

Networks of Exchange

AP World History ■ Unit 2

AP World History



What we will cover

- 1 What Made the Networks Grow
- 2 The Silk Roads
- 3 The Mongol Empire
- 4 The Indian Ocean
- 5 Trans-Saharan Trade
- 6 Cultural and Environmental Consequences



What Made the Networks Grow

Unit 2 covers the three great exchange networks of 1200 to 1450 – the Silk Roads, the Indian Ocean, and the trans-Saharan routes – and asks the same question of each: what made trade grow, and what did that growth change?

- **Improved commercial practices** – money economies , credit , and forms of partnership that spread risk.
- **Improved transportation technologies** – better ships, saddles, and navigation.
- **State support** – empires that secured routes and taxed the trade benefited from protecting it.

What Made the Networks Grow, continued

Demand mattered too: **luxury goods** from Chinese, Persian, and Indian artisans found expanding markets across Afro-Eurasia, and producers increased output to meet that demand.

Each enabler removed a named obstacle

- **Improved commercial practices** - **money economies** , **credit** , and forms of partnership that spread risk.
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- **State support** - empires that secured routes and taxed the trade benefited from protecting it.

Each enabler removed a named obstacle, in detail

WHAT IMPROVED	THE OBSTACLE REMOVED	EXAMPLES
COMMERCIAL PRACTICES	you had to carry the value you traded	money economies, credit, bills of exchange
TRANSPORT TECHNOLOGY	distance, and the risk of not arriving	caravanserais, the camel saddle, the dhow and lateen sail, compass and astrolabe
STATE SUPPORT	no one would protect a route that crossed borders	rulers who profited from the traffic policed it

Each enabler removed a named obstacle - that pairing is what turns description into explanation



The Silk Roads

The **Silk Roads** carried high-value, low-bulk goods overland across Eurasia: silk, porcelain, spices, and precious metals.

Its enabling innovations were commercial as much as technical – **caravanserais** along the routes, the use of **paper money** and **bills of exchange** in China, and forms of credit that let merchants trade without carrying bullion.

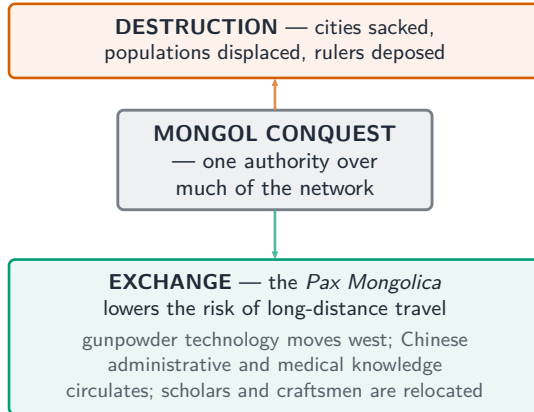


The Mongol Empire

Empires collapsed and were reconstituted in this period, and the largest transformation came from the **Mongol Empire** .

Mongol expansion facilitated Afro-Eurasian trade and communication by bringing much of the network under a single authority, which lowered the risk of long-distance travel – a period often called the **Pax Mongolica** .

The Mongols, both ways



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What each carried, what enabled it, what it changed

- The network **fostered the growth of states** , such as the Swahili city-states on the East African coast and Srivijaya and Majapahit in Southeast Asia.
- Merchants established **diasporic communities** in key ports, introducing their own culture while adopting local ways.

What each carried, what enabled it, what it changed, in detail

	Silk Roads	Indian Ocean	Trans-Saharan
What it carried	silk, porcelain, spices high value, low bulk	textiles, timber, grain heavier, lower value	gold north, salt south
What enabled it	caravanserai, paper money, bills of exchange	monsoon winds, lateen sail, dhow, compass, astrolabe	camel saddle, organised caravans
What it changed	wealthy route cities; artisans expand output	states grow (Swahili coast, Majapahit); diasporic communities	empires such as Mali secure and tax the routes

all three grew for the **SAME** three reasons: **commercial practices, transport technology, state support**

Merchants established **diasporic communities** in key ports, introducing their own culture while adopting local ways.

The Indian Ocean

The **Indian Ocean** network moved bulkier goods than the Silk Roads – textiles, timber, grain, and spices – because ships carry more than camels.

- The network **fostered the growth of states**, such as the Swahili city-states on the East African coast and Srivijaya and Majapahit in Southeast Asia.
- Merchants established **diasporic communities** in key ports, introducing their own culture while adopting local ways.
- Long-distance trade depended on and expanded **coerced labour** and on the movement of people as well as goods.

The Indian Ocean, continued

Its enabling technologies were maritime: knowledge of the **monsoon winds** , the **lateen sail** , the **dhow** , and navigational tools including the **compass** and **astrolabe** .



a dhow under lateen sail



Trans-Saharan Trade

The **trans-Saharan** routes crossed the desert on innovations in existing technology – above all the **camel saddle** and organised **caravans** .

The expansion of empires, including **Mali** , facilitated Afro-Eurasian trade by securing the routes and taxing them – and Mali's wealth and its ruler's famous pilgrimage advertised the region across the Islamic world.



Cultural and Environmental Consequences

Increased cross-cultural interaction produced **diffusion** of literary, artistic, scientific, and religious traditions – the spread of Islam along trade routes, Buddhist and Neo-Confucian influence in East Asia, and the movement of scientific and mathematical knowledge.

An increasing number of **travellers** moved within and between regions, and their accounts are the period's key evidence.

What travelled besides goods

Diffusion of crops and pathogens

The **diffusion of crops and pathogens** reshaped populations: Champa rice fed a Chinese boom, and the plague emptied cities along the same roads.

Technology and culture

The networks **encouraged technological and cultural transfers** – paper, the compass, gunpowder, Indian numerals – each moving faster than any army.

Salt

Across the Sahara, **salt** moved south and gold north: two goods scarce at exactly opposite ends of one route.

Who carried it

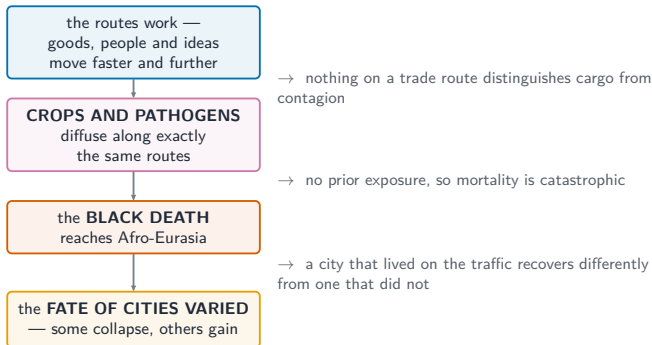
Merchants, missionaries, diplomats and slaves – the carriers change what arrives at the other end.

A trade route is a channel for anything that fits on the same animal: goods, ideas, and disease.

The Black Death on the trade routes

- Explain growth with the three causes - **commercial practices, transport technology, state support** - rather than listing trade goods.
- Match cargo to carrier: **overland routes** move high-value, low-bulk goods; **maritime routes** move bulk.

The Black Death on the trade routes, in detail



Match cargo to carrier: **overland routes** move high-value, low-bulk goods; **maritime routes** move bulk.



Comparison of Economic Exchange

The unit's reasoning skill is **comparison**.

Compare the networks on what they carried, what made them possible, and what they changed – not on which was "most important".

Worked example – turning a difference into an explanation

“Explain one difference” between two trade networks in this period.

- **Full marks:** *“Both the Silk Roads and the Indian Ocean network expanded because of improved commercial practices, but the Indian Ocean carried heavier, lower-value goods such as timber and grain because ships could transport far greater bulk than overland caravans.”*
- The **because** clause is the difference between describing and explaining.

Without the mechanism the answer only describes – and *explain* questions never award description.

Exam tips

- Explain growth with the three causes – **commercial practices**, **transport technology**, **state support** – rather than listing trade goods.
- Match cargo to carrier: **overland routes** move high-value, low-bulk goods; **maritime routes** move bulk.
- Learn the enabling technologies by network: caravanserai and credit; monsoons, lateen sail and dhow; the camel saddle.
- The Mongols' examinable role is **facilitating exchange**, not conquest for its own sake.
- The **Black Death** is the environmental consequence to name, and it travelled on the trade network itself.
- On difference questions, always add the **because**. A stated difference without a cause is only half an answer.



Unit 2 – key takeaways

1

Growth

commercial practices, transport,
state support

2

Cargo

overland: high-value low-bulk;
maritime: bulk

3

Mongols

facilitating exchange, not
conquest for its own sake

4

Black Death

travelled on the trade network
itself

Check yourself

- 1 Name the three causes of network growth.
- 2 What cargo belongs on overland routes?
- 3 What is the Mongols' examinable role?
- 4 How did the Black Death travel?

Answers: practices, transport, states ■ high-value low-bulk ■ facilitating exchange ■ on the trade network