WORLD HISTORY 9 HONORS
SUMMER ASSIGNMENT 2019

Essential Question: How much and in what ways are people influenced by geography, or their natural environment?

BACKGROUND:

This year we will be studying World History from 1450-1914. While studying World History we will take a step back from our current place and time to look at how the various societies of the world ended up where they are today. In doing so, we will be examining how different factors influence people and events.

For your summer assignment we will be looking at the same essential question as your ELA course:

How much and in what ways are people influenced by geography, or their natural environment?

Through this assignment, you will be looking at both primary sources and current events to think about this question. Over the summer you will be expected to read and analyze two current event articles and a historical primary source that deal with our EQ. Once in the classroom, students will be composing a response to this question based on a historical document. The work that you do this summer will serve as background knowledge and support for your response. Without these articles and analysis, your in-class assessment will be nearly impossible to properly complete, resulting in a significantly lower performance grade.

YOUR TASK:

1. Read the primary source “Meadows of Gold” by Abdul-Hasan Ali al-Masudi. Keep in mind that there are three parts to this reading: the background on the source and the author, followed by the essential question (see above), and then lastly the source itself. Read them in this order: the background will help give you a summary and some context for the source, the essential question (see above) that will show you what to look for, and the source is where you’ll have to find all the supporting information. Pay careful attention to not only the source but also the footnotes as you read, because these will give you key information you’ll need to understand the source. Your answers to the questions must include direct quotes from the source and an explanation of what the quotes mean in your own words. Write a paragraph (at least 6-8 sentences) in response.

2. Find two (2) current event articles in a newspaper or from a reputable news site*** that demonstrates an issue in which a person is influenced by his or her environment. Print out the articles and write a paragraph (at least 6-8 sentences) for each that answers the essential question drawing specific examples from the articles.

***To find a reputable news source: Go to https://mediabiasfactcheck.com/ and use it to check to make sure the sources you are using have a “HIGH” level of factual reporting. For example, if you type in “CNN” into the search bar and then click on the world map icon below CNN in the search results, it will show you that CNN has a “MIXED” level of factual reporting, which means you don’t want to use it. But if
you do the same for the Wall Street Journal, you'll see that it has a “HIGH” rating, which means you can use it.
The Land of Zanj: Tenth-Century East Africa

71 ▪ Abul-Hasan Ali al-Masudi,
MEADOWS OF GOLD

The Arabs who traded along the coast of East Africa knew it as the Land of Zanj, a name that survives in Zanzibar, an island that is part of present-day Tanzania. Following the monsoon winds of the Indian Ocean, which blow toward East Africa between November and March, Arab merchants sailed from Oman and other regions of the Arabian Peninsula and visited trading ports that stretched southward
from Mogadishu in Somalia to Sofala, which is located in present-day Mozambique. At these trading centers, they met sailors from India and the islands of Southeast Asia, as well as Arab and Iranian colonists, many of whom had intermarried with Africans. Because of the presence of Arabic speakers along this coast, Arab merchants had little difficulty in conducting commerce, apart from the normal hazards of venturing long distances across treacherous ocean waters in small vessels. After acquiring the desired raw materials, Arab merchants either returned home or sailed to India, driven by monsoon winds that blow northeastward between April and October.

One of the earliest Arabic accounts of East African society and its trade comes from the pen of Abul-Hasan Ali al-Masudi (ca. 890–956), who visited the region in 915/916. In his masterwork of history and geography, Meadows of Gold, which he composed in 943, al-Masudi informs his readers of the Indian Ocean trade network into which the Land of Zanj was interwoven and of the people of interior East Africa, who fed that trade. How much of what he tells us about the people of Zanj is fact and how much is the stuff of distorted legend is open to question. What is clear and undisputed is the picture that al-Masudi draws of the importance of Africa’s east coast to foreign merchants.

The pilots of Oman¹ pass by the channel [of Berbera] to reach the island of Kanbalu,² which is in the Zanj sea.³ It has a mixed population of Muslims and Zanj idolaters.⁴ . . . The aforesaid Kanbalu is the farthest point of their voyages on the Zanj sea, and the land of Sofala and the Waqwaq,⁵ on the edge of the Zanj mainland and at the end of this branch of the sea. The people of Sira⁶ also make this voyage, and I myself have sailed on this sea, setting off from Sanjir, the

¹The region of southeast Arabia that stretches along the entrance to the Persian Gulf.
²The island of Pemba.
³The region of the Indian Ocean that washes the central portion of Africa’s eastern coast.
⁴Worshippers of idols. People who follow traditional religions.
⁵Arabs normally used this term to refer only to the people of Malaysia, who speak a language that is related to the Malagasy tongue of Madagascar. Madagascar is a large island off the coast of East Africa and opposite Sofala; Malaysia is across the Indian Ocean in Southeast Asia (see note 15). In the present context, however, the term seems to refer to the people of interior Africa.
⁶A port on the Iranian shore of the Persian Gulf.
capital of Oman, in company with a number of Omani shipowners, among whom were Muhammad ibn al-Zarnibud and Jawhar ibn Ahmad surnamed Ibn Sirah, who was later lost at sea with his ship. My last voyage from Kanhali to Oman was in A.H. 304 on the ship belonging to Ahmad and Abdel al-Samad, who were the brothers of Abdel al-Rahim ibn Jafar al-Sirafi. ... They were both lost at sea with all their goods later on. ... I have sailed much on the seas, ... but I do not know of one more dangerous than that of the Zanj.

The land of Zanj produces wild leopard skins. The people wear them as clothes, or export them to Muslim countries. They are the largest leopard skins and the most beautiful for making saddles. ... They also export tortoise-shell for making combs, for which ivory is likewise used.

In the same way that the sea of China ends with the land of Japan, the sea of Zanj ends with the land of Sofala and the Waqwaq, which produces gold and many other wonderful things. It has a warm climate and is fertile. The Zanj capital is there8 and they have a king called the Mfombe. This is the ancient name of their kings, and all the other Zanj kings are subject to him: he has 300,000 horsemen. The Zanj use the ox as a beast of burden, for they have no horses, mules or camels in their land, and do not know of their existence. ... They do not know of snow or hail. Some of their tribes sharpen their teeth and are cannibals. ... The villages stretch for 700 parasangs9 and the same distance inland: the country is cut up into valleys, mountains, and stony deserts. There are many wild elephants but no tame ones. The Zanj do not use them for war or anything else, but only hunt and kill them. When they want to catch them, they throw down the leaves, bark and branches of a certain tree which grows in their country: then they wait in ambush until the elephants come to drink. The water burns them and makes them drunk. They fall down and cannot get up: their limbs will not articulate. The Zanj rush upon them armed with very long spears, and kill them for their ivory. It is from this country that come tusks weighing fifty pounds and more. They usually go to Oman, and from there are sent to China and India. This is the chief trade route, and if it were not so, ivory would be common in Muslim lands.

In China the kings and military civil officers use ivory palanskins,10 no officer or notable dares to come into the royal presence in an iron palanskin, and ivory alone can be used. Thus they seek after straight tusks in preference to the curved, to make the things we have spoken of. They also burn ivory before their idols and cast their altars with it, just as Christians use the Mary incense11 and other perfumes. The Chinese make no other use of the elephant, and consider it unlucky to use it for domestic purposes or war. This fear has its origin in a tradition about one of their most ancient military expeditions. In India ivory is much sought after.12 It is used for the handles of daggers called bharri or bari in the singular: and also for the curved sword-scabbards called kartal, in the plural karatil, but the chief use of ivory is making chessmen and backgammon pieces. ... It is only in the land of Zanj and in India that elephants reproduce. ...
Now let us return to . . . the Zanj, the description of their country and of the other peoples of Abyssinia. The Zanj, although always busied hunting the elephant and collecting its ivory, make no use of it for domestic purposes. They use iron instead of gold and silver, just as they use oxen, as we said before, both for beasts of burden and for war. These oxen are harnessed like a horse and run as fast . . .

To go back to the Zanj and their kings, these are known as Wadhalme, which means son of the Great Lord, since he is chosen to govern them justly. If he is tyrannical or strays from the truth, they kill him and exclude his seed from the throne, for they consider that in acting wrongfully he forfeits his position as the son of the Lord, the King of Heaven and Earth. They call God Malikajlu, which means Great Lord.

The Zanj have an elegant language and men who preach in it. One of their holy men will often gather a crowd and exhort his hearers to please God in their lives and to be obedient to him. He explains the punishments that follow upon disobedience, and reminds them of their ancestors and kings of old. These people have no religious law: their kings rule by custom and by political expediency.

The Zanj eat bananas, which are as common among them as they are in India; but their staple food is millet and a plant called kalari which is pulled out of the earth like truffles. It is plentiful in Aden and the neighboring part of Yemen near to the town. It is like the cucumber of Egypt and Syria. They also eat honey and meat. Every man worships what he pleases, be it a plant, an animal or a mineral. They have many islands where the coconut grows: its nuts are used as fruit by all the Zanj peoples. One of these islands, which is one or two days' sail from the coast, has a Muslim population and a royal family. This is the island of Kanbalu of which we have already spoken.

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13 Usually the term refers only to Ethiopia, but al-Masudi uses it to refer to a substantial portion of the northeastern coast of Africa.
14 Apparently these are the kings mentioned earlier in this excerpt who are subordinate to the Mafalme.
15 Migrants from Malaysia in Southeast Asia settled in Madagascar around the first century c.e. (see note 5) and brought with them plants and seeds from their homeland, including the banana. From Madagascar the banana traveled into the tropical rainforests of continental Africa, where it flourished as a domesticated crop.
16 A cereal.
17 An Arabic port city that commands the entrance to the Red Sea.
18 See note 11.