

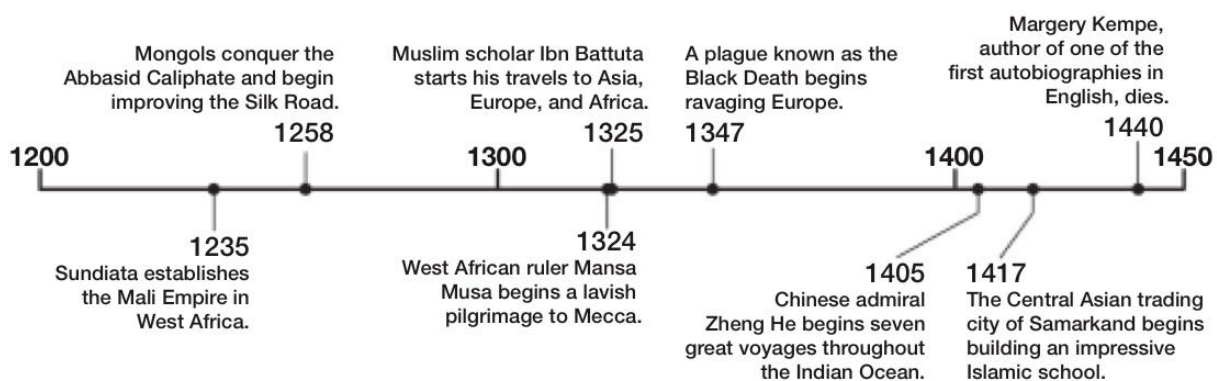
UNIT 2: Networks of Exchange from c. 1200 to c. 1450

Understand the Context

Between 1200 and 1450, economic activity along existing trade routes increased in volume and scope. Technological and commercial innovations, imperial expansion, and demand for luxury goods were key factors in the ongoing expansion of trade. Growing trade networks accelerated cultural, biological, and technological diffusion across Afro-Eurasia.

Factors that Expanded Trade Between 1200 and 1450, the rise of powerful states and empires played a critical role in increasing the volume and geographical reach of existing trade networks. The Mongol Empire promoted trade along the Silk Roads, creating a vast commercial network across Eurasia. Trade routes across the Sahara and in the Indian Ocean added both West Africa and East Africa to this network. Improvements to previously existing commercial practices, including forms of credit, facilitated larger networks of exchange. Driving this growth in trade was a growing demand for luxury goods, such as silk and porcelain from China and gold from Africa.

Consequences of Trade In the context of this growing trade, powerful new trading cities emerged scattered across Africa and Eurasia. Trade provided the setting for significant cross-cultural exchanges. As merchants and other travelers moved from place to place, they introduced religious beliefs such as Islam and developments in technology such as paper making and gunpowder to new communities. Against the backdrop of this transfer of ideas and things, came also the rapid spread of deadly diseases, most notably the bubonic plague.



The Silk Roads

And don't forget that if you treat the custom-house officers with respect, and make them something of a present in goods or money, as well as their clerks and dragomen, they will behave with great civility, and always be ready to appraise your wares below their real value.

—Italian merchant Francesco Balducci Peglotti (1471)

Essential Question: What were the causes and effects of the growth of networks of exchange after 1200?

More than 1,300 years after the first accounts of travel on the Silk Roads, these fabled routes that had fallen into disuse had revived by the 8th and 9th centuries. As described by merchant Peglotti, the land route of the Silk Roads was vibrant and essential to interregional trade in the 14th and 15th centuries.

Demand for luxury goods increased in Europe and Africa. Chinese, Persian, and Indian artisans and merchants expanded their production of textiles and porcelains for export. Caravans made travel safer and more practical, and the Chinese developed a system using paper money to manage increasing trade. Interregional trade on the Silk Roads flourished.

Causes of the Growth of Exchange Networks

The Crusades helped pave the way to expanding networks of exchange, as lords and their armies of knights brought back fabrics and spices from the East. Despite the inroads on the Byzantine Empire by the Ottoman Turks, the Silk Roads trade routes remained in operation, as did sea routes across the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean. China was still eager for Europe's gold and silver, and Europe was growing more eager than ever for silk, tea, and rhubarb. Global trade increased. Although Europeans had not yet found a route around the Cape of Good Hope at the southern tip of Africa, they had been making overland trips across Europe for many centuries.

Rise of New Empires After the collapse of classical civilizations such as the Roman and Han empires, the first golden age of the Silk Roads came to an end, and activity declined dramatically. However, by the 8th and 9th centuries, Arab merchants from the Abbasid Empire revived the land route of the Silk Roads as well as sea routes in the Indian Ocean. Tang China had much to offer the newly revived global trade network, including the compass,

paper, and gunpowder. China exported porcelain, tea, and silk. From other parts of Asia, China imported cotton, precious stones, pomegranates, dates, horses, and grapes. These luxury goods appealed to the upper class of Chinese society, whose members reveled in their country's newfound affluence. This period marked the second golden age of the Silk Roads.

No other cause, however, had as significant an impact on the expansion of trade as did the rise of the **Mongol Empire**. Mongols conquered the Abbasid Caliphate in 1258, and in the 14th century China came under their control as well. Parts of the Silk Roads that were under the authority of different rulers were, for the first time, unified in a system under the control of an authority that respected merchants and enforced laws. The Mongols improved roads and punished bandits, both of which increased the safety of travel on the Silk Roads. New trade channels were also established between Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Europe. Those who survived the conquests by the Mongols and their descendants benefited from the reinvigoration of trade routes that had not been heavily used since the days of the Roman and Han Empires. (You will read more about the Mongols in Topic 2.2.)

Improvements in Transportation Technologies Another cause for the expansion of exchange networks was the improvement of transportation. Travelers on the overland Silk Roads learned that traveling with others in caravans was safer than traveling alone. They also learned how to design saddles for camels that greatly increased the weight of the load the animals could carry.

Centuries earlier, China had made advances in naval technology that allowed it to control sea-based trade routes in the South China Sea. During the Han Dynasty, Chinese scientists developed the **magnetic compass** and improved the **rudder**, both of which helped aid navigation and ship control along the seas. The Chinese **junk**, also developed in the Han Dynasty, was a boat similar to the Southwest Asian dhow. It had multiple sails and was as long as 400 feet—at least triple the size of the typical Western European ship of its time. The hull of a junk was divided into compartments. The walls making these divisions strengthened the ship for rough voyages at sea and made sinking less likely.

Effects of the Growth of Exchange Networks

Two significant effects of the expansion and stability of the Silk Roads were the series of oases that developed along the routes, including thriving cities, and commercial innovations that greatly helped to manage the increasing trade.

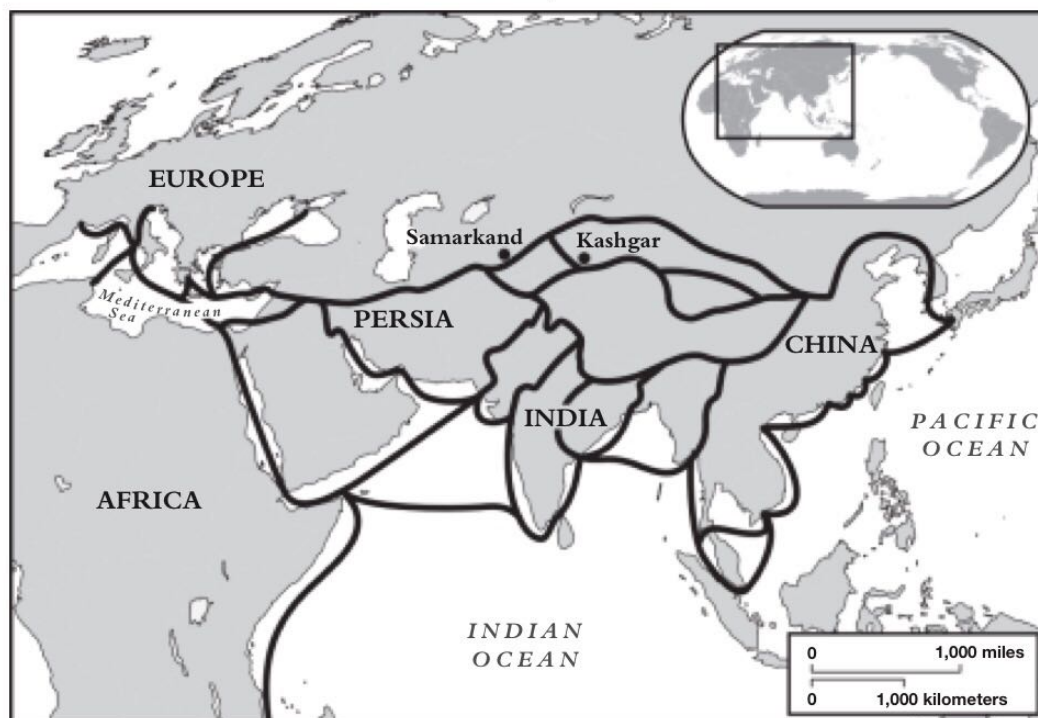
Cities and Oases Long stretches of the overland Silk Roads passed through inhospitable terrain—hot arid lands where water was scarce. Cities along the routes that were watered by rivers became thriving centers of trade. For example, the city of **Kashgar** is located at the western edge of China where northern and southern routes of the Silk Roads crossed, leading to destinations



in Central Asia, India, Pakistan, and Persia. It sits where the Taklamakan Desert meets the Tian Shan Mountains and is watered by the Kashgar River, which has made the lands along it fertile for crops such as wheat, rice, fruits, and cotton. Travelers on the Silk Roads depended on Kashgar for its abundance of water and food. Artisans in Kashgar produced textiles, rugs, leather goods, and pottery. Its food and handicrafts were sold in a bustling market. At the crossroads of both ideas and goods, the once primarily Buddhist city also became a center of Islamic scholarship.

Similarly, **Samarkand**, in present-day Uzbekistan in the Zeravshan River valley, was a stopping point on the Silk Roads between China and the Mediterranean. Samarkand was a center of cultural exchange as much as it was a center for trading goods. Archaeological remains show the presence of diverse religions, including Christianity, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, and Islam. Like Kashgar, Samarkand was known for its artisans as well as its centers of Islamic learning and magnificently decorated mosques.

Silk Roads, c. 1200



Caravanserai Large flourishing trading cities such as Kashgar and Samarkand, however, were not the only oases along the arid Silk Roads. Once the routes of the Silk Roads became stabilized, inns known as **caravanserai** sprang up, often about 100 miles apart. That distance is how far camels could travel before they needed water. At the caravanserai, travelers could rest both themselves and their animals and sometimes trade their animals for fresh ones. The word *caravanserai* derives from the Persian words for caravan and palace.

Commercial Innovations To manage the increasing trade, China developed new financial systems. China had long been a **money economy**—using money rather than bartering with such commodities as cowrie shells or salt. However, the copper coins they used became too unwieldy to transport



Source: Wikimedia Commons
Credit: Photo by Babak Gholizadeh

The entrances to caravanserais were large enough to allow animals as well as people to enter. Inside the enclosure, there were stalls for animals as well as chambers for people. This caravanserai is in Iran.

for everyday transactions, so the government developed a system of credit known as **flying cash**. This allowed a merchant to deposit **paper money** under his name in one location and withdraw the same amount at another location. Locations for exchanging flying cash became the model for the banks of the modern era, including the **banking houses** established in European cities in the 1300s. At a banking house, a person could present a **bill of exchange**—a document stating the holder was legally promised payment of a set amount on a set date—and receive that amount of money in exchange. Each of these innovations encouraged and supported trade by providing convenience and the stability of institutions.

The Crusades awakened Europeans' interest in luxury goods from Asia. To acquire them, they organized the trade of European resources. In the 13th century, cities in northern Germany and Scandinavia formed a commercial alliance called the **Hanseatic League**. Controlling trade in the North Sea and the Baltic Sea, member cities of the league, such as Lubeck, Hamburg, and Riga, were able to drive out pirates and monopolize trade in goods such as timber, grain, leather, and salted fish. League ships would leave the Baltic and North Seas. They would round the Atlantic Coast of Western Europe, proceeding to the ports of the Mediterranean. There, they might pick up valuable goods from Arab caravans. The league lasted until the mid-17th century, when national governments became strong enough to protect their merchants. (Connect: Write a paragraph analyzing the effects in Asia of European interest in Asian goods. See Topic 1.1.)



Innovations in Commerce, 500 B.C.E. to 1603 C.E.			
Financial Instrument	Description	Origin Date	Early Location
Coin	Minted precious metals (silver, bronze, gold) with own inherent value	c. 500 B.C.E.	Lydia, Turkey
Caravanserai	Inns along trade routes where travelers could trade, rest, and replenish	c. 500 B.C.E.	Persian Empire
Paper Money	Currency in paper form	c. 800 C.E.	China
Hanseatic League	First common market and confederation of merchant guilds	1296 C.E.	Germany
Banking House	Precursor to modern banking	c. 200 B.C.E.	China
Bill of Exchange	A written order without interest that binds one party to pay a fixed sum to another party at a predetermined date in the future	c. 700 C.E.	China

Increase in Demand The growing demand for luxury goods from Afro-Eurasia, China, Persia, and India led to a corresponding increase in the supply of those goods through expanded production. Craftworkers expanded their production of such goods as silk and other textiles and porcelains for export. Increased demand also led to the expansion of iron and steel manufactured in China, motivating its proto-industrialization. (See Topic 1.1.)

KEY TERMS BY THEME		
TECHNOLOGY: Sea Trade magnetic compass rudder junk GOVERNMENT: New Empires Mongol Empire	CULTURE: Trade Cities Kashgar Samarkand	ECONOMICS: Innovations caravanserai money economy flying cash paper money banking houses bill of exchange Hanseatic League

The Mongol Empire and the Modern World

Swarming like locusts over the face of the earth, they [the Mongols] have brought terrible devastation to the eastern parts [of Europe], laying it waste with fire and carnage. After having passed through the land of the Saracens [Muslims], they have razed cities, cut down forests, overthrown fortresses, pulled up vines, destroyed gardens, killed townspeople and peasants.

—Matthew Paris, from the *Chronica Majora* (1240)

Essential Question: How did Eurasian empires grow over time, and how did their expansion influence trade and communication?

The Mongols of Central Asia marched across much of Eurasia throughout the 13th century, leaving destruction and chaos in their wake. The reputation of the Mongols for slaughter spread even farther than their actual conquest. Matthew Paris had no firsthand knowledge of the Mongols as he wrote from the safe vantage point of a Benedictine abbey in England. Like Paris, most writers of the time focused on Mongol atrocities. However, in their quest for blood and treasure, the Mongols also sparked a period of interregional connection and exchange at a level that the world had not experienced in a thousand years.

The Mongols and Their Surroundings

In the 12th century, the Mongols were multiple clans of pastoral nomads who herded goats and sheep and who were also hunter-foragers, north of the **Gobi Desert** in East Asia. Life on the arid Asian steppes was harsh, and it shaped the Mongol culture.

The Mongols expected everyone, male and female, to become skilled horse riders, and they highly valued courage in hunting and warfare. They were surrounded by other tribes—the Tatars, the Naimans, the Merkits, and the powerful Jurchen in northern China. The Mongols coveted the relative wealth of tribes and kingdoms that were located closer to the Silk Roads and had easier access to luxury goods such as silk clothing and gold jewelry.



Genghis Khan

The Mongol leader Temujin, born in 1162, spent the early decades of his life creating a series of tribal alliances and defeating neighboring groups one by one. He formed key friendships and married his oldest son to the daughter of a neighboring **khan**, or king. Temujin was intensely focused on building power. With this focus, he sometimes appointed talented nonfamily members to positions over family members. He was often also ruthless. For example, he killed his own stepbrother. He considered personal loyalty the best way to run his growing kingdom. In 1206, Temujin gathered the Mongol chieftains at a meeting called a **kuriltai** where he was elected khan of the Mongolian Kingdom. He took the name **Genghis Khan**, or “ruler of all.”



Temujin, better known as Genghis Khan. 14th century, National Palace Museum

The Beginning of Conquest In 1210, Genghis Khan and his troops headed east and attacked the powerful Jin Empire, which had been established by the Jurchens a century earlier and now ruled Manchuria, Inner Mongolia, and northern China. Its capital was the city of Zhongdu, present-day Beijing. Genghis Khan earned his reputation as a terrifying warrior during this campaign; anyone who resisted him was brutally killed in retribution. Sometimes the Mongols wiped out the civilian populations of entire towns after defeating their armies. Stories of Khan’s brutality spread in advance of his new westward campaigns, inducing some leaders to surrender before an attack. In 1219, Khan conquered both the Central Asian Kara Khitai Empire and the Islamic Khwarazm Empire farther west. By 1227, Genghis Khan’s **khanate**, or kingdom, reached from the North China Sea to eastern Persia. (Connect: Write a paragraph comparing the reign of Genghis Khan to the reign of Sundiata. See Topic 1.5.)

Genghis Khan at War Khan’s empire would not have been possible without the skilled and fearsome soldiers under his command. Mongolian soldiers were strong riders and proficient with the short bow. They were also highly disciplined, and Khan developed an efficient command structure. To help with communication between units, a messenger force was created whose members rode for days without stopping, even sleeping on their horses while continuing to ride. With the help of Genghis Khan, the Mongolian armies developed special units that mapped the terrain so that they were

prepared against attacks and knew which way to go to attack their enemies. Their military strategies extended to surprise and craft. For instance, Mongol forces frequently deployed a band of warriors smaller than that of their enemy, retreating in feigned defeat; usually, enemy forces pursued the retreating Mongols, who then amassed larger forces to confuse and outflank the enemy.

When coming upon an enemy settlement, Genghis Khan sent a small group ahead to ask for surrender. If the enemy refused, he killed all the aristocrats. Craftworkers, miners, and others with skills, such as the ability to read and write, were recruited for the Mongol Empire. Others were used as laborers for tasks such as carrying looted goods back to the Mongol capital or as fodder in the front lines of battles.

Mongols quickly incorporated into their military the weapons and technology of the peoples they conquered. For example, when they conquered parts of China and Persia, they exploited the expertise of captured engineers who knew how to produce improved **siege weapons**, such as portable towers used to attack walled fortifications and catapults that hurled stones or other objects. To keep contact with the far reaches of the empire, Genghis Khan created a type of pony express, except instead of carrying written letters riders carried oral messages.

Genghis Khan at Peace Those who expected Genghis Khan to govern the way he made war were surprised. The period of Eurasian history between the 13th and 14th centuries is often called the **Pax Mongolica**, or Mongolian peace. Genghis Khan established the capital of his empire at Karakorum, near the center of what is now the modern country of Mongolia. In constructing the city and establishing his government, he consulted with scholars and engineers of Chinese and Islamic traditions. Genghis Khan may have been responsible for more new bridges than any other ruler in history. The social policies of Genghis Khan were liberal for the day. For example, he instituted a policy of religious tolerance throughout the empire, which was unusual in the 13th century. Freed from years of warfare, Genghis Khan's soldiers took charge of protecting the Silk Roads, making them safe for trade and ushering in the third golden age of the Silk Roads. New trade channels were also established between Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Europe. Those who survived the conquests by the Mongols and their descendants benefited from the reinvigoration of trade routes that had not been heavily used since the days of the Roman and Han Empires. (Connect: List the similarities and differences in religious policies between the Pax Mongolica and the Romans. See Prologue.)

Genghis Khan's effort to unify his empire included directing a scribe captured in 1204 to adapt the **Uyghur alphabet** to represent Mongol. Although the effort to establish one system throughout the empire failed, the alphabet is still used in Mongolia today.

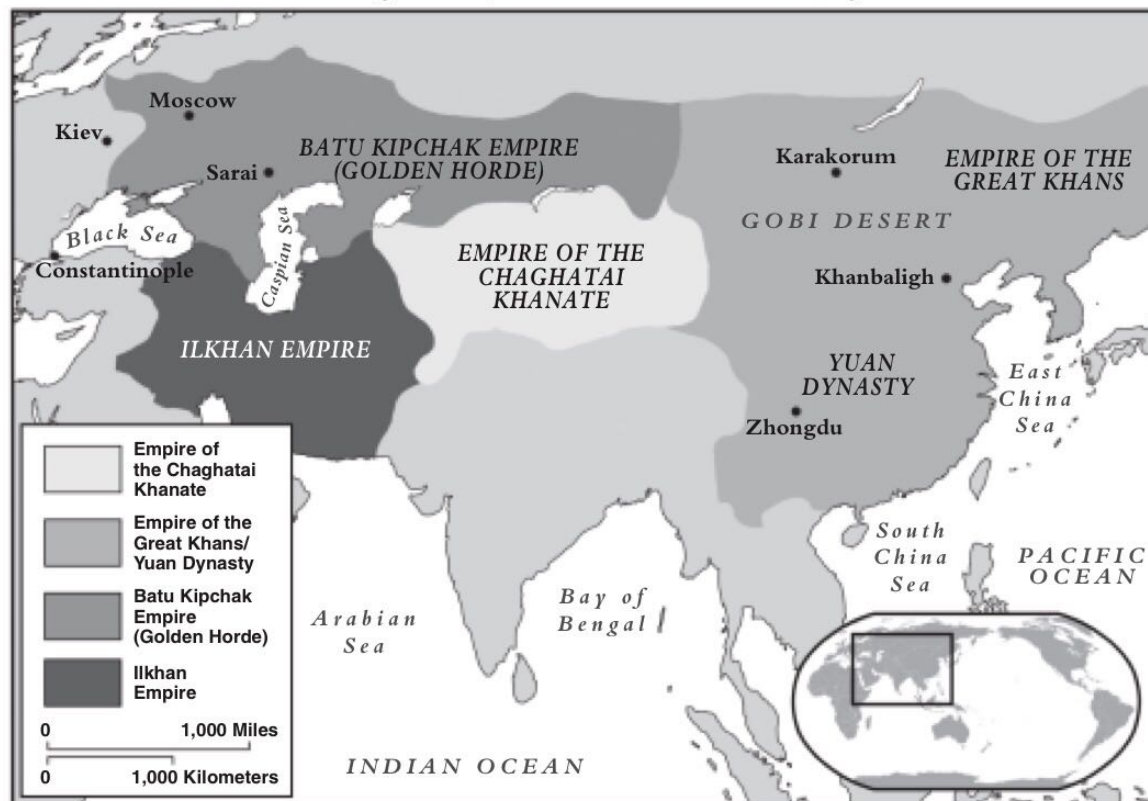
Mongolian Empire Expands

Three of Genghis Khan's grandsons set up their own khanates, further expanding the empire into Asia and Europe. With each conquest, the empire expanded, with new people absorbed into its economy and networks of exchange.



Batu and the Golden Horde In 1236, **Batu**, the son of Khan's oldest son, led a Mongolian army of 100,000 soldiers into Russia, which at the time was a loose network of city-states and principalities. Batu's army, which came to be known as the **Golden Horde**, marched westward, conquering the small Russian kingdoms and forcing them to pay tributes. In 1240, the capital city of Kiev was looted and destroyed.

Mongol Empires in the 13th Century



The Golden Horde continued pushing westward. An initial period of sympathy for the Mongols, based on religious toleration and promotion of trade, evaporated when Western Europe saw the Golden Horde conquer a Christian region, Russia. In 1241, Batu led the Golden Horde into a successful military encounter with Polish, German, and French knights under the leadership of King Henry of Silesia. Soon afterward, Batu defeated a force of Hungarian knights. He next set his sights on Italy and Austria, but fate intervened. Back in Karakorum, Ogodei Khan, the Great Khan's successor, had died. Batu called off the attacks and returned home to attend the funeral and to see to issues of succession. By the time Batu returned to Europe, he had apparently lost interest in conquering Western Europe.

The Mongols ruled northern Russia by working through existing Russian rulers, who sent regular tributes. The Mongols chose this form of indirect rule because they did not want to live in the forests. The rulers of the city-state of **Moscow** began collecting additional tributes, which they set aside to develop an army to resist the Mongols, and began building an anti-Mongol coalition among the Russian city-states. This coalition, under Moscow's leadership, rose up against the Golden Horde and defeated it in 1380 at the Battle of Kulikovo. After this battle, Mongol influence began to decline. By the mid-16th century, Russia had defeated all of the descendant khans

of the Mongols except the Crimean Tatars, who were not defeated until the late 18th century. (Connect: Create a five-event timeline tracing the history of Russia from the Mongols to the development of the modern state. See Topics 1.6 and 2.1.)

The Mongols had long-lasting impact on Russia. As elsewhere, Russia suffered widespread devastation and death from the Mongol attacks. But once the destruction by the Golden Horde was over, Russia began to recover. The invasions prompted Russian princes to improve their military organization and to accept the value of more centralized leadership of the region. In addition, three centuries of Mongol rule severed Russia's ties with much of Western Europe. As a result, Russia developed a more distinctly Russian culture than it had before, and resistance to the Mongols created the foundation for the modern Russian state.

Hulegu and the Islamic Heartlands While Batu led the western armies, **Hulegu**, another grandson of Genghis Khan, took charge of the southwest region. In 1258, Hulegu led the Mongols into the Abbasid territories, where they destroyed the city of Baghdad and killed the caliph, along with perhaps 200,000 residents of the city. Hulegu's Mongolian armies continued to push west, threatening more of the Middle East. In 1260, however, they were defeated as a result of a temporary alliance between the Muslim Mamluks, under their military leader Baibars, and Christian Crusaders in Palestine. Both religious groups viewed the Mongols as a serious threat.

At the time of this defeat, Hulegu's kingdom, called the **Il-khanate**, in Central Asia stretched from Byzantium to the Oxus River, which is now called the Amu Darya. Mongols ruled this kingdom, but Persians served as ministers and provincial and local officials. The Mongols found that this arrangement resulted in maximum tax collection.

Eventually, Hulegu and most of the other Mongols living in the Il-khanate converted to Islam. Before this conversion, the Mongols had tolerated all religions in Persia. After the conversion, however, Mongols supported massacres of Jews and Christians.

Kublai Khan and the Yuan Dynasty Meanwhile, in the eastern part of the Mongolian Empire, a grandson of Genghis Khan, **Kublai Khan**, set his sights on China, which was then ruled by the Song Dynasty. China was a more formidable opponent than those faced by the other khans, and Kublai's armies spent the years from 1235 to 1271 attempting to conquer China. In 1260, Kublai assumed the title of Great Khan, and eleven years later finally defeated the Chinese. Adhering closer to Chinese tradition, rather than enforcing Mongolian practices of leadership and control, Kublai Khan established the **Yuan Dynasty**. He rebuilt the capital at Zhongdu, which had been destroyed by the Mongols in 1215, calling it Dadu. Kublai Khan proved to be skilled at governing a large, diverse territory. Like his grandfather, he instituted a policy of religious tolerance, which inspired loyalty in formerly oppressed groups such as Buddhists and Daoists, who were out of favor in China at the time. His policies were also tolerant toward Muslims, Jews, and Christians. With these and other reforms and the protection of the Mongolian armies, most Chinese initially enjoyed the rule of the Great Khan; he brought prosperity to China

because of cultural exchanges and improved trade with other countries, including European ones.

Mongol women led more independent lives than women in other societies of the time. In their nomadic culture, women tended flocks of sheep and goats in addition to raising children and providing meals for the family. Since they rode horses as Mongol men did, the women wore the same kind of leather trousers. Mongol women could remarry after being widowed and could initiate divorces.

Mongols Lose Power Despite Kublai Khan's adoption of many Chinese customs, Mongolian leaders eventually alienated many Chinese. They hired foreigners for the government rather than native-born Chinese. By promoting Buddhists and Daoists and dismantling the civil service exam system, the Mongols distressed the Chinese scholar-gentry class who were often Confucians. Although the official policy was one of tolerance, the Mongolians tended to remain separate from the Chinese and prohibited non-Mongols from speaking Mongolian.

Just as Batu had reached the limit of Mongol expansion to the west, the Mongolian rulers of China failed to expand beyond China. Starting in 1274, the Yuan Dynasty tried and failed to conquer Japan, Indochina, Burma, and the island of Java. These defeats suggested to the already disenchanted Chinese population that the Mongols were not as fearsome as they once had been. In the 1350s, the secret **White Lotus Society** began quietly organizing to put an end to the Yuan Dynasty. In 1368, **Zhu Yuanzhang**, a Buddhist monk from a poor peasant family, led a revolt that overthrew the Yuan Dynasty and founded the **Ming Dynasty** (1368–1644).

The Mongols' defeat in China paralleled a general decline in their power elsewhere, and the empire began to shrink. The Golden Horde had lost its territory by about 1369, while Central Asian territories were conquered by Tamerlane, also known as Timur the Lame, at around the same time.

(Connect: Describe what the Mongols desired in each of their conquests. See Topic 2.1.)

The Long-Term Impact of the Mongolian Invasions

The Mongolian invasions played a key role in history in many ways, positive and negative.

- Mongols conquered a larger area than the Romans, and their bloody reputation was usually well-earned. Their empire was the largest continuous land empire in history.
- During the period known as the Pax Mongolica (c. 1250–c. 1350), Mongols revitalized interregional trade between Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Europe. The Mongols built a system of roads and continued to maintain and guard the trade routes.



- Interregional cultural exchange occurred as well. Islamic scientific knowledge made its way to China, and paper from China made possible the revolution in communication powered by the Gutenberg printing press (see Topic 1.6). The Mongols transferred Greco-Islamic medical knowledge and the Arabic numbering system to Western Europe.
- The Mongol conquests helped to transmit the fleas that carried the **bubonic plague**, termed the Black Death, from southern China to Central Asia, and from there to Southeast Asia and Europe. It followed familiar paths of trade and military conquest.
- The Mongols ruled successfully due to their understanding of centralized power, a capacity that would transfer in many cases to the occupied civilizations. The Mongols devised and used a single international law for all their conquered territories. Thus, after the Mongols declined in power, the kingdoms and states of Europe, Asia, and Southeast Asia continued or copied the process of centralizing power.
- Mongol fighting techniques led to the end of Western Europe’s use of knights in armor. The heavily clad knights could not react in time to the Mongols’ use of speed and surprise.
- The era of the walled city in Europe also came to an end, as walls proved useless against the Mongols’ siege technology. Some consider the **cannon** a Mongol invention, cobbled together using Chinese gunpowder, Muslim flamethrowers, and European bell-casting techniques.

KEY TERMS BY THEME		
<p>GOVERNMENT: Northern China and Central Asia</p> <p>Mongols khan kuriltai Genghis Khan khanates Pax Mongolica</p> <p>GOVERNMENT: Russia and Western Europe</p> <p>Batu Golden Horde Moscow</p>	<p>GOVERNMENT: Islamic Heartlands</p> <p>Hulegu Il-khanate</p> <p>GOVERNMENT: China</p> <p>Kublai Khan Yuan Dynasty Zhu Yuanzhang Ming Dynasty</p> <p>ENVIRONMENT: Asia</p> <p>Gobi Desert</p>	<p>TECHNOLOGY: Warfare</p> <p>siege weapons cannon</p> <p>CULTURE: Writing</p> <p>Uyghur alphabet</p> <p>SOCIETY: Revolt</p> <p>White Lotus Society</p> <p>SOCIETY: Disease</p> <p>bubonic plague</p>

Exchange in the Indian Ocean

Seek ye knowledge, even to China.

—Hadith (9th century)

Essential Question: What were the causes and effects of the growth of networks of exchange after 1200, and how did environmental knowledge support that expansion?

The saying from the Hadith, traditionally attributed to the prophet Muhammad, provides guidance to Muslims, encouraging them to travel and learn. Following this advice, it is understandable that Dar al-Islam—literally the House of Islam, or Muslim world—might be called the world’s first global empire. It connected societies from North Africa to South Asia.

Even before missionaries and imperial armies spread Islam around the world, Muslim merchants traveling to non-Muslim lands in search of trading partners were paving the way. In fact, Arab merchants had been traveling to South Asia for centuries before Islam began expanding. Muslim merchants’ connections to Dar al-Islam interacted with developments in sailing technology and environmental knowledge to transform the Indian Ocean into an economic hot spot during the Postclassical Era.

Causes of Expanded Exchange in the Indian Ocean

South Asia, with its location in the center of the Indian Ocean, benefited enormously from the trade in the **Indian Ocean Basin**. (Connect: Write a paragraph comparing the Islamic global empire with the Mongolian Empire. See Topic 2.2.) Although some of the causes of expanded trade in the Indian Ocean Basin were the same as those of expanded overland routes, some related specifically to ocean travel and knowledge.

Spread of Islam Although the Indian Ocean trade had existed as early as 200 B.C.E., the expansion of Islam connected more cities than ever before. Trading partners existed in East Africa, East and Southeast Asia, and South Asia. Muslim Persians and Arabs were the dominant seafarers and were instrumental in transporting goods to port cities across the Indian Ocean. Cities on the west coast of India, such as **Calicut** and Cambay, became thriving centers of trade due to interactions with merchants from East Africa and Southwest Asia.

Calicut, especially, became a bustling port city for merchants in search of spices from southern India. Foreign merchants from Arabia and China met in

Calicut to exchange goods from the West and the East, respectively. Local rulers welcomed the presence of Muslim and Chinese merchants, as it brought the city wealth and prominence in the Indian Ocean Basin.

Increased Demand for Specialized Products As the Indian Ocean trade grew, so did the demand for specialized products. Every region involved in trade had something special to offer its trading partners.

- India became known for the high quality of its fabrics, particularly cotton. In addition, merchants traveled to India in search of meticulously woven carpets as well as high-carbon steel (used for knives and swords), tanned leather, and artisan-crafted stonework. Merchants also sought pepper from India's southern coastal cities.
- Modern-day Malaysia and Indonesia became known as the **Spice Islands** because of the fragrant nutmeg, cinnamon, cloves, and cardamom they exported.
- Slaves, ivory, and gold came from the Swahili coastal cities of Mombasa, Mogadishu, and Sofala.
- China exported silks, and Chinese porcelain became coveted worldwide, which is why people in the West still refer to their fancier dishes as "fine china."
- From Southwest Asia came horses, figs, and dates.

Trade in enslaved people also played a role in exchanges in the Indian Ocean. While most Africans who were enslaved and transported to the Americas after 1500 came from west and central Africa, there had been a long-running slave trade in the eastern part of the continent. By routes over land or in the Indian Ocean, slaves from eastern Africa were sold to buyers in northern Africa, the Middle East, and India. Many were transported to the islands off the southeast coast of Africa, such as Madagascar. The trade reached its peak in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Enslaved people taken in the Indian Ocean trade suffered fates different from those who were taken across the Atlantic. Slaves in the Indian Ocean trade were more likely to provide forced labor in seaports in the shipping industry and as household servants. Some worked as sailors or even soldiers. Living in towns or cities, they had more opportunity to develop communities and to work alongside free laborers than did enslaved people taken to the Americas. Slaves who ended up in Islamic communities had certain rights, such as the right to marry. As a result of the **Indian Ocean slave trade**, African words, musical styles, and customs can be found in Oman, India, and elsewhere.

Environmental Knowledge Knowledge of **monsoon winds** was essential for trading in the Indian Ocean. In the winter months, winds originated from the northeast, while in the spring and summer, they blew from the southwest. Thus, merchants had to time their voyages carefully, often remaining in port cities for months at a time, depending on when favorable winds would come their way.

Advances in Maritime Technology Travelers needed ships capable of navigating the Indian Ocean's winds. Arab sailors used sailing technology to aid their travel. It is debatable whether Arab sailors invented the triangular **lateen sails** that they used, but the sails were popular because sailors found that the triangular shape could easily catch winds coming from many different directions. Chinese sailors during the classical period had invented the **stern rudder**, which gave their ships more stability and made them easier to maneuver. The small wooden dhows used by Arab and Indian sailors dominated the seas during the Postclassical Era. Trade facilitated the rapid spread of sailing technology across the many lands bordering the Indian Ocean in this period. (See Topic 4.1 for later Chinese maritime technology, such as the magnetic compass and improved rudder.) The **astrolabe**, improved by Muslim navigators in the 12th century, allowed sailors to determine how far north or south they were from the equator.

Growth of States The trading networks in the Indian Ocean fostered the growth of states to help institutionalize the revenue from trade. One Muslim city-state, **Malacca**, also spelled **Melaka**, became wealthy by building a navy and by imposing fees on ships that passed through the Strait of Malacca, a narrow inlet that many ship captains used to travel between ports in India and ports in China. The Sultan of Malacca became so powerful in the 1400s that he expanded the state into Sumatra and the southern Malay Peninsula. As in city-states in East Africa, Italy, and the Americas, Malacca's prosperity was based on trade rather than agriculture or mining or manufacturing.

The sultanate ended when the Portuguese invaded the city in 1511. The Portuguese hoped that by conquering the key city on the Strait of Malacca, they could control the trade that flowed through it between Europe, India, and China. They were successful enough to generate great wealth for their empire. However, they were less successful than they had hoped. Their conquest touched off conflicts among the other states in the region and caused traders to diversify their routes and the ports they used.

Effects of Expanded Exchange in the Indian Ocean

Some of the very factors that caused expansion of exchange networks in the Indian Ocean also, in time, became effects.

Diasporic Communities Without the arrival of merchants in distant lands, trade could not have expanded. As a natural result of waiting for favorable winds for travel, these merchants interacted with the surrounding cultures and peoples of the region. In fact, many Arab and East African merchants stayed in western Indian port cities permanently because they married women they met there. Arab and Persian merchants settled in East Africa. Thus, these merchants from Dar al-Islam were the first to bring Islam to southern Asia, not through missionary work or conquest, but through intermarriage. Their children would generally be raised within Muslim traditions.



Settlements of people away from their homeland are known as a **diaspora**. In these communities, settlers introduced their own cultural traditions into the indigenous cultures. Those cultures, in turn, influenced the culture of the merchants. Diasporas arose through trade in many parts of the world.

Merchants in Diasporic Communities		
Merchant Community	Region(s)	Products
Muslim	China, Indian Ocean Basin, Europe	Silk, paper, porcelain, spices, gems, woods, gold, salt, amber, furs
Chinese	Southeast Asia, Africa	Cotton, tea, silk, metals, opium, salt
Sogdian (in Samarkand)	Main caravan merchants along Silk Roads, China	Silk, gold, wine, linens
Jewish	China, India, Europe	Glass beads, linens, dyes, spices
Malay	Sri Lanka	Nutmeg, pepper, cloves

Source: Iranica Online. "Sogdian Trade," <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/sogdian-trade>

Response to Increased Demand In a similar way, increased demand for products caused trade to expand. At the same time, however, it resulted in several effects with long-lasting impact. For example, to meet rising demand, producers needed to find ways to become more efficient—to grow more crops, to make more textiles, to manufacture more iron. In some places, the role of the state increased even more to oversee these efforts at efficiency and to raise money through customs—taxes on imported goods—and fees for the use of seaports. The western Indian Rajput kingdom of **Gujarat**, for example, became the go-between for trade between the East and West. The revenue from customs in Gujarat was many times more than the entire worth of some European states.

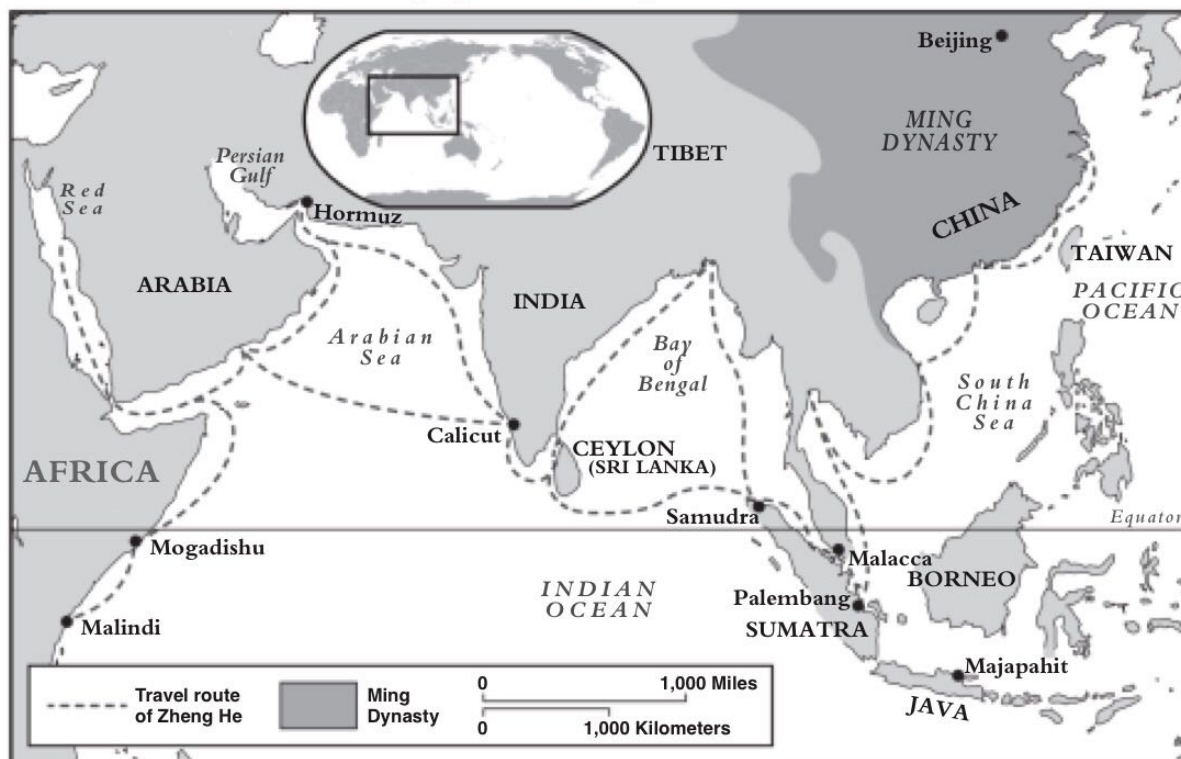
Swahili City-States The Indian Ocean trade also created thriving city-states along the east coast of Africa, sometimes known as the **Swahili city-states**. "Swahili," which literally means "coasters," referred to the inhabitants of bustling commercial centers, such as Kilwa, Mombasa (in modern Kenya), and Zanzibar (in modern Tanzania). The traders of the Zanj Coast, as it was known in Arabic, sold ivory, gold, and slaves to their Arab trading partners, as well as more exotic goods such as tortoise shells, peacock feathers, and rhinoceros horns. In exchange, the "Zanj" cities acquired Chinese porcelain, Indian cotton, and manufactured ironwork. Trade was so vigorous with East Asia that Chinese porcelain remains a common find among the ruins of Swahili cities.

Trade brought considerable wealth to the cities on the East African coast. Architectural ruins in Kilwa suggest the wealth and grandeur that once existed there. For example, most buildings had traditionally been constructed of mud and clay. However, at the Indian Ocean trade's height, many mosques and wealthy merchants' homes were made of stone or coral.



Significant Cultural Transfers The transfer of knowledge, culture, technology, commerce, and religion intensified as a result of thriving trade in the Indian Ocean Basin. The voyages of the Muslim admiral **Zheng He** (1371–1433) reflect this transfer, as well as the conflicts it sometimes generated. In 1405, the Ming emperor Yongle sent Zheng He on the first of seven great voyages. Zheng traveled to Indonesia, Ceylon, and other coastal areas on the Indian Ocean, to Arabia, and to the east coast of Africa as well as to the Cape of Good Hope. The main purposes of the voyages were to display the might of the Ming Dynasty to the rest of the world and to receive tribute from the people he encountered. Zheng’s fleet was impressive: At its height, his fleet included more than 300 ships that carried 28,000 people.

The Voyages of Zheng He, 1405–1433



The expeditions won prestige for the Chinese government and opened up new markets for Chinese goods. Zheng He and his crew returned to China with exotic treasures, such as the first giraffe the Chinese had ever seen. They also brought back a new understanding of the world beyond China’s borders. The voyages inspired some to immigrate to ports in Southeast Asia and elsewhere.

Zheng He’s voyages stirred controversy, though. Confucianism promoted a stable, agrarian lifestyle, and scholars worried that greater interaction and trade with foreign cultures threatened China’s social order. Some critics simply looked down upon other cultures, deeming them barbaric and vastly inferior to Chinese culture. Some thought the voyages were too expensive.

Emperor Yongle’s successor, his son Zhu Gaozhi, ended Zheng He’s travels, and he also discouraged all Chinese from sailing away from China. To emphasize his point, he made building a ship with more than

two masts a punishable offense. Zheng's voyages did have one positive short-term result: They put a stop to pirate activities off the coast of China and in Southeast Asia. However, after China stopped sending armed merchant ships into the ocean, the pirate activities resumed, especially on the China Sea.

KEY TERMS BY THEME

GOVERNMENT: States

Malacca (Melaka)

Gujarat

Swahili city-states

ECONOMY: Trade

Calicut

Spice Island

ENVIRONMENT: Ocean

Indian Ocean Basin

monsoon winds

TECHNOLOGY: Sailing

lateen sails

stern rudder

astrolabe

CULTURE: Disruptions and Transfers

Indian Ocean slave trade

diaspora

Zheng He