

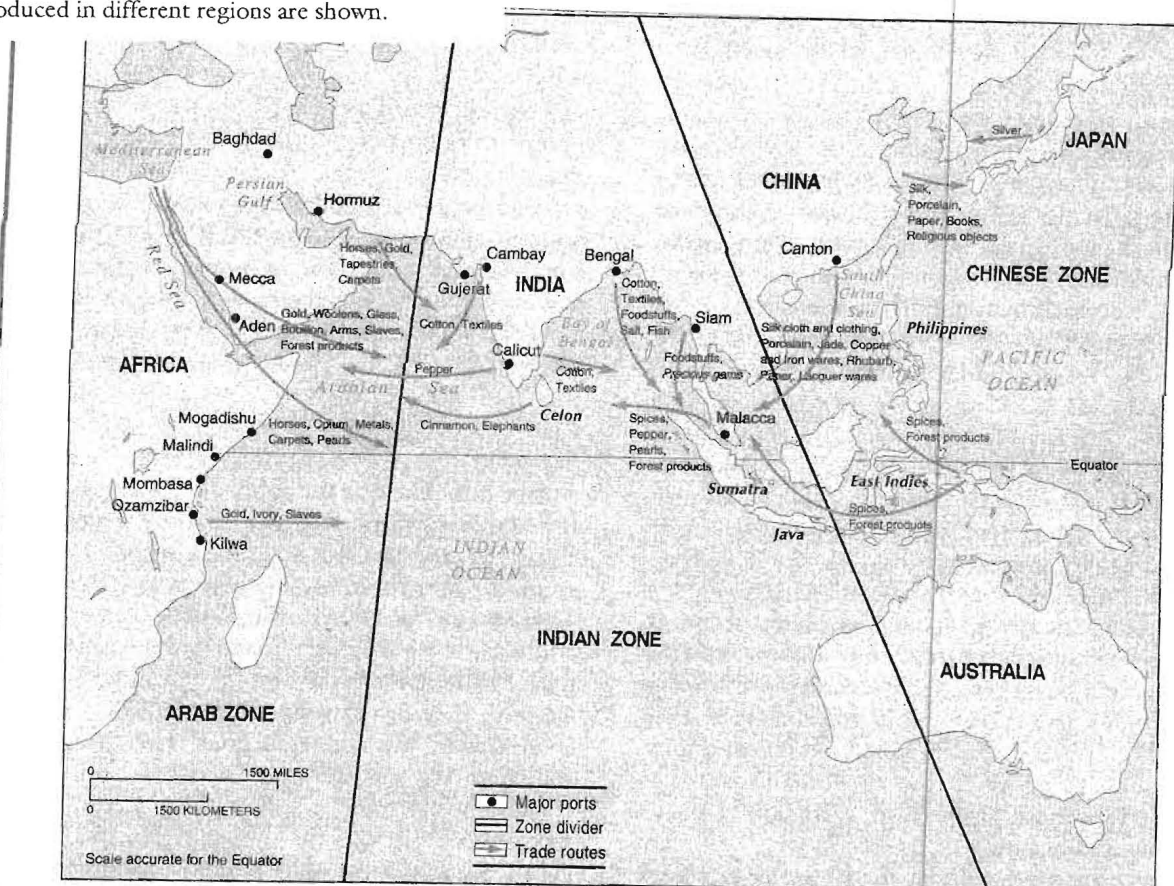
Visualizing the Past

The Pattern of Trade in the Ancient Eurasian World

The period of Maurya rule in India coincided with a great expansion in trade between the main centers of civilization in Eurasia and Africa. In the centuries that followed, a permanent system of exchange developed that extended from Rome and the Mediterranean Sea to China and Japan. The trading networks that made up this system included both those established between ports connected by ships and sea routes and those consisting of overland exchanges transmitted along the chain of trading centers that crossed central Asia and the Sudanic region of Africa. By the last centuries B.C.E., this far-flung trading system included much of the world as it was known to the peoples of the Eastern Hemisphere.

Some products produced at one end of the system, such as Chinese silks and porcelains, were carried the entire length of the network to be sold in markets at the other edge, in Rome, for example. As a general rule, products carried over these great distances tended to be high-priced luxury goods such as spices and precious jewels. But most of the exchanges, particularly in bulk goods such as metal ores or foodstuffs, were between adjoining regions. The ports of western India, for example, carried on a brisk trade with those in the Red Sea and Persian Gulf, while trading centers in southeast Asia supplied China with forest products and other raw materials in exchange for the many items manufactured by China's highly skilled artisans. Although some merchants and seamen, particularly the Chinese and Arabs, could be found in ports far from their homelands, most confined their activities within regional orbits, such as the Arabian Sea, the Persian Gulf, or the South China Sea.

This map provides an overview of this great trading network in the age of the classical civilizations, roughly the 3rd century B.C.E. to the 3rd century C.E. It shows the main centers of production, the goods exported overland and overseas, and the main directions of trade in these products. In each of the main sectors participating in the system, key ports, inland trading centers, and the products produced in different regions are shown.



Eurasian and African Trading Goods Routes, c. 300 B.C.E. to 300 C.E.

IV. MAP EXERCISES

B. Visualizing the Past: *Patterns of Trade in the Eurasian World* (Pages 64 – 65)

1. What physical geographic features would have defined:
 - a. The Arab zone?
 - b. The Indian zone?
 - c. The Chinese zone?
2. Missing from the map is the Greco-Roman pattern of trade. What physical features defined this area? Use the physical map at the front of the book.
3. What areas would have been centers of exchange between zones? Why?
4. If monsoons in the area blow northeast to southwest (November to March) and Southwest to Northeast (April to October) how would this have affected movement?
5. What products would you have considered luxury goods? Staples, foodstuffs, and raw materials?
6. Which products would have had the highest profit margins? Why?
7. Why would trade in foodstuffs have been less profitable?

MAP 10-5 (P 742)
MMP 11-2 (P 268)