

Chapter 10

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Interregional Trade and Exchange

Key Terms

| | |
|-------------------------|--------------------|
| age grade* | Maori* |
| astrolabe* | metropolitan* |
| Austronesian* | Middle Kingdom* |
| Bantu-speaking peoples* | Ming dynasty |
| Black Death* | Mongol Peace* |
| caravel* | perspective* |
| <i>griots</i> * | Renaissance* |
| <i>kamikaze</i> * | stateless society* |
| <i>Khan</i> * | steppe diplomacy* |
| lateen sail* | syncretism* |
| Malay sailors* | Yuan dynasty |

INTRODUCTION

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Throughout the period from 600 to 1450, the world steadily moved toward increased global contacts. In Eurasia, the Mongols served as trade facilitators between East and West. In Africa, the migrations of Bantu-speaking peoples not only altered the nature of African society but also led to new contacts between African and Arab peoples in the eastern portions of sub-Saharan Africa. Indian Ocean trade networks enriched contacts between African and Asian peoples. The eastern portion of the Roman empire gradually lost territory to the Turks as Western Europe built upon Islamic and Greco-Roman traditions to forge a new society on the European continent.

THE MONGOLS

The Song dynasty was overcome in the thirteenth century by the Mongols, a society of pastoral nomads from the steppes of Central Asia. By the end of their period of dominance in the fifteenth century, the Mongols had conquered China, Persia, and Russia, controlling the largest land empire in history. In establishing their empire, the Mongols facilitated the flow of trade between Europe and Asia and brought bubonic plague to three continents.

Accomplished horsemen, the Mongols typified the numerous nomadic bands who migrated throughout Central Asia in search of grazing lands for their livestock. To supplement the meat and dairy products provided by their herds, the Mongols traded with settled agricultural peoples for grain and vegetables. The basic unit of Mongol society was the tribe; when warfare threatened, tribes joined together to form confederations. Although men held tribal leadership roles, Mongol women had the right to speak in tribal councils. Throughout their history, the Mongols were masters of the intrigues of steppe diplomacy, which involved alliances with other pastoral groups and the elimination of rivals, sometimes rivals within one's own family.

Early Mongol influence on China had begun as early as the twelfth century, when the Mongols defeated an army from Qin China sent to repel their advances. The leader credited with organizing the Mongols into an effective confederation was Temujin, who was renamed Chinggis Khan when he was elected the ultimate ruler, or *Khan*, of the Mongol tribes in 1206. A master at motivating the Mongol tribes, Chinggis Khan managed to break individual clan loyalties and construct new military units with allegiance to himself as their leader.

In addition to their unparalleled horsemanship, the Mongols became masters of the shortbow. Mongol contact with the Chinese also introduced them to other weapons of war such as the catapult, gunpowder, cannons, flaming arrows, and battering rams. By the time that Chinggis Khan died in 1227, the Mongols controlled an empire that extended from northern China to eastern Persia.

As they consolidated their empire, the Mongols were more preoccupied with collecting tribute than in administering their newly acquired territories. They were generally tolerant toward the religious beliefs and practices of the people they conquered and sometimes eventually adopted the dominant religion of their subject peoples.

EXPANSION OF THE MONGOL EMPIRE INTO RUSSIA

The Mongol conquests continued after the death of Chinggis Khan, reaching Russia by 1237. From that year until 1240 the Mongols, or Tartars as the Russians called them, executed the only successful winter invasions of Russia in history. Cities that resisted Mongol advances saw

their inhabitants massacred or sold into slavery. The once-prosperous city of Kiev was burned to the ground. The effects of the Mongol occupation of Russia were numerous:

- The Mongols set up a tribute empire called The Golden Horde.
- Serfdom arose as peasants gave up their lands to the aristocracy in exchange for protection from the Mongols.
- Moscow benefited financially by acting as a tribute collector for the Mongols. When neighboring towns failed to make their tribute payments, the princes of Moscow added their territory to the principality of Moscow.
- They strengthened the position of the Orthodox Church by making the metropolitan, or head of the Orthodox Church, the head of the Russian church.
- Mongol rule kept Russia culturally isolated from Western European trends such as the Renaissance. This isolation denied Russia opportunities to establish both commercial and cultural contacts with the West that fostered misunderstanding through the modern period.

After establishing their presence in Russia, the Mongols went on to their next goal: the conquest of Europe. After an attempted conquest of Hungary in 1240 and raids in Eastern Europe, the Mongols withdrew to handle succession issues in their capital of Karakorum in Mongolia. The proposed conquest of Europe never materialized.

THE MONGOLS IN PERSIA

After abandoning their plans to add Europe to their empire, the Mongols turned to conquest within the world of Islam. In 1258, the city of Baghdad was destroyed and Persia added to the portion of the Mongol empire known as the Ilkhanate. Among the approximately 800,000 people slaughtered in the capture of Baghdad was the Abbasid caliph. With his murder the Islamic dynasty that had ruled Persia for about 500 years ended. Another group of Islamic peoples, the Seljuk Turks, had been defeated by the Mongols in 1243, weakening their dominance in Anatolia. The resulting power vacuum facilitated the conquest of Anatolia (present-day Turkey) by the Ottoman Turks in the fifteenth century. The Mongol threat to the Islamic world ended in 1260 at the hands of the Mamlukes, or slaves, of Egypt.

THE MONGOLS IN CHINA

In China the Mongols, under the leadership of Kubilai Khan, a grandson of Chinggis Khan, turned their attention to the remnants of the Song empire in the southern part of the country. By 1271, Kubilai Khan controlled most of China and began to refer to his administration of China

as the Yuan dynasty. The Yuan dynasty would administer China until its overthrow by the Ming dynasty in 1368. Under Mongol rule:

- The Chinese were forbidden to learn the Mongol written language, which was the language of official records under the Yuan dynasty.
- Intermarriage between Mongols and Chinese was outlawed.
- The Chinese civil service examination was not reinstated.
- Religious toleration was practiced.
- Chinese were allowed to hold positions in local and regional governments.
- Mongol women enjoyed more freedoms than Chinese women, refusing to adopt the Chinese practice of footbinding. Mongol women also were allowed to move about more freely in public than were Chinese women. Toward the end of the Yuan dynasty, however, the increasing influence of Neo-Confucianism saw greater limits placed on Mongol women.
- The Yuan used the expertise of scholars and artisans from various societies.
- Foreigners were welcome at the Yuan court. Among visitors to the Mongol court were the Venetian Marco Polo and his family. Marco Polo's subsequent account of his travels, perhaps partially derived from other sources, increased European interest in exploring other lands.
- Merchants were accorded higher status in the Mongol administration than they had under the Chinese.
- The suppression of piracy furthered maritime trade.
- Attempts at expansion culminated in the unsuccessful invasions of Japan in 1274 and 1280 and a brief occupation of Vietnam. The attempted invasions of Japan were turned back by treacherous winds known to the Japanese as divine winds or *kamikaze*.

By the mid-fourteenth century, the court of Kubulai Khan weakened as it became more concerned with the accumulation and enjoyment of wealth than with efficient administration. Banditry, famine, and peasant rebellion characterized the last years of the Yuan until their overthrow by a Chinese peasant who founded the Ming dynasty.

THE IMPACT OF MONGOL RULE ON EURASIA

The most significant positive role of the Mongols was the facilitation of trade between Europe and Asia. The peace and stability fostered by the Mongol empire, especially during the Mongol Peace of the mid-thirteenth to the mid-fourteenth centuries, promoted the exchange of products that brought increased wealth to merchants and enriched the exchange of ideas between East and West. New trading posts and empires encouraged European peoples to later invest in voyages of exploration.

Another exchange brought about unintentionally by the Mongols proved devastating to Europe, Asia, and Africa: the spread of bubonic plague. It is possible that the plague entered Mongol-controlled territories

through plague-infested fleas carried by rats that helped themselves to the grain in Mongol feedbags. The bubonic plague, known also in Europe as the **Black Death**, spread across the steppes of Central Asia to China, where it contributed to the weakening and eventual fall of the Yuan dynasty. In the mid-fourteenth century, the plague also spread throughout the Middle East, North Africa, and Europe. The disease followed Eurasian and African trade routes as merchants carried it from city to city and port to port. As many as 25,000,000 people may have died from plague in China, and Europe lost about one third of its population; the Middle East also suffered a large death toll. Significant loss of life among Western European serfs helped deal a final blow to manorialism in that region. Some plague-devastated areas required 100 years or more to recover population losses and economic and urban vigor.

FURTHER NOMADIC INFLUENCES

With the decrease of Mongol dominance in Eurasia came a final nomadic thrust by Timur the Lame, or Tamerlane, a Turk from Central Asia. Although his capital city at Samarkand was noted for architectural beauty, his conquests were known only for their incredible brutality. From the mid-1300s until his death in 1405, Tamerlane spread destruction across Persia, Mesopotamia, India, and a part of southern Russia. His death marked the final major thrust of nomadic peoples from Central Asia into Eurasia.

ENCOUNTER AND EXCHANGE IN AFRICA: THE BANTU MIGRATIONS

Sub-Saharan Africa witnessed an exchange of ideas, technology, and language through the migrations of the Bantu-speaking peoples. About 2000 B.C.E., small numbers of agrarian peoples from the edge of the rain forest in present-day Nigeria began migrating from their homeland, perhaps as a result of population pressures. The migrations escalated throughout the period from 500 B.C.E. to 1000 C.E., and continued until about 1500 C.E.

As the Bantu peoples migrated southward and eastward throughout sub-Saharan Africa, they spread the knowledge of the agricultural techniques that they brought from their homeland. Following the course of the Congo River, they farmed the fertile land along riverbanks at the edges of the rain forest. Their contacts with foraging peoples of central Africa taught them the techniques of cattle-raising. As they migrated, the Bantu also spread the knowledge of ironworking. Historians are unsure whether their skills in ironworking were learned from previous contact with the ironworkers of Kush or were acquired by independent innovation. Whatever the reason, the spread of iron agricultural implements facilitated crop cultivation throughout sub-Saharan Africa.

The Bantu acquired an additional source of nutrition with the arrival of the banana on the African continent. Carried from Southeast Asia through the Indian Ocean to Madagascar by the Malay sailors about 400 C.E., the banana reached the African continent through interactions between the descendants of the Malay sailors and African peoples. After its arrival on the African continent, the banana spread throughout sub-Saharan Africa in a reverse pattern to that of the migratory Bantu. Today, the inhabitants of Madagascar speak a language belonging to the same Austronesian linguistic group as Malaysian tongues.

INTERACTIONS IN EAST AFRICA

The Bantu migrations also resulted in the spread of the Bantu languages. By the thirteenth century, the Bantu had reached the eastern coast of Africa, where they came into contact with Arab traders. The interactions between the two groups of people forged the syncretism of the Bantu and Arabic languages into the Swahili tongue. Swahili remains a major African language to the present.

BANTU SOCIETY AND GOVERNMENT

The Bantu also contributed their social and political organization to the heritage of sub-Saharan Africa. With the village as the basis of Bantu society, stateless societies emerged as the political organization of the Bantu. Stateless societies were organized around family and kinship groups led by a respected family member. Religion was animistic, with a belief in spirits inhabiting the natural world. Early Bantu societies did not have a written language; oral traditions were preserved by storytellers called *griots*.

Bantu society centered around the age grade, a cohort group that included tribal members of the same age who shared life experiences and responsibilities appropriate to their age group. Woman's role as a child-bearer was highly respected, and women shared in agricultural work, trade, and sometimes military duties. All property was held communally; individual wealth was determined, not by the acquisition of property but by the acquisition of slaves.

CHINA AND EUROPE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN

The disruption of overland trade routes fostered by the decline of Mongol power in Eurasia produced increased commercial vigor in the Indian Ocean. China's Ming dynasty (1368–1644) responded to the fall of the Yuan dynasty by a renewed focus on Indian Ocean trade. In the early fifteenth century, the Ming sent out massive expeditions into the Indian Ocean to display the glories of the Middle Kingdom. In addition to exploring the Indian Ocean, the Chinese expedition entered the Persian

Gulf and the Red Sea, carrying with them Chinese porcelain and other luxuries to trade for local merchandise. The expeditions were led by Zheng He, a Chinese general of the Muslim faith.

In 1433, the voyages of Zheng He were abruptly called to an end by the Ming emperors. Confucian scholars had long resented the notoriety that Zheng He enjoyed by virtue of his voyages. To this resentment the Ming emperors now added fear of the cost of the expeditions, taking the opinion that the money would be better spent on resisting the continuing Mongol threat against China's borders and on constructing a new capital at Beijing. Although China now returned to its more traditional policy of isolation, Ming emperors continued to engage in regional trade in Southeast Asia.

THE RISE OF WESTERN EUROPE

As the Chinese withdrew from world commercial dominance, the nations of Western Europe stepped in to fill the void. By the 1400s, European regional monarchies possessed the political power and financial resources to allow them to investigate the world beyond their borders. European technology had become more sophisticated, and commercial activity in urban areas contributed to its financial stability. European visitors to the Mongol court learned of advances in Asian technology such as the printing press, gunpowder, and the magnetic compass.

In spite of the increased economic vitality enjoyed by Europeans in the early modern era, there remained a serious imbalance of trade between Europe and the East. Although many Europeans craved the luxury goods of the East, Europe offered very few products attractive to the peoples of the East. Europe's trade goods consisted mainly of items such as wool, honey, salt, copper, tin, and animals for Eastern zoos. The unfavorable balance of trade between Europe and the East meant that Europeans frequently had to pay for their luxury items in gold, a situation that drained Europe of its gold supply.

THE RENAISSANCE

By the beginning of the fifteenth century, the city-states of northern Italy were experiencing a renewed interest in the learning and artistic styles of the Greco-Roman world. This rebirth of learning, or Renaissance, owed its origins partly to interactions with the Muslim world. European contacts with the Middle East during the Crusades, the preservation of Greco-Roman learning by the Muslims during their occupation of Spain, and Islamic and European interactions in the weakening Byzantine empire invigorated the revival of learning and trade characteristic of the Renaissance. Furthermore, the northern Italian city-states had become wealthy from their role in supplying goods for the Crusaders and in transporting them across the waters of the Mediterranean.

The Renaissance spirit differed from that of the European Middle Ages by focusing on life in this world rather than in the afterlife. Many Renaissance paintings continued to feature religious subjects; but, at the same time, there was an additional emphasis on paintings of people and nature. Renaissance painting also was characterized by the use of perspective and a greater variety of colors.

EARLY EUROPEAN EXPLORATIONS

By the early 1400s, European explorations outside the Mediterranean had been primarily confined to the Atlantic islands of the Azores, Madeiras, and the Canaries. Europeans also had carried out some explorations along the western coast of Africa. Lack of European technological expertise prevented further explorations into the waters of the Atlantic. Contacts with Chinese and Arab merchants introduced Europeans to the magnetic compass, the astrolabe, and the caravel, a lighter vessel with a lateen sail and a steerable rudder.

Voyages of exploration soon changed focus to colonization as Spain and Portugal settled the Canary and Madeira Islands and the Azores. The crop initially grown on these islands was sugar, which had been introduced to Europeans by Middle Eastern peoples during the Crusades. Slaves were brought from northwestern Africa to work the plantations.

OCEANIA

Two regions that by 1450 remained outside the global network were the Americas and Oceania. (The Americas will be discussed in Chapter 11.) After 600 C.E., the peoples of Polynesia were involved in migration and expansion from island to island in the Pacific. From their base in the islands of Fiji, Samoa, and Tahiti, Polynesians in canoes sailed northward to the uninhabited islands of Hawaii. For several centuries, Polynesians continued to spread throughout the Hawaiian Islands, establishing agricultural and fishing villages. Inhabitants set up regional kingdoms with a highly stratified class system.

About 1200, another group of Polynesians migrated to the islands of present-day New Zealand. The Maori, as these migrants came to be called, learned to adapt to the colder environment of their new home. The Maori set up a stratified society that included slaves.

Rapid Review



One of the most significant forces in history throughout the mid-fifteenth century was the movement of the Mongols into Russia, the Middle East, and China. Responsible for the massacre of hundreds of thousands of peoples who resisted them, especially in the Middle East, the Mongols

also deserve credit for forging strong trade connections between Europe and Asia. While the Mongols were establishing their presence in Eurasia, the Bantu-speaking peoples were continuing their migrations throughout sub-Saharan Africa, spreading the knowledge of agriculture and iron-working. Their contacts with Arabs in eastern Africa gave birth to a new language: Swahili. In the Indian Ocean, China engaged in massive expeditions, which were abruptly halted about the time that Europe entered the global trade network. Still outside the global network were Polynesia and the Americas. The inhabitants of Polynesia and the Americas interacted with other peoples in their own regions.

✓ Chapter Review Questions

1. Mongol rule in Russia and China differed in that
 - A. in China, the Mongols maintained Chinese traditions of isolation from foreigners.
 - B. Eurasian trade routes under Mongol protection connected Russia more than China to Western European trade routes.
 - C. the Mongols became more involved in administration in China than in Russia.
 - D. the Mongols were more interested in controlling trade in China than they were in Russia.
 - E. Russia advanced culturally under Mongol rule while China became increasingly backward.
2. Historians studying linguistic syncretism would be most interested in
 - A. the voyages of the Malay sailors.
 - B. the writings of Renaissance philosophers.
 - C. the Polynesian migrations.
 - D. the Bantu migrations.
 - E. the Yuan dynasty.
3. The Black Death
 - A. was most devastating in North Africa.
 - B. originated in Europe.
 - C. changed the course of political institutions.
 - D. spread solely along routes of Mongol conquest.
 - E. produced large loss of life in India.
4. The Yuan dynasty was brought down by all of the following EXCEPT
 - A. foreign resistance to the Mongol Peace.
 - B. bubonic plague.
 - C. economic distress.
 - D. inefficient administration.
 - E. a breakdown in internal security.
5. The Renaissance
 - A. was a movement of uniquely Western origins.
 - B. began in the Eastern Roman Empire.
 - C. was a result of the Crusades.
 - D. represented a complete break from medieval traditions.
 - E. was a period of classical tradition rather than independent innovation.
6. European exploration through the mid-fifteenth century
 - A. produced intense rivalries with East Asian civilizations.
 - B. placed merchants in conflict with monarchs.
 - C. suffered from a lack of technological expertise.
 - D. depended upon the knowledge of the Eastern world.
 - E. created trade connections that increased Europe's gold supply.

7. Under Mongol rule in China
- A. Japan and Vietnam were brought under Mongol control.
 - B. Chinese women were placed in a more subordinate position.
 - C. Chinese educational traditions were maintained.
 - D. Chinese regional rulers were allowed to govern.
 - E. in contrast to Chinese tradition, scholars were despised.
8. The influence of nomadic peoples in Eurasia
- A. created a reciprocal relationship between nomads and settled peoples.
 - B. ended with the Mongols.
 - C. delayed the interaction of global commercial networks.
 - D. brought efficient administration to Eurasia.
 - E. brought increased religious intolerance to Eurasia.

2 Answers and Explanations

1. C. The Mongols were more involved in profiting from Russian tribute and trade than in administering the Russian people; in China, the Mongols established the Yuan dynasty to rule their subjects. In China, the Mongols encouraged the use of foreign advisers (A). China was part of Eurasian trade routes protected by the Mongols, whereas the Mongols kept Russia isolated from Western European routes (B). The Mongols controlled both Chinese and Russian trade (D). Russia became more culturally and economically backward under Mongol rule, whereas China continued to thrive (E).
2. D. The Bantu migrations resulted in the new language of Swahili, which represented syncretism between Bantu languages and Arabic. Although the Malay sailors spread their Austronesian tongue from Malaysia to Madagascar, the resulting language of Madagascar was not a linguistic blend (A). The writings of the Renaissance philosophers were not particularly useful in studying language transmission (B). The Polynesian migrations were not noted for creating linguistic blends (C). The Yuan dynasty actively prevented linguistic syncretism by enacting laws that forbade the Chinese from learning the Mongol language (E).
3. C. The Black Death helped bring down the Yuan dynasty and also was a factor in the end of Western European feudalism. The Black Death was more devastating in China, Europe, and the Middle East than in North Africa (A). It also did not drastically affect India, which was to the south of the most traveled trade routes in the fourteenth century (E). The Black Death originated in Central Asia, spreading first to China (B). Although the Mongols were the initial transmitters of the bubonic plague, the disease also spread along Mediterranean routes not reached by the Mongols (D).
4. A. The Mongol Peace of the mid-thirteenth to the mid-fourteenth centuries promoted trade connections rather than foreign resistance. The Yuan dynasty fell because of the distress and population losses of the bubonic plague (B) and inefficient administration (D), which resulted in economic problems (C) and highway banditry (E) in China.
5. C. Among the results of the Crusades was renewed Western interest in the splendid cities of the East. Also, the

wealth obtained by Italian city-states resulted from acting as suppliers of provisions and transportation for crusaders. Beginning in the northern Italian city-states (B), the Renaissance was a revival of the Greco-Roman culture that had been preserved by the Muslims in Spain and in the eastern portions of the former Roman Empire (A). Although it dwelled on subjects in this world, the Renaissance continued some medieval traditions by featuring some art of a religious nature (D). Whereas the Renaissance represented a return to the Greco-Roman classics, the use of perspective and new varieties of color in Renaissance painting represented independent innovation (E).

6. D. The technological improvements that propelled Europe into the Age of Exploration were borrowed and adapted from the Arabs and Chinese (C). In the mid-fifteenth century, Europe and East Asia had not yet developed intense rivalries (A). Merchants tended to support monarchs because of the political and economic stability they brought to Europe (B). Trade imbalances between East and West caused Europeans to pay

for many of their goods in gold, which drained the continent of much of its supply of gold (E).

7. D. The Mongols relied on China's regional rulers to help provide an efficient administration. Twice the Mongols failed in their attempt to invade Japan, while Vietnam came under Mongol domination only briefly (A). Mongol culture placed women in a more dominant role than did the Chinese (B). The Chinese civil service exam was not reinstated under Mongol rule (C). Scholars from other societies, however, were brought into China and their works were admired (E).
8. A. Nomadic peoples frequently supplemented their diet by trading for the agricultural products of settled peoples. Nomads also sometimes provided horses and camels for trading along established routes. Nomadic influence ended with the invasion of Tamerlane (B). The nomadic Mongols increased the volume of Eurasian trade (C), but they were not noted for their administrative skills (D). The Mongols and other nomadic peoples tended to tolerate religious differences in Eurasia (E).

