

THEMATIC REVIEW SHEET #5: Connections (Commercial - Diplomatic - Religious)

- The creation of empires and the spread of religion were -- along with trade -- the most important ways in which connections were established among peoples of the world both before and after 1500.
- Expanding networks of military, political, economic, and religious ties created connections among cultures and societies in Europe, Asia, and Africa at least as early as the time of the Roman (31 B.C.E.-476 C.E.) and Han (206 B.C.E.-220 C.E.) Empires.
- In some cases, cultural influences survived the demise of an empire → Hellenism extended Greek influence into North Africa and South Asia.
- The Chinese Empire expanded the influence of Chinese culture throughout East Asia, initially through the establishment of military control and political domination of Vietnam and Korea. Though the empire's political control waned, Chinese cultural influences remained.
- The Mongols extended military and political control from Central and East Asia over widely differing cultures, bringing into contact regions of the world that had been previously unconnected and strengthening commercial and other ties among regions that had.
- Islamic empires in West Asia, inspired by religious fervor, similarly built links among disparate cultures as they extended Islam throughout West, South, and Southeast Asia, North Africa, and even Spain → by Muslim armies as well as merchants.
- Buddhism was carried by both merchants and missionaries from its roots in India across the Central Asian caravan routes to China and along maritime routes to Southeast Asia. By the first century C.E., Buddhism had been introduced to China; by the fourth century to Korea; and by the sixth to Southeast Asia and Japan.
- Empires built on continental trade were dependent on the horse or camel.
- Empires built on maritime trade were dependent on ships and navigational technology.
- The expansion of empires often resulted in contacts that facilitated trade, such as that between the Roman and Han Empires across the Central Asian caravan route that became known as the Silk Road.
- Trade led to other connections as religious ideas flowed along trade routes and as economic dependency created political ties.
- Travelers moved along routes connecting people and transmitting knowledge from culture to culture. As suggested in the accounts of Marco Polo, Ibn Battuta and others, the development of commerce transformed societies in Asia, Europe, and Africa both before and after 1500.
- Although the Americas were not connected with the Afro-Eurasian linkages, within the Americas there was a complex array of interregional contacts, facilitated by the organization and power of the large states / empires.

ORDER: IDEAS → POLITICAL STRUCTURE + ECONOMIC SYSTEM + SOCIAL ORGANIZATION