HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
Peter N. Stearns, Ph.D.

GLOBALIZATION – The Post-Classical Period, 600-1450

A New Network of Contacts

In the wake of the fall of the great classical empires, merchants and missionaries began to reach out in new directions. They utilized some of the contact routes that had been established in the classical period, particularly in the Indian Ocean, while embellishing them as well. Overland travel became more difficult for a time, thanks to greater political instability in Eurasia, which helped focus attention on seagoing opportunities. At the same time new regions began to connect, from Africa, northern Europe, and additional parts of Asia.

For several centuries, Arab and associated Middle Eastern traders dominated the expanded patterns of transregional trade. Missionary and merchant motives often combined, as Islam began its rapid expansion. The Middle East had long been a trade center, of course, but Islam's encouragement to merchant activity (under appropriate ethical guidelines) may have provided an additional spur. Arabic itself, or at least smatterings of the language, became the first-ever widespread trading language, a crucial component in the period. Ultimately, other Muslim merchants, from India and Southeast Asia, would join and compete with Arabs in the expansion of trade.

Transregional trade still highlighted luxury goods, but there is no question that wider arrays of consumer tastes were now involved, particularly in the enthusiasm for access to new spices and fabrics. Trade volume and wider regional engagement also brought more corollaries than had been true of the classical period. It became easier for one region to imitate another, particularly in the cultural arena. More ideas and styles were exchanged, along with goods themselves; and there was simply more long distance travel.

One historian, David Northrup, has argued that, on the strength of the new contact network, a watershed in world history was reached around 1000 CE. Before this, he contends, world history is mainly the story of separate regions and civilizations – as was probably true, for example, with the great classical empires that mainly focused on building their own institutions and ideas. After 1000, though gradually, world history becomes a story of increasing integration, a story of the results of contacts, mutual influences, and shared processes. If this is true – and it is certainly worth testing – then the postclassical period plays a special role in the history of globalization, for its achievements would set in motion a straight march toward still more elaborate patterns of contact.

And of course the contacts kept building. Toward the end of the postclassical period, for a century and a half, a new, interlocking series of Mongol empires unquestionably accelerated exchanges even further, particularly between Europe and Asia. And this would build, quite directly, to the next acceleration of transregional exchange.

Basic Treatments (pick at least one):

Globalization in World History by Peter N. Stearns (Routledge 2010). Pages 29-56.

The Three Waves of Globalization by Robbie Robertson (Zed Books 2003). Pages 61-74.

Globalization: A Short History by Jurgen Osterhammel and Niels P. Petersson (Princeton 2005). Pages 31-45.

"Globalization and the Great Convergence: Rethinking World History in the Long Term." By David Northrup. From *Journal of World History*, Volume 16, Number 3 (September 2005) http://www.jstor.org/stable/20079329

Trade and Technology as Forces for Change

Arab Shipping Improvements in Arab shipping, though not necessarily revolutionary, created new opportunities for use of the Indian Ocean, including greater capacities to carry bulk goods. Arabs benefited from Persian experience, as they took over this region. Arabs themselves introduced new devices to calculate the position of a ship in relation to a fixed star, particularly a simple instrument called the *Kamal*. They improved on the astrolabe, which they learned about by translating Greek documents, which improved measurement of stars, mountains or even large human structures. Most important was the Arab development of a triangular, or lateen, sail, which greatly improved ships' maneuverability, and proved especially useful in trade along with east African coast.

Other Improvements China introduced additional improvements, which fairly quickly spread to Indian Ocean trade. Particularly crucial was the compass, which became a standard navigational device during the post-classical centuries. The Chinese also improved the use of rudders for steering. Toward the end of the period the Chinese themselves began to build boats of unprecedented size, using new methods of caulking to prevent leaks. These gains, however, did not have wide impact beyond a series of Chinese expeditions in the early 15th century. This exception aside, the other key point about new shipping and navigational technologies was their rapid spread, to Southeast Asia and Europe as well as the Arab world. Indonesians and Europeans both, for example, not only learned about the compass but introduced additional refinements by the end of the period.

New and Expanded Trade Routes As suggested, the Indian Ocean became the center of transregional trade. Shipping moved west-east, from the Middle East to India, Southeast Asia, and the Chinese coast; clusters of Arab merchants located in Chinese port cities, for example. Another key route extended from the Middle East down the African coast, as far as present-day Tanzania. Arabs and Africans mingled in the port cities, building a new trading language called Swahili. The Mediterranean was an active hub, with goods transshipped from or to the Indian Ocean. But still other routes now added in. Japan began regular exchanges with Korea and China. Scandinavian merchants built a route overland (with the use of some rivers), from the north down through Kievan Rus (present-day Ukraine) to Constantinople; there, they exchanged with the Byzantines but also with Arab traders. African and Arab merchants reached across the Sahara in West Africa, using camels and horses – another key addition to the network. Finally, Western European merchants reached from the north – the Low Countries, northern France and Britain – to the Mediterranean, linking up with major arteries in the process. Never before had such a complex set of regional relationships been possible.

Trade and Taste Along with new routes came, of course, a wider array of goods. From western Russia came honey, furs, amber and craft products, exchanged for textiles, glass, fine metals and spices. Central Asia contributed meats, leather goods, rugs, and various soaps. Japan sent timber, mercury and other minerals in its trade with China. Africa contributed gold, salt and slaves (Western Europe was another key source of slaves in the period). China and India, of course, traded in manufactured goods. Not only Chinese silks and now ceramics but also Indian printed cotton cloth and glassware became highly prized, from Japan to Western Europe. Trade unquestionably stimulated new tastes. Arabs learned of sugar through their conquests in Persia (Persians had earlier learned from India), and quickly set up their own plantations. Europeans encountered sugar a bit later, in parts thanks to the crusades, but developed a great fondness for what was at that point a very expensive delicacy; European efforts to expand their role in trade were based in no small measure in a desire to gain greater access to affordable sugar, which could not be grown in Europe itself.

The Rich Ships Recent discoveries of ships that sank in the period measure the nature and importance of trade. One Indian or Arab ship, the *Belitung*, was found near Indonesia in 1998. It has a lot of Chinese porcelain and some coins, anise, but also Middle Eastern mirrors and other glassware, intended perhaps as gifts for rulers and merchants, plus some cast-iron utensils. The ship had loaded in China and was bound for the Middle East. Another ship, the *Cirebon*, had loaded in south China and had over 200,000 items, including religious figurines as well as all sorts of ceramic objects, colored glassware inscribed in Arabic, and jewelry including ornate daggers. Personal items on the boat suggest a crew that had Hindus, Buddhists and Muslims from various regions in the Indian Ocean region. Participation in

growing transregional trade clearly involved a new mix of people, as well as products.

Sources

1. "The Lateen Sail in World History." By I. C. Campbell. From the *Journal of World History*. Volume 6, Number 1 (Spring, 1995).
   Invention of lateen by Arabs and its importance to trade. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20078617

2. "Local and International Trade and Traders in the Straits of Melaka Region: 600-1500." By Kenneth R. Hall. From the *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*. Volume 47, Number 2 (2004)
   Study of regional trade and the influences both locally and globally impacting it.
   http://www.jstor.org/stable/25165035

3. "A Ninth-Century AD Arab or Indian Shipwreck in Indonesia: First Evidence for Direct Trade with China." By Michael Flecker. From *World Archaeology*. Volume 32, Number 3 (February 2001).
   http://www.jstor.org/stable/827926

4. "The Economic Meaning of the Invention of the Compass." By Frederic C. Lane. From the *American Historical Review.* Volume 68, Number 3 (April 1963)
   Importance of the compass in facilitating trade, expeditions, and economic growth.
   http://www.jstor.org/stable/1847032

Primary Source:

Ibn Fadlan and The Rusiyyah. Arab traveler's account of Viking/Norsemen with introduction by translator.
http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&ved=0CDcQFjAB&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.library.cornell.edu%2Fcolldev%2Fmideast%2Fmontgo1.pdf&ei=MfB_UqSdKNWq4AObjoGICw&usg=AFQjCNFh-D2dnMza-BL3-xuwlMd2atGV6Q&sig2=Xen-Lq8LeW91LqUz5UEOgg

Suggested Reading:

Before European Hegemony – The World System A.D. 1250-1350 By Janet L. Abu-Lughod (Oxford, 1991)

Questions

1. How did the dissemination of the compass both illustrate and further the acceleration of transregional contacts?

2. Discuss the position of China and Southeast Asia in post-classical transregional trade.

3. How did Arab merchants gain a new role in transregional trade after 600 CE?

4. How did new contacts shape the mutual impressions of distant peoples, in the period 600-1450?

5. Were changes in transportation technology sufficiently great to position the postclassical period as a major turning point toward globalization?

The Great Travelers

The Pattern Significant travels had occurred earlier in world history, and of course some undoubtedly went completely unrecorded. Herodotus, the Greek historian, visited several adjacent societies and speculated (often wildly) about still others. A few Phoenicians may have traveled widely; one, conceivably, went around Africa though we have no definite knowledge. Chinese emissaries went to central Asia, and at the end of the classical period a number of Chinese pilgrims visited India and Southeast Asia. But all of this was scattered and, except for connections to next-door regions, fairly limited in significance. Not so the travel that developed in the postclassical period. Better shipping, more trade and more missionary outreach all facilitated and encouraged longer trips. Again, some journeys were still unrecorded, but a growing number of travelers not only showed new venturesomeness, but also proved eager to talk about (and sometimes to exaggerate) their exploits. The result was a growing body of travel literature, and on the whole more reliable travel literature that provided greater knowledge of distant regions and could stimulate still further outreach. It was still true that only a handful of people were involved, but their numbers and their impact were both on the rise.

Maps More regular trade, along new as well as old routes, supported better mapmaking, which in turn encouraged further travel. Arab mapmakers were the most accurate in the world to date. Africa along with additional parts of Asia and Europe were rendered with growing precision. Ships' pilots began to keep meticulous logs on their trade routes, carefully noting for example safe passages in the intricate islands of present-day Indonesia.

Distances Whereas more trade in the classical period had been in relatively short hops, along the Silk Roads or other routes, merchants in this new period became more venturesome. Again, better shipping and navigation helped. So, perhaps, did growing beliefs in a single divine system – for instance, the world under Allah – that made remote places seem less forbidding, because they fell under a single God. By the 9th century Middle-Eastern merchants began covering the whole 6000-mile trip to south China fairly routinely – a six-month commitment every time. A Persian book early in the 10th century, *The Account of China and India*, put these experiences in written form. Other travel literature began to appear on India alone. Religion also increasingly encouraged long-distance travel. Buddhist pilgrims continued to come from China and now Japan to holy sites in India and Southeast Asia. Christians sometimes went to Jerusalem, as well as to holy places nearer home. Islam, and the obligation of the *hadj* or pilgrimage to Mecca, promoted particularly long trips as the religion spread, with women involved as well as men.

Ibn Battuta The world's greatest traveler was almost certainly Ibn Battuta, during the 15th century. Battuta, a lawyer from Morocco, began his adventures with a fairly routine pilgrimage to Mecca. Like many others he took advantage of the opportunity to travel around other parts of the Middle East. He later went back to Mecca, but also traveled more widely, taking jobs with Muslim governments in India and in the Maldive islands. He also visited the east African coast, and at one point went deep into central Asia, heading up the Volga River into Mongol-dominated Russia, then doubling back to the Byzantine Empire. He visited China. This was his only prolonged experience outside the Islamic world, and while he admired Chinese achievements he never felt comfortable there (except when he met some fellow Muslim merchants – "when I saw Muslims in China, I felt as though I was seeing my own kith and kin"). He doubled back via Indonesia, before launching a final trip to Mali in West Africa – where he provided some of the best information we have about the region in that period. Overall, Battuta would travel over 75,000 miles, on foot, donkey and by boat, and his memoirs added to the rich store of Arab travel literature that helped supply increasingly global knowledge.

Christian Travelers During the century before Ibn Battuta, as Mongols gained control over vast stretches of Asia, a growing number of Christian travelers ventured into China. Some were churchmen, hoping to encourage conversions. Far more were merchants and adventurers. A few got jobs in China, including a handful of entertainers. The most famous of the lot, of course, was a Venetian, Marco Polo, whose uncles had also visited China earlier. Marco Polo spent some time in Persia, and then undertook the long trip into China (which gave him enough time to learn some Mongolian), reaching western China in 1273. Though carefully describing the non-Christian Chinese as Idolaters, he admired the splendid cities he saw and the effective administration the Mongols were developing. Polo's later account was

widely read in Europe, encouraging further taste for contacts with China and a spirit of adventure more generally. Polo's book was one of the few volumes Christopher Columbus would take on his expedition two centuries later.

Disease People were not the only creatures to take advantage of the new contact patterns. Early in the 15th century bubonic plague developed in the deserts of western China. Thanks to the regular exchanges now current, the disease quickly reached Chinese ports on the Pacific and from there to the Middle East, toward the middle of the century, where it would kill up over a quarter of the population. Another decade saw the plague reach Italy, and then spread northward in Europe with similarly catastrophic effects. Contagious disease was no novelty in world history, but the "Black Death", as it came to be called, was unusually swift and deadly, a clear downside of the new ease of contact in Asia and Europe.

Sources

1. "Silks and Religions in Eurasia, C. A.D. 600-1200." By Liu Xinru. From the *Journal of World History*. Volume 6, Number 1 (Spring 1995). http://www.jstor.org/stable/20078618

2. "Religious Syncretism in the Shilla Period: The Relationship between Esoteric Buddhism and Korean Primeval Religion." By James Huntley Grayson. From *Asian Folklore Studies*. Volume 43, Number 2 (1984)
   Traces the influence of Buddhism in Post-classical Period up to official recognition.
   http://www.jstor.org/stable/1178008

3. "Ibn Baṭṭūṭa and the Mongols." By D. O. Morgan. From the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*. Volume 11, Number 1 (April 2001).
   http://www.jstor.org/stable/25188080

   "Ibn Battuta on Muslims and Christians in the Crimean Peninsula." By Harry Norris. From *Iran & the Caucasus*. Volume 8, Number 1 (2004) http://www.jstor.org/stable/4030887

4. "The Contribution of Muslim Geographers to the Development of the Subject." By Ahmad Pourahmad and Simin Tavallai. From *Geography*. Volume 89, Number 2 (April 2004)
   Short article on Muslim contribution to travel technology and geography in postclassical.
   http://www.jstor.org/stable/40573958

5. "The Travel Records of Chinese Pilgrims Faxian, Xuanzang, and Yijing: Sources for Cross-Cultural Encounters Between Ancient China and Ancient India." By Tansen Sen. From *Education about Asia.*
   http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=4&cad=rja&ved=0CE8QFjAD&url=http%3A%2F%2Fafe.easia.columbia.edu%2Fspecial%2Ftravel_records.pdf&ei=qVSAUsj3DOjB4APjqYGgBQ&usg=AFQjCNGd7A3El7VVJIdTJM_Z2Bz8jEc-bw&sig2=C0-WMTP5F2AiLwVu3CIeWg

6. "Chōnen's Pilgrimage to China, 983—986." By Wang Zhenping. From *Asia Major*. Volume 7, Number 2 (1994).
   http://www.jstor.org/stable/41645508

Primary Source:

Background on Marco Polo: http://www.silk-road.com/artl/marcopolo.shtml

Marco Polo in China. 13th century account of Polo's observations in China.
http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/mongols/pop/menu/class_marco.htm#travels

“A Chinese Source Bearing on Marco Polo's Departure From China and a Persian Source on His Arrival in Persia.” By Francis Woodman Cleaves. From the *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*. Volume 36 (1976) http://www.jstor.org/stable/2718743

Suggested Reading:

The Adventures of Ibn Battuta: A Muslim Traveler of the Fourteenth Century by Ross E. Dunn (University of California Press, 1989).

Plagues and Peoples by William McNeill (New York: Anchor Books, 1977).

Questions

1. How did religion and trade combine in encouraging new patterns of travel and contact during the postclassical centuries?

2. What impression did Marco Polo have, and convey, about China?

3. Discuss the role of Buddhism in trade and travel in the late classical, early postclassical centuries.

4. What were the motives of the leading travelers in the postclassical period? Why did travel begin to accelerate?

5. Did the travelers and their accounts have a significant impact during the after the postclassical period, or are they more an interesting sideshow?

The Impact of Contact: Beyond Trade

A Key Change Trade contacts before the postclassical period had normally involved little additional baggage – at least as far as we know. Alexander the Great's conquests in present-day Pakistan brought some interest interactions between Greeks and Indians, affecting art and possibly science in the region, for a fairly short period of time. Trade between India and China helped broker Chinese awareness of Buddhism, but this was already toward the end of the classical period. After 600, trade often involved more. It frequently intertwined with missionary efforts, again particularly in Islam. It contributed to technology diffusion, as we have already seen in cases like the compass. It furthered the transmission of cultural apparatus, as in the famous case of "Arabic" numerals. And on a regional basis, it was also wrapped up in new patterns of deliberate cultural and political imitation. The new range of consequences was one of the striking features of transregional contacts in this period.

Diffusing Technologies Trade, sometimes along with military contacts, unquestionably accelerated the spread of technology. Arabs learned of paper from the Chinese, after taking some prisoners in battle in central Asia. Paper production was established in Baghdad. Europeans, a bit later, learned paper from the Arabs, with a first factory set up in Sicily in the 13th century. Knowledge of silk production spread beyond Chinese borders, with the Byzantine government taking a special interest. Even more directly Arab scientists studied Indian steelmaking methods – the most advanced in the world. The result was a major improvement in metallurgy throughout the Arab world – including, at that point, Spain, where Toledo steel gained great renown. Various approaches, all involving contact and some involving deliberate inquiry, began to circulate technological gains.

Tastes We have already seen that wider trade helped develop new tastes, sometimes affecting social habits as well. Tea use arose in China late in the classical period. Turkic traders carried tea central Asia, and early Japanese expeditions to China spread the product there as well, by the 6th century. Turkic migrations to the Middle East spread tea to Arabs and Persians, and from there (though only in the 16th century) it would reach Europe as well. Rituals around tea, often involving ceramic ware (from China), reached beyond sheer changes in taste. The craze for sugar was another case in point, already noted. Arab enthusiasm began to spread to Europe (the first European reference to sugar dates from 1099), particularly as a result of European experience in the crusades. Other taste changes reflected what one might call early examples of globalization – like the enthusiasm for tall hats by aristocratic women in Europe late in the Middle Ages, which echoed earlier style changes in China.

Apparatus: Numbers Other ideas spread. Arab and Persian mathematicians began writing about the advantages of the "Hindu" numbering system in the 9th century, and while older methods persisted the Middle East increasingly converted. (The relevance to easier commercial transactions was obvious.) Knowledge spread to North Africa and thence to Muslim Spain. The first European reference occurred in 970. Italian scholars promoted the numbering system (which they knew as Arabic) by 1200, though it would only gradually displace the older (and far more cumbersome) Roman system. Chinese adoption of the system, copied from Arab merchants, began by the early 16th century. Ultimately, of course, the triumph would be worldwide, but a strong start had been made already.

Missionary Religions Much of the character of the postclassical period came from the combination of wider trade and the force of missionary religions: Buddhism, Christianity and particularly Islam. Many factors were involved in conversion, but the longer-distance efforts stemmed from deliberate outreach and, often, the mixture of commerce and piety. Most notably, the spread of Islam to Southeast Asia, including Indonesia, was entirely due to the missionary-merchant combination. Religions would of course complicate transregional interaction: tensions between Muslims and Christians, in particular, created new barriers in many places. But wider religious zones did cut across many previous political and cultural barriers.

Deliberate Imitation Along with general transregional exchanges, specific programs of imitation created new ties between emerging areas and better-established neighbors. Japanese leaders launched specific inquiry into Chinese institutions and ideas in the 4th century, a connection that would last for many centuries. Japan as a result imported many Chinese technologies; the Chinese writing system, adapted

for the very different Japanese language; styles ranging from martial arts to gardening to architecture; Buddhist religion and Confucian thought; and some ideas about social structure. Efforts to copy Chinese political institutions failed; the Japanese were not ready for such a centralized arrangement. And there was no attempt to import foot binding for women (though women's status did decline thanks to Chinese example). Russia's trade contact with Byzantium helped induce wide imitation of this empire, including Orthodox religion, a modified Greek alphabet (Cyrillic), artistic and architectural styles, and the idea of empire itself (though again, not specific political institutions, where Russia remained more decentralized). Widespread West European imitations of the Arabs (from mathematics – including algebra – to medicine to philosophy to commercial law), West African importation of Islam and the establishment of Islamic centers of learning like Timbuktu were other instances of unprecedented regional imitation based heavily on trade contacts. Transregional commerce, again, was breaking beyond the exchange of goods.

Sources

1. *China's Gifts to the West* by Derek Bodde. Read Introduction, Silk, Tea, and Paper. http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/song/readings/inventions_gifts.htm

2. *The Spread of Chinese Civilization to Japan* by Peter N. Stearns. http://history-world.org/Chinese%20Civilization%20To%20Japan.htm

3. "The Introduction of 'Arabic' Numerals in European Accounting," By John W. Durham. From the *Accounting Historians Journal*. Volume 19, Number 2 (December 1992) http://www.jstor.org/stable/40698081

4. "The Mediterranean Sugar Industry." By J. H. Galloway. From the *Geographical Review* Volume 67, Number 2 (April 1977)
   Traces spread of sugar production and consumption throughout Mediterranean.
   http://www.jstor.org/stable/214019

5. "The Road to Timbuktu: Trade & Empire." By Timothy A. Insoll. From *Archaeology*. Volume 53, Number 6 (2000)
   Islam and trade in West Africa and Timbuktu.
   http://www.jstor.org/stable/41779369

6. "The Eastern Contribution to Medieval Russian Culture." By Leonid A. Beliaev and Alexei Chernetsov. From *Muqarnas*. Volume 16 (1999) http://www.jstor.org/stable/1523267

Primary Source:

The Japanese Missions to Tang China, 7th-9th Centuries by Doug Fuqua. Read background and primary source on website.
http://aboutjapan.japansociety.org/content.cfm/the_japanese_missions_to_tang_china_7th-9th_centuries

Suggested Reading:

Old World Encounters: Cross Cultural Contacts and Exchanges in Pre-Modern Times by Jerry H. Bentley (Oxford, 1993).

Questions

1. Why and how did Japan begin to learn from China? How was a Japanese identity preserved in the process?

2. Compare Russia and West Africa as cultural importers during the postclassical period.

3. How were consumers' tastes shaped by transregional contacts, and how did these tastes affect contacts in turn?

4. Why did many societies place particular emphasis on styles and techniques as they sought results from contacts with other regions between 6-00 and 1450? Why were political systems not copied at least as widely?

5. Is it useful to see Western Europe as a "developing" society in the postclassical period, compared to more developed regions like China or the Middle East?

From Separation to Convergence

Limitations; Geography All sorts of constraints continued to circumscribe transregional contact patterns, qualifying any easy connection to contemporary globalization. Most obvious was the geographical limit: exciting interactions did develop among parts of Africa, Europe and much of Asia – but the Americas and Oceania were not in the mix at all. Absence of contact would ultimately leave the Americas with a very different experience in terms of available domesticated animals, technology, and disease resistance, but none of this would become clear until interaction did develop from 1492 onward. The absence of Australia from exchange was particularly interesting, for Chinese vessels did actually probe the northern coast, seeking oceanic products, but there was no venture beyond despite proximity to Indonesia. Australian landscapes seemed bleak, animals unrecognizable – which would deter even European entry until the 18th century.

Limitations: Selectivity Even in Afro-Eurasia, the constraints on contacts were numerous. Travel and communication were slow. Obviously effective products like paper did not catch on quickly. Commitments to routine made conversion to a clearly superior numbering system take literally centuries, in places like Europe or China. Societies were in different stages of development (an issue still with the world today, to some extent), such that even a desire to imitate an advanced political system like China's could not readily translate into reality. And of course many societies imitated selectively by intention – another feature still with us today. West African states adopted Islam for elites and used Muslims as literate bureaucrats, but conversions of ordinary people were limited; and Muslim travelers like Battuta noted that societies that were in principle Muslim did not copy Middle Eastern standards for the dress and behavior of women (and he was appropriately shocked, even while admiring overall piety). Finally, openness could change with time. Muslim Spain was highly tolerant, with positive interactions with Jews and Christians; but Christian reconquest created vast new barriers between Christianity and Islam in the peninsula, ultimately leading to the expulsion of Muslims after 1492. Japan cooled to Chinese example by the end of the period, wondering if Japan was now superior, while of course Russian reliance on Byzantium as a model weakened as the great Empire itself began to decay.

Convergence? Even so, connections were clearly becoming more important overall. A number of societies became dependent on larger exchanges. Aristocrats and wealthy businessmen would not have perished without stylish cloth from Asia or Chinese porcelain, but they certainly sought the goods eagerly. Many merchants, correspondingly, depended directly on long distance trade. By the end of the postclassical period Spain and Portugal reached out to seize island groups in the South Atlantic, like the Canaries, setting up plantations to grow the precious sugar, for which such a strong market now existed in Europe. Europe did not need constant contacts with China to update its technologies, but a period of strong interaction proved essential, as Europe began to adapt explosive powder, printing and other devices to their own use. By the 14th and 15th century, key elements of European foreign policy were being shaped by the experience of contact and the desire for more. Societies without these active contacts with the technology leaders began to fall behind; Africa, for example, despite its ongoing exchanges with the Middle East simply lacked direct approaches to China at this crucial point.

Blurred Boundaries Several key regions, thanks to the new opportunities for imitation, began to shape their identities in part around cultural features available from their more powerful neighbors. Japan did not become China. But by adopting so many styles and particularly by adding Buddhism and Confucianism to the cultural repertoire, something of a larger East Asian cultural zone began to emerge

that would have deep effects on the values of societies like Japan and Korea, along with continued local distinctions. It has even been argued that China, for its part, respected the shared Confucian values of this region and downplayed aggressive moves, during this period and beyond. Russia did not become Byzantium. But it certainly took on key characteristics of its model. Ultimately, Russian leaders would claim to have inherited the Byzantine mantle: just as Byzantium carried on the Roman tradition, so Russia – now a "third Rome" – would keep the imperial line going, even to the point of calling its ruler a tsar, or Caesar. Regional diversities, new and old, remained extremely important, but new overlaps were shaping a number of emerging societies, and the process would continue in the future.

Continuity The most telling sign of the new importance of the transregional contact network was its sheer persistence, even amid changes in leadership. By the 13th century Arab leadership was beginning to falter somewhat, most obviously with the collapse of the Caliphate. But other merchants were quite ready to take up the slack, providing abundant new competition. Muslims from other parts of the Indian Ocean, Europeans in the Mediterranean became more assertive (when Ibn Battuta sought ships to and from Mecca, he dealt with European traders, who had taken over some of the main routes). At the same time a new land-based network reemerged, thanks to the Mongol conquests in Asia and Eastern Europe; and when the Mongols pulled back, yet other claimants were ready to help sustain a transregional network. The process had become self-sustaining.

Sources

1. "Christian-Islamic Confrontation in the West: The Thirteenth-Century Dream of Conversion." By Robert I. Burns. From the *American Historical Review*. Volume 76, Number 5 (December 1971)
   Discusses tensions of conquest and reconquest and its effect in Europe.
   http://www.jstor.org/stable/1870514

2. "Reputation and Coalitions in Medieval Trade: Evidence on the Maghribi Traders." By Avner Greif. From the *Journal of Economic History*. Volume 49, Number 4 (December 1989).
   Discusses international merchants and agents working in disparate regions for trade.
   http://www.jstor.org/stable/2122741

3. "The Head of the Jews (ra'is al-yahud) in Fatimid Egypt: A Re-Evaluation." By Elinoar Bareket. From *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*. Volume 67, Number 2 (2004).
   Tolerance in Fatimid controlled areas and role of trade in Jewish communities.
   http://www.jstor.org/stable/4145978

4. "Diasporic Identities in the Historical Development of the Maritime Muslim Communities of Song-Yuan China." By John Chaffee. From the *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*. Volume 49, Number 4 (2006)
   Discusses trade networks of merchants abroad and their transformation through different Chinese rule.
   http://www.jstor.org/stable/25165167

5. *The Asian Resurgence in World History Perspective* by Craig A. Lockard. Discusses China's influence on East Asia and its role in the premodern world economy.
   Read through footnote 29. http://worldhistoryconnected.press.illinois.edu/9.1/lockard.html

Primary Source:

Privileges Granted to German Merchants at Novgorod, 1229.
Discusses trade in Russian empire as well as aspects of religion.
http://www.fordham.edu/Halsall/source/1229novgorod-germans.asp

Suggested Reading:

Islamic and Christian Spain in the Early Middle Ages by Thomas F. Glick (Princeton University Press, 1979).

Institutions and European Trade: Merchant Guilds, 1000-1800 by Sheilagh Ogilvie (Cambridge University Press, 2011). Only parts on merchant guilds from 1000 to 1500.

Questions

1. How did merchant communities operate in furthering transregional trade?

2. Discuss the extent and variations in tolerance in Muslim-Christian relations in the postclassical period. How did this factor affect transregional exchanges?

3. Did the shift in transregional trade by 1000 CE reflect a transformation in the role of exchanges in Afro-Eurasian history, or merely incremental change?

4. Discuss the relationships between missionary religions and trade in the postclassical period: is conflict or complementarity the dominant theme?

5. How much cross-regional imitation became possible between 600 and 1450?

The Role of the Mongols

The New Empire In 2000 the British journal The Economist named Chinggis Khan the most important single individual of the past millennium. The choice did not focus on his fierce fighting skills, but on his capacity to craft a new empire in Asia that would be open to the outside world. For over a century, interlocking Mongol Khanates did indeed provide unprecedented safe passage for travelers and offered unusual willingness to host, inform and learn from a variety of visitors. The result was a distinctive period in the history of transregional contacts and another step forward toward more global relationships.

The Mongol Domains Chinggis Khan began to conquer territories in China early in the 13th century, and the Mongols would ultimately seize the whole country, by 1279. Conquests in central Asia added to the holdings. Successors swept into the Middle East, toppling the Arab Caliphate and carving out territory in the eastern part of the region, including much of Persia. Mongols also seized Russia and pressed some of the smaller countries in east-central Europe. There were also gains in Southeast Asia, though attempts in India and an effort to invade Japan were repulsed. Despite some setbacks, by 1300 the Mongols ruled or influenced much of Eurasia, with territories stretching about 6000 miles.

Openness Mongol rulers, and particularly Chinggis' grandson Kubilai Khan in China, were notoriously open to foreigners and eager to use their talents. Chinese bureaucrats mistrusted their foreign overlords, and Mongols used Turks and other Muslims, and even some Europeans, extensively in their own ministries. The Mongol court welcomed foreign visitors, including Christian emissaries and of course the Polo family. Overland travel had never been more fruitful, with more and more visitors going long distances rather than the shorter stints characteristic of the old Silk Roads. Europeans were the most obvious beneficiaries of the new opportunities for exchange, but Turkic peoples also gained new knowledge, for example about methods of warfare and the use of explosive powder. Even more modest exchanges could be interesting: it was through the Mongol contacts for example that Europeans learned about the Chinese invention of playing cards.

Aftermath The Mongol period was short lived. The overlords were expelled from China by the end of the 14th century, and their holdings in Persia collapsed at about the same time. Russian expulsion of the Mongols occurred a bit later, beginning in the early to mid-15th century. But there was no question that, by the 15th century, the Mongol era was over. The gains that had occurred during the period of transmission were not of course reversed: Europeans and Turks continued to adapt their new knowledge. But the Chinese took from the Mongol period a heightened concern that invasions of this sort not be repeated,

which would lead soon to the construction of a more effective Great Wall and an attitude of some suspicion about contacts with foreigners. Japan, proud of its immunity from invasion, began to separate itself from the regular interchange with China, now tarnished because of the earlier Mongol victory. And of course with the Mongol retreat overland travel became noticeably less safe, with far less protection from brigands: attention inevitably returned to the seas.

The Chinese Interlude Into this vacuum, the Chinese undertook a brief but fascinating series of expeditions of their own under the new Ming dynasty. The expeditions extended the growing Chinese role in transregional trade that had developed over the past several centuries, based on the strength of Chinese manufacturing in products like silks and ceramics. Now, however, a great fleet was built to organize state-sponsored visits around the Indian Ocean, seeking commercial contacts but also tribute from various regions. Under the Muslim admiral Zheng he, a first expedition, with 62 ships carrying 28,000 men, set sail for India. Later voyages probed the Indonesian islands, reached the Middle East and sailed down the coast of Africa, brining porcelain and copper coins to exchange for local goods (which would include giraffes from Africa, which created a sensation back home). The ships involved were the most sophisticated in the world to that point, capable of carrying a year's supply of grain and carrying tubs to grow garden vegetables. Worried about the cost of the expeditions and pressed to invest in the Great Wall and a new capital city in Beijing, the Chinese government called a halt in 1433. While Chinese trading activity with the Philippines and Southeast Asia remained very active, the leadership in transregional trade would soon pass to the Europeans, who at this point were pressing down the coast of Africa in hopes of finding a more direct route to Asia. The motives for transregional trade were solidly established; the only question was what regional balance would next take shape. The connection is plausible, but we lack details – another sign that contacts, though important, were still sketchy in many ways.

CollapseThe classical empires began to end by the 3rd century CE. China entered a 350-year period of division and warfare, from 220 onward, reducing its participation in transregional trade. The Roman Empire soon divided and, in the west, fell apart. India's Gupta Empire faltered in the 6th century. These changes most obviously reduced overland trade, which now became more dangerous, with fewer political protections. But overall economic activity declined for a time, and it would be a few centuries before some newer societies, headed by the Arabs, began to revive, but also greatly extend, some of the classical connections.

Sources

1. "From Mongol Empire to Yuan Dynasty: Changing Forms of Imperial Rule in Mongolia and Central Asia." By John W. Dardess. Fom *Monumenta Serica*. Volume 30 (1972-1973)
   Organization and impact of Mongol rule on region as well as shift to Chinese rule.
   http://www.jstor.org/stable/40725972

2. "The Mongols: Ecological and Social Perspectives." By Joseph Fletcher. From *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*. Volume 46, Number 1 (June 1986)
   Environmental factors impacting Mongol rule and the social breakdown of their rule.
   http://www.jstor.org/stable/2719074

3. "The Formation of Chinese Maritime Networks to Southern Asia, 1200-1450." By Tansen Sen. From *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*. Volume 49, Number 4 (2006).
   http://www.jstor.org/stable/25165168

4. "Portuguese and Chinese Maritime Imperialism: Camoes's Lusiads and Luo Maodeng's Voyage of the San Bao Eunuch." By Robert Finlay. From *Comparative Studies in Society and History*. Volume 34, Number 2 (April 1992)
   Comparison between Chinese and Portuguese maritime travel/trade.
   http://www.jstor.org/stable/178944

Primary Source:

Mongols in World History. Marco Polo's observations of Mongols on this voyage.

Read Chapter XLVI: Of the City of Caracoron, Chapter XXII: Concerning the City of Cambaluc, and Its Great Traffic and Population, Chapter XXIV: How the Great Kaan Causeth the Bark of Trees, Made into Something Like Paper, to Pass for Money over All His Country, and Chapter XXVI: How the Kaan's Posts and Runners Are Sped through Many Lands and Provinces.

http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/mongols/figures/figu_polo.htm

Suggested Reading:

The Mongols and Global History by Morris Rossabi (W.W. Norton & Company, 2010).

Questions

1. How did encounters with Mongol China affect European views of Asia and European regional relationships?

2. How did the Mongol experience affect Chinese involvement with transregional exchanges?

3. How did the Mongol network build on earlier transregional trade patterns?

4. How did contact patterns by 1400 differ from those of two centuries earlier, because of the Mongol role?