

When nations. this  
era of commerce  
would be

[Economics](#), [Trade](#)



When it comes to commerce and Islam, there were 3 main exchange routes which would help establish new muslim colonies and essentially pave the way for the spread of Islamic culture.

These 3 trade routes were called the Silk Roads — which was exchange across eurasia, Sea Roads — which was exchange across the Indian ocean, and Sand Roads — or exchange across the Sahara Desert. The first trade route, The Silk Road, was responsible for the trade of goods, new cultures, and diseases across regions such as China, Southeast Asia, and Arabia. Goods such as spices, incense, and most importantly, silk, were traded on these routes. The routes extended from East Asia, through China, Russia, India, the Middle East, and all the way as far as Northern Africa. This Silk trade era reached its strongest point when the travelers and merchants were protected by valid security systems when crossing into new territories. However, each country had its own desirable goods that made the trade routes form such vital relationships with neighboring regions. Some of the products contributed by China were silk, bamboo, mirrors, gunpowder, paper, rhubarb, ginger, lacquerware, and chrysanthemums.

The goods being exported out of Siberian Forests and Central Asia were more agricultural such as furs, walrus tusks, amber, livestock, horses, falcons, hides, copper vessels, tents, saddles, and slaves. The products India had to offer several valuables such as cotton textiles, herbal medicine, precious stones, and spices. The Middle East provided small fruits and grains such as dates, nuts, almonds, dried fruit, dyes, lapis lazuli, and swords.

Lastly, the Mediterranean offered gold coins, glassware, glazes, grapevines, jewelry, artworks, perfume, wool and linen textiles, and olive oil. (Strayer 2016, 320). The second trade route, The Sea Roads, were responsible for connecting different regions across the Indian Ocean and uniting trade relationships amongst countries. This was a cost effective way of trading goods, since export by sea was cheaper than cost of transportation by camel.

This ship travel also allowed for access of more heavy trade items which could not be done on the Silk Roads. This Sea Road trade was considered “weaving the web” between Indian ocean nations. This era of commerce would be the first to make faster progress at farther distances. Many new improvements were made to ships which made long-distance travel easier, such as “improvements in sails, new kinds of ships called junks.

..., new means of calculating latitude such as the astrolabe, and evolving versions of the magnetic needle or compass”. (Strayer 2016, 326), The spread of Islam began during this time, because Islam was open to the idea of commercial trade-unlike confucians. Many of the merchants and sailors were Muslim. After performing trade with many other Muslims, Islamic people started to develop new colonies in Africa, Japan, Russia, and Europe. This eventually spread muslim culture all around the Indian Ocean.

The third trade route, the Sand Roads, helped connect trade between the Mediterranean and North Africa/West Africa. The first accounts of long distance trade in these desert regions was in the African region of Sudan. The primary items of trade at this time included gold, cotton textiles, metals,

and food products. These items were transported by river boats; however, once the camel and donkey was introduced to the African people, trade would be revolutionized forever. With the Sahara desert previously being a major prevention from expanding trade, the camel provided new opportunities for long distance travel, and the Sahara would then become a major trade pattern for North Africans and Arabs living in this area.

One traveler named Ibn Battuta, journeyed across the Sahara desert to the kingdom of Mali, west of the Sahara. He learned that in this non-Islamic kingdom, many men worked as slaves here, and these men were very talented at turning basic materials into valuable items. Once Battuta traveled back across the Sahara to East Africa, the Islamic merchants sought to barter with these Mali peoples. This would later develop a strong African trade relationship helping spread Islamic cultures throughout Africa.

After the Islamic settlements spread, we see many advancements made by the Muslims. First was the birth of the Islamic religion, then the making of an Arab Empire, and finally the new civilization of Islam. Birthing the new religion, we see Islam being centered in Arabian desert cities.

Many Jews and Christians lived within the Arabs in the Arabian Peninsula. Soon after, many Arabs found themselves siding with some Jewish and Christian ideas, questioning if Allah/ Yahweh was the only real god (Strayer 2016, 414). The Muslims, Jews, and Christians came to have a close relationship, based on ideas that these three middle eastern religions completed each others beliefs. Thus, in following centuries, a new Arab empire emerged. It was composed of Persian, Byzantine, Mesopotamian, and

Indian societies. However, several centuries later, internal conflicts would suddenly deteriorate the relationships between these joined nations, and the Arab empire would slowly vanish. Even with Islam still flourishing, the alliances between the nations in this empire would deteriorate. With that being the case, the Islamic empire would split into four separate entities, being Spain, India, West Africa, and Anatolia.

Despite the various internal conflicts, Islamic civilization flourished and dominated most of the Afro-Eurasian civilizations during these times (Strayer 2016, 437). With such immense spread through commerce and cultural expansion, this is why the Islamic world was considered the first “ global civilization”.