

Trade Routes of the Ancient World

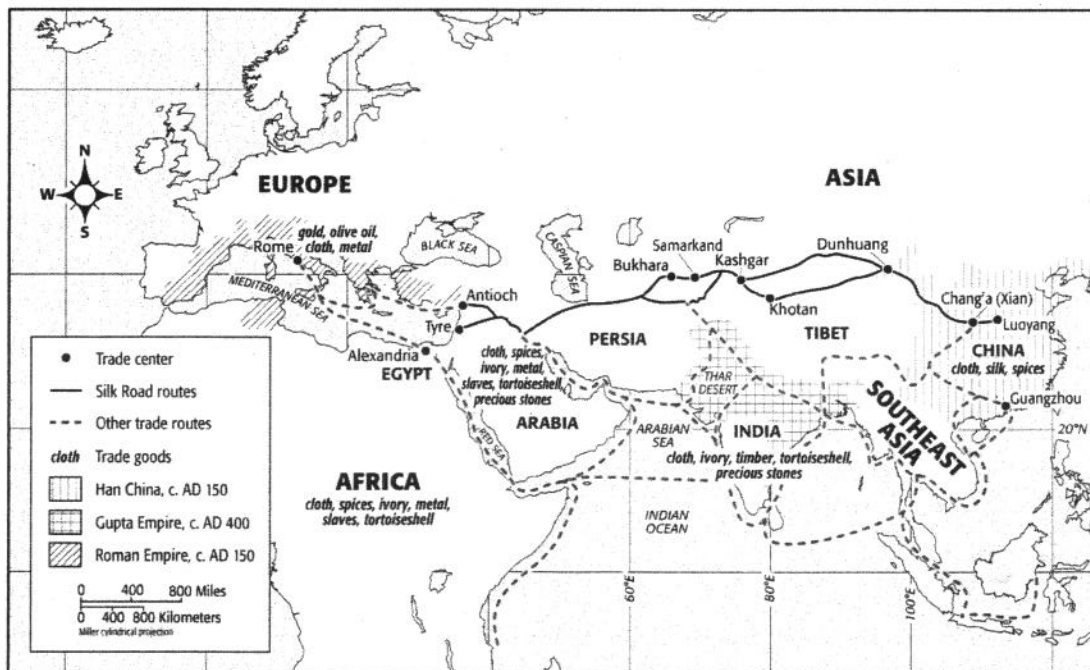


ECONOMIC FOCUS Because resources are not evenly distributed around the world, trade has long been an important economic activity among human societies. Since ancient times, people have exported surplus goods and resources and imported goods and resources that are scarce in their area.

As you read think about why trade routes developed over such great distances between the civilizations of the ancient world.

Trade was vital to the economies of the ancient world. Mesopotamians exchanged goods with people in other lands more than 5,000 years ago. By 2000 BC, a trading network linked Egypt, Southwest Asia, Persia, and northwestern India. Then, between 200 BC and AD 400, powerful empires emerged in Europe, China, and India. During this period, a series of even longer trade routes stretched across the continent of Asia. Collectively, this network of trade routes became known as the Silk Road. At the same time, merchants started shipping goods via sea lanes between ports in Africa, Arabia, Persia, India, and Southeast Asia. Over land and water, many products moved back and forth across these ancient trade routes.

The Silk Road



The Growth of Civilizations

Economics and History

WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

1. A large trading network linked which continents in the ancient world?

2. Goods moving over the Silk Road from China to Rome would have passed through which major trading centers?

- _____
3. Why do you think merchants endured hardships from harsh weather, difficult terrain, and bandits to transport goods along the routes shown on the map?

- _____
4. Buddhism had become a major religion in India by the third century BC. By AD 100 the religion was popular across China as well. Buddhism, however, did not gain popularity in Europe at that time. What clues does the map provide about the reasons for these contrasting developments?

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5. **Critical Thinking: Make Generalizations** What generalizations can you make about the goods that were exchanged over the Silk Road and other trade routes of the ancient world?

ACTIVITY

Review the goods that were exchanged between the regions shown on the map. Choose two major locations (e.g., Arabia and China). Research these regions to learn which goods are exchanged between the two areas today. On a separate piece of paper, prepare a chart comparing and contrasting trade between these regions in the ancient times and today.