

CHAPTER TWO STARTING WITH CHINA

Chapter Two analyzes how Chinese, Indians, and Arabs interacted in the Indian Ocean both before and after Europeans made their appearance there beginning about 1500. Indian Ocean trade was a major generator of wealth in the world, and gaining access to it was important to many societies. Also very important in setting into motion dynamics that would have a huge impact on the course of world history were the Chinese voyages of discovery in the early 1400s, and the Chinese decision to base its monetary system on silver. The chapter also describes the creation and expansion of the Islamic world, African societies and the place of Africa in the world trading system, the reasons why Europeans were so interested in getting access to Asian trade, the obstacles they faced in going overland to Asia, and the consequences of the first Europeans (the Portuguese) in finding an ocean route to Asia.

Key Terms/Vocabulary

Ming dynasty	silver	gunpowder epic
Great Wall	Islam	bombards and cannons
Annam	Ibn Battuta	European states
Zheng He	Arabs	Venice
Treasure Ships	Ottoman empire	Genoa
Strait of Malacca	Mali	Marco Polo
Spice Islands	Mans Musa	Henry the Navigator
Persian Gulf	sojourn	Cape of Good Hope
Mecca	African "mini-states"	Vasco da Gama
armed trading	slavery	
agrarian empire	fragmented sovereignty	

Study Questions for Chapter Two

A. The big questions for Chapter Two are these:

1. Why does the author "start with China?" What was happening there in the 1400s that matters to the course of world history?
2. How important was the Indian Ocean to world trade? What parts of the world dominated trade there? Why did Europeans want to

gain access to the Indian Ocean trade? Why couldn't they (at least until 1498)?

B. The following questions build up to and inform the big questions:

1. What were "the voyages of Zheng He," and why were they important? Why were they stopped, and why is that significant for world history?
2. Describe the trade circuits of the Indian Ocean. Who traded what, where? How did Europeans (starting with the Portuguese) change the rules of trade there?
3. Compare and contrast China and India ca. 1400. What are some important political differences? Why do you think those differences might matter in the way world history develops in the period from 1500 to 1800?
4. What is "dar al-Islam," and why is it an important concept to know about world history? Are all Muslims Arabs? What other peoples converted to Islam?
5. When and how did Constantinople, the seat of Eastern Orthodox Christianity, get renamed Istanbul?
6. How is Africa connected to "dar al-Islam" and the Indian Ocean trading world?
7. Why did African societies use slavery? What is the significance of the claim (p. 57) that in the centuries from 750 to 1500 c.e. between 5-10 million Africans had been enslaved?
8. What is meant by "fragmented sovereignty" and how is that connected with the European system of warfare? How did warfare affect the political system that developed in Europe? How did this system differ from China's empire?
9. Why did the Portuguese begin exploring the Atlantic Ocean? When and where exactly were they exploring? What is the significance of Vasco da Gama's 1498 voyage?

Map exercise: Analyse Map 2.1 (pp. 44-45). Using different colored pens (or markers), trace the extent of Islam ca. 1500, the extent of the Mongol empire ca. 1300, and the voyages of Zheng He, Vasco da Gama, and Columbus. Identify the various "empires" on the map. Is "Europe" an empire? Identify the important trading ports on the Indian Ocean.

Additional Web Sites to Explore

- [China Teaching Workbook: Traditional History](#)
- [Maps of China](#)
- [The Ming Emperor and the Treasure Voyages](#)
- [Historical Materials on China](#)
- [The European Voyages of Discovery](#)