

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** 商业惯例的改进 – **money economies** 货币经济, **credit** 信贷, and forms of partnership that spread risk.
- **Improved transportation technologies** 交通技术的改进 – better ships, saddles, and navigation.
- **State support** 国家支持 – empires that secured routes and taxed the trade benefited from protecting it.

What Made the Networks Grow, continued

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

The Silk Roads

The **Silk Roads** 丝绸之路 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** 商队旅馆 along the routes, the use of **paper money** 纸币 and **bills of exchange** 汇票 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** 蒙古帝国.

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** 蒙古和平.

The Indian Ocean

	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	caravanserais, 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

the distinction this unit turns on

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** 促进国家成长, such as the Swahili city-states on the East African coast and Srivijaya and Majapahit in Southeast Asia.
- Merchants established **diasporic communities** 侨居社群 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** 季风, the **lateen sail** 三角帆, the **dhow** 单桅帆船, and navigational tools including the **compass** 罗盘 and **astrolabe** 星盘.

Trans-Saharan Trade

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

The expansion of empires, including **Mali** 马里帝国, 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** 传播 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** 旅行者 moved within and between regions, and their accounts are the period's key evidence.

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".

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.