

Period 3: Regional and Transregional Interactions, c. 600 to c. 1450 CE

Key Concept 3.1 Expansion and Intensification of Communication and Exchange Networks

Though Afro-Eurasia and the Americas remained separate from each other, this era witnessed a deepening and widening of old and new networks of human interaction within and across regions. The results were unprecedented concentrations of wealth and the intensification of cross-cultural exchanges. Innovations in transportation, state policies and mercantile practices contributed to the expansion and development of commercial networks, which in turn served as conduits for cultural, technological, and biological diffusion within and between various societies. Pastoral or nomadic groups played a key role in creating and sustaining these networks. Expanding networks fostered greater inter-regional borrowing while at the same time sustaining regional diversity. Significantly, Islam, a major religion, emerged at the start of this period and spread quickly through practices of trade, warfare, and diffusion characteristic of this period.

I. Improved transportation technologies and commercial practices led to an increased volume of trade, and expanded the geographical range of existing and newly-active trade networks.

- A. Existing trade routes including the Silk Roads, the Mediterranean Sea, the trans-Saharan and the Indian Ocean basins flourished and promoted the growth of powerful new trading cities. (such as—to mention just a few—Novgorod, Timbuktu, the Swahili city-states, Hangzhou, Calicut, Baghdad, Melaka, Venice, and, in the Americas, Tenochtitlan or Cahokia)
- B. New trade routes between Mesoamerica and the Andes developed.
- C. The growth of inter-regional trade in luxury goods (such as silk and cotton textiles, porcelain, spices, precious metals and gems, slaves or exotic animals) was encouraged by significant innovations in previously-existing transportation and commercial technologies, including more sophisticated caravan organization (such as caravanserai or camel saddles), use of the compass, astrolabe, and larger ship designs in sea travel, and new forms of credit and monetization. (such as bills of exchange, credit, checks or banking houses)
- D. Commercial growth was also facilitated by state practices (such as the minting of coins or use of paper money), trading organizations (such as the Hanseatic League), and state-sponsored commercial infrastructures like the Grand Canal in China.

How did trade networks in the post-Classical Era compare to the Classical Era?

What new technologies, governmental policies, and merchant activities accompanied these developments?

What role did pastoral and nomadic groups play in these trade networks?

How did the physical size of post-Classical trade networks compare to the previous era?

What Classical era trade networks continued during the post-classical era, and which new cities were added during the post-Classical era?

What new trade network(s) developed in this era?

What new technologies enabled the growth of inter-regional trade networks?

What factors encouraged commercial growth in the post-classical era?

- E. The expansion of existing empires—including China, the Byzantine Empire, and the Caliphates—as well as new empires—like the Mongols—facilitated trans-Eurasian trade and communication as new peoples were drawn into their conquerors' economies and trade networks.

II. The movement of peoples caused environmental and linguistic effects.

- A. The expansion and intensification of long-distance trade routes often depended on peoples' understanding of a particular regional environment and their subsequent technological adaptations to them. (such as the way Scandinavian Vikings used their longboats to travel in coastal and open water as well as rivers and estuaries, the Arabs and Berbers adapted camels to travel across and around the Sahara or central Asian pastoral groups used horses to travel in the steppes)
- B. Some migrations had significant environmental impact, including the migration of the agricultural Bantu-speaking peoples who facilitated transmission of iron technologies in Sub-Saharan Africa, and the maritime migrations of the Polynesian peoples who cultivated transplanted foods and domesticated animals as they moved to new islands.
- C. Some migrations and commercial contacts led to the diffusion of languages throughout a new region or the emergence of new languages. (such as the spread of Bantu languages, including Swahili, or the spread of Turkic and Arabic languages)

III. Cross-cultural exchanges were fostered by the intensification of existing or the creation of new networks of trade & communication.

- A. Islam developed in the Arabian peninsula from the interactions among Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians with the local peoples and expanded to many parts of Afro-Eurasia due to military expansion and the activities of merchants and missionaries.
- B. In key places along important trade routes, merchants set up diaspora communities where they introduced their own cultural traditions into the indigenous culture. (such as Muslim merchant communities in the Indian Ocean region, Chinese merchant communities in Southeast Asia, Sogdian merchant communities throughout Central Asia or Jewish communities in the Mediterranean, Indian Ocean basin, or along the Silk Roads)
- C. The writings of certain inter-regional travelers (such as Ibn Battuta, Marco Polo or Xuangzang) illustrate both the extent and the limitations of inter-cultural knowledge and understanding.
- D. Increased cross-cultural interactions resulted in the diffusion of literary, artistic, and cultural traditions. (such as the influence of

How did the expansion of empires & trade networks affect the relationship between peoples inside vs. outside those "zones?"

What were the effects of migration in the post-classical era?

What basic understandings of environment and technology did post-classical traders need to conduct their business?

What were the environmental effects of migration in the post-classical era?

What were the linguistic effects of migration in the post-classical era?

How did trade networks as a whole develop in the post-classical era?

Why and where did Muslim trade networks change in the post-classical era?

What institutions did merchants create to foster both trade and cultural diffusion in the post-classical era?

How well did post-classical societies know and understand each other?

How did post-classical trade affect the diffusion of

Neo-Confucianism and Buddhism in East Asia, Hinduism and Buddhism in Southeast Asia, the influence of Islam in sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia or the influence of Toltec/Mexica and Inca traditions in Meso- and Andean America)

- E. Increased cross-cultural interactions also resulted in the diffusion of scientific and technological traditions. (such as the influence of Greek and Indian mathematics on Muslim scholars, the return of Greek science and philosophy to western Europe via Muslim al-Andalus in Iberia, or the spread of printing and gunpowder technologies from East Asia into the Islamic empires and into Western Europe)

IV. There was continued diffusion of crops and pathogens throughout the Eastern Hemisphere along the trade routes.

- A. New foods and agricultural techniques were adopted in populated areas. (such as bananas in Africa, new rice varieties in East Asia, or the spread of cotton, sugar and citrus throughout Dar-al Islam and the Mediterranean basin)
- B. The spread of epidemic diseases, including the Black Death, followed the well-established paths of trade and military conquest.

literary, artistic, and cultural traditions?

How did post-classical trade affect the diffusion of scientific and technological traditions?

What were the biological effects of post-classical trade?

What new foods, crops, and agricultural practices diffused in the post-classical era?

What diseases and pathogens also spread via post-classical trade networks?

Key Concept 3.2 Continuity & Innovation of State Forms and Their Interactions

State formation in this era demonstrated remarkable continuity, innovation and diversity in various regions. In Afro-Eurasia some states attempted, with differing degrees of success, to preserve or revive imperial structures, while smaller, less-centralized states continued to develop. The expansion of Islam introduced a new concept—the caliphate—to Afro-Eurasian statecraft. Pastoral peoples in Eurasia built powerful and distinctive empires that integrated people and institutions from both the pastoral and agrarian worlds. In the Americas, powerful states developed in both Meso-america and the Andean region

How did state forms develop in the post-classical era?

I. Empires collapsed and were reconstituted; in some regions new state forms emerged.

- A. Most reconstituted governments following the collapse of empires, including the Byzantine Empire and the Chinese dynasties—Sui, Tang, and Song—combined traditional sources of power and legitimacy (such as patriarchy, religion or land-owning elites) with innovations better suited to the current circumstances. (such as new methods of taxation, tributary systems or adaptation of religious institutions)

How did post-classical states avoid the mistakes of classical empires in the regions where classical empires collapsed?

- B. In some places, new forms of governance emerged, including those developed in various Islamic states (such as the Abbasids, Muslim Iberia or the Delhi sultanates), the Mongol Khanates, and

What new forms of governance emerged in the post-classical era?

city-states. (such as in the Italian peninsula, East Africa or Southeast Asia)

- C. Some states synthesized local and borrowed traditions. (such as Persian traditions influencing Islamic states or Chinese traditions influencing Japan)
- D. In the Americas, as in Afro-Eurasia, state systems expanded in scope and reach: networks of city-states flourished in the Maya region, and, at the end of this period, imperial systems were created by the Mexica (“Aztecs”) and Inca.

II. Inter-regional contacts and conflicts between states and empires encouraged significant technological and cultural transfers, for example between Tang China and the Abbasids, across the Mongol empires and during the Crusades.

How & where did governmental diffusion occur in the post-classical era?

How did states in the Americas develop in the post-classical era?

What technological and cultural exchanges did states encourage in the post-classical era?

Key Concept 3.3 Increased Economic Productive Capacity and Its Consequences

Changes in trade networks resulted from and stimulated increasing productive capacity, with important implications for social and gender structures and environmental processes. Productivity rose in both agriculture and industry. Rising productivity supported population growth and urbanization but also strained environmental resources and at times caused dramatic demographic swings. Shifts in production and the increased volume of trade also stimulated new labor practices, including adaptation of existing patterns of free and coerced labor. Social and gender structures evolved in response to these changes.

What were the overall worldwide economic trends in the post-classical era?

I. Innovations stimulated agricultural and industrial production in many regions.

- A. Agricultural production increased significantly due to technological innovations. (such as Champa rice varieties, the chinampa field systems, waru waru raised field cultivation in the Andean areas, improved terracing techniques or the horse collar)
- B. In response to increasing demand in Afro-Eurasia for foreign luxury goods, crops were transported from their indigenous homelands to equivalent climates in other regions.
- C. Chinese, Persian, and Indian artisans and merchants expanded their production of textiles and porcelains for export; industrial production of iron and steel expanded in China.

What new innovations affected agriculture in the post-classical era?

How and why did crops migrate during the post-classical era?

How did textile and porcelain production develop in the post-classical era?

II. The fate of cities varied greatly, with periods of significant decline, and periods of increased urbanization buoyed by rising productivity and expanding trade networks.

- A. Factors that contributed to declines of urban areas in this period included invasions, disease, the decline of agricultural productivity, and the Little Ice Age.

Why did some post-classical urban areas decline?

- B. Factors that contributed to urban revival included the end of invasions, the availability of safe and reliable transport, the rise of commerce and the warmer temperatures between 800 and 1300. Increased agricultural productivity and subsequent rising population and greater availability of labor also contributed to urban growth.
- C. While cities in general continued to play the roles they had played in the past as governmental, religious and commercial centers, many older cities declined at the same time that numerous new cities took on these established roles. NOTE: Students should be able to explain the cultural, religious, commercial and governmental function of at least two major cities.

Why did some post-classical urban areas prosper and grow?

What roles did cities play in their societies during the post-classical era?

III. Despite significant continuities in social structures and in methods of production, there were also some important changes in labor management and in the effects of religious conversion on gender relations and family life.

How did social and labor systems develop during the post-classical era?

- A. As in the previous period, the main forms of labor organization included free peasant agriculture, nomadic pastoralism, craft production and guild organization, along with various forms of coerced and unfree labor and government imposed labor taxes and military obligations.
- B. As in the previous period, social structures were shaped largely by class and caste hierarchies. Patriarchy persisted; however, in some areas, women exercised more power and influence, most notably among the Mongols and in West Africa, Japan and Southeast Asia.
- C. New forms of coerced labor appeared including serfdom in Europe and Japan and the elaboration of the mit'a in the Inca Empire. Free peasants resisted attempts to raise dues and taxes by staging revolts. (such as in China or the Byzantine Empire) The demand for slaves for both military and domestic purposes increased particularly in central Eurasia, parts of Africa and the eastern Mediterranean.
- D. The diffusion of Buddhism, Christianity, Islam and Neo-Confucianism often led to significant changes in gender relations and family structure.

What pre-existing labor systems continued through the post-classical era?

How did social and gender hierarchies develop in the post-classical era?

What new labor forms developed in the post-classical era?

Why and how did some gender roles and family structures change in the post-classical era?