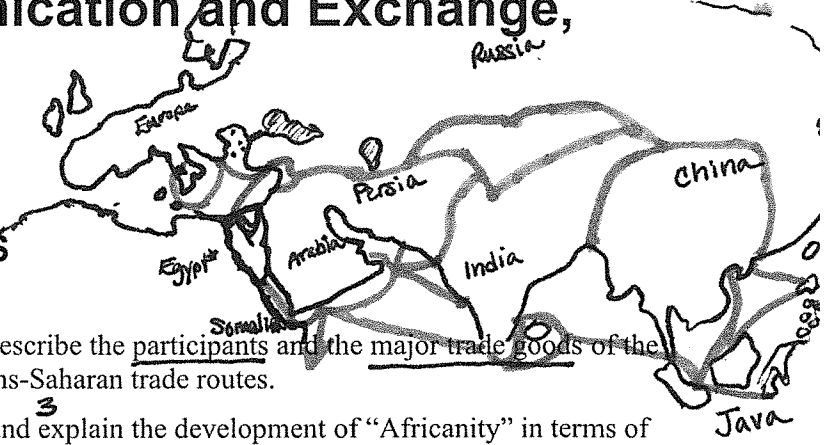


# CHAPTER 8

Indian Ocean Trade  
Silk Road Routes

## Networks of Communication and Exchange, 300 B.C.E.-1100 C.E.



### INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter students should:

1. Be able to identify the locations and to describe the participants and the major trade goods of the Silk Road, the Indian Ocean, and the trans-Saharan trade routes.
2. Be able to define the term "Africanity" and explain the development of "Africanity" in terms of the Bantu migrations.
3. Be able to analyze the relationship between environment, transportation technology, and trade along the Silk Road, Indian Ocean, and trans-Saharan trade routes. *\* C. Diffusion → syncretism*
4. Be able to discuss the causes and the patterns of the spread of Buddhism and Christianity.

### CHAPTER OUTLINE

I. The Silk Road (S.R.) \* 1st Steps toward "globalization" → Diffusion, Exploration, wealth

#### A. Origins and Operations

1. The Silk Road was an overland route that linked China to the Mediterranean world via Mesopotamia, Iran, and Central Asia. There were two periods of heavy use of the Silk Road: (1) 150 B.C.E.-907 C.E. and (2) the thirteenth through seventeenth centuries C.E.
2. The origins of the Silk Road trade may be located in the occasional trading of Central Asian nomads. Regular, large-scale trade was fostered by the Chinese demand for western products (particularly horses) and by the Parthian state in northeastern Iran and its control of the markets in Mesopotamia.
3. In addition to horses, China imported alfalfa, grapes, and a variety of other new crops as well as medicinal products, metals, and precious stones. China exported peaches and apricots, spices, and manufactured goods including silk, pottery, and paper.

\* Chinese demand for horses

heavy use of S.R. = 1,150 B.C.E. - 907 C.E. - 1200-1600 C.E.  
imports: \* Horses, Agriculture, medicines, metal

#### B. The Impact of the Silk Road Trade \* (significance/so what?)

1. Turkic nomads, who became the dominant pastoralist group in Central Asia, benefited from the trade. Their elites constructed houses, lived settled lives, and became interested in foreign religions including Christianity, Manichaeism, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, and (eventually) Islam. Central Asian military technologies, particularly the stirrup, were exported both east and west, with significant consequences for the conduct of war. → stability → "mounted warfare" (Knight calvary, 11c-20c)

\* Importation of stirrup → change in warfare

#### C. The Indian Ocean Maritime System

1. The Indian Ocean maritime system linked the lands bordering the Indian Ocean basin and the South China Sea. Trade took place in three distinct regions: (1) the South China Sea, dominated by Chinese and Malays; (2) Southeast Asia to the east coast of India, dominated by Malays and Indians; and (3) the west coast of India to the Persian Gulf and East Africa, dominated by Persians and Arabs.
2. Trade in the Indian Ocean was made possible by and followed the patterns of the seasonal changes in the monsoon winds.

#### 3 Regions of Indian O. Trade:

- 1) S. China Sea (China + Java (Malays, Indonesia))
- 2) S.E. Asia (E. India, Malays)
- 3) W. India → Persian Gulf → E. Africa → Mediterranean Sea

New Sea Tech. + Monsoon Winds

- 3. Sailing technology unique to the Indian Ocean system included the lateen sail and a shipbuilding technique that involved piercing the planks, tying them together, and caulking them.
- 4. Because the distances traveled were (longer than in the Mediterranean) traders in the Indian Ocean system seldom retained political ties to their homelands, and war between the various lands participating in the trade was rare.

\*Most merchants a

D. Origins of Contact and Trade

- 1. There is evidence of early trade between ancient Mesopotamia and the Indus Valley. This trade appears to have broken off as Mesopotamia turned more toward trade with East Africa. Via Med. Sea + Red Sea + Persian Gulf
- 2. Two thousand years ago, Malay sailors from Southeast Asia migrated to the islands of Madagascar. These migrants, however, did not retain communications or trade with their homeland.

Malaysia → Madagascar

E. The Impact of Indian Ocean Trade (Impact/significance/So What?)

- 1. What little we know about trade in the Indian Ocean system before Islam is gleaned largely from a single first century C.E. Greco-Egyptian text, The Periplus of the Erythrean Sea. This account describes a trading system that must have been well established and flourishing when the account was written. The goods traded included a wide variety of spices, aromatic resins, pearls, Chinese pottery, and other luxury goods. The volume of trade was probably not as high as in the Mediterranean. \* The culture of the Indian Ocean ports was often isolated from that of their hinterlands. Isolated Ports In the western part of the Indian Ocean, trading ports did not have access to large inland populations of potential consumers. Even in those eastern Indian and Malay sea-oriented peninsula ports that did have access to large inland populations, the civilizations did not become oriented toward the sea. \* New cult. emerge
- 2. Traders and sailors in the Indian Ocean system often married local women in the ports that they frequented. These women thus became mediators between cultures.

\* Trade is "well est." by 1 CE  
- Luxury goods:  
• silk  
• pottery  
• pearls  
• spices  
• resins/incense

II. Routes Across the Sahara

A. Early Saharan Cultures

- 1. Undatable rock paintings in the highland areas that separate the southern from the northern Sahara indicate the existence of an early Saharan hunting culture that was later joined by cattle breeders who are portrayed as looking rather like contemporary West Africans.
- 2. The artwork indicates that the cattle breeders were later succeeded by horse herders who drove chariots. There is no evidence to support the earlier theory that these charioteers might have been Minoan or Mycenaean refugees. But there is also no evidence to show us either their origins or their fate. No Evidence
- 3. The highland rock art indicates that camel riders followed the charioteers. The camel was introduced from Arabia and its introduction and domestication in the Sahara was probably related to the development of the trans-Saharan trade. Written evidence and the design of camel saddles and patterns of camel use indicate a south-to-north diffusion of camel riding.
- 4. \* The camel made it possible for people from the southern highlands of the Sahara to roam the desert and to establish contacts with the people of the northern Sahara.

Nomadic Pastoralist → cattle, camels, horses

Camel (imp. from Arabia) →  
Trans-Saharan Trade  
(not poss. w/o!)

B. Trade Across the Sahara

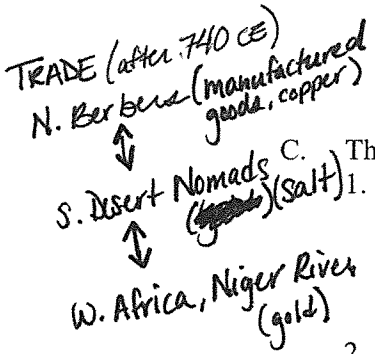
- 1. Trade across the Sahara developed slowly when two local trading systems, one in the southern Sahara and one in the north, were linked. Traders in the southern Sahara had access to desert salt deposits and exported salt to the sub-Saharan regions in return for kola nuts and palm oil. Traders in the north exported agricultural products and wild animals to Italy.



N = Agriculture, wild animals → S. Africa, Med.

S = Salt deposits, kola nuts, palm oil

2. When Rome declined (3rd century C.E.) and the Arabs invaded North Africa (mid-7th century C.E.), the trade of Algeria and Morocco was cut off. The Berber people of these areas revolted against the Arabs in the 700s and established independent city-states including Sijilmasa and Tahert. *Fall of Rome → decline cut off Algeria + Morocco* *Berber Revolt*



3. After 740 the Berbers found that the southern nomads were getting gold dust from the Niger and other areas of West Africa in exchange for their salt. This opened their eyes to a great business opportunity. A pattern of trade developed in which the Berbers of North Africa traded copper and manufactured goods to the nomads of the southern desert in return for gold. The nomads of the southern desert, for their part, exchanged their salt for the gold of the Niger and other West African river areas.

III. Sub-Saharan Africa

- A. A Challenging Geography
1. The Kingdom of Ghana was one of the early sub-Saharan beneficiaries of this new trans-Saharan trade. The origins and early history of Ghana are obscure. The first description we have is the eleventh century account by al-Bakri, who described a city of two towns, one a Muslim merchant town and the other the capital of an animist king and his court.
  2. After 1076 Ghana was weakened by the invasion of the Moroccan Almorovids. Even after the Almorovids retreated from the south, Ghana never recovered its former wealth and status.

Human-Environment Interaction

Geographic Sub-Sahara

1. Sub-Saharan Africa is a large area with many different environmental zones and many geographical obstacles to movement.
2. Some of the significant geographical areas are the Sahel, the tropical savanna, the tropical rain forest of the lower Niger and Zaire, the savanna area south of the rain forest, steppe and desert below that, and the temperate highlands of South Africa.

Today is desert (desert)

B. The Development of Cultural Unity

1. Scholars draw a distinction between the "great traditions" of ruling elite culture in a civilization and the many "small traditions" of the common people.
2. In sub-Saharan Africa no overarching "great tradition" developed. Sub-Saharan Africa is a vast territory of many "small traditions." Historians know very little about the prehistory of these many "small traditions" and their peoples.
3. African cultures are highly diverse. The estimated two thousand spoken languages of the continent and the numerous different food production systems reflect the diversity of the African ecology and the difficulty of communication and trade between different groups. Another reason for the long dominance of "small traditions" is that no foreign power was able to conquer Africa and thus impose a unified "great tradition."

"small traditions"

\* Huge diversity (huge continent) of culture  
 . languages  
 . traditions  
 . religious tradition  
 . food  
 . geography

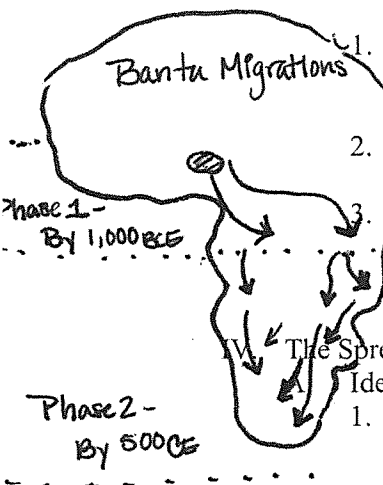
No foreign power to conquer in Africa until 19th C.  
 No forced unification

C. African Cultural Characteristics

1. Despite their diversity, African cultures display certain common features that attest to an underlying cultural unity that some scholars have called "Africanity."
2. One of these common cultural features is a concept of kingship in which kings are ritually isolated and oversee societies in which the people are arranged in age groups and kinship divisions.
3. Other common features include cultivation with the hoe and digging stick, the use of rhythm in African music, and the functions of dancing and mask wearing in rituals.
4. One hypothesis offered to explain this cultural unity holds that the people of sub-Saharan Africa are descended from the people who occupied the southern Sahara during its "wet period" and migrated south the Sahel, where their cultural traditions developed.

"Africanity"  
 - Music  
 - Kingship  
 - Dancing, rituals

D. The Advent of Iron and the Bantu Migrations



1. Sub-Saharan agriculture had its origins north of the equator and then spread southward. Iron working also began north of the equator and spread southward, reaching southern Africa by 800 C.E. (2,300 yrs. After Hittites (1500 BCE))
2. Linguistic evidence suggests that the spread of iron and other technology in sub-Saharan Africa was the result of a phenomenon known as the Bantu migrations. \* Bantu Migrations → Iron & tech.
3. The original homeland of the Bantu people was in the area on the border of modern Nigeria and Cameroon. Evidence suggests that the Bantu people spread out toward the east and the south through a series of migrations over the period of the first millennium C.E. By the eight century, Bantu-speaking people had reached East Africa.

#### The Spread of Ideas

##### Ideas and Material Evidence

1. It is extremely difficult, sometimes impossible, to trace the dissemination of ideas in preliterate societies. For example, eating pork was restricted or prohibited by religious belief in Southeast Asia, in ancient Egypt, and in eastern Iran. Because Southeast Asia was an early center of pig domestication, scholars hypothesize that the pig and the religious injunctions concerning eating the pig traveled together toward the west. This has not been proved.
2. Another difficult problem involves the invention of coins. In the Mediterranean world, the coins were invented in Anatolia and spread from there to Europe, North Africa, and India. Chinese made cast copper coins—was this inspired by the Anatolian example? There is no way of knowing.

#### B. The Spread of Buddhism

1. The spread of ideas in a deliberate and organized fashion such that we can trace it is a phenomenon of the first millennium C.E. This is particularly the case with the spread of Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam.
2. The spread of Buddhism was facilitated both by royal sponsorship and by the travels of ordinary pilgrims and missionaries. In India, the Mauryan king Ashoka and King Kanishka of the Kushans actively supported Buddhism. Two of the most well-known pilgrims who helped to transmit Buddhism to China were the Chinese monks Faxian and Xuanzang. Both have left reliable narrative accounts of their journeys.
3. Buddhist missionaries from India traveled to a variety of destinations: west to Syria, Egypt, and Mesopotamia, as well as to Sri Lanka, southeast Asia, and Tibet. Buddhism was changed and further developed in the lands to which it spread. Theravada Buddhism became dominant in Sri Lanka, Mahayana in Tibet, and Chan (Zen) in East Asia.

#### C. The Spread of Christianity

1. Armenia was an important entrepot for the Silk Road trade. Mediterranean states spread Christianity to Armenia in order to bring that kingdom over to its side and thus deprive Iran of control of this area. \* Control of trade → Armenia \* Christianity ↑ Ethiopia
2. The transmission of Christianity to Ethiopia was similarly linked to a Mediterranean Christian attempt to deprive Iran of trade.

\* Spread of Ideas/Religions:  
- Buddhism, Christianity, Islam

Buddhism morphs/changes as it spreads:

1. Theravada (Sri Lanka)
2. Mahayana (Tibet)
3. Chan (E. Asia)  
Zen

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Are there substantial similarities between the origins and the development of the Silk Road and the Trans-Saharan trade?
2. What effects did the Indian Ocean trade have on the societies that took part in it? What factors determine the extent or the significance of the effects of trade on society?
3. How is trade related to the dissemination of technology?

4. How did geography affect the trade patterns of Africa and of Asia during the period of time covered in this chapter?
5. Why did Buddhism and Christianity spread when and as they did?
6. On page 209 the authors state that “Travelers and traders seldom owned much land or wielded political power. Socially isolated (sometimes by law) and secretive because any talk about markets, products, routes, and travel conditions could help their competitors, they nevertheless contributed more to drawing the world together than did all but a few kings and emperors.” If this is the case, then what role did trade play in their various societies between 300 B.C.E. and 1100 C.E.?

## LECTURE TOPICS

### 1. The Silk Road

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### 2. The Indian Ocean Trading System

#### Sources:

- a. Chandra, Moti. *Trade and Trade Routes in Ancient India*. New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1977.
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### 3. The Trans-Saharan Trade

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- b. Bulliet, Richard. *The Camel and the Wheel*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1990.
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### 4. The Bantu Migrations

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- b. Shillington, Kevin. *A History of Africa*. rev. ed. New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1995.

### 5. Chinese Pilgrims in India: Faxian and Xuanzang

#### Sources: