

Document E

Source: Al-Umari, *Masalik al-Absar*, 1337-1338.

Note: Al-Umari was an Arab scholar and the son of a Cairo official. He did not meet Mansa Musa when the *hajj* arrived in Cairo in December 1324, but several years afterward he interviewed people who had. He included their observations in his encyclopedia *Masalik-al-Absar*, excerpted below.

From the beginning of my coming to stay in Egypt I heard talk of the arrival of this sultan Musa on his Pilgrimage and found the Cairenes [people of Cairo] eager to recount what they had seen of the Africans' prodigal [wasteful] spending. I asked the emir Abu ... and he told me of the opulence [luxury; extreme wealth], manly virtues, and piety of his sultan [king]. "When I went out to meet him, that is, on behalf of the mighty [Egyptian] sultan al-Malik al-Nasir, he did me extreme honour and treated me with the greatest courtesy.... Then he forwarded to the royal treasury many loads of unworked native gold and other valuables. I tried to persuade him to go up to the Citadel to meet the sultan, but he refused persistently saying: 'I came for the Pilgrimage and nothing else. I do not wish to mix anything else with my Pilgrimage.' He had begun to use this argument but I realized

that [meeting the sultan] was repugnant to him because he would be obliged to kiss the ground and the sultan's hand. I continued to cajole him and he continued to make excuses but the sultan's protocol demanded that I should bring him into the royal presence, so I kept on at him till he agreed..."

This man [Mansa Musa] flooded Cairo with his benefactions [gifts]. He left no court emir nor holder of a royal office without the gift of a load of gold. The [people of Cairo] made incalculable profits out of him and his suite in buying and selling and giving and taking. They exchanged gold until they depressed its value in Egypt and caused its price to fall.... This has been the state of affairs for about twelve years until this day by reason of the large amount of gold which they brought into Egypt and spent there.

Document Analysis

1. Whom does al-Umari quote in this account?
2. How did Mansa Musa treat his Cairo hosts?
3. Why did Mansa Musa say when asked to meet with the sultan of Cairo? Might there have been another reason for his refusal?
4. How did Mansa Musa's actions affect the Egyptian economy and currency?

Writing Journal Entry #5: Label your journal entry "Cairo, 1324, Afternoon."

You arrived in Cairo this morning and the city was abuzz with activity and excitement. There are rumors swirling that Mansa Musa will not meet with the local sultan. Meanwhile, great amounts of gold are being given to the people of Cairo. How do you feel about the excitement surrounding your visit? What are your thoughts about how much gold is being distributed? Take a few moments to write your thoughts in your journal.