Commerce & Culture
500-1500
Sea Roads: The Indian Ocean

AP World History Notes
Chapter 7
Sea Exchange

- Nothing new
- Begins with Mediterranean Sea trade
  - Participants = Phoenicians, Greeks, Romans
  - Italian city of Venice = major center of commerce
Sea Exchange

- Begins with Red Sea trade
  - Participants = Egyptians, Phoenicians, Greeks, Romans, Africans
  - Alexandria = major port and city of commerce
Indian Ocean Exchange

Map 8.2 The Sea Roads
Chapter 8, Ways of the World: A Brief Global History with Sources, First Edition
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Indian Ocean Exchange

- Like the Silk Roads, trade grew because of:
  - Environmental and cultural diversities in each region
  - Desire for goods not available at home
- Same goods traded from each region as on the Silk Roads
  - Ex: silk and porcelain from China
  - Ex: ivory and gold from the African coast
- Unlike the Silk Roads: transportation costs much lower
  - Ships could carry much more at one time than camels
  - Sea Roads carried more bulk and staple goods not just luxury items like on the Silk Roads
Monsoons

- Made Indian Ocean exchange possible
- Monsoons = alternating wind currents
  - Blow predictably eastward in summer months
  - Blow predictably westward in winter months
Indian Ocean Exchange

• Not between countries
• Not between entire regions
• IS between individual merchant towns
Growth of Indian Ocean Trade

• 2 major transformations occurred between 500 and 1500 that led to major growth of the Indian Ocean trade network

  1) Economic and political revival of China
  2) Rise of Islam in the 7th century
China’s Comeback

• 4 centuries after the collapse of the Han dynasty
• Reestablished a unified government
• Encouraged sea trade
• Economic growth = allowed Chinese products to pour into trade networks
• Technological innovations = larger ships; magnetic compass
Rise of Islam

• Islam = friendly to commercial life (unlike Confucianism)

• Creation of an Arab Empire
  – Stretching from Atlantic Ocean to India
  – Brought together a wide range of economies in a single political system
  – Powerful and wealthy empire = continued to stimulate Indian Ocean trade
Sea Roads = Change

• Indian Ocean trade transformed ALL of its participants in one way or another
• Major transformations to two regions:
  – Southeast Asia
  – East Africa
• Both regions experienced:
  – Political change ➔ rulers used wealth to construct larger states
  – Cultural change ➔ exposure to new religions
Southeast Asia & Srivijaya

- Southeast Asia = between India and China
- Its geography = allowed it to play an important role in Indian Ocean commerce
- 350 CE = Malay sailors opened an all-water sea route between India and China through the straits of Malacca
  - Result = more traders and travelers in the region
  - Result = ports along Malay Peninsula competed to attract these traders
Southeast Asia & Srivijaya

• From this competition emerged the Malay kingdom of Srivijaya
  – Dominated this region of Indian Ocean commerce from 670 to 1025

• Its advantages:
  – Big supply of gold
  – Access to in-demand spices
  – Placed taxes on passing ships
Srivijaya: Cultural Change

- Influenced by Indian traders and adopted Buddhism
- Rulers sponsored the creation of images of the Buddha and different bodhisattvas
- Srivijaya = became a major center of Buddhist learning and culture
Sailendra Kingdom

- Another kingdom in Southeast Asia influenced by Indian culture
- Built huge Hindu temples and Buddhist monuments
- Largest Buddhist monument anywhere in the world is located here = Borobudur
Borobudur

- Mountain-shaped structure
- 10 levels
- Elaborate carvings and illustrations
- 3-mile long walkway
East Africa & Swahili

- Swahili civilization = set of commercial city-states stretching along the East African coast
- Each city-state was politically independent with its own king
  - Big competition between each city-state
- Sharp class distinctions in each city-state → big gap between the merchant elite class and the commoners
Swahili: Cultural Change

- Arab, Indian, and Persian merchants = always welcome there
- Swahili language = blend of African Bantu and Arabic
- Swahili civilization = quickly became Islamic
- Ibn Battuta = Arab scholar and merchant
  - Described these East African cities as Muslim societies
Coastal Cities = Intermediaries

• Got valued goods from the interior of Africa and then sold them to others using the Indian Ocean trade network.

• This allowed regions in the interior of Africa to become wealthy even though they were not a part of the actual trade network.
  - Example = state of Great Zimbabwe