# The Global Tapestry

AP World History: Modern

## 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.

Three questions apply everywhere, and answering them for each region is the whole unit:

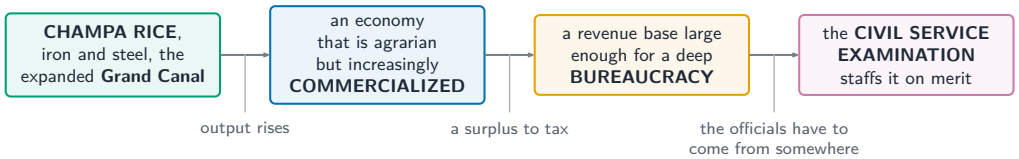
- **How is the state organised?** Who rules, through what officials, and paid for how?
- **What belief system shapes society?** Religion supplies law, education, and legitimacy in every region here.
- **What is the economic base?** Agriculture almost everywhere, but with very different labour systems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

## East Asia

**Song China** is the unit's benchmark state. Its economy became increasingly **commercialized** while remaining largely **agrarian**, supported by rising productive capacity - **Champa rice**, iron and steel production, and transport improvements such as the expanded **Grand Canal**.

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

**Chinese cultural traditions continued and influenced neighbouring regions** - Korea, Japan, and Vietnam adopted writing, bureaucratic models, and belief systems. **Neo-Confucianism** shaped society, including **filial piety** and the expectation of women's deference. **Buddhism** continued to shape Asian societies and spread further, in forms including **Theravada**, **Mahayana**, and **Tibetan** Buddhism.




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

**What Song China made, and why it matters later.** The commercialised economy did not only feed itself: it produced **textiles**, **porcelains** and iron **for export**, in workshops organised for volume rather than for a household's own use. Paper money and credit instruments circulated to pay for it. This is the supply side of the Indian Ocean trade you meet in the next unit – the demand for Chinese porcelain and silk is what put ships on those routes, so treat Song manufacturing as a **cause** of the trading world, not a detail about China.

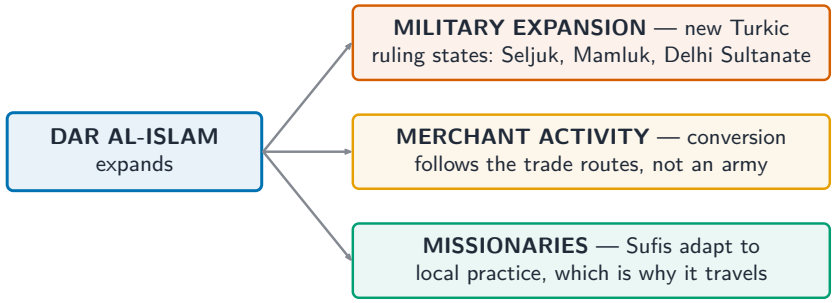
**Confucian expectations cut both ways for women. Neo-Confucianism** held that women were owed respect within the family and were morally central to it, while also expecting **deference** to father, husband and son. Both halves are in the CED, and a question asking about continuity and change in women's status wants the tension between them rather than one side alone; the spread of **foot binding** among elite families in this period is the usual evidence for the restrictive half.

## 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.

Muslim states encouraged significant **intellectual innovations and transfers**: advances in mathematics, medicine, and astronomy, gathered in the **House of Wisdom** in Abbasid Baghdad, and the preservation and extension of Greek learning that later moved into Europe.




Three **different** mechanisms. Which one a region's evidence supports is usually the whole question — an army leaves different traces from a merchant

## South and Southeast Asia

**Hinduism**, **Islam**, and **Buddhism** continued to shape the region, and their meeting produced new devotional forms - the **bhakti movement** in Hinduism and **Sufism** in Islam, both emphasising direct personal devotion.

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 Americas and Africa

| | 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*

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.

## 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.

**Christianity**, **Judaism**, and **Islam** all shaped European society, with the Church supplying law, learning, and legitimacy.

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** (Mexica) against states funded by **taxation** (Song China).

**Worked example (a real AP exam question).** AP World short-answer questions regularly ask students to *"Identify one similarity"* or *"Explain one difference"* between two regions in a period. A full-mark answer for this unit names the feature and applies it to both: *"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."* Notice the shape: a comparison must be **one feature, two societies**. Describing each society in turn and leaving the reader to infer the comparison does not earn the point.

| 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 |

Name the **function**, not the faith. "They were Confucian" is a label; "recruitment by examination rested on it" is an answer

## 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.

Vocabulary card meanings

commercialized: Organised more around sale in markets than around local use. agrarian: Based mainly on farming. Champa rice: A fast-ripening rice from Vietnam that raised harvests in Song China. Grand Canal: The long waterway linking northern and southern China. bureaucracy: A body of appointed officials who carry out a state's routine work. civil service examination: The Chinese tests that selected officials by scholarly merit. Neo-Confucianism: A later revival of Confucian thought that absorbed Buddhist and Daoist ideas. filial piety: The duty of respect and care that children owe their parents. Buddhism: The religion, founded in India, that spread across Asia along trade routes. Theravada: The Buddhist tradition stressing the earliest teachings and monastic discipline. Mahayana: The Buddhist tradition that emphasises compassion and the bodhisattva path. Tibetan: The Buddhist tradition of Tibet, with its own scriptures and institutions. textiles: Cloth, a major manufactured good in long-distance trade. porcelains: Fine ceramics, especially from China, prized as luxury exports. deference: Yielding respect to someone of higher status. foot binding: The Chinese practice of tightly wrapping girls' feet, a marker of status and constraint. Abbasid Caliphate: The Islamic empire, centred on Baghdad, that flourished as a centre of learning. Turkic: Peoples from Inner Asia who founded several Islamic states. Seljuk Empire: A Turkic Muslim empire that ruled much of the Middle East in the eleventh century. Mamluk sultanate of Egypt: The state in Egypt led by a manumitted military elite of slave origin, which defeated the Mongols. Delhi Sultanate: The Muslim kingdoms that ruled much of northern India from Delhi. merchant activity: Trade carried on by people who bought and sold for profit. missionaries: People who travel to spread a religion. intellectual innovations and transfers: New ideas, and the passing of knowledge from one culture to another. House of Wisdom: The Baghdad centre where scholars translated and advanced Greek and other learning. Hinduism: The diverse religious traditions of India centred on dharma, karma, and devotion. bhakti movement: A devotional movement in India that stressed personal love of a god. Vijayanagara: A Hindu empire in southern India that prospered on trade. Majapahit: A maritime empire based in Java that dominated much of island Southeast Asia. Khmer Empire: The mainland Southeast Asian state that built Angkor. Maya: A Mesoamerican civilisation known for city-states, writing, and calendars. Mexica: The people who built the Aztec empire in central Mexico. Inca: The Andean empire that ruled a long mountain realm through roads and labour tribute. Great Zimbabwe: A stone-built trading state in south-eastern Africa. Ethiopia: A long-established Christian kingdom in the Horn of Africa in the centuries this topic covers. Hausa Kingdoms: City-states in West Africa linked by trade across the Sahara. politically fragmented: Split among many rulers rather than united under one state. Christianity: The religion, based on the teachings of Jesus, that spread through Europe and beyond. Judaism: The monotheistic religion of the Jewish people. free and coerced labour: Work done by choice alongside work extracted by force or law.