

## Chapter

# 10

## BECOMING “THE WORLD,” 1000–1300 CE



In the late 1270s two Christian monks, Bar Sāwmā and Markōs, voyaged into the heart of Islam. They were not Europeans. They were Uighurs, a Turkish people of central Asia, many of whom had converted to Christianity centuries earlier. Sent by the mighty Mongol ruler Kubilai Khan as he prepared to become the first emperor of China’s Yuan dynasty, the monks were supposed to worship at the temple in Jerusalem. But the Great Khan also had political ambitions. He was eager to conquer Jerusalem, held by the Muslims. Accordingly, he dispatched the monks as agents to make alliances with Christian kings in the area and to gather intelligence about his potential enemy in Palestine.

By 1280, conflict and conquest had transformed many parts of the world. But friction was simply one manifestation of cultures brushing up against one another. More important was trade. Indeed, Bar Sāwmā and Markōs lingered at the magnificent trading hub of Kashgar in far western China, where caravan routes converged in a market for jade, exotic spices, and precious silks. Later, at Baghdad, the monks parted ways. Bar Sāwmā visited

Constantinople (where the king gave him gold and silver), Rome (where he met with the pope at the shrine of Saint Peter), and Paris (where he saw that city’s vibrant university) before deciding to return to China, where the Christians of the east awaited his reports. In the end, neither monk ever returned. Yet their voyages exemplified the crisscrossing of people, money, and goods along the trade routes and sea-lanes that connected the world’s regions. For just as religious conflict was a hallmark of this age, so was a surge in trade, migration, and global exchange.

The period brought to a climax many centuries of human development, and it ushered in a new, very long cycle of cultural interaction from which emerge three interrelated themes. First, trade was shifting from land-based routes to sea-based routes. Coastal trading cities began to dramatically expand. Second, intensified trade and linguistic and religious integration generated the world’s four major cultural “spheres,” whose inhabitants were linked by shared institutions and beliefs: China, India, Islam, and Europe. Not all cultures turned into “spheres,” though. In the Americas and sub-Saharan Africa there was not the same impulse to integrate regions, which remained more fragmented but thrived nonetheless. Third, the rise of the Mongol Empire represented the peak in the long history of ties and tensions between settled and mobile peoples. From China to Persia and as far as eastern Europe, the Mongols ruled over much land in the world’s major cultural spheres.

## COMMERCIAL CONNECTIONS

→ *What factors led to the explosion of global trading between 1000 and 1300?*

### REVOLUTIONS AT SEA

By the tenth century, sea routes were eclipsing land networks for long-distance trade. Improved navigational aids, refinements in shipbuilding, better mapmaking, and new legal arrangements and accounting practices made shipping easier and slashed the costs of seaborne trade. The numbers testify to the power of the maritime revolution: while a porter could carry about 10 pounds over long distances, and animal-drawn wagons could move 100 pounds of goods, the Arab dhows plying the Indian Ocean were capable of transporting up to 5 tons of cargo. (Dhows are ships with triangle-shaped sails, called lateens, that maximize the monsoon trade winds on the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean.) As a result some coastal ports, like Mogadishu in eastern Africa, became vast transshipment centers for a thriving trade across the Indian Ocean.

A new navigational instrument spurred this boom: the needle compass. This Chinese invention initially identified prom-

## Focus Questions

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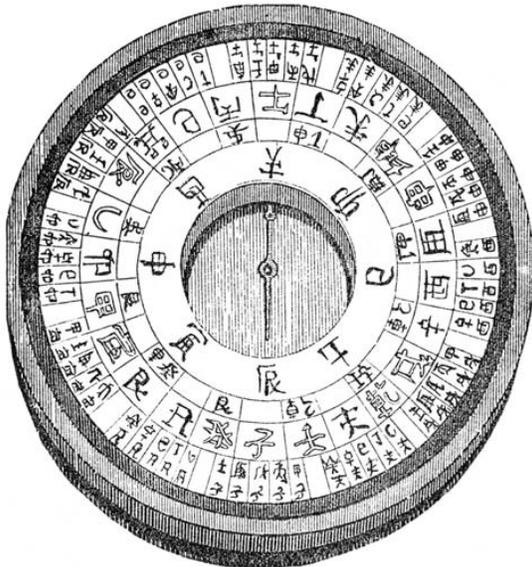
- *What factors led to the explosion of global trading between 1000 and 1300?*
- *How did trade and migration affect sub-Saharan Africa between 1000 and 1300?*
- *How did trade, conversion, and migration affect the Islamic world between 1000 and 1300?*
- *In what ways did India remain a cultural mosaic?*
- *What transformations in communication, education, and commerce promoted a distinct Chinese identity during this era?*
- *How were Southeast Asia, Japan, and Korea influenced by sustained contact with other regions?*
- *How did Christianity produce a distinct identity among the diverse peoples of Europe?*
- *Where did societies in the Americas demonstrate strong commercial expansionist impulses?*
- *How did Mongol conquests affect cross-cultural contacts and regional development in Afro-Eurasia?*

→ *What factors led to the explosion of global trading between 1000 and 1300?*

ising locations for houses and tombs, but eleventh-century sailors from Canton used it to find their way on the high seas. The device spread rapidly. Not only did it allow sailing under cloudy skies, but it also improved mapmaking. And it made all the oceans, including the Atlantic, easier to navigate.

Now shipping became less dangerous. Navigators relied on lateen-rigged dhows between the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea, heavy junks in the South China seas, and Atlantic “cogs,” which linked Genoa to locations as distant as the Azores and Iceland. They also enjoyed the protection of political authorities, such as the Song dynasts in China, in guiding the trading fleets in and out of harbors. The Fatimid caliphate in Egypt, for instance, profited from maritime trade and defended merchant fleets from pirates. Armed convoys of ships escorted commercial fleets in a system called *karim* (a loose confederation of shippers banding together to protect convoys) that regularized the ocean traffic. The system soon spread to North Africa and southern Spain. Most *karimi* firms were family-based, and they sent young men of the family, sometimes servants or slaves, to work in India. Housewives in Cairo could expect gifts from their husbands to arrive with the *karimi* fleet.

Changes in navigation ushered in the demise of overland routes. Silk Road merchants eventually gave up using camel trains, caravansaries (inns for travelers), and oasis hubs as they switched to the sea-lanes. The shift took centuries, but overland routes and camels were no match for multiple-masted cargo ships.



**Antique Chinese Compass.** Chinese sailors from Canton started to use needle compasses in the eleventh century. By the thirteenth century, needle compasses were widely used on ships in the Indian Ocean and were starting to appear in the Mediterranean.



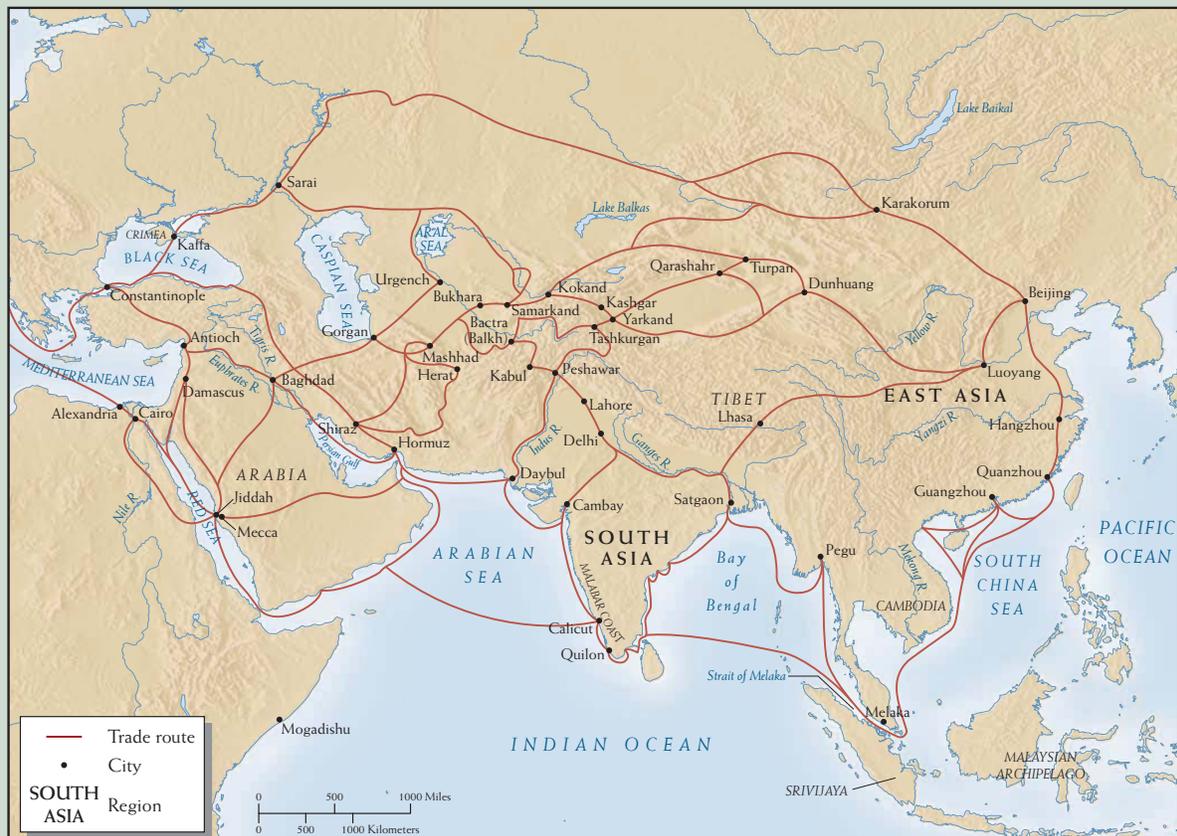
**Dhow.** This modern dhow in the harbor of Zanzibar displays the characteristic triangle sail. The triangle sail can make good use of the trade monsoon and thus has guided dhows on the Arabian Sea since ancient times.

## COMMERCIAL CONTACTS

The opening of the sea-lanes also tapped into changes occurring in world agriculture (see Map 10-1). By 1000 CE, major innovations in irrigation techniques, carried out over many centuries and in numerous locations, had yielded enormous returns. New strains of cereals—and in the Americas, the refinement of maize—led to grain cultivation in vast areas that had been too cold and arid to sustain them previously. Clover, alfalfa, and other newly domesticated grasses became fodder for healthier, stronger, and fatter animals. Agriculture pushed into new regions, buoying population growth and surpluses that now could be shipped over great distances.

## GLOBAL COMMERCIAL HUBS

Long-distance trade spawned the growth of commercial cities. These entrepôts became cosmopolitan nerve centers of an increasingly integrated world. (Entrepôts are transshipment centers, located between borders or in ports, where traders exchange commodities and replenish supplies.) Beginning in the late tenth century, four places became major anchorages of the maritime trade: in the west, the Egyptian port cities of Alexandria and Cairo; in the east, the Chinese city of Quanzhou; in the Malaysian Archipelago, the city of Melaka; and near the tip of the Indian peninsula, the port of Quilon. These hubs thrived under the political stability of powerful dynasts who recognized that the free-for-all of trade and market life would generate wealth for their regimes. Yemeni rulers, for instance, offered shelter to *karimi* fleets in return for taxes collected on cargoes; so did Egyptian governments for fleets moving through the Red Sea.



**MAP 10-1** AFRO-EURASIAN TRADE, 1000–1300

During the early second millennium, Afro-Eurasian merchants increasingly turned to the Indian Ocean to transport their goods. Locate the global hubs of Quilon, Alexandria, Cairo, and Guangzhou on this map. What regions do each of these global hubs represent? Based on the map, why would sea travel have been preferable to overland travel? According to the text, what revolutions in maritime travel facilitated this development?

**THE EGYPTIAN ANCHORAGE** Cairo and Alexandria were the Mediterranean's main maritime commercial centers. Cairo was home to numerous Muslim and Jewish trading firms, and Alexandria was their lookout post on the Mediterranean.

Silk yarn and textiles were the most popular commodities in the global trade involving Egypt. It was through Alexandria that Europeans acquired silks from China, especially the coveted *zaytuni* (satin) fabric from Quanzhou. Spanish silks also passed through Alexandria, heading to eastern Mediterranean markets. But the entrepôts handled much more. Goods from the Mediterranean included olive oil, glassware, flax, corals, and metals. Gemstones and aromatic perfumes poured in from India. Also changing hands were minerals and

chemicals for dyeing or tanning, and raw materials such as timber and bamboo. The real novelties were paper and books. Hand-copied Bibles, Talmuds, legal and moral works, grammars in various languages, and Arabic books became the first best sellers of the Mediterranean.

Cairo and Alexandria prospered under Islamic leaders' commercial institutions. Success required states to protect merchants from predators. Armed convoys sent by Fatimid caliphs to escort commercial fleets in the Mediterranean and the Red Sea were so effective that fleets arrived on schedule and were relied on for postal service. Thus, when an Egyptian trader in Quilon (India) around 1100 was delayed on his journey home, he could send a consoling message to his wife in Cairo. He apologized for his absence but promised gifts

→ *What factors led to the explosion of global trading between 1000 and 1300?*



**Mazu.** Many Quanzhou sailors sought protection at the shrine of the goddess Mazu. According to legend, before assuming godhood Mazu had performed many miracles. Her temple became prominent after 1123, when Quanzhou's governor survived a storm at sea while returning from Korea. After that, sailors and their families burned incense for the goddess and prayed for her aid in keeping them safe at sea.

including pearl bracelets, red silk garments, a bronze basin, an ewer, and a slave girl: "I shall send them, if God wills it, with somebody who is traveling home in the *Karim*" (Goitein, "New Light," 179).

The Islamic legal system also promoted a favorable business environment. Consider how legal specialists got around the rule that might have brought commerce to a halt—the *sharia's* (see Chapter 9) prohibition against earning interest on loans. With the clerics' blessing, Muslim traders formed partnerships between those who had capital to lend and those who needed money to expand their businesses. These partnerships enabled owners of capital to entrust their money or commodities to agents who, after completing their work, returned the investment and a share of the profits to the owners—and kept the rest as their reward. The English word "risk" derives from the Arabic *rizq*, the extra allowance paid to merchants in lieu of interest.

**THE ANCHORAGE OF QUANZHOU** In China, Quanzhou was as busy as Cairo and Alexandria. The Song government set up offices of Seafaring Affairs in its three major ports: Canton, Quanzhou, and an area near present-day Shanghai in the Yangzi delta. In return for a portion of the taxes, these offices registered cargoes, sailors, and traders, while guards kept a keen eye on the traffic.

All foreign traders were guests of the governor, who doubled as the Chief of Seafaring Affairs. Part of his mandate

was to summon favorable winds for shipping. Every year, the governor took his place on a high perch facing the harbor, in front of a rock cliff filled with inscriptions that recorded the wind-calling rituals. Traders of every origin witnessed the rite, then joined the dignitaries for a sumptuous banquet.

Ships departing from Quanzhou and other Chinese ports were junks—large, flat-bottomed ships with internal sealed bulkheads and stern-mounted rudders. Their multiple watertight compartments increased stability; the largest ones boasted four decks, six masts, and a dozen sails and could carry 500 men. Those departing Quanzhou headed for Srivijaya (Java) in the Malay Archipelago, navigating through the Strait of Melaka, a choke point between the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean. The final destination was Quilon on the coast of southwest India. Traders heading farther west in Arab-dominated seas unloaded their cargo and boarded small Arabian dhows.

Arabs, Persians, Jews, and Indians (as well as Chinese) traded at Quanzhou, and some stayed on to manage their businesses. Perhaps as many as 100,000 Muslims lived there during the Song dynasty. And traders could become power brokers in their own right. Consider the Pu family, which owned several hundred ships ferrying goods between India and Islamic countries. For generations the family made donations for public projects such as bridges, and the contributions garnered them official positions.

Although most foreign merchants did not reside apart from the rest of the city, they had their own buildings for

# Storylines BECOMING “THE WORLD”

## MAIN THEMES

- Trade routes shift from land to sea, transforming coastal cities into global trading hubs and elevating Afro-Eurasian trade to unprecedented levels.
- Intensified trade, linguistic, and religious integration generate the foundational cultural spheres that we recognize today: China, India, Islam, and Europe.
- The rise of the Mongol Empire integrates the world’s foundational cultural spheres.

## FOCUS ON *Foundational Cultural Spheres*

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### *The Islamic World*

- ◆ Islam undergoes a burst of expansion, prosperity, and cultural diversification but remains politically fractured.
- ◆ Arab merchants and sufi mystics spread Islam over great distances and make it more appealing to other cultures, helping to transform Islam into a foundational world.
- ◆ Islam travels across the Sahara Desert; the powerful gold- and slave-supplying empire of Mali arises in West Africa.

### *China*

- ◆ The Song dynasty reunites China after three centuries of fragmented rulership, reaching into the past to re-establish a sense of a “true” Chinese identity as the Han, through a widespread print culture and denigration of outsiders.
- ◆ Breakthroughs in iron metallurgy allow agricultural expansion to support 120 million people and undergird Han commercial success.
- ◆ China undergoes the world’s first manufacturing revolution: gunpowder, porcelain, and handicrafts are produced on a large scale for widespread consumption.

### *India*

- ◆ India remains a mosaic under the canopy of Hinduism despite cultural interconnections and increasing prosperity.
- ◆ The invasion of Turkish Muslims leads to the Delhi Sultanate, which rules over India for three centuries, strengthening cultural diversity and tolerance.

### *Christian Europe*

- ◆ Catholicism becomes a “mass” faith and helps to create a common European cultural identity.
- ◆ An emphasis on religious education spawns numerous universities and a new intellectual elite.
- ◆ Feudalism causes a fundamental reordering of the elite–peasant relationship, leading to agricultural and commercial expansion.
- ◆ Europe’s growing confidence is manifest in the Crusades and Reconquista, an effort to drive Islam out of Christian lands.

religious worship. A mosque from this period is still standing on a busy street. Hindu traders living in Quanzhou worshipped in a Buddhist shrine where statues of Hindu deities stood alongside those of Buddhist gods.

**THE CROSSROADS OF AFRO-EURASIA: MELAKA** Because of its strategic location and proximity to Malayan tropical produce, Melaka became a key cosmopolitan city. Indian, Javanese, and Chinese merchants and sailors spent months at a time in such ports selling their goods, purchasing return cargo, and waiting for the winds to change so they could reach their next destination. During peak season, Southeast Asian ports teemed with colorfully dressed foreign sailors,

local Javanese artisans who produced finely textured batik handicrafts (using melted wax applied to cloth before dipping it into blue and brown dyes), and money-grubbing traders. The latter converged from all over Asia to flood the markets with their merchandise and to search for pungent herbs, aromatic spices, and agrarian staples such as quick-ripening strains of rice to ship out. In a sense, each bustling port represented the cosmopolitan mosaic that Southeast Asia had become.

**THE TIP OF INDIA** In the tenth century, the Chola dynasty in south India supported a nerve center of maritime trade between China and the Red Sea and the Mediterranean. Although the Chola golden age lasted only about two

➤ *How did trade and migration affect sub-Saharan Africa between 1000 and 1300?*

generations, trade continued to flourish. Many Muslim traders settled in Malabar, on the southwest coast of the Indian peninsula, and Quilon became a major cosmopolitan hub. Dhows arrived, laden not only with goods from the Red Sea and Africa but also with traders, sojourners, and fugitives. Chinese junks unloaded silks and porcelain, and picked up passengers and commodities for East Asian markets. Sailors and traders strictly observed the customs of this entrepôt, for it was good business to respect others' norms and values while doing business with them.

Muslims, the largest foreign community, lived in their own neighborhoods. They shipped horses from Arab countries to India and the southeast islands, where kings viewed them as symbols of royalty. Because the animals could not survive in those climates, the demand was constant. There was even trade in elephants and cattle from tropical countries, though most goods were spices, perfumes, and textiles. Traders knew each other well, and personal relationships were key. When striking a deal with a local merchant, a Chinese trader would mention his Indian neighbor in Quanzhou and that family's residence in Quilon. Global commercial hubs relied on friendship and family to keep their businesses thriving across religious and regional divides.

## SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA COMES TOGETHER

➤ *How did trade and migration affect sub-Saharan Africa between 1000 and 1300?*

During this period sub-Saharan Africa's relationship to the rest of the world changed dramatically. Before 1000 CE sub-Saharan Africa had never been a world entirely apart, but now its integration became firmer. Africans and outsiders were determined to overcome the sea, river, and desert barriers that had blocked sub-Saharan peoples from participating in long-distance trade and intellectual exchanges (see Map 10-2). Increasingly, interior hinterlands found themselves touched by the commercial and migratory impulses emanating from the Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea transformations.

### WEST AFRICA AND THE MANDE-SPEAKING PEOPLES

Once the camel bridged the Sahara Desert (see Chapter 9), the flow of commodities and ideas linked sub-Saharan Africa to the Muslim world of North Africa and Southwest Asia. As the savanna region became increasingly connected to developments in Afro-Eurasia, Mande-speaking peoples emerged as the primary agents for integration within and beyond West

Africa. Exploiting their expertise in commerce and political organization, the Mande edged out rivals.

The Mande, or Mandinka, homeland was a vast area between the bend in the Senegal River to the west and the bend of the Niger River to the east (1,000 miles wide), stretching from the Senegal River in the north to the Bandama River in the south (more than 2,000 miles). This was where the kingdom of Ghana had arisen (see Chapter 9) and where Ghana's successor state—the Mandinka state of Mali, discussed below—emerged around 1100.

The Mande-speaking peoples were constantly on the go and marvelously adaptable. By the eleventh century they were spreading their cultural, commercial, and political hegemony from the high savanna grasslands southward into the woodlands and tropical rainforests stretching to the Atlantic Ocean. Those dwelling in the rainforests organized small-scale societies led by local councils, while those in the savanna lands developed centralized forms of government under sacred kingships. These peoples believed that their kings had descended from the gods and that they enjoyed the gods' blessing.

As the Mande broadened their territory to the Atlantic coast, they gained access to tradable items that residents of the interior were eager to have—notably kola nuts and malaguetta peppers, for which the Mande exchanged iron products and textile manufactures. By 1300 the Mandinka merchants had followed the Senegal River to its outlet on the coast and then pushed their commercial frontiers farther inland and down the coast. Thus, even before European explorers and traders arrived in the mid-fifteenth century, West African peoples had created dynamic networks linking the hinterlands with coastal trading hubs.

From the eleventh century to the late fifteenth century, the most vigorous businesses were those that spanned the Sahara Desert. The Mande-speaking peoples, with their far-flung commercial networks and highly dispersed populations, dominated this trade as well. Here one of the most prized commodities was salt, mined in the northern Sahel around the city of Taghaza; it was in demand on both sides of the Sahara. Another valuable commodity was gold, mined within the Mande homeland and borne by camel caravans to the far northern side of the Sahara, where traders exchanged it for various manufactures. Equally important in West African commerce were slaves, who were shipped to the settled Muslim communities of North Africa and Egypt.

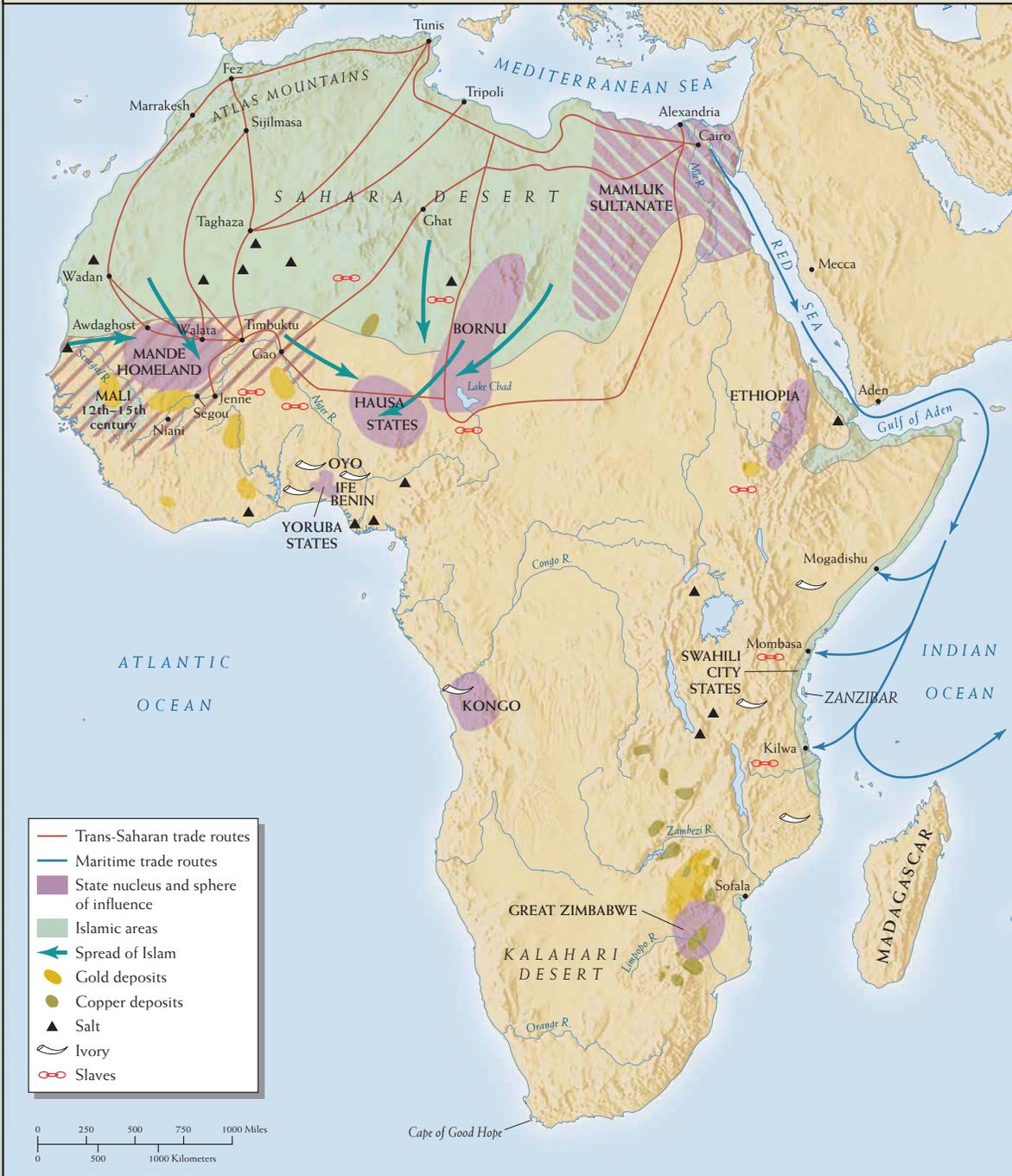
### THE EMPIRE OF MALI

As booming trade spawned new political organizations, the empire of Mali became the Mande successor state to the kingdom of Ghana. Founded in the twelfth century, it exercised political sway over a vast area for three centuries.

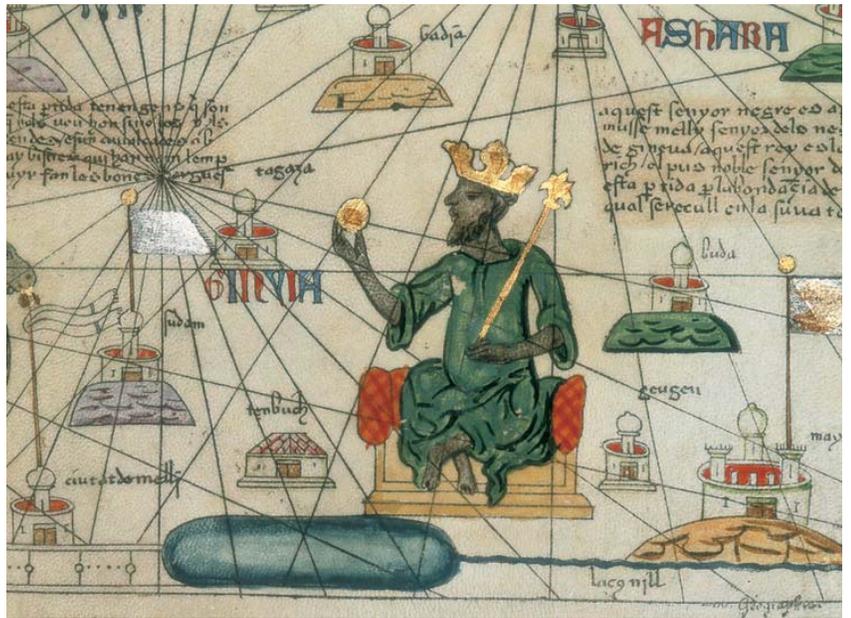
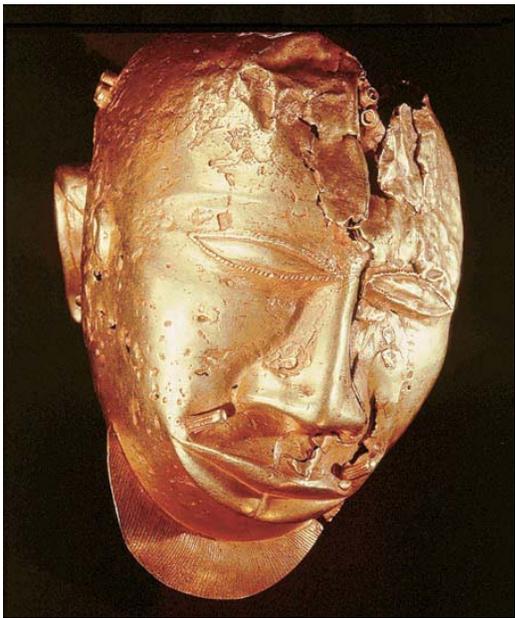
The Mali Empire represented the triumph of horse warriors, and its origins are enshrined in an epic involving the dynasty's founder, the legendary Sundiata, *The Epic of Sundiata*. Many

**MAP 10-2 SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA, 1300**

Increased commercial contacts influenced the religious and political dimensions of sub-Saharan Africa at this time. Compare this map to Map 9-3 (p. 335). Where had strong Islamic communities emerged by 1300? According to this map, what types of activity were affecting the Mande homeland? To what extent had sub-Saharan Africa "come together"?



→ How did trade and migration affect sub-Saharan Africa between 1000 and 1300?



West African Asante Gold. Although this gold head from the kingdom of Asante (left) was made in the eighteenth century, it shows the artistic abilities of the West African peoples. The head probably belonged to the Asante ruler, known as the Asantehene, and symbolized his power and wealth. This 1375 picture (right) shows the king of Mali on his throne, surrounded by images of gold.

historians believe that Sundiata actually existed, noting that the Arab historian Ibn Khaldun referred to him by name and reported that he was “their [Mali’s] greatest king” (Levtzion and Pouwels, p. 64). His triumph, which occurred in the fourteenth century, marked the victory of new cavalry forces over traditional footsoldiers. Henceforth, horses—which had always existed in some parts of Africa—became prestige objects of the savanna peoples, symbols of state power. (See Primary Source: An African Epic.)

Under the Mali Empire, commerce was in full swing. With Mande trade routes extending to the Atlantic Ocean and spanning the Sahara Desert, West Africa was no longer an isolated periphery of the central Muslim lands. Mali’s most famous sovereign, Mansa Musa (r. 1312–1332), made a celebrated hajj, or pilgrimage to Mecca, in 1325–1326, traveling through Cairo and impressing crowds with the size of his retinue and his displays of wealth, especially many dazzling items made of gold.

Mansa Musa’s visit to Cairo was a sensation in its time. The stopover in one of Islam’s primary cities astonished the Egyptian elite and awakened much of the world to the fact that Islam had spread far below the Sahara and that a sub-Saharan state could mount such an ostentatious display. Mansa Musa spared no expense to impress his hosts. He sent ahead an enormous gift of 50,000 dinars (a unit of money widely used in the Islamic world at this time), and his entourage included soldiers, wives, consorts, and as many as 12,000 slaves, many

wearing rich brocades woven of Persian silks. And there was gold—a lot of it. He brought immense quantities and distributed it lavishly during his three-month stay. Preceding his retinue as it crossed the desert were 500 slaves, each carrying a golden staff. The caravan also included around 100 camels, each bearing two 300-pound sacks of gold.

The Mali Empire boasted two of West Africa’s largest cities. Jenne, an ancient entrepôt, was a vital assembly point for caravans laden with salt, gold, and slaves preparing for journeys west to the Atlantic coast and north over the Sahara. The city had originated as an urban settlement around 200 BCE; by 1000 CE most substantial structures were made of brick. Around the city ran an impressive wall over eleven feet thick at its base and extending over a mile in length. More spectacular was the city of Timbuktu; founded around 1100 as a seasonal camp for nomads, it grew in size and importance under the patronage of various Malian kings. By the fourteenth century it was a thriving commercial and religious center famed for its two large mosques, which are still standing. Timbuktu was also renowned for its intellectual vitality. Here, West African Muslim scholars congregated to debate the tenets of Islam and to ensure that the faithful, even when distant from the Muslim heartland, practiced their religion with no taint of pagan observances. These clerics acquired treatises on Islam from all over the world for their personal libraries, remnants of which remain to this day.

## Primary Source



### AN AFRICAN EPIC

*The traditional story of the founding of the kingdom of Mali was passed down orally from generation to generation by griots, counselors and other official historians to the royal family. Only in 1960 was it finally written down in French. The narrative recounts the life of Sundiata, the heroic founder of the Mali state. The following passage provides insight into the role of the narrator (the griot) in the Malian kingdom, as well as some of the qualities of good and bad rulers.*

Griots know the history of kings and kingdoms and that is why they are the best counsellors of kings. Every king wants to have a singer to perpetuate his memory, for it is the griot who rescues the memories of kings from oblivion, as men have short memories.

Kings have prescribed destinies just like men, and seers who probe the future know it. They have knowledge of the future, whereas we griots are depositories of the knowledge of the past. But whoever knows the history of a country can read its future.

Other peoples use writing to record the past, but this invention has killed the faculty of memory among them. They do not feel the past any more, for writing lacks the warmth of the human voice. . . .

I, Djeli Mamoudou Kouyaté, am the result of a long tradition. For generations we have passed on the history of kings from father to son. The narrative was passed on to me without alteration and I deliver it without alteration, for I received it free from all untruth.

Listen now to the story of Sundiata, the Na'Kamma, the man who had a mission to accomplish.

At the time when Sundiata was preparing to assert his claim over the kingdom of his fathers, Soumaoro was the king of kings, the most powerful king in all the lands of the setting sun. The fortified town of Sosso was the bulwark of fetishism against the word of Allah. For a long

time Soumaoro defied the whole world. Since his accession to the throne of Sosso he had defeated nine kings whose heads served him as fetishes in his macabre chamber. Their skins served as seats and he cut his footwear from human skin. Soumaoro was not like other men, for the jinn had revealed themselves to him and his power was beyond measure. So his countless sofas [soldiers] were very brave since they believed their king to be invincible. But Soumaoro was an evil demon and his reign had produced nothing but bloodshed. Nothing was taboo for him. His greatest pleasure was publicly to flog venerable old men. He had defiled every family and everywhere in his vast empire there were villages populated by girls whom he had forcibly abducted from their families without marrying them.

- *Are you able to understand the function of the griot after reading this passage?*
- *How reliable do you think this kind of oral history is?*
- *Soumaoro, the adversary of Sundiata, exemplified the characteristics of a bad ruler. What were they? Can you tell, indirectly, what the characteristics of a good ruler (like Sundiata) were?*

SOURCE: *Sundiata: An Epic of Old Mali*, translated by D. T. Niane (Harlow: Longman Group, 1965), pp. 40–41.

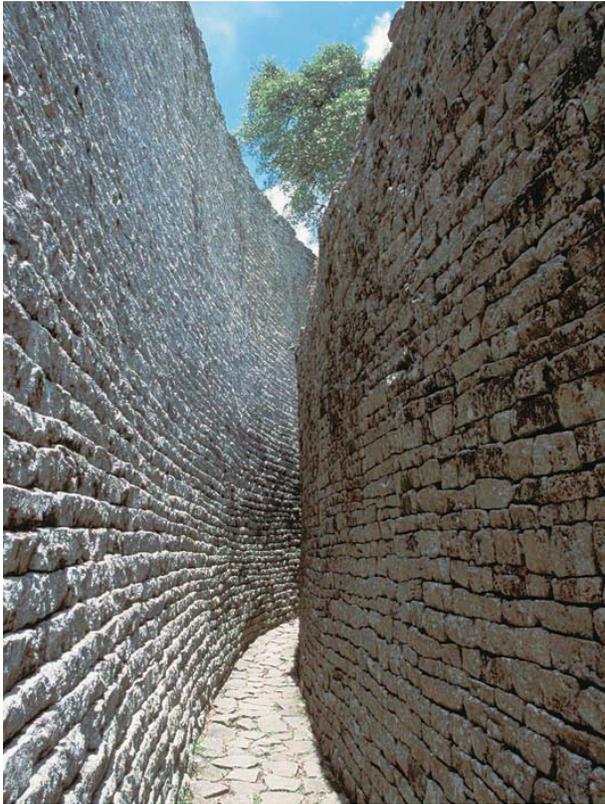
## EAST AFRICA AND THE INDIAN OCEAN

Africa's eastern and southern regions were also integrated into long-distance trading systems. Because of monsoon winds, East Africa was a logical end point for much of the Indian Ocean trade. Thus Swahili peoples living along that coast became brokers for the trade coming and going from the Arabian Peninsula, the Persian Gulf territories, and the

western coast of India. Merchants in the city of Kilwa along the coast of present-day Tanzania brought ivory, slaves, gold, and other items from the interior and shipped them to destinations around the Indian Ocean.

The most valued commodity in the trade was gold. Shona-speaking peoples grew rich by mining the ore in the highlands between the Limpopo and Zambezi rivers. By the year 1000, the Shona had founded up to fifty small religious and political centers, each one erected from stone to display

→ How did trade and migration affect sub-Saharan Africa between 1000 and 1300?



**Great Zimbabwe.** These walls surrounded the city of Great Zimbabwe, which was a center of the gold trade between the East African coastal peoples and traders sailing on the Indian Ocean. Great Zimbabwe flourished during the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries.

## THE TRANS-SAHARAN AND INDIAN OCEAN SLAVE TRADE

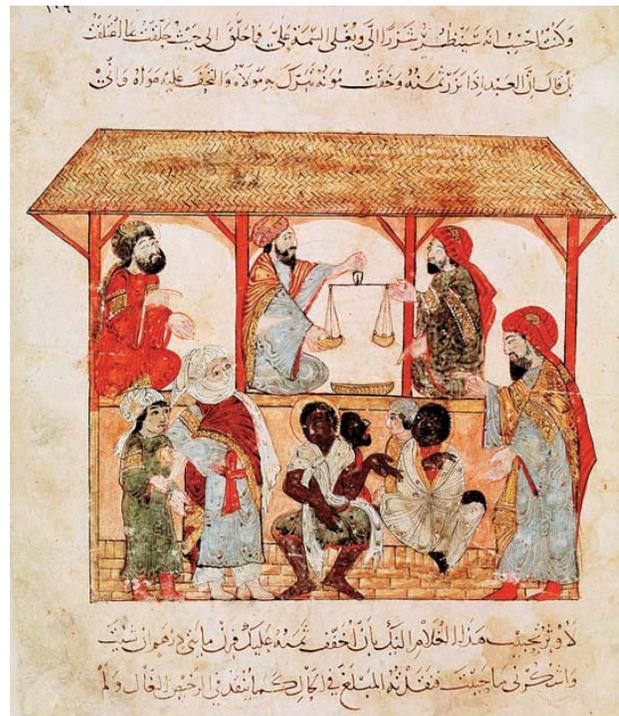
African slaves were as valuable as African gold in shipments to the Mediterranean and Indian Ocean markets. There had been a lively trade in African slaves (mainly from Nubia) into pharaonic Egypt well before the Common Era. After Islam spread into Africa and sailing techniques improved, the slave trade across the Sahara Desert and Indian Ocean boomed.

Although the Quran attempted to mitigate the severity of slavery, requiring Muslim slave owners to treat their slaves kindly and praising manumission as an act of piety (a strong sense of religious duty and devoutness, often inspiring extraordinary actions), nonetheless the African slave trade flourished under Islam.

**Slave Market.** Slaves were a common commodity in the marketplaces of the Islamic world. Turkish conquests during the years from 1000 to 1300 put many prisoners into the slave market.

its power over the peasant villages surrounding it. Around 1100 one of these centers, Great Zimbabwe, stood supreme among the Shona. Built on the fortunes made from gold, its most impressive landmark was a massive elliptical building—32 feet high, 17 feet thick in parts, and extending more than 800 feet—made of stone so expertly that its fittings needed no grouting. The buildings of Great Zimbabwe probably housed the king and may also have contained smelters for melting down gold.

One of the key meeting grounds of the Indian Ocean trading system was the island of Madagascar. So intense was the interchange of peoples, plants, and animals from mainland Africa and around the rest of the Indian Ocean that Madagascar became one of the most multicultural places in the world at this time. Among the early inhabitants of the island were seafarers from Indonesia who plied the oceans with seaworthy outrigger canoes, likely picking up Bantu-speaking mainlanders from East Africa. The first evidence of human settlement there dates to the eighth century CE. Subsequently the island became a regular stopover point, as well as an import-export market, for traders crossing the Indian Ocean.



Africans became slaves during this period much as they had before: some were prisoners of war; others were considered criminals and sold into slavery as punishment. Their duties were varied. Some slaves were pressed into military service, rising in a few instances to positions of high authority. Others with seafaring skills worked as crewmen on dhows or as dockworkers. Still others, mainly women, were domestic servants, and many became concubines of Muslim political figures and businessmen. Slaves also did forced labor on plantations, the most oppressive being the agricultural estates of lower Iraq. There, slaves endured fearsome discipline and revolted in the ninth century. Yet in this era plantation-slave labor like that which later became prominent in the Americas was the exception, not the rule. Slaves were more prized as additions to family labor or as status symbols for their owners.

## ISLAM IN A TIME OF POLITICAL FRAGMENTATION

→ How did trade, conversion, and migration affect the Islamic world between 1000 and 1300?

Islam underwent the same burst of expansion, prosperity, and cultural diversification that swept through the rest of Afro-Eurasia (see Map 10-3 and Map 10-4). However, whereas prosperity fostered greater integration in other regions, the peoples of Islam remained politically fractured. As in China, efforts to unite under a common rulership failed, giving way to defeats by marauding outsiders. The attempt to uphold centralized rule ended cataclysmically in 1258 with the Mongol sacking of Baghdad. But unlike China, Muslim leaders were unable to reunite after their collapse.

### BECOMING THE “MIDDLE EAST”

Islam responded to political fragmentation by undergoing major changes, many prompted by contacts (and conflicts) with neighbors. Commercial networks, sustained by Muslim merchants, carried the word of the Quran far and wide. As Islam spread, it attracted more converts.

Decisive in the spread of Islam was a popular form of the religion, highly mystical and communal, called **Sufism**. The term *Sufi* comes from the Arabic word for wool (*suf*), which many of the early mystics wrapped themselves in to mark their penitence. Seeking closer union with God, they also performed ecstatic rituals such as repeating over and over again the name of God. In time, groups of devotees gathered to read aloud the Quran and other religious tracts. Although



**Dervishes.** Today, the whirling dance of dervishes is almost a tourist attraction, as shown in this picture from the Jerash Cultural Festival in Jordan. Though Sufis in the early second millennium CE were not this neatly dressed, the whirling dance was an important means of reaching union with God.

many clerics despised the Sufis and loathed their seeming lack of theological rigor, the movement spread with astonishing speed. Sufism’s emotional content and strong social bonds, sustained in Sufi brotherhoods or lodges, made its appeal to common folk irresistible. Sufi missionaries carried the universalizing faith to India, across the Sahara Desert, and to many other distant locations. It was from within these brotherhoods that Islam became truly a religion for the people.

Sufism had an intellectual and artistic dynamism that complemented its missionizing zeal. This was especially true of poetry, where the mystics’ desire to experience God’s love found ready expression. Most admired of Islam’s mystical love poets was Jalal al-Din Rumi, spiritual founder of the Mevlevi Sufi order that became famous for the ceremonial dancing of its whirling devotees, known as dervishes. Rumi, who wrote in Persian, celebrated all forms of love, spiritual and sexual, and preached a universalistic religious message:

What is to be done of Muslims? For I do not recognize myself.

I am neither Christian, nor Jew, nor Gabr (Zoroastrian), nor Muslim.

Another Sufi mystic and advocate of the universality of religions, the Spanish Muslim poet Ibn Arabi, wrote in Arabic:

My heart has been of every form; it is a pasture for gazelles and a convent for Christian monks.

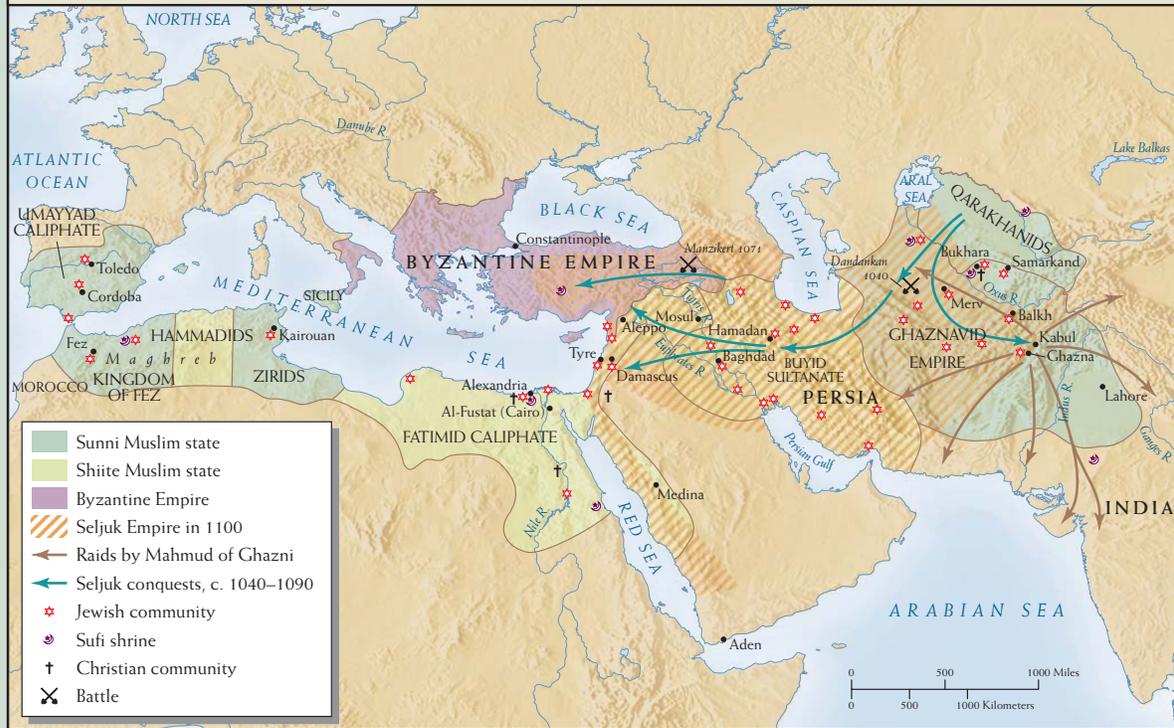
And a temple for idols and the pilgrim’s kaaba, and the tables of the Torah and the book of the Quran.

As trade increased and more converts appeared in the Islamic lands, urban and peasant populations came to understand the faith practiced by the political, commercial, and scholarly upper classes even while they remained attached to their

→ How did trade, conversion, and migration affect the Islamic world between 1000 and 1300?

### MAP 10-3 ISLAM BETWEEN 900 AND 1200

The Muslim world experienced political disintegration in the first centuries of the second millennium. According to the map key, what were the two major types of Muslim states in this period and what were the two major empires? What were the sources of instability in this period according to the map? As Islam continued to expand in this period, what challenges did it face?



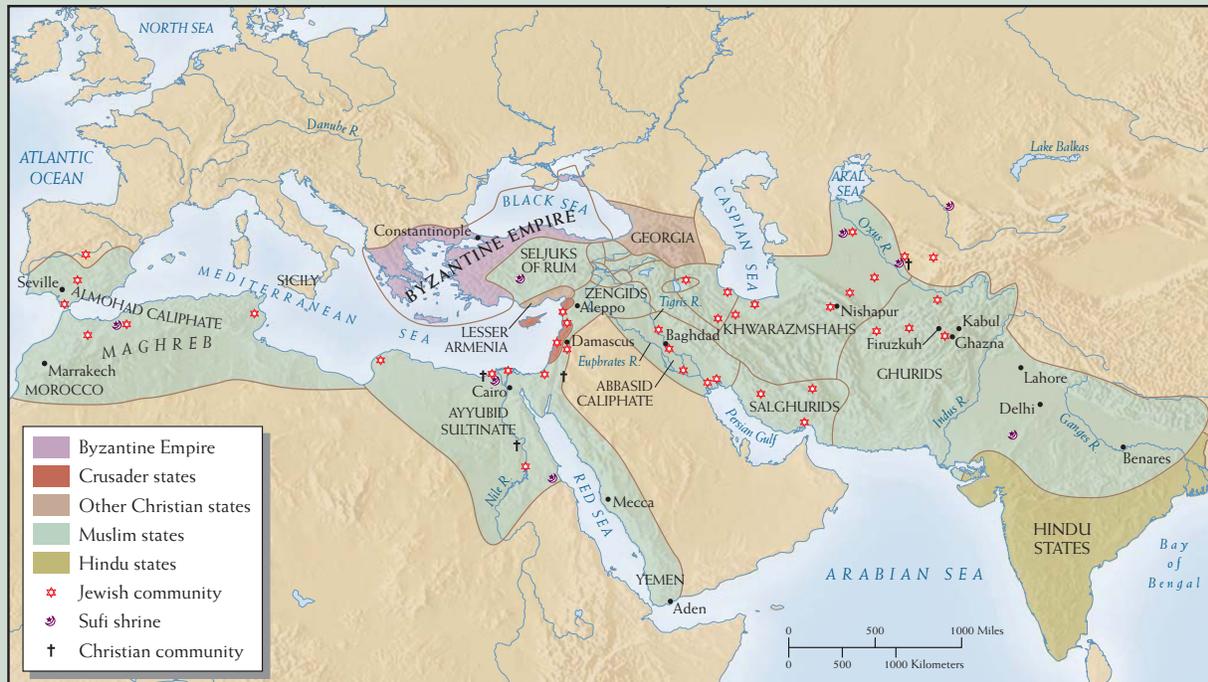
Sufi brotherhood ways. Islam became even more accommodating, embracing Persian literature, Turkish ruling skills, and Arabic-language contributions in law, religion, literature, and science. In this way the world acquired a “core” region centered in what we now call the Middle East (the lands west of the “Far East” of China and Japan, and including the “Near East” of the eastern Mediterranean), united by a shared faith and pulsating with religious and commercial energies.

### AFRO-EURASIAN MERCHANTS

By the thirteenth century, as the old Islamic heartland became the crossroads for commercial networks, Muslim merchants were the world’s premier traders. As diverse as their businesses, these merchants were proof that a universal religion, an imagined political unity (projected by the Abbasid caliphate), the spread of the Arabic language, and Islamic law

allowed entrepreneurs of varied backgrounds to flourish. The traders were not only Muslims but also Armenians, Indians, and Jews; working out of Islam’s major cities; and they all had connections with families in North Africa and central Asia. (See Primary Source: The Merchants of Egypt.)

Long-distance trade surged under the protection of a sophisticated legal framework. The traders drew up elaborate contracts knowing that if breaches of contract occurred, they could take their cases to the courts. Many Jewish, Armenian, and Christian merchants went before Islamic judges, whose expertise in commercial matters they admired. Yet legal recourse was rarely necessary because the merchant community was self-policing—its members severely punished those who violated trust, sometimes ending their careers. Relying on partnerships, letters of credit, and a thorough knowledge of local trading customs and currencies, traders and their customers were confident that agreements made in India would be honored in Southeast Asia, Egypt, and North Africa.



**MAP 10-4** ISLAMIC AND HINDU STATES AND THE BYZANTINE EMPIRE BETWEEN 1200 AND 1300

Islam continued to expand after the thirteenth century. Where were its largest and most important gains according to the map? How did other religions fare under Islamic rule in this period? How was Islam able to continue to expand in this period?

### DIVERSITY AND UNIFORMITY IN ISLAM

Not until the ninth and tenth centuries did Muslims become a majority within their own Abbasid Empire (see Chapter 9). From the outset, Muslim rulers and clerics had to deal with large non-Muslim populations, even as these groups were converting to Islam. Rulers through the *dhimma* system accorded non-Muslims religious toleration as long as the non-Muslims accepted Islam's political dominion. Thus Jewish, Christian, and Zoroastrian communities were free to choose their own religious leaders and to settle internal disputes in their own religious courts. They did, however, have to pay a special tax, the *jizya*, and be deferential to their rulers. The *dhimma* system spared the Islamic world some of the religious conflict that afflicted other areas, and it made Islamic cities hospitable environments for traders from around the world.

While tolerant, Islam was an expansionist, universalizing faith. Intense proselytizing carried the sacred word to new frontiers and, in the process, reinforced the spread of Islamic

institutions that supported commercial exchange. There were also moments of intense religious passion within Islam's frontiers, especially when Muslim rulers feared that Christian minorities would align with the Europeans pressing on their borders. Ugly incidents left some Christian churches in flames. Pressures to convert to Islam were unremitting at this time. After a surge of conversions to Islam from the ninth century onward, for example, the Christian Copts of Egypt shrank to a small community and never recovered their numbers.

### POLITICAL INTEGRATION AND DISINTEGRATION

Just as the Islamic faith was increasing its reach from Africa to India and ultimately to Southeast Asia, its political institutions began to fragment. From 950 to 1050, it appeared that Shiism would be the vehicle for uniting the Islamic

## Primary Source



### THE MERCHANTS OF EGYPT

*The most comprehensive collection of eleventh- and twelfth-century commercial materials from the Islamic world comes from a repository connected to the Jewish synagogue in Cairo. (It was the custom of the Jewish community to preserve, in a special storeroom, all texts that mention God.) These papers, a rich source of information about the Jewish community in Egypt at that time, touch on all manner of activities: cultural, religious, judicial, political, and commercial. The following letter is addressed to Joseph ibn 'Awkal, one of Egypt's leading merchants in the eleventh century.*

Dear and beloved elder and leader, may God prolong your life, never take away your rank, and increase his favors and benefactions to you.

I inform you, my elder, that I have arrived safely. I have written you a letter before, but have seen no answer. Happy preoccupations—I hope. In that letter I provided you with all the necessary information.

I loaded nine pieces of antimony (kohl), five in baskets and four in complete pieces, on the boat of Ibn Jubār—may God keep it; these are for you personally, sent by Mūsā Ibn al-Majjānī. On this boat, I have in partnership with you—may God keep you—a load of cast copper, a basket with (copper) fragments, and two pieces of antimony. I hope God will grant their safe arrival. Kindly take delivery of everything, my lord.

I have also sent with Banāna a camel load for you from Ibn al-Majjānī and a camel load for me in partnership with you—may God keep you. He also carries another partnership of mine, namely, with 'Ammār Ibn Yijū, four small jugs (of oil).

With Abū Zayd I have a shipload of tin in partnership with Salāma al-Mahdawī. Your share in this partnership with him is fifty pounds. I also have seventeen small jugs of s[oap]. I hope they arrive safely. They belong to a man [called . . .] b. Salmūn, who entrusted them to me at his own risk. Also a bundle of hammered copper, belonging to [a Muslim] man from the Maghreb, called Abū Bakr Ibn

Rizq Allah. Two other bundles, on one is written Abraham, on the other M[. . .]. I agreed with the shipowner that he would transport the goods to their destination. I wish my brother Abū Nasr—may God preserve him—to take care of all the goods and carry them to his place until I shall arrive, if God wills.

Please sell the tin for me at whatever price God may grant and leave its “purse” (the money received for it) until my arrival. I am ready to travel, but must stay until I can unload the tar and oil from the ships.

Please take care of this matter and take from him the price of five skins (filled with oil). The account is with Salāma.

Al-Sabbāgh of Tripoli has bribed Bu 'l-'Alā the agent, and I shall unload my goods soon.

Kindest regards to your noble self and to my master [. . . and] Abu 'l-Fadl, may God keep them.

- *List all the different kinds of commodities that the letter talks about.*
- *How many different people are named as owners, partners, dealers, and agents?*
- *What does the letter reveal about the ties among merchants and about how they conducted their business?*

SOURCE: *Letters of Medieval Jewish Traders*, translated with introductions and notes by S. D. Goitein (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973), pp. 85–87.

world. While the Fatimid Shiites established their authority over Egypt and much of North Africa (see Chapter 9), the Abbasid state in Baghdad fell under the sway of a Shiite family. Each group created universities (in Cairo and Baghdad, respectively), ensuring that leading centers of higher learning were Shiite. But divisions also sapped Shiism, as Sunni Muslims began to challenge Shiite power and establish their own strongholds. The last of the Shiite Fatimid rulers gave way to

a new Sunni regime in Egypt. In Baghdad, the Shiite Buyid family surrendered to a group of unrelated Sunni strongmen.

The new strongmen were mainly Turks. Their people had been migrating into the Islamic heartland from the Asian steppes since the eighth century, bringing superior military skills and an intense devotion to Sunni Islam. Once established in Baghdad, they founded outposts in Syria and Palestine, and then moved into Anatolia after defeating

Byzantine forces in 1071. But this Turkish state also crumbled, as tribesmen quarreled for preeminence. Thus by the thirteenth century the Islamic heartland had fractured into three regions. In the east (central Asia, Iran, and eastern Iraq), the remnants of the old Abbasid state persevered. Caliphs succeeded one another, still claiming to speak for all of Islam yet deferring to their Turkish military commanders. Even in the core of the Islamic world (Egypt, Syria, and the Arabian Peninsula), where Arabic was the primary tongue, military men of non-Arab origin held the reins of power. Farther west (in the Maghreb), Arab rulers prevailed—but there the influence of Berbers, some from the northern Sahara, was extensive. Islam was a vibrant faith, but its polities were splintered.

### WHAT WAS ISLAM?

Buoyed by Arab dhows on the high seas and carried on the backs of camels, following commercial networks, Islam had been transformed from Muhammad’s original goal of creating a religion for Arab peoples. By 1300, its influence spanned Afro-Eurasia. It attracted urbanites and rural peasants alike, as well as its original audience of desert nomads. Its extraordinary universal appeal generated an intense Islamic cultural flowering in 1000 CE.

Some people worried about the preservation of Islam’s true nature as, for example, Arabic ceased to be the language of many Islamic believers when it spread beyond the Arab peoples. True, the devout read and recited the Quran in its original tongue, as the religion mandated. But Persian was now the language of Muslim philosophy and art, and Turkish was the language of law and administration. Moreover, Jerusalem and Baghdad no longer stood alone as Islamic cultural capitals. Other cities, housing universities and other centers of learning, promoted alternative, vernacular versions of Islam. In fact, some of the most dynamic thought came from Islam’s fringes.

At the same time, heterogeneity fostered cultural blossoming in all fields of high learning. Arabic remained a pre-eminent language of science, literature, and religion in 1300. Indicative of Islam’s and Arabic’s prominence in thought was the legendary Ibn Rushd (1126–1198). Known as Averroës in the western world, where scholars pored over his writings, he wrestled with the same theological issues that troubled western scholars. Steeped in the writings of Aristotle, Ibn Rushd became Islam’s most thoroughgoing advocate for the use of reason in understanding the universe. His knowledge of Aristotle was so great that it influenced the thinking of the Christian world’s leading philosopher and theologian, Thomas of Aquino (Thomas Aquinas, 1225–1274). Above all, Ibn Rushd believed that faith and reason could be compatible. He also argued for a social hierarchy in which learned

men would command influence akin to Confucian scholars in China or Greek philosophers in Athens. Ibn Rushd believed that the proper forms of reasoning had to be entrusted to the educated class—in the case of Islam, the *ulama*—which would serve the common folk.

Equally powerful works appeared in Persian, which by now was expressing the most sophisticated ideas of culture and religion. Best representing the new Persian ethnic pride was Abu al-Qasim Firdawsi (920–1020), a devout Muslim who also believed in the importance of pre-Islamic Sasanian traditions. In the epic poem *Shah Namah*, or *Book of Kings*, he celebrated the origins of Persian culture and narrated the history of the Iranian highland peoples from the dawn of time to the Muslim conquest. As part of his effort to extol a pure Persian culture, Firdawsi attempted to compose his entire poem in Persian unblemished by other languages, even avoiding Arabic words.

By the fourteenth century, Islam had achieved what early converts would have considered unthinkable. No longer a religion of a minority of peoples living amid Christian, Zoroastrian, and Jewish communities, it had become the people’s faith. The agents of conversion were mainly Sufi saints and Sufi brotherhoods—not the *ulama*, whose exhortations had little impact on common people. The Sufis had carried their faith far and wide to North African Berbers, to Anatolian villagers, and to West African animists (who believed that things in nature have souls). Indeed, Ibn Rushd worried about the growing appeal of what he considered an “irrational” piety. But his message failed, because he did not appreciate that Islam’s expansionist powers rested on its appeal to common folk. While the *sharia* was the core of Islam for the educated and scholarly classes, Sufism spoke to ordinary men and women.

## INDIA AS A CULTURAL MOSAIC

→ In what ways did India remain a cultural mosaic?

Trade and migration affected India, just as it did the rest of Asia and Africa. As in the case of Islam, India’s growing cultural interconnections and increasing prosperity produced little political integration. Under the canopy of Hinduism it remained a cultural mosaic; in fact, the Islamic faith now joined others to make the region even more diverse (see Map 10-5). India, in this sense, illustrates how cross-cultural integration can just as easily preserve diversity as promote internal unity.

→ In what ways did India remain a cultural mosaic?



**MAP 10-5** SOUTH ASIA IN 1300

As the fourteenth century began, India was a blend of many cultures. Politically, the Turkish Muslim regime of the Delhi Sultanate dominated the region. Use the map key to identify the areas dominated by the Delhi Sultanate. How do you suppose the trade routes helped to spread the Muslims' influence in India? Now use the key to find the Hindu areas. Based on your reading, what factors accounted for Hinduism's continued appeal despite the Muslims' political power?

## RAJAS AND SULTANS

Turks spilled into India as they had the Islamic heartlands, bringing their newfound Islamic beliefs. But the newcomers encountered an ethnic and religious mix that they would add to without upsetting the balance. India became an intersection for the trade, migration, and culture of Afro-Eurasian peoples. Moreover, with 80 million inhabitants in 1000 CE, it had the second-largest population in the region, not far behind China's 120 million.

Before the Turks arrived, India was splintered among rival chiefs called *rajās*. (*Rajās* considered themselves kings; the term also denotes the head of a family or the person who controlled land and resources.) These leaders solicited support from high-caste Brahmans by giving them land. Much of it was uncultivated, so the Brahmans set out to make it

arable: they built temples, converted the indigenous hunter-gatherer peoples to the Hindu faith, and then taught the converts how to cultivate the land. In this way the Brahmans simultaneously spread their faith and expanded the agrarian tax base for themselves and the *rajās*. The Brahmans reciprocated the *rajās*' support by compiling elaborate genealogies for them and endowing them with a lengthy (and legitimizing) ancestry. For their part, the *rajās* demonstrated that they were well versed in Sanskrit culture, including equestrian skills and courtly etiquette, and became the patrons of artists and poets. Ultimately, many of the warriors and their heirs became Indian *rajās*. However, the Turkish invaders were armed with Islam, so the conquerors remained sultans instead of becoming *rajās*. (Unlike *rajās*, **sultans** were political leaders who combined a warrior ethos with a devotion to Islam.)



**Hindu Temple.** When Buddhism started to decline in India, Hinduism was on the rise. Numerous Hindu temples were built, many of them adorned with ornate carvings like this small tenth-century temple in Bhubaneswar, east India.

## INVASIONS AND CONSOLIDATIONS

When the Turkish warlords began entering India, the rajas had neither the will nor resources to resist them after centuries of fighting off invaders. The Turks introduced their own customs while accepting local social structures, such as the caste system. Concerned to promote Islamic culture, the Turks constructed grandiose mosques and built impressive libraries where scholars could toil and share their wisdom with the court. Previous invaders from central Asia had reinforced the rajas' power base through intermarriage. But the Turks upset the balance of the raja kingdoms. For example, Mahmud of Ghazna (971–1030) launched many expeditions from the Afghan heartland into northern India and wanted to make his capital, Ghazni, a center of Islamic learning in order to win status within Islam. Subsequently, Muhammad Ghuri in the 1180s led another wave of Islamic Turkish invasions from Afghanistan and dispersed across the Delhi region in northern India. Wars raged between the Indus and Ganges rivers until one by one, all the way to the lower Ganges valley, the fractured kingdoms of the rajas toppled.

The most powerful and enduring of the Turkish Muslim regimes of northern India was the **Delhi Sultanate** (1206–1526), whose rulers strengthened the cultural diversity and tolerance that were already a hallmark of the Indian social order. Sultans recruited local artisans for numerous building projects, and palaces and mosques became displays of Indian architectural tastes adopted by Turkish newcomers. But the sultans did not force their subjects to convert, so that

South Asia never became an Islamic-dominant country. Nor did they have an interest in the flourishing commercial life along the Indian coast. So they permitted these areas to develop on their own. Persian Zoroastrian traders settled on the coast around modern-day Mumbai (Bombay). The Malabar coast to the south became the preserve of Arab traders. The Delhi Sultanate was a rich and powerful regime that brought political integration but did not enforce cultural homogeneity.

## WHAT WAS INDIA?

During the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries India became the most diverse and, in some respects, most tolerant region in Afro-Eurasia. It is from this era that India as an impressive but fragile mosaic of cultures, religions, and ethnicities truly arises. Not even Islam's entry into the region undermined this intense cultural mixing.

When the Turks arrived, the local Hindu population, having had much experience with foreign invaders and immigrants, assimilated these intruders as they had done earlier peoples. And the Turks cooperated. Before long, they thought of themselves as Indians who, however, retained their Islamic beliefs and steppe ways. They continued to wear their distinctive trousers and robes and flaunted their horse-riding skills. At the same time, the local population embraced some of their conquerors' ways, donning the tunics and trousers that characterized Central Asian peoples.

→ *In what ways did India remain a cultural mosaic?*



**Lodi Gardens.** The Lodi Dynasty was the last Delhi sultan dynasty. Lodi Gardens, the cemetery of Lodi sultans, places central Asian Islamic architecture in the Indian landscape, thereby creating a scene of “heaven on the earth.”

Diversity and cultural mixing became most visible in the multiple languages that flourished in India. Although the sultans spoke Turkish languages, they regarded Persian literature as a high cultural achievement and made Persian their courtly and administrative language. Meanwhile, most of their Hindu subjects spoke local languages (which had evolved out of Sanskrit) and followed their caste regulations. Despite living under Muslim rulers, the subject populations adhered to their local adaptations of the Hindu faith. Here the rulers did what Muslim rulers did with Christian and Jewish communities living in their midst: they collected the *jizya* tax and permitted communities to worship as they saw fit and to administer their own communal law. Ultimately, Islam proved in India that it did not have to be a conquering religion to prosper. As rulers, sultans granted lands to ulama (Islamic scholars) and Sufi saints, much as Hindu rajahs had earlier granted lands to Brahmins (see Chapter 8). These scholars and saints in turn attracted followers to their large estates and forests to enjoy the benefits of membership in a community of believers.

Although newcomers and locals cleaved to separate religious traditions, nonetheless their customs began to merge.

**Vishnu.** With Buddhism disappearing from India, Buddha was absorbed by the cult of Vishnu and became one of the incarnations of the Hindu god. This late-twelfth-century Angkor Wat-style sculpture from Cambodia shows Vishnu asleep; from his nostril sprouts the lotus that will give birth to Buddha.

Sultans maintained their steppe lifestyle and equestrian culture and took delight in the fact that their subjects adopted Central Asian-style clothing. Within only a few decades, once the subject peoples realized that sultans and Islam were there to stay, they embraced the fashions of the court. In turn, their Muslim rulers understood that ruling effectively meant mastering the local language. Before long, court scholars and Sufi holy men were writing and teaching proficiently in local dialects. Hindustani was the result, an Indian language incorporating Persian and Arabic words; in time, it became the root language of Hindi and Urdu.



This exchange of skills among diverse communities was not confined to governance and religion. It spilled over into the economic arena as well. The foreign artisans who had arrived with their rulers brought silk textiles, rugs, and appliances to irrigate gardens that the leading families of Delhi cherished. Soon the artisans’ talents were influencing local manufacturing techniques. Native-born Indians learned from Muslims how to extract long filaments from silk cocoons and were themselves weaving fine silk textiles.

Although Buddhism had been in decline in India for centuries, it, too, became part of the cultural intermixing of these centuries. As Vedic Brahmanism evolved into Hinduism (see Chapter 8), it absorbed many Buddhist doctrines and practices, such as *ahimsa* (non-killing) and vegetarianism. The two religions became so similar that Hindus simply considered the Buddha to be one of their deities—an incarnation of the great god Vishnu. Many Buddhist moral teachings mixed with and became Hindu stories. Artistic motifs reflect a similar process of adoption and adaptation. Goddesses, some beautiful and others fierce, appeared alongside Buddhas, Vishnus, and Sivas as their consorts. The Turkish invaders’ destruction of major monasteries in the thirteenth century deprived Buddhism of local spiritual leaders. Lacking dynastic support, Buddhists in India were thus more easily assimilated into the Hindu population or converted to Islam.

## SONG CHINA: INSIDERS VERSUS OUTSIDERS

→ *What transformations in communication, education, and commerce promoted a distinct Chinese identity during this era?*

The preeminent world power in 1000 CE was still China, despite its recent turmoil. Once dampened, that turbulence yielded to a long era of stability and splendor—a combination that made China a regional engine of Afro-Eurasian prosperity.

After the end of the Tang dynasty (907 CE), North and South China splintered into regional kingdoms, mostly led by military generals. In 960 CE one of those generals, Zhao Kuangyin, ended the fragmentation. Overthrowing the boy emperor of his own kingdom, Zhao reunified China by conquering regional kingdoms. After his death, his younger brother annexed the remaining kingdoms. Thus, the Song dynasty took over the mandate of heaven.

The following three centuries witnessed many economic and political successes, but northern nomadic tribes kept the Song from completely securing their reign (see Map 10-6 and Map 10-7). Their efforts to deter these warriors were ulti-

mately unsuccessful, and in 1127 the Song lost control of northern China to the Jurchen (ancestors of the Manchu, who would rule China from the seventeenth until the twentieth century). After reconstituting their dynasty in southern China, their empire’s most economically robust region, the Song enjoyed another century and a half of rule before falling to the Mongols.

## CHINA’S ECONOMIC PROGRESS

China, like India and the Islamic world, participated in Afro-Eurasia’s powerful long-distance trade. Indeed, Chinese merchants were as energetic as their Muslim and Indian counterparts. Yet China’s commercial successes could not have occurred without the country’s strong agrarian base—especially its vast rice fields, which sustained a population that reached 120 million. Agriculture benefited from breakthroughs in metalworking that yielded stronger iron plows, which the Song harnessed to sturdy water buffalo to extend the farming frontier. In 1078, for example, total Song iron production reached between 75,000 and 150,000 tons, roughly the equivalent of European iron production in the early eighteenth century. The Chinese piston bellows were a marvel, and of a size unsurpassed until the nineteenth century.

Manufacturing also flourished. In the early tenth century, Chinese alchemists mixed saltpeter with sulfur and charcoal to produce a product that would burn and could be deployed on the battlefield: gunpowder. Soon, Song entrepreneurs were inventing a remarkable array of incendiary devices that flowed from their mastery of techniques for controlling explosions. Moreover, artisans produced increasingly light, durable, and exquisitely beautiful porcelains. Before long, their porcelain (now called “china”) was the envy of all Afro-Eurasia. Also flowing from the artisans’ skillful hands were vast amounts of clothing and handicrafts, made from the fibers grown by Song farmers. In effect, the Song Chinese oversaw the world’s first manufacturing revolution, producing finished goods on a large scale for consumption far and wide.

## MONEY AND INFLATION

Expanding commerce transformed the role of money and its wide circulation. By now the Song government was annually minting nearly two million strings of currency, each containing 1,000 copper coins. In fact, the supply of metal currency could not match the demand. (The result: East Asia’s thirst for gold from East Africa.) At the same time, merchant guilds in northwestern Shanxi developed the first letters of exchange, called “flying cash.” These letters linked northern traders with their colleagues in the south. Before long,

➔ *What transformations in communication, education, and commerce promoted a distinct Chinese identity during this era?*



**MAP 10-6 EAST ASIA IN 1000**

Several states emerged in East Asia between 1000 and 1300, but none were as strong as the Song dynasty in China. Using the key to the map, try to identify the factors that contributed to the Song state's economic dynamism. What external factors kept the Song dynasty from completely securing their reign? What factors drove the Chinese commercial revolution in this period?

printed money had eclipsed coins. Even the government collected more than half its tax revenues in cash rather than grain and cloth. The government also issued more notes to pay its bills—a practice that ultimately contributed to the world's first case of runaway inflation.

### NEW ELITES

Song emperors ushered in a period of social and cultural vitality. They established a central bureaucracy of scholar-officials chosen through competitive civil service examinations. Zhao Kuangyin, or Emperor Taizu (r. 960–976 CE), himself

administered the final test for all who had passed the highest-level palace examination. In subsequent dynasties, the emperor was the nation's premier examiner, symbolically demanding oaths of allegiance from successful candidates. By 1100 these ranks of learned men had accumulated sufficient power to become China's new ruling elite.

The introduction of the civil service examination system was crucial to a dramatic shift in power from a hereditary aristocracy to a less wealthy but more highly schooled class of scholar officials. Consider the career of the infamous Northern Song reformer Wang Anshi (1021–1086), who ascended to power from a commoner family outside of Hangzhou in the south. He owed his rise to power to success



**MAP 10-7** EAST ASIA IN 1200

The Song dynasty regularly dealt with “barbarian” neighbors. What were the major “barbarian” tribes during this period? Approximately what percentage of Song China was lost to the Jin in 1126? How did the “barbarian” tribes affect the Han Chinese identity in this period?

in Song state examinations—a not insignificant achievement, for in nearby Fujian province alone, of the roughly 18,000 candidates who gathered triennially to take the provincial examination, over 90 percent failed! After gaining the emperor’s ear, Wang eventually challenged the political and cultural influence of the old Tang dynasty elites from the northwest.

## NEGOTIATING WITH NEIGHBORS

As the Song flourished, nomads on the outskirts eyed the Chinese successes closely. To the north, Khitan, Tungusic, Tangut, and Jurchen nomadic societies formed their own dynasties and adopted Chinese techniques. Located within the “greater China” established by the Han and Tang dynasties,

➔ *How were Southeast Asia, Japan, and Korea influenced by sustained contact with other regions?*



**Wang Anshi.** He owed his rise from a commoner family to a powerful position as a reformer to the Song state examinations.

agreements with the borderlanders. For example, after losing militarily to the Khitan Liao dynasty, the Song agreed to make annual payments of 100,000 ounces of silver and 200,000 bolts of silk. The treaty allowed them to live in relative peace for more than a century. Securing peace meant emptying the state coffers and then printing more paper money. The resulting inflation added economic instability to military weakness, making the Song an easy target when Jurchen invaders made their final assault.

## WHAT WAS CHINA?

Paradoxically, the increasing exchange between outsiders and insiders within China hardened the lines that divided them and gave residents of China's interior a highly developed sense of themselves as a distinctive people possessing a superior culture. Exchanges with outsiders nurtured a "Chinese" identity among those who considered themselves true insiders and referred to themselves as Han. Improvements in communications and education further intensified this Han sense that they were the authentic Chinese, and that outsiders were radically different. Driven from their ancient homeland in the eleventh century, they grew increasingly suspicious and resentful toward the outsiders living in their midst. They called these outsiders "barbarians" and treated them accordingly.

these non-Chinese nomads saw China proper as an object of conquest.

In military power the Song dynasts were relatively weak: despite their sophisticated weapons, they could not match their steppe foes when the latter united against them. Yes, steel tips improved the arrows that their soldiers shot from their crossbows, and flame throwers and "crouching tiger catapults" sent incendiary bombs streaking into their enemies' ranks; none of these breakthroughs was secret. Warrior neighbors on the steppe mastered the new arts of war more fully than did the Song dynasts themselves.

China's strength as a manufacturing powerhouse made economic diplomacy an option, so the Song relied on "gifts" and generous trade



**Chinese and Barbarian.** After losing the north, the Han Chinese grew resentful of outsiders. They drew a dividing line between their own agrarian society and the nomadic warriors, calling them "barbarians." Such identities were not fixed, however. Chinese and so-called barbarians were mutually dependent.

Vital in crystallizing this sense of a distinct Chinese identity was print culture. In fact, of all Afro-Eurasian societies in 1300, the Chinese were the most advanced in their use of printing and book publishing and circulation. The Song government used its plentiful supply of paper to print books, especially medical texts, and to distribute calendars. The private publishing industry also expanded. Printing houses throughout the country produced Confucian classics, works on history, philosophical treatises, and literature—all of which figured in the civil examinations. Buddhist publications, too, were available everywhere. The dramatic expansion of the print culture was further emblematic of this great period of stability and splendor in China.

## CHINA'S NEIGHBORS ADAPT TO CHANGE

➔ *How were Southeast Asia, Japan, and Korea influenced by sustained contact with other regions?*

Feeling the pull of Chinese economic and political gravity, cultures around China's rim consolidated internal political authority to resist being swallowed up, while increasing their commercial transactions.

## THE RISE OF WARRIORS IN JAPAN

In Japan, rulers sought to create a stable regime out of feuding warrior factions, so they combined the Heian court’s imperial authority with the military power of provincial warriors. At first, entrenched court nobles in the new capital of Heian (today’s Kyoto) dominated Japan (see Map 10-7); later, rough-and-ready warriors won possession of the throne to “protect” its sanctity as an object of popular veneration.

The most influential of these ruling groups was the Fujiwara family, ancestors of the Nakatomi kinship group (see Chapter 9). During the tenth and eleventh centuries the Fujiwara presided over Japanese society in what is known as the Heian period (794–1185). They exchanged poetry written in classical Chinese and their native language, and dressed in the elegant costumes that have influenced Japanese taste up to this day.

In time, however, power shifted to elites in the provinces. In a new hierarchy of land tenures, peasant cultivators were at the bottom, managers and estate officials in the middle, and absentee patrons at the top. Soon these large estates controlled more than half of Japan’s rice land, and the state’s revenue and power plummeted. In the midst of such privatization, Heian aristocrats became politically weak but culturally influential—while the hinterlands provided their economic wealth.

Heian aristocrats disdained the military and even abolished the conscription system used to raise imperial armies. In the provinces, however, trained warriors affiliated with kinship groups gathered strength. Protected by lightweight leather armor, these expert horsemen defended their private estates with remarkable long-range bowmanship and superbly crafted, single-edged long steel swords for close combat. Formidable in warfare, they formed local warrior organizations in the outlying regions and prepared the way for the rise of a warrior or samurai society.

Japan now smoldered with multiple sources of political and cultural power: an endangered aristocracy, an imperial family, and local samurai warriors. It was a combustible mix of refined high culture in the capital versus uncouth warriors in the provinces. Such a mix generated social intrigue in marriage politics and political double-dealing in the capital. Lady Murasaki Shikibu (c. 976–c. 1031), writing in native Japanese script, captured this world of elegant lives and sordid affairs of courtiers and their women in *The Tale of Genji*, Japan’s—and possibly the world’s—first novel. (See Primary Source: *The Tale of Genji*.)

## SOUTHEAST ASIA: A MARITIME MOSAIC

Southeast Asia, like India, now became a crossroads of Afro-Eurasian influences. Its sparse population (probably around 10 million in 1000 CE—tiny compared with that of China and India) was not immune, however, to the foreign influences riding the sea-lanes into the archipelago. Indeed, the Malay Peninsula became home to many trading ports and stopovers for traders shuttling between India and China, because it connected the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean with the South China Sea (see Map 10-8).

**“INDO-CHINESE” INFLUENCES** Indian influence had been prominent both on the Asian mainland and in island portions of Southeast Asia since 800 CE, but Islamic expansion into the islands after 1200 gradually superseded these influences. Only Bali and a few other islands far to the east of Malaya preserved their Vedic religious origins. Elsewhere in Java and Sumatra, Islam became the dominant religion. In Vietnam and northern portions of mainland Southeast Asia, Chinese cultural influences and northern schools of Mahayana Buddhism were especially prominent.



**Heiji Rebellion.** This illustration from the Kamakura period depicts a battle during the Heiji Rebellion, which was fought between rival subjects of the cloistered emperor Go-Shirakawa in 1159. Riding in full armor on horseback, the fighters on both sides are armed with devastating long bows.

→ How were Southeast Asia, Japan, and Korea influenced by sustained contact with other regions?

## Primary Source

### THE TALE OF GENJI

*Lacking a written language of their own, Heian aristocrats adopted classical Chinese as the official written language while continuing to speak Japanese. Men at the court took great pains to master the Chinese literary forms, but Japanese court ladies were not expected to do so. Lady Murasaki Shikibu, the author of The Tale of Genji, hid her knowledge of Chinese, fearing that she would be criticized. In the meantime, the Japanese developed a native syllabary (a table of syllables) based on Chinese written graphs. Using this syllabary, Murasaki kept a diary in Japanese that gave vivid accounts of Heian court life. Her story—possibly the world's first novel—relates the adventures of a dashing young courtier named Genji. In the passage below, Genji evidently speaks for Murasaki in explaining why fiction can be as truthful as a work of history in capturing human life and its historical significance.*

Genji . . . smiled, and went on: “But I have a theory of my own about what this art of the novel is, and how it came into being. To begin with, it does not simply consist in the author’s telling a story about the adventures of some other person. On the contrary, it happens because the storyteller’s own experience of men and things, whether for good or ill—not only what he has passed through himself, but even events which he has only witnessed or been told of—has moved him to an emotion so passionate that he can no longer keep it shut up in his heart. Again and again something in his own life or in that around him will seem to the writer so important that he cannot bear to let it pass into oblivion. There must never come a time, he feels, when men do not know about it. That is my view of how this art arose.

“Clearly then, it is no part of the storyteller’s craft to describe only what is good or beautiful. Sometimes, of course, virtue will be his theme, and he may then make such play with it as he will. But he is just as likely to have been struck by numerous examples of vice and folly in the world around him, and about them he has exactly the same feelings as about the pre-eminently good deeds which he encounters: they are more important and must all be garnered in. Thus anything whatsoever may become the subject of a novel, provided only that it happens in this mundane life and not in some fairyland beyond our human ken.

“The outward forms of this art will not of course be everywhere the same. At the court of China and in other foreign lands both the genius of the writers and their actual methods of composition are necessarily very different from ours; and even here in Japan the art of storytelling has in course of time undergone great changes. There will, too, always be a distinction between the lighter and the more serious forms of fiction. . . . So too, I think, may it be said that the art of fiction must not lose our allegiance because, in the pursuit of the main purpose to which I have alluded above, it sets virtue by the side of vice, or mingles wisdom with folly. Viewed in this light the novel is seen to be not, as is usually supposed, a mixture of useful truth with idle invention, but something which at every stage and in every part has a definite and serious purpose.”

- According to this passage, what motivates an author to write a story (i.e., fiction)?
- Genji feels it is appropriate for a writer to address not only “what is good or beautiful” but also “vice and folly.” What explanation does he give? Do you agree?

SOURCE: *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, compiled by Ryūsaku Tsunoda, Wm. Theodore de Bary, and Donald Keene (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964), vol. 1, pp. 177–79.



**MAP 10-8** SOUTHEAST ASIA, 1000–1300

Cross-cultural influences affected Southeast Asian societies during this period. What makes Southeast Asia unique geographically compared to other regions of the world? Based on the map, why were the kingdoms of Southeast Asia exposed to so many cross-cultural influences? In this chapter, the term “mosaic” describes both South and Southeast Asia. Compare Map 10-5 with this map, and explain how the mosaic of Southeast Asia differed from the mosaic of India.

**MAINLAND BUFFER KINGDOMS** During this period Cambodian, Burmese, and Thai peoples founded powerful mixed polities along the Mekong, Salween, Chao Phraya, and Irrawaddy river basins of the Asian mainland. Important Vedic and Buddhist kingdoms emerged here as political buffers between the strong states in China and India and brought stability and further commercial prosperity to the region.

Consider the kingdom that ruled Angkor in present-day Cambodia. With their capital in Angkor, the Khmers (889–

1431) created the most powerful and wealthy empire in Southeast Asia. Countless water reservoirs enabled them to flourish on the great plain to the west of the Mekong River after the loss of eastern territories. Public works and magnificent temples dedicated to the revived Vedic gods from India went hand in hand with the earlier influence of Indian Buddhism. Eventually the Khmer kings united adjacent kingdoms and extended Khmer influence to the Thai and Burmese states along the Chao Phraya and Irrawaddy rivers.

→ *How did Christianity produce a distinct identity among the diverse peoples of Europe?*



**Angkor Wat.** Mistaken by later European explorers as a remnant of Alexander the Great's conquests, the enormous temple complexes built by the Khmer people in Angkor borrowed their intricate layout and stupa (a moundlike structure containing religious relics) architecture from the Brahmanist Indian temples of the time. As the capital, Angkor was a microcosm of the world for the Khmer, who aspired to represent the macrocosm of the universe in the magnificence of Angkor's buildings and their geometric layout.

One of the greatest temple complexes in Angkor exemplified the Khmers' heavy borrowing from Vedic Indian architecture. Angkor aspired to represent the universe in the magnificence of its buildings. As signs of the ruler's power, the pagodas, pyramids, and terra-cotta friezes (ornamented walls) presented the life of the gods on earth. The crowning structure of the royal palace was the magnificent temple of **Angkor Wat**, possibly the largest religious structure ever built. In ornate detail and with great artistry, its buildings and statues represented the revival of the Hindu pantheon within the Khmer royal state. Far less Buddhist influence is visible.

## CHRISTIAN EUROPE

→ *How did Christianity produce a distinct identity among the diverse peoples of Europe?*

In the far western corner of Afro-Eurasia, people were building a culture revealingly different. Although their numbers were small compared with the rest of Afro-Eurasia in 1000 CE (36 million in Europe, compared to 80 million in India and 120 million in China), their population would soar to 80 million before the arrival of the Black Death in the fourteenth century.

This was a region of contrasts. On the one hand, the period 1000–1300 witnessed an intense localization of politics because there was no successor to the Roman Empire or

Charlemagne's (see Chapter 9). On the other hand, the territory united under a shared sense of its place in the world. Indeed, some inhabitants even began to believe in the existence of something called "Europe" and increasingly referred to themselves as "Europeans" (see Map 10-9).

## WESTERN AND NORTHERN EUROPE

The collapse of Charlemagne's empire had exposed much of northern Europe to invasion, principally from the Vikings, and left the peasantry with no central authority to protect them from local warlords. Armed with deadly weapons, these strongmen collected taxes, imposed forced labor, and became the unchallenged rulers of society. Within this growing warrior aristocracy, northern France led the way. The Franks (later called Frenchmen) were the trendsetters of eleventh- and twelfth-century western Europe.

The most important change was the peasantry's subjugation to the knightly class. Previously, well-to-do peasants had carried arms as "free" men. The moment the farmers lost the right to carry arms, they were no longer free. They slipped back to being mere agricultural laborers. Each peasant toiled under the authority of a lord, who controlled every detail of his or her life. This was the basis of a system known as **feudalism**.

Assured of control of the peasantry, feudal lords watched over an agrarian breakthrough—which fueled a commercial transformation that drew Europe into the rest of the global trading networks. Lordly protection and more advanced metal tools like axes and plows, combined with heavier livestock to pull plows through the root-infested sods of northern



**MAP 10-9 LATIN CHRISTENDOM IN 1300**

Catholic Europe expanded geographically and integrated culturally during this era. According to this map, into what areas did western Christendom successfully expand? What factors contributed to the growth of a widespread common culture and shared ideas? How did long-distance trade shape the history of the region during this time?

Europe, led to massive deforestation. Above this clearing activity stood the castle. Its threatening presence ensured that the peasantry stayed within range of the collector of rents for the lords and of tithes (shares of crops, earmarked as “donations”) for the church. In this blunt way, “feudalism” harnessed agrarian energy to its own needs. The population of western Europe as a whole leaped forward, most spectacularly in the north. As a result, northern Europe (from England to Poland) ceased to be an underdeveloped “barbarian” appendage of the Mediterranean.

## EASTERN EUROPE

Nowhere did pioneering peasants develop more land than in the wide-open spaces of eastern Europe, the region’s land of opportunity. Between 1100 and 1200, some 200,000 farmers emigrated from Flanders (modern Belgium), Holland, and northern Germany into eastern frontiers. Well-watered landscapes, covered with vast forests, filled up what are now Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and the Baltic states. “Little Europes,” whose castles, churches, and towns echoed

→ How did Christianity produce a distinct identity among the diverse peoples of Europe?



**The Bayeux Tapestry.** This tapestry was prepared by a queen and her ladies to celebrate the victories of William, known as the Conqueror because of his successful invasion of England in 1066. It shows the fascination of the entire “feudal” class, even women, with war on which they depended—great horses, tightly meshed chain mail, long shields, and the stirrups that made such cavalry warfare possible.

the landscape of France, now replaced economies that had been based on gathering honey, hunting, and the slave trade. For a thousand miles along the Baltic Sea, forest clearings dotted with new farmsteads and small towns edged inward from the coast up the river valleys.

The social structure here was a marriage of convenience between migrating peasants and local elites. The area offered the promise of freedom from the feudal lords’ arbitrary justice and imposition of forced labor. Even the harsh landscape of the eastern Baltic (where the sea froze every year and impenetrable forests blocked settlers from the coast) was preferable to life in the feudal west. For their part, the elites of eastern Europe—the nobility of Poland, Bohemia, and Hungary and the princes of the Baltic—wished to live well, in the “French”

**Olavinlinna Castle.** This castle in Finland was the easternmost extension of a “western,” feudal style of rule through great castles. It was built at the very end of the Baltic, to keep away the Russians of Novgorod.



style. But they could do so only if they attracted manpower to their lands by offering newcomers a liberty that they had no hope of enjoying in the west.

## THE RUSSIAN LANDS

In Russian lands, western settlers and knights met an eastern brand of Christian devotion. This world looked toward Byzantium, not Rome. Russia was a giant borderland between the steppes of Eurasia and the booming feudalisms of Europe. Its cities lay at the crossroads of overland trade and migration, and Kiev became one of the region’s greatest cities. Standing on a bluff above the Dnieper River, it straddled newly opened trade routes. With a population exceeding 20,000, including merchants from eastern and western Europe and the Middle East, Kiev was larger than Paris—larger even than the much-diminished city of Rome.

Kiev looked south to the Black Sea and to Constantinople. Under Iaroslav the Wise (1016–1054), it became a small-scale Constantinople on the Dnieper. A stone church called St. Sophia stood (as in Constantinople) beside the imperial palace. Indeed, with its distinctive “Byzantine” domes, it was a miniature Hagia Sophia (see Chapter 8). Its highest dome towered a hundred feet above the floor, and its splendid mosaics depicting Byzantine saints echoed the religious art of Constantinople. But the message was political as well, for the ruler of Kiev was cast in the mold of the emperor of Constantinople. He now took the title *tsar* from the ancient Roman name given to the emperor, Caesar. From this time onward, *tsar* was the title of rulers in Russia.

The Russian form of Christianity replicated the Byzantine style of churches all along the great rivers leading to the trading cities of the north and northeast. These were not agrarian centers, but hubs of expanding long-distance trade.



#### Hagia Sophia, Novgorod.

The cathedral of Novgorod (as that of Kiev) was called Hagia Sophia. It was a deliberate imitation of the Hagia Sophia of Constantinople, showing Russia's roots in a glorious Roman/Byzantine past that had nothing to do with western Europe.

(See Primary Source: The Birch Bark Letters of Novgorod.) Each city became a small-scale Kiev, and thus a smaller-scale echo of Constantinople. The Orthodox religion looked to Byzantium's Hagia Sophia rather than the Catholic faith associated with the popes in Rome. Russian Christianity remained the Christianity of a borderland—vivid oases of high culture set against the backdrop of vast forests and widely scattered settlements.

### WHAT WAS CHRISTIAN EUROPE?

In this era Catholicism became a universalizing faith that transformed the region becoming known as “Europe.” The Christianity of post-Roman Europe had been a religion of monks, and its most dynamic centers were great monasteries. Members of the laity were expected to revere and support their monks, nuns, and clergy, but not to imitate them. By 1200, all this had changed. The internal colonization of western Europe—the clearing of woods and founding of villages—ensured that parish churches arose in all but the wildest landscapes. Their spires were visible and their bells were audible from one valley to the next. Church graveyards were the only places where good Christians could be buried; criminals' and outlaws' bodies piled up in “heathen” graves outside the cemetery walls. Even the bones of the believers helped make Europe Christian.

Now the clergy reached more deeply into the private lives of the laity. Marriage and divorce, previously considered family matters, became a full-time preoccupation of the church. And sin was no longer an offense that just “happened”; it was

a matter that every person could do something about. Soon, regular confession to a priest became obligatory for all Catholic, western Christians. The followers of Francis of Assisi (1182–1226) emerged as an order of preachers who brought a message of repentance. They did not tell their audiences to enter the monastery (as would have been the case in the early Middle Ages). Instead, their listeners were to weep, confess their sins to local priests, and strive to be better Christians. Franciscans instilled in the hearts of all believers a Europe-wide Catholicism based on daily remorse and daily contemplation of the sufferings of Christ and his mother, Mary. From Ireland to Riga and Budapest, Catholic Christians came to share a common piety.

**UNIVERSITIES AND INTELLECTUALS** Vital to the creation of Europe's Christian identity was the emergence of universities, for it was during this era that Europe acquired its first class of intellectuals. Since the late twelfth century, scholars had gathered in Paris, where they formed a *universitas*—a term borrowed from merchant communities, where it denoted a type of union. Those who belonged to the *universitas* enjoyed protection by their fellows and freedom to continue their trade. Similarly protected by their own “union,” the scholars of Paris began wrestling with the new learning from Arab lands. When the bishop of Paris forbade this undertaking, they simply moved to the Left Bank of the Seine, so as to place the river between themselves and the bishop's officials, who lived around the cathedral of Notre Dame.

The scholars' ability to organize themselves gave them an advantage that their Arab contemporaries lacked. For all his

## Primary Source



### THE BIRCH BARK LETTERS OF NOVGOROD

*The city of Novgorod was a vibrant trading center with a diverse population. From 1951 onward, Russian archaeologists in Novgorod have excavated almost a thousand letters and accounts scratched on birch bark and preserved in the sodden, frequently frozen ground. Reading them, we realize how timeless people's basic concerns can be.*

First, we meet the merchants. Many letters are notes by creditors of the debts owed to them by trading partners. The sums are often expressed in precious animal furs. They contain advice to relatives or to partners in other cities:

Giorgii sends his respects to his father and mother: Sell the house and come here to Smolensk or to Kiev: for the bread is cheap there.

Then we meet neighborhood disputes:

From Anna to Klemiata: Help me, my lord brother, in my matter with Konstantin. . . . [For I asked him,] "Why have you been so angry with my sister and her daughter. You called her a cow and her daughter a whore. And now Fedor has thrown them both out of the house."

There are even glimpses of real love. A secret marriage is planned:

Mikiti to Ulianitza: Come to me. I love you, and you me. Ignato will act as witness.

And a poignant note from a woman was discovered in 1993:

I have written to you three times. What is it that you hold against me, that you did not come to see me this Sunday? I regarded you as I would my own brother. Did I really offend you by that which I sent to you? If you had been pleased you would have torn yourself away from company and come to me. Write to me. If in my clumsiness I have offended you and you should spurn me, then let God be my judge. I love you.

➤ *What does the range of people writing on birch bark tell us about these people?*

➤ *Think of the messages you send to friends and relatives today. Even if texting and e-mailing seem centuries distant from writing on birch bark, can you relate in any way to these ancient letter-writers?*

SOURCE: A. V. Artsikhovskii and V. I. Borkovski, *Novgorodskie Gramoty na Bereste*, 11 vols. (Moscow: Izd-vo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1951–2004), document nos. 424, 531, 377, and 752.

genius, Ibn Rushd had to spend his life courting the favor of individual monarchs to protect him from conservative fellow Muslims, who frequently burned his books. Ironically, European scholars congregating in Paris could quietly absorb the most persuasive elements of Arabic thought, like Ibn Rushd's. Yet they endeavored to prove that Christianity was the only religion that fully met the aspirations of all rational human beings. Such was the message of the great intellectual Thomas Aquinas, who wrote *Summa contra Gentiles* (Summary of Christian Belief against Non-Christians) in 1264.

The Europe of 1300 was more culturally unified than in previous centuries. It was permeated by Catholicism, and its leading intellectuals extolled the virtues of Christian learning. Such a confident region was not, however, a tolerant place for heretics, Jews, or Muslims.

### CHRISTIAN EUROPE ON THE MOVE: THE CRUSADES AND IBERIA

By the tenth and eleventh centuries, western Christianity was on the move, spreading into Scandinavia, southern Italy, the Baltic, and eastern Europe. Its ambitions to reconquer Spain and Portugal (which had been under Islamic control since the eighth century CE) demonstrated one of the effects of feudal power: the lords' self-confidence, their belief in their military capability, and their pious sense of destiny were all inflated. Besides, the wealth of the east was irresistible to those whose piety entwined with an appetite for plunder. Yet the two Christendoms formed an uneasy alliance to roll back the expanding frontiers of Islam. The result: Europeans zealously took war outside their own borders.

# Global Connections & Disconnections

## THE CRUSADES FROM DUAL PERSPECTIVES

In 1095, Pope Urban II called for the First Crusade in the following words:

Oh, race of Franks, race from across the mountains, race chosen and beloved by God, as shines forth in very many of your works, set apart from all nations by the situation of your country, as well as by your Catholic faith and the honor of the Holy Church! To you our discourse is addressed, and for you our exhortation is intended. We wish you to know what a grievous cause has led us to your country, what peril, threatening you and all the faithful, has brought us.

The “grievous cause” was the occupation of the Holy City of Jerusalem by the Islamic empire. Formed within the complex relationship between the Byzantine Empire and the western Christian papacy and kingdoms of Europe, the religious motivation behind the Crusades became the subject of many literary renditions of the tumultuous events. It also generated emotionally stirring and polemical (argumentative) writing, depicting either a Muslim or Christian enemy (depending on the work’s author).

Polemics are often passionate, harsh, and emotional. They also inspire and reinforce the conviction of fellow believers, with little concern for accuracy. Thus authors of

polemic in the time of the Crusades were usually too biased or too misinformed to present accurate portraits of their enemies. But occasionally, firsthand accounts in the form of chronicles and histories offer us unique glimpses into Christian-Muslim relations in the age of the Crusades.

Consider Usāmah ibn Munqidh (1095–1188), the learned ruler of the city of Shaizar in western Syria. Skirmishes, truces, and the ransoming of prisoners were part of his daily life, and Usāmah socialized with his Frankish neighbors as much as he fought with them. He offers a dismissive opinion of his enemies. Basically, they struck him as “animals possessing the virtues of courage and fighting, but nothing else.” In particular, their medical practice appalled him. More strange, the Franks allowed their wives to walk about freely and to talk to strangers unaccompanied by male guardians. How could men be at once so brave and yet so lacking in a proper, Arab sense of honor, which would lead a man to protect his women? Unlike other Muslim authors of his time, however, Usāmah does not refer to the Franks in derogatory terms such as “infidels” or “devils.” In fact, he occasionally refers to some of them as his companions and writes of a Frank who called him “my brother” (*An Arab-Syrian Gentleman and Warrior in the Time of the Crusades*, 16).

**CRUSADES** In the late eleventh century, western Europeans launched a wave of attacks known as the **Crusades**. The First Crusade began in 1095, when Pope Urban II appealed to the warrior nobility of France to put their violence to good use: they should combine their role as pilgrims to Jerusalem with that of soldiers, and free Jerusalem from Muslim rule. What the clergy proposed was a novel kind of war. Whereas previously war had been a dirty business and a source of sin, now the clergy told the knights that good and just wars were possible. Such wars could cancel out the sins of those who waged them.

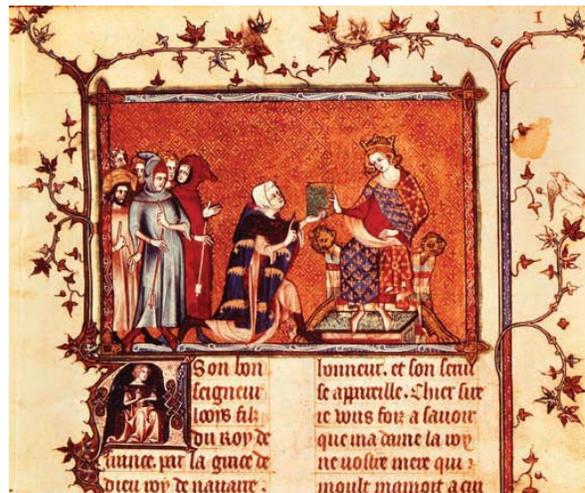
Starting in 1097, an armed host of around 60,000, men moved all the way from northwestern Europe to Jerusalem. This was a huge crowd. But it was divided. Knights in heavy armor led, as they did in Europe. But in the eastern Mediterranean they depended on poor masses who joined

the movement to help besiege cities and construct a network of castles as the Christian knights drove their frontier forward. Later Crusaders brought their wives, especially those from the upper class. As in many colonial societies away from the homeland, these women felt freer. Eleanor of Aquitaine, for example, led her own army. Also, queens were crucial in opening up to the local populations. Consider the Armenian queen, Melisende (r. 1131–1152): regarded as wise and experienced in affairs of the state, she was popular with local Christians. As a result, the society of the Crusader states remained more open to women and the lower classes than in Europe. Above all, the Crusades could not have happened without the sailors and merchants of Italy. It was the fleets of Venice, Genoa, and Pisa that transported the later Crusaders and supplied their kingdom.

Christian authors had similar interests in documenting the customs of their enemies in battle. Jean de Joinville (1224/1225–1317) was a chronicler of medieval France. During one crusade, while in the service of the king, Joinville had occasion to note the Muslims' social behavior:

Whenever the Sultan was in the camp, the men of the personal Guard were quartered all round his lodging, and appointed to guard his person. At the door of the Sultan's lodging there was a little tent for the Sultan's door-keepers, and for his musicians, who had Arabian horns and drums and kettledrums; and they used to make such a din at daybreak and at nightfall that people near them could not hear one another speak, and that they could be heard plainly all through the camp. The musicians never dared sound their instruments in the daytime unless by the order of the Chief of the Guard. Thus it was, that whenever the Sultan had a proclamation to make he used to send for the Chief of the Guard, and give him the order; and then the Chief would cause all the Sultan's instruments to be sounded; and thereupon all the host would come to hear the Sultan's commands.

Although scholars regard such literary renditions with caution, they are useful for gleaning personal details that other types of works omit. The colorful accounts by authors such as Usāmah ibn Munqidh and Joinville are invaluable resources for the social history of the Crusaders.



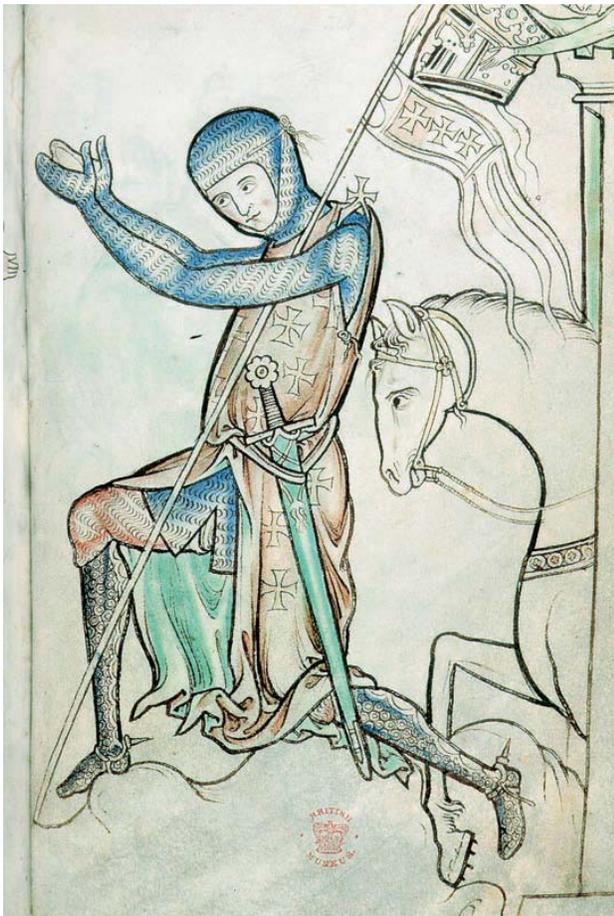
**Jean de Joinville.** Joinville dictating his Memoir of St. Louis, in which he described the Seventh Crusade.

There were five Crusades in all, spread out over two centuries. None of the coalitions, in the end, created permanent Christian kingdoms in the lands they “reconquered.” Only a small proportion of Crusaders remained in southwest Asia, and those who did met their match in Muslim armies. (See Global Connections & Disconnections: The Crusades from Dual Perspectives.) Part of the problem was that few Crusaders had any intention of becoming colonists. Only a small proportion remained to defend the Kingdom of Jerusalem after the First Crusade. Most knights returned home, their epic pilgrimage completed. The remaining fragile network of Crusader lordships could barely threaten the Islamic heartlands.

Muslim leaders, however, did not see the Frankish knights as a threat. For them, the Crusades were irrelevant. And as far as the average Muslim of the region was concerned, the Cru-

saders hardly mattered at all. Jerusalem and Palestine had always been fringe areas in the Middle East. Real prosperity and the capital cities of Muslim kingdoms lay inland, away from the coast—at Cairo, Damascus, and Baghdad. The assaults' long-term effect was to harden Muslim feelings against the Franks and the millions of non-Western Christians who had previously lived peacefully in Egypt and Syria. Muslims viewed the Crusaders as brave but uncivilized warriors. A neighboring Muslim wrote: “The Franks possess none of the virtues of men except courage. . . . Nobody counts for them except knights.” Their lack of medical knowledge shocked this observer. He noted that they would rather chop off a man's leg than administer ointments, as Muslim doctors would have advised.

Other campaigns of Christian expansion were more successful. Consider the Spanish driving the Muslims out of the



**Crusader.** Kneeling, this Crusader promises to serve God (as he would serve a feudal lord) by going to fight on a Crusade (as he would fight for any lord to whom he had sworn loyalty). The two kinds of loyalty—to God and to one's lord—were deliberately confused in Crusader ideology. Both were about war. But fighting for God was unambiguously good, while fighting for a lord was not always so clear-cut.

Iberian Peninsula. Beginning with the capture of Toledo in 1061, the Christian kings of northern Spain (who could count on support from Christian neighbors across the Pyrenees) slowly pushed back the Muslims. Eventually they reached the heart of Andalusia and conquered Seville, adding more than 100,000 square miles of territory to Christian Europe. Another force from northern France crossed Italy to conquer Muslim-held Sicily, ensuring Christian rule in the strategically located mid-Mediterranean island. These two conquests—not the Crusaders' fragile foothold at the edge of the Middle East—turned the tide in relations between Christian and Muslim power.

## THE AMERICAS

→ *Where did societies in the Americas demonstrate strong commercial expansionist impulses?*

During this period, the Americas were untouched by the connections reverberating across Afro-Eurasia. After all, navigators still could not cross the large oceans that separated the Americas from other lands. Yet, here, too, commercial and expansionist impulses fostered closer contact among peoples who lived there.

### ANDEAN STATES

Growth and prosperity in the Andean region gave rise to South America's first empire. Known as the Chimú Empire, it developed early in the second millennium in the fertile Moche Valley bordering the Pacific Ocean (see Map 10-10). Ultimately the Moche people expanded their influence across numerous valleys and ecological zones, from pastoral highlands to rich valley floodplains to the fecund fishing grounds of the Pacific Coast. As their geographical reach grew, so did their wealth. The Chimú regime lasted until Incan armies invaded in the 1460s and incorporated the Pacific state into their own immense empire.

**A THRIVING LOWLAND ECONOMY** The Chimú economy was successful because it was highly commercialized. Agriculture was its base, and complex irrigation systems turned the arid coast into a string of fertile oases capable of feeding an increasingly dispersed population. Cotton became a lucrative export to distant markets along the Andes. Parades of llamas and porters lugged these commodities up and down the steep mountain chains that are the spine of South America. As in China, a well-trained bureaucracy oversaw the construction and maintenance of canals, with a hierarchy of provincial administrators watching over commercial hinterlands.

Between 850 and 900 CE, the Moche peoples founded their biggest city, Chan Chan, with a core population of 30,000 inhabitants. A sprawling walled metropolis, covering nearly ten square miles with extensive roads circulating through neighborhoods, it boasted ten huge palaces at its center. Protected by thick walls thirty feet high, these opulent residence halls bespoke the rulers' power. Within the compound, emperors erected mortuary monuments for storing their accumulated riches: fine cloth, gold and silver objects, splendid *Spondylus* shells, and other luxury goods. Around the compound spread neighborhoods for nobles and artisans; farther out stood rows of commoners' houses.

→ *Where did societies in the Americas demonstrate strong commercial expansionist impulses?*

**AN INVENTIVE HIGHLAND STATE** The Andes also saw its first highland empires during this period. On the shores of the plateau lake Titicaca, the people of Tiahuanaco forged a high-altitude state. Though neither as large nor as wealthy as the Chimú Empire, its residents converted the inhospitable highlands into an environment where farmers and herders thrived. There is evidence of long-distance trade with neighbors in semitropical valleys, and even signs of highlanders migrating to the lowlands to produce agrarian staples for their kin in the mountains. Dried fish and cotton came from the coast; fruits and vegetables came from lowland valleys. Trade sustained an enormous urban population of up to 115,000 people. Looming over the skyline of Tiahuanaco was an imposing pyramid of massive sandstone blocks. Its advanced engineering system conveyed water to the summit, from which an imitation rainfall coursed down the carefully carved sides—an awesome spectacle of engineering prowess in such an arid region.

### CONNECTIONS TO THE NORTH

Additional hubs of regional trade developed farther north, showing once again that even in areas of relative geographic isolation, cultures could flourish and interact within expanding regional spheres. The Toltecs and the Cahokians are superb examples.



**MAP 10-10 ANDEAN STATES**

Although the Andes region of South America was isolated from Afro-Eurasian developments before 1500, it was not stagnant. Indeed, political and cultural integration brought the peoples of this region closer together. Where are the areas of the Chimú Empire and Tiahuanaco influence on the map? What kinds of ecological niches did they govern? According to your reading, how did each polity encourage greater cultural and economic integration?



**Andean States.** The image to the left shows what remains of Chan Chan. The city covered fifteen square miles and was divided into neighborhoods for nobles, artisans, and commoners, with the elites living closest to the hub of governmental and spiritual power. The buildings of Tiahuanaco (below) were made of giant, hand-hewn stones assembled without mortar. Engineers had not discovered the principle of curved arches and keystones and instead relied on massive slabs atop gateways. Gateways were important symbolic features, for they were places where people acknowledged the importance of sun and moon gods.



**THE TOLTECS IN MESOAMERICA** By 1000 CE, Mesoamerica had seen the rise and fall of several complex societies. Caravans of porters worked the intricate roads that connected the coast of the Gulf of Mexico to the Pacific, and the southern lowlands of Central America to the arid regions of modern Texas (see Map 10-11). The region's heartland was the rich valley of central Mexico. Here the Toltecs filled the political vacuum left by the decline of Teotihuacán (see Chapter 8) and tapped into the commercial network radiating from the valley.

The Toltecs were a combination of migrant groups, refugees from the south, and farmers from the north. They settled northwest of Teotihuacán as the city waned, making their capital at Tula. They relied on a maize-based economy supplemented by beans, squash, and dog, deer, and rabbit meat. Their rulers, however, made sure that enterprising merchants provided them with status goods such as ornamental pottery, rare shells and stones, and precious skins and feathers.

Tula was a commercial hub, a political capital, and a ceremonial center. While its layout differed from Teotihuacán's, many features revealed borrowings from other Mesoamerican peoples. Temples consisted of giant pyramids topped by colossal stone soldiers, and ball courts where subjects and conquered peoples alike played their ritual sport were ubiquitous. The architecture and monumental art bespoke the

mixed and migratory origins of the Toltecs: a combination of Mayan and Teotihuacáno influences. At its height, the Toltec capital teemed with 60,000 people—a huge metropolis by contemporary European standards.

**THE CAHOKIANS IN NORTH AMERICA** Cities took shape at the hubs of trading networks all across North America. The largest was **Cahokia**, along the Mississippi River near modern-day East St. Louis. A city of about 15,000, it approximated the size of London at the time. Farmers and hunters settled in the region around 600 CE, attracted by its rich soil, its woodlands for fuel and game, and its access to the trading artery of the Mississippi. Eventually, fields of maize and other crops fanned out toward the horizon. The hoe replaced the trusty digging stick, and satellite towns erected granaries to hold the increased yields.

Now Cahokia became a commercial center for regional and long-distance trade. The hinterlands produced staples for Cahokia's urban consumers, and in return its crafts rode inland on the backs of porters and to distant markets in canoes. The city's woven fabrics and ceramics were especially desirable. In exchange, traders brought mica from the Appalachian Mountains, seashells and sharks' teeth from the Gulf of Mexico, and copper from the upper Great Lakes. Indeed, Cahokia became more than an importer and exporter:

→ Where did societies in the Americas demonstrate strong commercial expansionist impulses?



**MAP 10-11** COMMERCIAL HUBS IN MESOAMERICA AND NORTH AMERICA, 1000

Both Cahokia and Tula were commercial hubs of vibrant regional trade networks. Where are Cahokia and Tula on the map? According to the map, what kinds of goods circulated through these cities? How much political influence on the surrounding region do you think each city had?

it was the entrepôt for an entire regional network trafficking in salt, tools, pottery, woven stuffs, jewelry, and ceremonial goods.

Dominating Cahokia's urban landscape were enormous mounds (thus the nickname "mound people"). These earthen monuments reveal a sophisticated design and careful maintenance: for example, their builders applied layers of sand and clay to prevent the foundations from drying and cracking. It was from these artificial hills that the people paid homage to spiritual forces. Of course, building this kind of infra-

structure without draft animals, hydraulic tools, or even wheels was labor-intensive, so the Cahokians recruited neighboring people to help. A palisade around the city protected the metropolis from marauders.

Ultimately the city outgrew its environment, and its success bred its downfall. As woodlands fell to the axe and arable soil lost nutrients, timber and food became scarce. Because the city lacked a means of transportation to ship bulky items over long distances (in contrast to the sturdy dhows of the Arabian Sea and the bulky junks of the China Sea), its river



**Toltec Temple.** Tula, the capital of the Toltec Empire, carried on the Mesoamerican tradition of locating ceremonial architecture at the center of the city. The Pyramid of the Morning Star cast its shadow over all other buildings. And above them stood columns of the Atlantes, carved Toltec god-warriors, the figurative pillars of the empire itself. The walls of this pyramid were likely embellished with images of snakes and skulls. The north face of the pyramid has the image of a snake devouring a human.

canoes could carry only limited cargoes. Thus Cahokia's commercial networks met their limits. When the creeks that fed its water system could not keep up with demand, engineers changed their course, but to no avail. By 1350 the city

was practically empty. Nevertheless, Cahokia was a remarkable entrepôt while it lasted. It represented the growing networks of trade and migration, and the ability of North Americans to organize vibrant commercial societies.



**Cahokia Mounds.** This is all that is left of what was once a large city organized around temple mounds in what today is Illinois. The largest of the temples, known as Monks' Mound, was likely a burial site, with four separate terraces for crowds to gather. Centuries of neglect and erosion have taken their toll on what was once the largest human-made earthen mound in North America.

→ *How did Mongol conquests affect cross-cultural contacts and regional development in Afro-Eurasia?*

## THE MONGOL TRANSFORMATION OF AFRO-EURASIA

→ *How did Mongol conquests affect cross-cultural contacts and regional development in Afro-Eurasia?*

The world's sea-lanes grew crowded with ships; ports buzzed with activity. Commercial networks were clearly one way to integrate the world. But just as long-distance trade connected people, so could conquerors—as we have seen throughout the history of the world. Now, transformative conquerors came from the Inner Eurasian steppes, the same place that centuries earlier had unleashed horse-riding warriors such as the Xiongnu (see Chapters 6 and 7).

Like the Xiongnu and the Kushans before them, the Mongols not only conquered but intensified trade and cultural exchange. By consolidating a latticework of states across northern and central Asia, they created an empire that straddled east and west (see Map 10-12). It was unstable and not as durable as other dynasties. It did not even have a shared faith; the mother of the conquering emperors, Hulagu and Kubilai Khan, was a devout Christian, reflecting Nestorian missionaries' centuries-long efforts to convert the animistic nomads. Many Europeans prayed that the entire empire would convert. But it did not; the Mongols were a religious patchwork of Afro-Eurasian belief

systems. Yet they brought far-flung parts of the world together as they conquered territories much larger than their own.

### WHO WERE THE MONGOLS?

The **Mongols** were a combination of forest and prairie peoples. Residing in circular, felt-covered tents, which they shared with some of their animals, they lived by hunting and livestock herding. They changed campgrounds with the seasons. Life on the steppes was such a constant struggle that only the strong survived. Their food, primarily animal products, provided high levels of protein, which built up their muscle mass and their strength. Always on the march, their society resembled a perpetual standing army with bands of well-disciplined military units led by commanders chosen for their skill.

**MILITARY SKILLS** Mongol archers were uniquely skilled. Wielding heavy compound bows made of sinew, wood, and horns, they were deadly accurate at over 200 yards—even at full gallop. Their small but sturdy horses, capable of withstanding extreme cold, bore saddles with high supports in front and back, enabling the warriors to maneuver at high speeds. With their feet secure in iron stirrups, the archers could rise in their saddles to aim their arrows without stopping. These expert horsemen often remained in the saddle all day and night, even sleeping while their horses continued on. Each warrior kept many horses, replacing tired mounts with fresh ones so that the armies could cover up to seventy miles per day.



**Mongol Warriors.** This miniature painting is one of the illustrations for *History* by Rashid al-Din, the most outstanding scholar under the Mongol regimes. Note the relatively small horses and strong bows used by the Mongol soldiers.



**MAP 10-12** MONGOL CAMPAIGNS AND CONQUESTS, 1200–1300

Mongol campaigns and conquests brought Afro-Eurasian worlds together as never before. Trace the outline of the entire area of Mongol influence shaded on this map. What cultural groups did the Mongol armies conquer, partially conquer, or invade? How many different Khanates did the Mongols establish across Eurasia, and what were they? What role did geography play in limiting the spread of their influence?

→ How did Mongol conquests affect cross-cultural contacts and regional development in Afro-Eurasia?



# Global Connections & Disconnections

## THE TRAVELS OF MARCO POLO AND IBN BATTUTA

The most famous of the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century travelers were Marco Polo and Ibn Battuta. They encountered a world linked by trade routes that often had as their ultimate destination the imperial court of the Great Khan in China. These two men, and less celebrated travelers, observed worlds that were highly localized and yet culturally unified.

In 1271, Marco Polo (1254–1324), the son of an enterprising Venetian merchant, set out with his father and uncle on a journey to East Asia. Making their way along the fabled Silk Road across central Asia, the Polos arrived in Xanadu, the summer capital of the Mongol Empire, after a three-and-a-half-year journey. There they remained for more than two decades. When they returned



**Marco Polo.** This medieval painting shows the caravan of Marco Polo's father and uncle crossing Asia.

**KINSHIP NETWORKS AND SOCIAL ROLES** Mongol tribes solidified their conquests by extending kinship networks, thus building an empire out of an expanding confederation of familial tribes. The tents (households) were interrelated mostly by marriage: they were alliances sealed by the exchange of daughters. Conquering men married conquered women, and conquered men were selected to marry the conquerors' women. Chinggis Khan may have had more than 500 wives, most of them daughters of tribes that he conquered or that allied with him.

Women in Mongol society were responsible for child-rearing, shearing and milking livestock, and processing pelts for clothing. But they also took part in battles. Kubilai Khan's niece Khutulun became famous for besting men in wrestling matches and claiming their horses as spoils. Although women were often bought and sold, Mongol wives had the right to

own property and to divorce. Elite women even played important political roles. Consider Sorghaghtani Beki, Kubilai Khan's mother, who helped to engineer her sons' rule. Illiterate herself, she made sure that each son acquired a second language to aid in administering conquered lands. She gathered Confucian scholars to prepare Kubilai Khan to rule China. Chabi, Kubilai's senior wife, followed a similar pattern, offering patronage to Tibetan monks who set about converting the Mongol elite in China to Tibetan Buddhism.

## CONQUEST AND EMPIRE

The nomads' need for grazing lands contributed to their desire to conquer the splendors of distant fertile belts and rich cities. Then, as they acquired new lands, they increasingly craved



**Ibn Battuta.** During his journey, Ibn Battuta traveled throughout Africa. In this woodcut, he is depicted in Morocco.

to Venice in 1295, fellow townsmen greeted them with astonishment, believing that the Polos had perished years before. So, too, Marco Polo's published account of his travels generated an incredulous reaction. Some of his European readers considered his tales of eastern wonders to be mere fantasy, yet others found their appetites for Asian splendor whetted by his descriptions.

A half-century after Polo began his travels, the Moroccan-born scholar Muhammad ibn Abdullah ibn Battuta (1304–1369) embarked on a journey of his own. Then just twenty-one, he vowed to visit the whole of the Islamic world without traveling the same road twice. It was an ambitious goal, for Islam's domain extended from one end of the Eurasian landmass to the other and far into Africa as well. On his journey, Ibn Battuta eventually covered some 75,000 miles. Along his way, he claimed to have met at least sixty rulers, and in his book he recorded the names of more than 2,000 persons whom he knew personally.

The writings of Marco Polo and Ibn Battuta provide a wealth of information on the well-traversed lands of Africa, Europe, and Asia. What they and other travelers observed was the extreme diversity of Afro-Eurasian peoples, reflecting numerous ethnicities, political formations, and religious faiths. In addition, they observed that the vast majority of people lived deeply localized lives, primarily seeking to obtain the basic necessities of everyday life. Yet, they were also aware the same societies welcomed trade and cultural exchange. In fact, they wrote most eloquently about how each of the four major cultural systems of the landmass—Christian, Muslim, Indian, and Chinese—struggled to define itself. Interestingly, if Ibn Battuta and Marco Polo had been able to travel in the “unknown” worlds—the African hinterlands, the Americas, and Oceania—they would have witnessed to varying degrees similar phenomena and challenges.

control of richer agricultural and urban areas nearby to increase their wealth and power through tribute. Trade disputes also likely spurred their expeditions. The Mongols depended on settled peoples for grain and manufactured goods (including iron for tools, wagons, weapons, bridles, and stirrups), and their first expansionist forays followed caravan routes.

The expansionist thrust began in 1206 under a united cluster of tribes. A gathering of clan heads acclaimed one of those present as Chinggis (Genghis) Khan, or Supreme Ruler. Chinggis (c. 1155–1227) subsequently launched a series of conquests southward across the Great Wall of China, and westward to Afghanistan and Persia. The Mongols also invaded Korea in 1231. The armies of Chinggis's son reached both the Pacific Ocean and the Adriatic Sea. His grandsons founded dynasties in China, in Persia, and on the southern Eurasian steppes. One of them, Kubilai Khan, enlisted thou-

sands of Koryo men and ships for (ill-fated) invasions of Japan. Thus, a realm took shape that touched all four of Afro-Eurasia's main worlds.

Mongol raiders ultimately built a permanent empire by incorporating conquered peoples and some of their ways. Their feat of unification was far more surprising and sudden than the ties developed incrementally by traders and travelers on ships. Now, Afro-Eurasian regions were connected by land and by sea, in historically unparalleled ways.

## MONGOLS IN CHINA

Mongol forces under Chinggis Khan entered northern China at the beginning of the thirteenth century, defeating the Jin army that was no match for the Mongols' superior

cavalry on the North China plain. But below the Yangzi River, where the climate and weather changed, the Mongol horsemen fell ill from diseases such as malaria, and their horses perished from the heat. To conquer the semitropical south, the Mongols took to boats and fought along rivers and canals. **Kublai Khan** (1215–1294) seized the grandest prize of all—southern China—after 1260. His cavalries penetrated the higher plateaus of southwest China and then attacked South China’s economic heartland from the west. The Southern Song army fell before his warriors brandishing the latest gunpowder-based weapons (which the Mongols had borrowed from Chinese inventors only to be used against them).

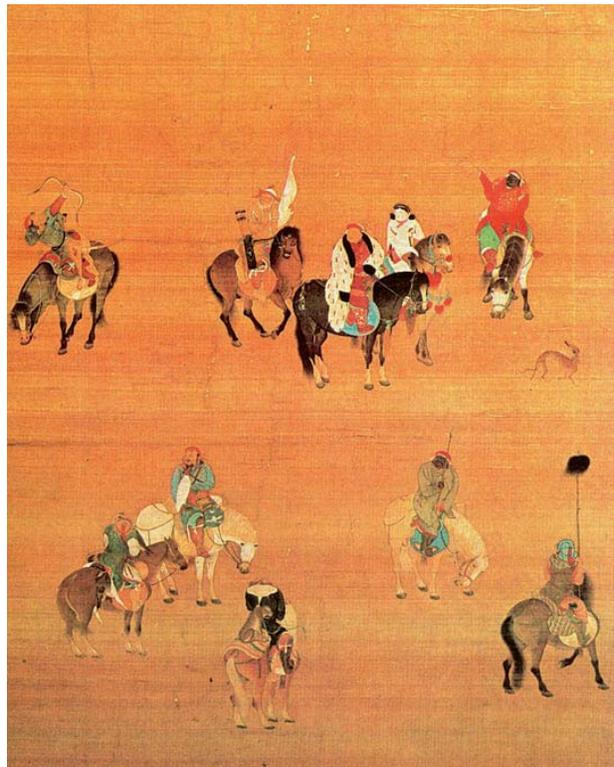
**THE FALL OF HANGZHOU** Hangzhou, the last Song capital, succumbed in 1276. Rather than see the invaders pillage the city and their emperors’ tombs, the Southern Song bowed to the inevitable. Kubilai Khan’s most able commander, Bayan, led his crack Mongol forces in seizing town after town, ever closer to the capital. The Empress Dowager tried to buy them off, proposing substantial tribute payments, but Bayan had his eye on the prize: Hangzhou, which fell under Mongol control but survived reasonably intact. Bayan escorted the emperor and the Empress Dowager to Beijing, where Kubilai treated them with honor. Within three years, Song China’s defeat was complete. With all of South China in their grip, the Mongols established the Yuan dynasty with a new capital at Dadu (“Great Capital,” present-day Beijing).

Although it fell to Mongol control, Hangzhou survived reasonably intact. It was still one of the greatest cities in the world when the Venetian traveler Marco Polo visited in the 1280s and the Muslim traveler Ibn Battuta in the 1340s. Both men agreed that neither Europe nor the Islamic world had anything like it. (See Global Connections & Disconnections: The Travels of Marco Polo and Ibn Battuta.)

**OUTSIDERS TAKE CONTROL** The Mongol conquest both north and south changed the political and social landscape. However, Mongol rule did not impose rough steppeland ways on the “civilized” urbanite Chinese. Outsiders, non-Chinese, took political control. They themselves were a heterogeneous group of Mongols, Tanguts, Khitan, Jurchen, Muslims, Tibetans, Persians, Turks, Nestorians, Jews, Armenians—a conquering elite that ruled over a vast Han majority. The result was a segmented ruling system in which incumbent Chinese elites governed locally, while newcomers managed the central dynastic polity and collected taxes for the Mongols.

### MONGOL REVERBERATIONS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Southeast Asia also felt the whiplash of conquest. Circling Song defenses in southern China, the Mongols galloped southwest and conquered states in Yunnan and in Burma. From there, in the 1270s, the armies headed directly back east into



**Mongols on Horseback.** Even after the Mongols became the rulers of China, the emperors remembered their steppe origin and maintained the skills of horse-riding nomads. This detail from a thirteenth/fourteenth-century silk painting shows Kubilai Khan hunting.

the soft underbelly of the Song state. In this sweep, portions of mainland Southeast Asia became annexed to China for the first time. Even the distant Khmer regime felt repercussions when the Mongol fleet (which grew out of the conquered Song navy) passed by on its way to attack Java—unsuccessfully—in 1293. Kubilai Khan used the conquered Chinese fleets to push his expansionism onto the high seas—with little success during the unsuccessful 1274 and 1281 invasions of Japan from Korea. The ill-fated Javanese expedition was his last.

### THE FALL OF BAGHDAD

In the thirteenth century, Mongol tribesmen streamed out of the steppes, crossing the whole of Asia and entering the eastern parts of Europe. Mongke Khan, a grandson of Chinggis, made clear the Mongol aspiration for world domination: he appointed his brother Kubilai to rule over China, Tibet, and the northern parts of India; and he commanded another brother, Hulagu, to conquer Iran, Syria, Egypt, Byzantium, and Armenia.

When Hulagu reached Baghdad in 1258, he encountered a feeble foe and a city that was a shadow of its former glorious self. Merely 10,000 horsemen faced his army of 200,000 soldiers, who were eager to acquire the booty of a wealthy city. Even before the battle had taken place, Baghdadi poets were composing elegies for their dead and mourning the defeat of Islam.

The slaughter was vast. Hulagu himself boasted of taking the lives of at least 200,000 people. The Mongols pursued their adversaries everywhere. They hunted them in wells, latrines, and sewers and followed them into the upper floors of buildings, killing them on rooftops until, as an Iraqi Arab historian observed, “blood poured from the gutters into the streets. . . . The same happened in the mosques” (Lewis, pp. 82–83). In a few weeks of sheer terror, the venerable Abbasid caliphate was demolished. Hulagu’s forces showed no mercy to the caliph himself, who was rolled up in a carpet and trampled to death by horses, his blood soaked up by the rug so it would leave no mark on the ground. With Baghdad crushed, the Mongol armies pushed on to Syria, slaughtering Muslims along the way.

In the end, the Egyptian Mamluks stemmed the advancing Mongol armies and prevented Egypt from falling into their hands. The Mongol Empire had reached its outer limits. Better at conquering than governing, the Mongols struggled to rule their vast possessions in makeshift states. Bit by bit, they ceded control to local administrators and dynasts who governed as their surrogates. There was also chronic feuding among the Mongol dynasts themselves. In China and in Persia, Mongol rule collapsed in the fourteenth century.

Mongol conquest reshaped Afro-Eurasia’s social landscape. Islam would never again have a unifying authority like the caliphate or a powerful center like Baghdad. China, too, was divided and changed, but in other ways. The Mongols introduced Persian, Islamic, and Byzantine influences on China’s architecture, art, science, and medicine. The Yuan policy of benign tolerance also brought elements from Christianity, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, and Islam into the Chinese mix. The Mongol thrust thus led to a great opening, as fine goods, traders, and technology flowed from China to the rest of the world in ensuing centuries. Finally, the Mongol state promoted an Afro-Eurasian interconnectedness that this huge landmass had not known before and would not experience again for hundreds of years. Out of conquest and warfare would come centuries of trade, migration, and increasing contacts among Africa, Europe, and Asia.

## CONCLUSION

Between 1000 and 1300, Afro-Eurasia was forming large cultural spheres. As trade and migration spanned longer distances, these spheres prospered and became more inte-

grated. In central Afro-Eurasia, Islam was firmly established, its merchants, scholars, and travelers acting as commercial and cultural intermediaries joining the landmass together, as they spread their universalizing faith. As seaborne trade expanded, India, too, became a commercial crossroads. Merchants in its port cities welcomed traders arriving from Arab lands to the west, from China, and from Southeast Asia. China also boomed, pouring its manufactures into trading networks that reached throughout Afro-Eurasia and even into Africa. Christian Europe had two centers, both of which were at war with Islam. In the east, Byzantium was a formidable empire with a resplendent and unconquerable capital city, Constantinople, in many ways the pride of Christianity. In the west, the Catholic papacy had risen from the ashes of the Roman Empire and sought to extend its ecclesiastical authority over Rome’s territories in western Europe.

Trade helped outline the parts of the world. The prosperity it brought also supported new classes of people—thinkers, writers, and naturalists—who clarified what it meant to belong to the regions of Afro-Eurasia. By 1300, learned priests and writers had begun to reimagine these regions as more than just territories: they were maturing into cultures with definable—and defensible—geographic boundaries. Increasingly these intellectuals delivered their messages to commoners as well as to rulers.

Neither the Americas nor sub-Saharan Africa saw the same degree of integration, but trade and migration in these areas did have profound effects. Certain African cultures flourished as they encountered the commercial energy of trade on the Indian Ocean. Indeed, Africans’ trade with one another linked coastal and interior regions in an ever more integrated world. American peoples also built cities that dominated cultural areas and thrived through trade. American cultures shared significant features: reliance on trade, maize, and the exchange of goods such as shells and precious feathers. And larger areas honored the same spiritual centers.

By 1300, trade, migration, and conflict were connecting Afro-Eurasian worlds in unprecedented ways. When Mongol armies swept into China, into Southeast Asia, and into the heart of Islam, they applied a thin, surface-like coating of political integration to these widespread regions and built on existing trade links. At the same time, most people’s lives remained quite local, driven by the need for subsistence and governed by spiritual and governmental representatives acting at the behest of distant authorities. Still, locals noticed the evidence of cross-cultural exchanges everywhere—in the clothing styles of provincial elites, such as Chinese silks in Paris or Quetzal plumes in northern Mexico; in enticements to move (and forced removals) to new frontiers; in the news of faraway conquests or advancing armies. Worlds were coming together within themselves and across territorial boundaries, while remaining apart as they sought to maintain their own identity and traditions. In Afro-Eurasia especially, as the

movement of goods and peoples shifted from ancient land routes to sea-lanes, these contacts were more frequent and far-reaching. Never before had the world seen so much activity connecting its parts. Nor within them had there been so much shared cultural similarity—linguistic, religious, legal, and military. Indeed, by the time the Mongol Empire arose, the regions composing the globe were those that we now recognize as the cultural spheres of today’s world. These were truly worlds together and worlds apart.

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## KEY TERMS

Angkor Wat (p. 389)	<i>karim</i> (p. 365)
Cahokia (p. 398)	Kubilai Khan (p. 405)
Crusades (p. 394)	Mongols (p. 401)
Delhi Sultanate (p. 380)	piety (p. 373)
dhows (p. 364)	rajās (p. 379)
entrepôts (p. 365)	Sufism (p. 374)
feudalism (p. 389)	sultans (p. 379)

## Chronology

	700 CE	800 CE	900 CE	1000 CE
SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA		Mandinka merchants establish vast commercial networks linking West Africa ♦		
THE AMERICAS		c. 1000 Cahokia flourishes as a commercial hub in Mississippi River valley ♦ c. 900 Moche people found Chan Chan ♦ c. 900–1100 Toltec Empire in Mexico Valley ♦		1000–1460 Chimú Empire ♦
THE ISLAMIC WORLD				
SOUTH ASIA			Turkish invasions from Central Asia begin ♦	
EAST ASIA	794–1185 Heian period in Japan ♦		Song dynasty founded 960 ♦ 918–1392 Koryo dynasty rules ♦	Gunpowder invented ♦
SOUTHEAST ASIA		899–1431 Khmer kingdom ♦		
CHRISTIAN EUROPE				

