2.1 The Silk Roads

Why Trade Grew c. 1200–1450

Silk Roads: overland routes linking China, Central Asia, Persia, Middle East & Mediterranean. Most goods passed relay-style; few traders went end to end.
Demand: Song China's commercial boom + rich Dar al-Islam & European elites → more trade. **Mongol unity** (2.2) later makes routes safer & cheaper (Pax Mongolica).
Luxury goods: silk, porcelain, spices, gems. Overland = slow & costly → only high value-to-weight goods pay.

Commercial Innovations

Innovation	Effect
Caravanserai	Inns ~1 day apart; rest
Bills of exchange	Pay far away w/o coins
Banking houses	Loans, credit, deposits
Paper money (China)	Money economy grows
Flying cash (China)	Credit voucher, less coin
Camel saddles	Heavier loads, caravans

Money economy: coins, paper & credit replace barter → more trade, taxes paid in cash (e.g., Song jiaozi).
State support: govts build & guard infrastructure (**Grand Canal**, roads), tax merchants, issue currency.

Trade Cities

Kashgar (W. China) & **Samarkand** (Central Asia): oasis hubs grow rich, mix merchants, faiths & languages.
Proto-industry: Chinese demand + exports → mass production of iron, porcelain & silk textiles.
Risks: bandits, deserts & mountains, tolls at each stop → why caravans traveled in large armed groups.

⚠ Silk Roads ≠ one road. A shifting network of routes moving luxuries + ideas, faiths & disease (2.5–2.6).

✓ MCQ: "caravanserai" or "flying cash" in a stimulus → answer is about lowering risk & cost of long-distance trade.

2.2 Mongol Empire: Rise & Rule

Conquest

Chinggis (Genghis) Khan (Temujin) unites steppe tribes 1206 → largest contiguous land empire ever, China to E. Europe.
Military edge: mounted archers w/ composite bows, speed, feigned retreats, merit-based promotion, decimal units (10s, 100s, 1000s) → loyalty to the Khan over clan ties.
Adapted tech: borrowed Chinese & Persian siege engineers, gunpowder. **Terror**: cities that resisted were destroyed.
Kublai Khan: completes conquest of Song (1279); capital at Dadu (Khanbaliq/Beijing); repairs Grand Canal, uses paper money, welcomes foreign merchants (Marco Polo).

Four Khanates (after 1260)

Khanate	Region	Note
Yuan	China	Kublai, 1271–1368
Il-Khanate	Persia	Sacks Baghdad 1258
Golden Horde	Russia	Rus pay tribute
Chagatai	Central Asia	Steppe core

How Mongols Ruled

Religious tolerance: no forced conversion; clergy tax-exempt. Rulers later convert (Il-Khan **Ghazan** → Islam, 1295).
Yuan China: Mongols on top, Central Asian/Muslim officials next, Han last; exams suspended to 1315.
Golden Horde: rules indirectly via Russian princes who collect tribute → **Moscow** rises as collector.
Limits: **Mamluks** stop Mongols at Ain Jalut (1260); typhoons (**kamikaze**) wreck invasions of Japan (1274, 1281).
Destruction: Baghdad (1258) & Persian irrigation wrecked; huge death tolls in N. China & Central Asia.

⚠ "Mongols only destroyed" loses points. They destroyed AND connected: tolerance, trade, tech transfer.

✓ Compare: Yuan kept Mongols apart from Han; Il-Khans & Golden Horde turned Muslim & assimilated more.

2.2 Mongols: Exchange & Legacy

Pax Mongolica

Pax Mongolica: c. 1250–1350 Mongol peace across Eurasia → safer, cheaper overland trade & travel.
Yam: relay stations w/ fresh horses for messengers & officials. **Paiza**: metal pass guaranteeing safe passage.
Merchants favored: Mongols lend capital to merchant partnerships (**ortogh**), lower tolls, protect caravans.

Transfers of Tech & Knowledge

What	From	To
Gunpowder	China	Middle East, Europe
Printing, paper	China	W. Eurasia
Astronomy	Persia	Yuan China
Medicine	Muslim world	China
Uyghur script	Uyghurs	Mongol writing

Maragha observatory (Il-Khanate) & Muslim astronomers in Beijing → better calendars & star tables.

Travelers on Mongol Roads

Marco Polo (Venice) serves Kublai Khan; his account sparks European interest in Asia. **Rabban Sauma**: Nestorian monk, China → Europe (1287), meets pope & kings.

Decline

Black Death (1340s) spreads along Mongol routes; Caffa siege (1346) → Europe. Succession fights, overreach, inflation (Yuan paper $) → Red Turban revolts (1351).
Yuan → Ming (1368): Han rebels expel Mongols. Il-Khanate fragments (1335); Golden Horde weakens by 1400s.
Legacy: Moscow centralizes Russia; Ming restores Han rule; gunpowder spread → later gunpowder empires (Unit 3).

⚠ Same Mongol roads that moved goods & ideas also moved plague. Connectivity has costs (link to 2.6).

✓ SAQ cause/effect: Mongol rule → ↑ trade + tech diffusion (gunpowder west) → shapes later empires (Unit 3).

2.3 Indian Ocean: Winds & Tech

Monsoon System

Monsoons: predictable seasonal winds. Summer SW → NE (to India/Asia); winter NE → SW (to Africa/Arabia).
Effect: sailors time voyages; must wait months in port for winds to turn → merchants settle abroad (**diasporas**).
Relay trade: most ships worked 1 segment (E. Africa–Arabia–India–SE Asia–China), not whole ocean.
Port life: merchants wait out monsoons → warehouses, inns, mosques & temples serve foreign traders.

Maritime Technology

Tech	Origin	Use
Lateen sail	Arab/Indian	Sail into wind
Dhow	Arab	Light trade ship
Junk	China	Big hull, bulkheads
Magnetic compass	China	Direction at sea
Astrolabe	Greek→Muslim	Find latitude
Sternpost rudder	China	Steer large ships

Better maps & knowledge of winds/currents from Muslim & Chinese geographers → lower risk (Ibn Majid).

What Moved

Bulk + luxury: cotton textiles (India), pepper, cloves & nutmeg (Spice Islands), porcelain & silk (China), gold, ivory & enslaved people (E. Africa), horses (Arabia).
Demand: Song/Ming China & Dar al-Islam drive volume; sea trade > Silk Roads in volume by this era.
Ports: Aden, Hormuz, Calicut, **Quanzhou** (China's top port; big Muslim merchant quarter). Port cities tax & host traders.

⚠ Sea ≠ only luxuries. Unlike overland trade, ships moved bulk goods (cotton, grain, timber) profitably.

✓ MCQ: a map w/ seasonal wind arrows → monsoon timing; answer links to port diasporas & cultural mixing.

2.3 Indian Ocean: States & Diasporas

Key Trading States

State	Where	Power from
Swahili cities	E. Africa	Gold, ivory trade
Gujarat	W. India	Cotton textiles
Malacca (Melaka)	Malay Peninsula	Taxes on strait
Calicut	SW India	Pepper port

Swahili city-states (Kilwa, Mombasa, Mogadishu): Bantu + Arab culture; Swahili language; Muslim merchant elites; export gold from **Great Zimbabwe** via Sofala port.
Malacca (c. 1400, Parameswara): Muslim sultanate controls Strait of Malacca; taxes ships, builds warehouses → huge entrepôt. Replaces **Srivijaya** as the strait's power.
Kilwa: richest Swahili city; coral-stone mosques, own coins. **Vijayanagara** (1336): Hindu state rich from trade.
Gujarat: Muslim, Hindu & Jain merchants; port of **Cambay** ships cotton cloth from E. Africa to SE Asia.
Calicut (SW India): pepper port; Hindu Zamorin rulers welcome Muslim & Chinese traders (Zheng He visits).

Diasporic Communities

Diaspora: merchant groups settled far from home. Arab & Persian traders in E. Africa & SE Asia; Chinese in SE Asia.
Effect: intermarry w/ locals, act as middlemen, spread Islam & customs → new blended cultures (Swahili).

Zheng He (Ming, 1405–1433)

Zheng He: Muslim eunuch admiral; 7 treasure-fleet voyages for **Yongle Emperor** to SE Asia, India, Arabia & E. Africa.
Goals: show Ming power, expand tributary system. Ended b/c cost, Confucian distrust of trade, Mongol threat.

⚠ Zheng He did NOT conquer or colonize: fleets = diplomacy & prestige. Contrast Europeans (Unit 4).

✓ Theme: Indian Ocean states got rich by TAXING & HOSTING trade, not ruling the ocean.

2.4 Trans-Saharan Trade

Tech That Opened the Desert

Camels (dromedaries): ~10 days w/o water, carry ~400+ lb.
Camel saddles → more cargo & mounted fighting.
Caravans: hundreds–thousands of camels travel together for safety; oasis towns (Walata, Taghaza) resupply.

Goods

Good	From	To
Gold	W. Africa	N. Africa, Europe
Salt	Sahara (Taghaza)	W. Africa
Enslaved people	W. Africa	N. Africa, Arabia
Ivory	W. Africa	Mediterranean
Cloth, horses	N. Africa	W. Africa

Mali Empire (c. 1235–1600)

Ghana (before c. 1200): earlier gold-trade kingdom (Soninke); taxed gold & salt; its decline → Mali rises.
Sundiata Keita founds Mali c. 1235 (Battle of Kirina); controls gold fields & trade cities → taxes all trade.
Mali govt: mansa rules via provincial governors & tribute; large army protects routes & gold fields.
Mansa Musa: hajj to Mecca 1324; spends so much gold in Cairo prices drop; brings back scholars & architects.
Timbuktu: trade + Islamic learning hub; Sankore, libraries, manuscripts. Elites Muslim; commoners keep old faiths.
Griots: oral historians preserve Mali's history (Epic of Sundiata). **Ibn Battuta** visits Mali (1352).
Effects: W. African cities grow (Timbuktu, Gao, Djenné), Arabic literacy spreads, trans-Saharan slave trade expands.

⚠ Islam spread in W. Africa via merchants & rulers' choice, NOT conquest. Rulers blend Islam w/ local traditions.

✓ Causation: camel saddle + caravans → ↑ gold trade → Mali's wealth & Islamic scholarship in Timbuktu.

2.5–2.6 Cultural & Environmental Effects

Spread of Religion (2.5)

Islam: via merchants & Sufis to E. Africa, W. Africa (Mali), SE Asia (Malacca, later Indonesia). **Buddhism**: rooted in E. Asia (China, Korea, Japan) & Theravada in SE Asia.
Hinduism & Buddhism into SE Asia via Indian traders & priests → **Angkor Wat** (Khmer): Hindu temple → Buddhist. Rulers adopt Indian ideas of kingship (devaraja, god-king).

Science, Tech & Literature

Paper & gunpowder spread west from China. **Indian numerals** & Greek texts reach Europe via Dar al-Islam. Timbuktu & Mongol courts = learning hubs.
Islamic learning: Greek philosophy & medicine kept in Arabic (Avicenna, Averroes) → later translated in Europe.
Travelers: **Ibn Battuta** (Morocco, 1325–54, across all Dar al-Islam); **Marco Polo** (Venetian, in Yuan China); **Margery Kempe** (English Christian pilgrim, 1400s).
Syncretism: Swahili culture; Sufi Islam w/ local saints in SE Asia & India; Mali rulers mix Islam & local rites (griots, ancestors). **Arabic** = trade & scholarly language.

Crops & Disease (2.6)

What	Route	Effect
Champa rice	Vietnam → China	Pop. boom
Bananas	SE Asia → Africa	Bantu ag. grows
Citrus	Asia → Mediterr.	New farm goods
Sugar, cotton	Via Muslim world	New crops spread
Bubonic plague	C. Asia → Eurasia	Pop. collapse

Black Death (1340s–50s): fleas on rats travel w/ caravans & ships → kills ~1/3+ of Europe, much of Middle East & China; labor shortages → higher wages, serfdom weakens.

⚠ Environmental = crops + disease moving along trade routes. Don't confuse w/ Columbian Exchange (Unit 4).

✓ Ibn Battuta's writings = evidence of Islam linking Africa, Asia & India. Strong DBQ outside-evidence pick.

2.7 Comparison & Exam Moves

Three Networks Compared

	Silk Roads	Ind. Ocean	Sahara
Medium	Land	Sea	Desert
Key tech	Caravanserai	Monsoon, ships	Camel saddle
Goods	Luxury	Bulk + luxury	Gold, salt
Hubs	Samarkand	Malacca, Kilwa	Timbuktu
Faith	Buddh., Islam	Islam, Hindu	Islam

Similarities: all expand c. 1200–1450 b/c new tech + state protection; all spread Islam & other faiths, crops & disease; all create rich trade cities (Samarkand, Malacca, Timbuktu).
Differences: sea moves more volume (bulk goods) at lower cost; land needs empires (Mongols) to stay safe; Sahara links Africa to Dar al-Islam (salt, gold, scholars).

Unit 2 Big Themes

Causation: tech + states + demand → bigger networks.
Effects: cities, diasporas, syncretism, plague. **Continuity**: trade routes existed before 1200; scale grows.

2027 Exam Moves

SAQ = ACE: Answer the prompt, Cite a specific example, Explain how it fits. All 3 SAQs required (no choice from 2027).
DBQ sourcing (HIPP): Historical situation, Intended audience, Purpose, Point of view. A travel account (Ibn Battuta, Marco Polo) → ask who it was written for (and with what bias).
Comparison: give 1 similarity AND 1 difference, each w/ a named route, city or ruler + reason (Mali vs Malacca).
LEQ: 1 required prompt. Thesis w/ line of reasoning; 2 specific examples; complexity = similarity AND difference.

⚠ Vague = 0 pts. "Trade spread ideas" loses; "Merchants carried Islam to Malacca, whose sultan converted c. 1400" earns. Always name the who, where & when.

✓ Unit 2 = 8–10% of MCQ. Expect stimulus sets on travel writing, trade maps & Mongol rule (+ SAQ sources).