

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:

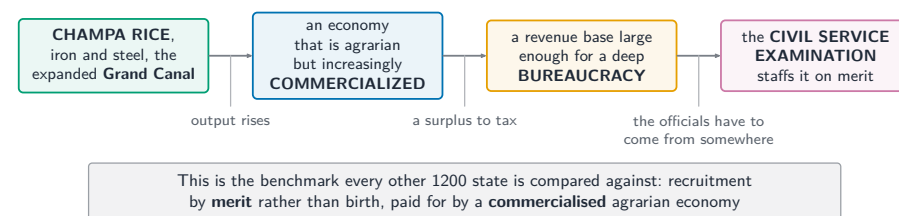
- **How is the state organised?** Who rules, through what officials, and paid for how?
- **What belief system shapes society?** Religion supplies law, education, and legitimacy in every region here.
- **What is the economic base?** Agriculture almost everywhere, but with very different labour systems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

East Asia

Song China 宋朝中国 is the unit's benchmark state. Its economy became increasingly **commercialized** 商业化 while remaining largely **agrarian** 农业为主, supported by rising productive capacity - **Champa rice** 占城稻, iron and steel production, and transport improvements such as the expanded **Grand Canal** 大运河.

Government ran through a **bureaucracy** 官僚体系 staffed by the **civil service examination** 科举制度, 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** 新儒学 shaped society, including **filial piety** 孝道 and the expectation of women's deference. **Buddhism** 佛教 continued to shape Asian societies and spread further, in forms including **Theravada** 上座部佛教, **Mahayana** 大乘佛教, and **Tibetan** 藏传佛教 Buddhism.



What Song China made, and why it matters later. The commercialised economy did not only feed itself: it produced **textiles** 纺织品, **porcelains** 瓷器 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.

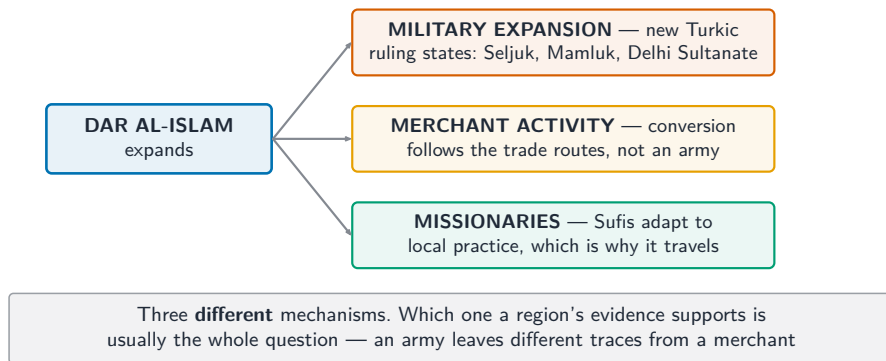
Confucian expectations cut both ways for women. **Neo-Confucianism** held that women were owed respect within the family and were morally central to it, while also expecting **deference** 顺从 to father, husband and son. Both halves are in the CED, and a question asking about continuity and change in women's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

Dar al-Islam

As the **Abbasid Caliphate** 阿拔斯哈里发国 fragmented, new Islamic political entities emerged, most of them **Turkic** 突厥人 in origin - among them the **Seljuk Empire** 塞尔柱帝国, the **Mamluk sultanate of Egypt** 埃及马穆鲁克苏丹国, and the **Delhi Sultanate** 德里苏丹国.

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

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



South and Southeast Asia

Hinduism 印度教, **Islam**, and **Buddhism** continued to shape the region, and their meeting produced new devotional forms - the **bhakti movement** 巴克提运动 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** 维查耶纳伽尔 arose in the south, and in Southeast Asia the sea-based **Majapahit** 满者伯夷 and the land-based **Khmer Empire** 高棉帝国 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** 玛雅 city-states, the **Mexica** 墨西哥人 (Aztec) with tribute-based expansion, and the **Inca** 印加 with a centralised administration, labour obligation, and road system.

In **Africa**, state systems likewise varied: **Great Zimbabwe** 大津巴布韦 grew on gold and cattle, **Ethiopia** 埃塞俄比亚 was a long-established Christian kingdom, and the **Hausa Kingdoms** 豪萨城邦 sat on trans-Saharan trade routes.



Europe

Europe was **politically fragmented** 政治上分裂, characterised by decentralised monarchies and by **feudalism** 封建制度 - a system of land held in exchange for service. Monarchs slowly consolidated power, but nothing here approached the administrative reach of Song China.

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

Europe was **largely agricultural**, dependent on **free and coerced labour** 自由与强制劳动, including **serfdom** 农奴制.

Comparison in the Period

The unit’s reasoning skill is **comparison** 比较. 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).

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	Shakti 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.