

The Global Tapestry

AP World History ■ Unit 1

AP World History



What we will cover

- 1 Reading the World in 1200
- 2 East Asia
- 3 Dar al-Islam
- 4 South and Southeast Asia
- 5 The Americas and Africa
- 6 Europe



Reading the World in 1200

Unit 1 surveys the major regions of the world around 1200 to 1450, just before the great connecting networks of Unit 2. Its purpose is comparison: by the end you should be able to say how any two of these societies were governed, what held them together, and how they made their living.

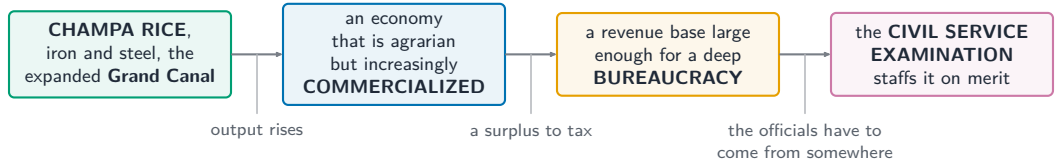
- **How is the state organised?** Who rules, through what officials, and paid for how?
- **What belief system shapes society?** Religion supplies law, education, and legitimacy in every region here.
- **What is the economic base?** Agriculture almost everywhere, but with very different labour systems and levels of trade.



East Asia

Government ran through a **bureaucracy** staffed by the **civil service examination** , which recruited officials on merit and gave the state unusual administrative depth.

The Song engine



This is the benchmark every other 1200 state is compared against: recruitment by **merit** rather than birth, paid for by a **commercialised** agrarian economy

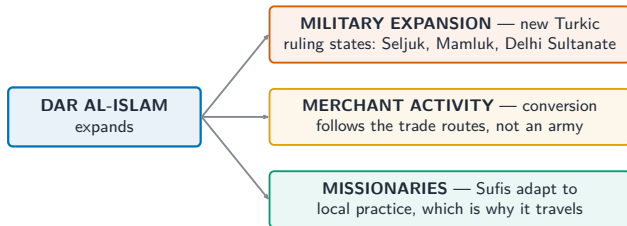


Dar al-Islam

As the **Abbasid Caliphate** fragmented, new Islamic political entities emerged, most of them **Turkic** in origin – among them the **Seljuk Empire** , the **Mamluk sultanate of Egypt** , and the **Delhi Sultanate** .

Muslim rule continued to expand across Afro-Eurasia through **military expansion**, **merchant activity** , and the work of **missionaries** , especially **Sufis** , whose adaptable practice helped Islam spread.

Three routes, three kinds of evidence



Islam spread by three routes: military expansion, **merchant activity**, and **Sufi** missionaries.



South and Southeast Asia

State formation showed the unit's theme of continuity and diversity: the **Delhi Sultanate** ruled much of the north, **Vijayanagara** arose in the south, and in Southeast Asia the sea-based **Majapahit** and the land-based **Khmer Empire** organised power in different ways.



The same three questions, asked of six regions

Ask the same three questions of each region: who held power, how was it paid for, and what made it last?

What was carried, and what it changed

East Asia

Chinese cultural traditions continued and influenced neighbouring regions – Korea, Japan and Vietnam adopted **Confucianism** , **Buddhism** and the writing system

the Song engine

Champa rice , the **Grand Canal** , and an increasingly **commercialised** economy

filial piety

the Confucian obligation that structured family and, by extension, the state

Dar al-Islam

Muslim states encouraged significant **intellectual innovations and transfers** – advances in mathematics, medicine and astronomy, and the preservation and translation of Greek texts

South and Southeast Asia

Hinduism , Islam and Buddhism continued to shape the region

their meeting

produced new forms – the **bhakti movement** , Sufism, and syncretic states

Belief systems in this period are best compared by what they **did politically**: who they legitimated, and which social order they underwrote.

The same three questions, asked of six regions, in detail

	East Asia	Dar al-Islam	S / SE Asia	Americas	Africa	Europe
state	exam-based bureaucracy	Turkic states post-Abbasid	sultanates, kingdoms	city-states, tribute empires	trading states, old kingdoms	fragmented, decentralised
beliefs	Neo-Confucian, Buddhist	Islam; Sufi missionaries	Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist	religion tied to rulers	Islam and Christianity	Christianity; the Church
economy	commercialised agriculture	trade and exchange	sea and land trade	farming + tribute	gold, salt, cattle	farming with serfdom

a comparison answer takes ONE row and TWO columns

One framework, six regions: state, belief system, and economic base are what comparison questions actually ask about

The Americas and Africa

In the **Americas**, state systems showed continuity, innovation, and diversity: the **Maya** city-states, the **Mexica** (Aztec) with tribute-based expansion, and the **Inca** with a centralised administration, labour obligation, and road system.

In **Africa**, state systems likewise varied: **Great Zimbabwe** grew on gold and cattle, **Ethiopia** was a long-established Christian kingdom, and the **Hausa Kingdoms** sat on trans-Saharan trade routes.

The outer walls of Great Zimbabwe



The outer walls of Great Zimbabwe - dry-stone construction, and a state built on the gold trade



Europe

Europe was **politically fragmented** , characterised by decentralised monarchies and by **feudalism** – a system of land held in exchange for service. Monarchs slowly consolidated power, but nothing here approached the administrative reach of Song China.

Europe was **largely agricultural**, dependent on **free and coerced labour** , including **serfdom** .



Comparison in the Period

The unit's reasoning skill is **comparison** . The productive comparisons are structural rather than evaluative:

- **Centralised** administration (Song China, Inca) against **fragmented** or decentralised rule (Europe, post-Abbasid Islamic states).
- Recruitment by **examination** against recruitment by **birth**.
- States funded by **tribute** (Mexico) against states funded by **taxation** (Song China).

Exam tips

- Learn each region through the same three questions – **state**, **belief system**, **economy** – so any comparison question already has a structure.
- **Song China** is the benchmark: examination-based bureaucracy, commercialised agriculture, and cultural influence on neighbours.
- For Dar al-Islam, remember the pattern is **fragmentation into new states** plus continued **expansion** by trade and Sufi missionaries.
- Give a named state for the Americas and Africa. **Mexica tribute**, **Inca labour obligation**, **Mali** and **Great Zimbabwe** gold are the reliable examples.
- Europe's distinguishing features are **fragmentation**, **feudalism**, and **coerced agricultural labour**.
- Write comparisons as **one feature across two societies**, never as two separate descriptions.

Belief systems, by what they did for authority

- **Centralised** administration (Song China, Inca) against **fragmented** or decentralised rule (Europe, post-Abbasid Islamic states).
- Recruitment by **examination** against recruitment by **birth**.
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Worked example – one feature, two societies

“Identify one similarity” or “Explain one difference” between two regions in the period.

- **Full marks:** *“Both Song China and the Inca Empire used a centralised bureaucracy to govern a large territory, but Song China recruited officials through a competitive examination system while the Inca staffed administration through hereditary elites and a labour obligation.”*
- One **feature**, applied to **both** societies.

Describing each society in turn and leaving the reader to infer the comparison earns nothing. The comparison must be made in the sentence.

The belief systems, and where each spread

Buddhism

Theravada in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia; **Mahayana** in China, Korea and Japan; **Tibetan** Buddhism across the Himalayan world.

Neo-Confucianism

Neo-Confucianism answered Buddhism in Song China by absorbing its metaphysics into a Confucian frame – and it became the syllabus of the civil service exam.

Christianity

Christianity was split between Latin and Orthodox, and reached Ethiopia and the Nestorian communities of Central Asia.

Judaism and Islam

Judaism persisted in diaspora communities across the Mediterranean and Dar al-Islam, where trade and law were **commercialized** to an extent Europe had not reached.

For each belief system: where it began, along which route it travelled, and what it changed when it arrived.

Belief systems, by what they did for authority, in detail

REGION	BELIEF SYSTEM	WHAT IT DID FOR AUTHORITY
Song China	Neo-Confucianism	ordered society by obligation — filial piety, and deference expected of women
Dar al-Islam	Islam	gave rulers of very different origins one shared source of legitimacy
Europe	Christianity, alongside Jewish and Muslim communities	sanctioned a fragmented order in which lords, not a state, held power
South and Southeast Asia	Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam together	bhakti and Sufi devotion crossed the boundaries rulers drew

Recruitment by **examination** against recruitment by **birth**.



Unit 1 – key takeaways

1

Regions

state, belief, economy – the same
three questions

2

Song

exam bureaucracy;
commercialised agriculture

3

Islam

new states plus expansion by
trade and Sufis

4

Named states

Mexica tribute; Inca labour; Mali
/ Great Zimbabwe gold

Check yourself

- 1 What three questions structure any regional comparison?
- 2 Why is Song China the benchmark?
- 3 Name one American and one African state with a mechanism.
- 4 Name Europe's three distinguishing features.

Answers: state / belief / economy ■ exams and commercial agriculture ■ Mexica tribute, Mali gold ■ fragmentation, feudalism, coerced labour