the caravan reached the settlement of Taghaza, a salt mining center. It was a grim place where salt slabs were exchanged for gold. Slaves dug the salt and loaded it onto the camels. The place was filled with flies. Ibn Battuta slept in a house made completely of salt except for the camel-skinned roof. All the food had to be imported. Loaded with salt slabs, the caravan left Taghaza and traversed five hundred miles of sand desert where only one watering point was to be found.

After several weeks, he traveled to the capital of Mali, the location of which is unsure. He fainted during dawn prayers after eating yams or some root that had not been cooked long enough to remove the natural poison. He remained ill for two months. When he finally recovered, he attended a memorial ceremony for a Moroccan sultan at the palace of Mansa Sulayman. The sultan entered the pavilion, preceded by three hundred slaves, two saddled and bridled horses, and two rams as defense against the evil eye. When Ibn Battuta was introduced to the ruler, he received to his dismay a measly gift of three loaves of bread, a piece of beef, and a gourd filled with yogurt. He was used to being treated as a more important person than that!

It was another two months before Ibn Battuta could again speak to Sulayman. When he did, he complained of his treatment. The ruler then gave him a house and some gold. Our traveler continued to think of Sulayman as a miser, but he did have respect for the ruler's government and his devotion to the Muslim population. Perhaps Sulayman was not impressed with Ibn Battuta, his large ego, or his righteous complaints about the presence of naked female slaves in the royal court.

In February 1353, Ibn Battuta went by camel to Timbuktu, which was just then developing as a trade center. Moving on to Gao, a source of copper, he became ill again and was cared for by a Moroccan. Shortly after, he received a request from the sultan of Morocco to return home, he did so. We do not know why the sultan called for him.

When he arrived in Fez and became known in educated circles, the sultan commanded him to set down an account of his fabulous travels. He did this with the literary assistance of Ibn Juzayy, the young scholar he had met in Granada. After dictating his story, Ibn Battuta may well have remained in Morocco, leading a quiet life. He died in 1368, or 1369, perhaps in Tangier.

Group (5) Questions

1. What caused the Black Death?
2. How serious was the plague in southwest Asia and North Africa?
3. How important was the salt trade?
4. Why did Ibn Battuta travel to Spain?
5. Why was the Arab world interested in the African empire of Mali?
6. What evidence did Ibn Battuta report of global interaction?
7. In your opinion, what would have been the most surprising discovery on this trip for Ibn Battuta? Why?