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Ways of the World: A Brief Global History

First Edition

CHAPTER 8

Commerce and Culture
500–1500

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Silk Roads: Exchange across Eurasia

What made trading networks successful?

Security

Did best when large states provided security for trade. Roman and Chinese empires anchored commerce.

7th and 8th centuries – Byzantine empire, Abbasid dynasty, and Tang dynasty

13th and 14th centuries Mongols controlled almost all of the silk roads

Goods in Transit

- What was traded?
- Mostly luxury goods!
- Why?

To costly to transport staple goods.

Goods in Transit

- Silk symbolized the Eurasian exchange system.

China had a monopoly on silk technology

Used as currency in Central Asia

Silk was a symbol of high status

6th century, others made silk, silk industry developed in Western Europe in 12th century

Cultures in Transit

- Cultural transmission was more important than the exchange of goods.
- Religion

Buddhism had always appealed to merchants, it spread along the silk road was religion of merchants and rulers for centuries.

Disease in Transit

- Long-distance trade meant exposure to unfamiliar diseases.

-Early cases?

Athens

Rome

Han

Athens 430-429 BCE

Smallpox devastated the populations of both the Roman and Han Empires

Disease in Transit

- 534-750 bubonic plague!

Byzantine Empire

Stopped Justinian I from conquering all of former Roman Empire. Through these events would eventually lead to a split from the Catholic Church

Disease in Transit

- Black Death spread thanks to the Mongol Empires unification of much of Eurasia
- Could have been bubonic plague, anthrax or a collection of epidemic diseases.
- Undermined Mongol power and would assist in its decline.

Disease gave Europeans an advantage when they reached the Western Hemisphere after 1500!

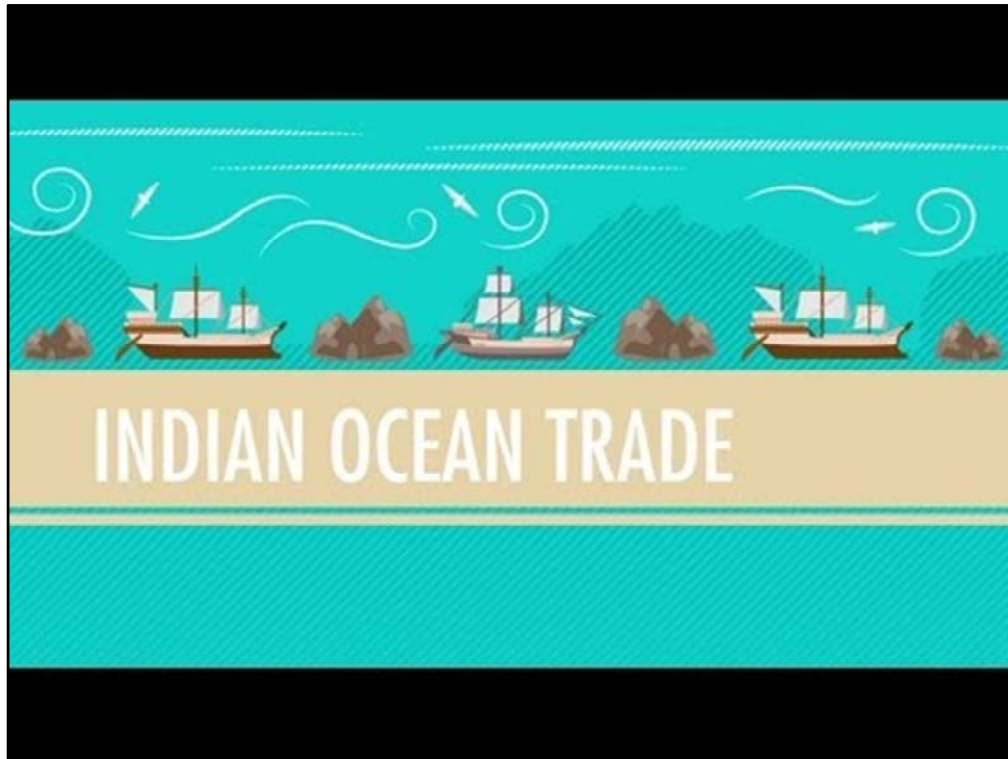
13th-14th centuries

Killed 1/3 of the pop. of Europe, China and Islamic world between 1346-1350

Sea Roads: Exchange across the Indian Ocean

Venice center of commerce by 1000CE

Controlled trade of imports from Asia, Linked Europe to a much greater trade network of the Indian Ocean



Sea Roads: Exchange across the Indian Ocean

The Mediterranean Sea was an avenue for commerce from the time of the Phoenicians.

Sea Roads: Exchange across the Indian Ocean

The Indian Ocean network was the world's most important until after 1500.

1. trade grew from environmental and cultural diversity
2. transportation was cheaper by sea than by land
3. made transportation of bulk goods possible (textiles, pepper, timber, rice, sugar, wheat)

4. commerce was possible thanks to monsoons (alternating wind currents)
5. commerce was between towns, not states

Weaving the Web of an Indian Ocean World

1. Indian Ocean trade started in the age of the First Civilizations

2. tempo of commerce increased in early centuries C.E. with greater understanding of monsoons

- 1: a. Indus Valley writing may have been stimulated by cuneiform
 - b. ancient Egyptians and Phoenicians traded down the Red Sea
 - c. Malay sailors reached Madagascar in the first millennium B.C.E.
-
- 2: a. merchants from Roman Empire settled in southern India and East African coast
 - b. growing trade in eastern Indian Ocean and South China Sea

Weaving the Web of an Indian Ocean World

3. fulcrum of trade was India

4. two great encouragers for the Indian Ocean exchange:

- 4: a. economic and political revival of China
- b. rise of Islam in seventh century C.E.

Sea Roads as a Catalyst for Change: Southeast Asia and Srivijaya

1. ocean commerce transformed Southeast Asia and East Africa

2. Southeast Asia: location between China and India made it important

- 1: a. trade stimulated political change
 - b. introduction of foreign religious ideas
- 2: a. Malay sailors opened an all-sea route between India and China through the Straits of Malacca ca. 350 C.E.
 - b. led many small ports to compete to attract traders

Sea Roads as a Catalyst for Change: Southeast Asia and Srivijaya

3. Malay kingdom of Srivijaya emerged from competition, dominated trade from 670 to 1025 C.E.

4. Sailendras kingdom (central Java) was also influenced by India

5. temples in Burma , the Khmer state of Angkor , etc., show reach of Indian culture

6. Islam penetrated later

- 3: a. gold, access to spices, and taxes on ships provided resources to create a state
b. local belief: chiefs possessed magical powers
c. also used Indian political ideas and Buddhism
- 4: a. massive building of Hindu and Buddhist centers (eighth–tenth centuries)
b. shows Buddhist cultural grounding in Javanese custom

Sea Roads as a Catalyst for Change: East Africa and Swahili Civilization

1. Swahili civilization of East Africa developed from blend of Bantu with commercial life of the Indian Ocean (especially Islamic)

2. Swahili civilization flourished along East African coast between 1000 and 1500 C.E.

- 1: a. growing demand for East African products (gold, ivory, quartz, leopard skins, some slaves, iron, wood products)
 - b. African merchant class developed, with towns and kingships
- 2: a. very urban, with cities of 15,000–18,000 people
 - b. each city was politically independent, ruled by a king
 - c. accumulated goods from the interior and traded for Asian goods
 - d. sharp class distinctions

Sea Roads as a Catalyst for Change: East Africa and Swahili Civilization

3. most of trade was in Arab ships; Swahili craft traveled coastal waterways

4. deep participation in the Indian Ocean world

5. Islam and Swahili culture didn't reach much beyond coast until the nineteenth century

- 4: a. regular visits by Arab and Indian (perhaps Persian) merchants; some settled
b. many ruling families claimed Arab or Persian origins
c. Swahili was written in Arabic script, with Arabic loan words
d. widespread conversion to Islam
- 5: a. but Swahili region traded with the interior, had an impact
b. trade with interior for gold led to emergence of Great Zimbabwe (flourished in 1250–1350 C.E.)

Sand Roads: Exchange across the Sahara

Commercial Beginnings in West Africa

A. Commercial Beginnings in West Africa

1. trans-African trade was also based on environmental variation

2. earliest trade in the region was among agricultural peoples in the Sudan

- 1: a. North Africa manufactured goods
 - b. Sahara had copper and salt deposits, dates
 - c. agricultural peoples further south grew crops, mined gold
- 2: a. emergence of urban clusters in the early centuries C.E.
 - b. most famous was Jenne-jeno (Niger Valley civilization)

Gold, Salt, and Slaves: Trade and Empire in West Africa

B. Gold, Salt, and Slaves: Trade and Empire in West Africa

1. introduction of the camel in early centuries C.E. was a turning point

2. regular trans-Saharan commerce by 300–400 C.E.

3. merchants especially wanted gold from West Africa (along with ivory, kola nuts, slaves)

4. the Sahara became a major international trade route

- 1: a. camels can go 10 days without water
 - b. made it possible to cross the Sahara
- 4: a. huge caravans (as many as 5,000 camels)
 - b. caravans traveled the desert for over 1,000 years

Gold, Salt, and Slaves: Trade and Empire in West Africa

5. trade encouraged new and larger political structures

- a. creation of a series of states in western and central Sudan between 500 and 1600 C.E., including Ghana, Mali, Songhay, Kanem, and Hausa city-states
- b. all were monarchies with elaborate court life and at least some administration and military forces
- c. all had a reputation for great riches

Gold, Salt, and Slaves: Trade and Empire in West Africa

6. slavery was present in West Africa

a. at first, most slaves were women

b. with development of civilization, male slaves were used as officials, porters, craftsmen, miners, agricultural laborers

c. most slaves came from societies raided farther south

d. some 5,500 slaves a year came from across the Sahara between 1100 and 1400

7. substantial urban/commercial centers (such as Koumbi-Saleh, Jenne, Timbuktu)

a. some became manufacturing centers

b. Islam was established in towns

An American Network: Commerce and Connection in the Western Hemisphere

A. There was no sustained interaction between the Western and Eastern hemispheres before the voyages of Columbus.

B. American trade networks were not as dense as Afro-Eurasian ones.

- B:**
- a. lack of domesticated large mammals, wheeled vehicles, large oceangoing ships**
 - b. geographical or environmental obstacles, including north/south orientation**
 - c. local and regional commerce flourished, but not long-distance trade**
 - d. cultural traditions did not spread as widely as in Eastern Hemisphere**

An American Network: Commerce and Connection in the Western Hemisphere

C. But there was a “loosely interactive web” from the Great Lakes to the Andes.

- 1. cultural elements spread gradually**
- 2. evidence of at least indirect contact**
- 3. Cahokia was at center of a widespread trading network**
- 4. Chaco canyon culture also interacted with Mesoamerica**
- 5. Amazon and Orinoco river exchange networks**
- 6. Caribbean peoples conducted interisland trade**
- 7. Chinchu people traded along Pacific coast of South America**

An American Network: Commerce and Connection in the Western Hemisphere

D. There was a major trade network in Mesoamerica.

1. Maya and Teotihuacán traded by land

2. Maya traded by sea on both coasts (with dugout canoes)

3. Aztecs of fifteenth century had professional merchants (pochteca)

E. There was a major state-run trade network in the Andes.

Chapter 8

Commerce and Culture, 500–1500

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Map 8-1
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Map 8-3
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Spot Map 8-1
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Spot Map 8-2
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Travels on the Silk Road
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Dunhuang
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Borobudur
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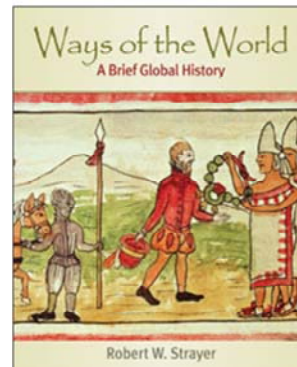
The Gold of Mali
 Ways of the World, First Edition
 Bibliothèque nationale de France



Inca Roads
Ways of the World, First Edition
Loren McIntyre/lorenmcintyre.com

Part III: An Age of Accelerating Connections, 500–1500
Chapter 8: Commerce and Culture, 500–1500

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Questions**



Comparison: Why did the Western Hemisphere produce a less extensive long-distance trading system than the Eastern Hemisphere?

- a. Fewer desirable goods or raw materials were available to trade for in the Americas.
- b. Particularly violent warfare in the Americas as compared to Eurasia suppressed trade.
- c. The lack of large domesticated animals and oceangoing vessels made long-distance trade more difficult.
- d. Native Americans were unable to use the river systems of the Americas for trade.

Connection: Even though long-distance trade predates the period between 500 c.e. and 1500 c.e., it grew in importance during this period because

- a. as the volume of trade increased, it encouraged peoples in many regions of Eurasia to specialize in producing particular products for sale rather than being self-sufficient.
- b. it became standard practice for merchants to regularly travel the whole length of trade routes across Eurasia bringing greater direct contact between distant civilizations.
- c. India was able to dominate both the Silk Roads and the Sea Roads from east to west, bringing peace and order to the system.
- d. for the first time empires sought to foster trade.

Change: Which of the following was NOT an outcome of the growth of Eurasian long-distance trade between 500 c.e. and 1500 c.e.?

- a. Increased spread of religious ideas
- b. The decline of empires as an important political structure
- c. Greater specialization of some economies
- d. Increased spread of diseases

Discussion Starter: In terms of the course of world history, which of the following exchanges that occurred because of long-distance trade between 500 c.e. and 1500 c.e. had the greatest impact?

- a. The spread of diseases
- b. The spread of technologies
- c. The spread of religions
- d. The trade of goods

Discussion Starter: In light of the increased long-distance contact in the Eastern Hemisphere by 1500 c.e., do you think that it is best

- a. to focus primarily on individual cultural zones as they remained remarkably distinct despite the increased contact?
- b. to focus primarily on individual cultural zones, but with an awareness that interaction was taking place?
- c. to think of the hemisphere primarily as a single interacting zone, but to focus occasionally upon individual regions to better understand how developments differed on the ground?
- d. to focus on the hemisphere as a single interacting zone?

Discussion Starter: Which do you think was more significant to world history, the Silk Roads or the Sea Roads?

- a. The Silk Roads were more significant to world history.
- b. The Sea Roads were more significant to world history.

Answer Key for Chapter 8

1. Answer is C
2. Answer is A
3. Answer is B