**GLOBAL TRADE AND CONTACT**

During the classical era the major civilizations were not entirely isolated from one another. Migrations continued, and trade increased, diffusing technologies, ideas, and goods from civilization centers to more parts of the world. However, the process was slow. Chinese inventions such as paper had not yet reached societies outside East Asia by the end of the classical era. The Western Hemisphere was not yet in contact with the Eastern Hemisphere. Nevertheless, a great deal of cultural diffusion did take place, and larger areas of the world were in contact with one another than in previous eras.

One very important example of cultural diffusion was Hellenization, or the deliberate spread of Greek culture. The most important agent for this important change was Alexander the Great, who conquered Egypt, the Middle East, and the large empire of Persia that spread eastward all the way to the Indus River Valley. Alexander was Macedonian, but he controlled Greece and was a big fan of Greek culture. His conquests meant that Greek architecture, philosophy, science, sculpture, and values diffused to large areas of the world and greatly increased the importance of Classical Greece as a root culture.

Trade routes that linked the classical civilizations include:

* **The Silk Road** - This overland route extended from western China, across Central Asia, and finally to the Mediterranean area. Chinese silk was the most desired commodity, but the Chinese were willing to trade it for other goods, particularly for horses from Central Asia. There was no single route, but it consisted of a series of passages with common stops along the way. Major trade towns appeared along the way where goods were exchanged. No single merchant traveled the entire length of the road, but some products (particularly silk) did make it from one end to the other.
* **The Indian Ocean Trade** - This important set of water routes became even more important in later eras, but the Indian Ocean Trade was actively in place during the classical era. The trade had three legs: one connected eastern Africa and the Middle East with India; another connected India to Southeast Asia; and the final one linked Southeast Asia to the Chinese port of Canton.
* **Saharan Trade** - This route connected people that lived south of the Sahara to the Mediterranean and the Middle East. The Berbers, nomads who traversed the desert, were the most important agents of trade. They carried goods in camel caravans, with Cairo at the mouth of the Nile River as the most important destination. There they connected to other trade routes, so that Cairo became a major trade center that linked many civilizations together.
* **Sub-Saharan Trade** - This trade was probably inspired by the Bantu migration, and by the end of the classical era people south of the Sahara were connect to people in the eastern and southern parts of Africa. This trade connected to the Indian Ocean trade along the eastern coast of Africa, which in turn connected the people of sub-Saharan Africa to trade centers in Cairo and India.

**TRADE DURING THE CLASSICAL ERA (1000 BCE TO 600 CE)**

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| **Route** | **Description** | **What traded?** | **Who participated?** | **Cultural diffusion** |
| Silk Road | Overland from western China to the Mediterranean Trade made possible by development of a camel hybrid capable of long dry trips | From west to east - horses, alfalfa, grapes, melons, walnuts  From east to west - silk, peaches, apricots, spices, pottery, paper | Chinese, Indians, Parthians, central Asians, Romans  Primary agents of trade – central Asian nomads | Chariot warfare, the stirrup, music, diversity of populations, Buddhism and Christianity, wealth and prosperity (particularly important for central Asian nomads) |
| Indian Ocean Trade | By water from Canton in China to Southeast Asia to India to eastern Africa and the Middle East; monsoon-controlled | Pigments, pearls, spices, bananas and other tropical fruits | Chinese, Indians, Malays, Persians, Arabs, people on Africa's east coast | Lateen sail (flattened triangular shape) permitted sailing far from coast and against the wind  Created a trading class with mixture of cultures, ties to homeland broken |
| Saharan Trade | Points in western Africa south of the Sahara to the Mediterranean; Cairo most important destination  Camel caravans | Salt from Sahara to points south and west  Gold from western Africa  Wheat and olives from Italy  Roman manufactured goods to western Africa | Western Africans, people of the Mediterranean  Berbers most important agents of trade | Technology of the camel saddle - important because it allowed domestication and use of the camel for trade |
| Sub-Saharan Trade | Connected Africans south and east of the Sahara to one another; connected in the east to other trade routes | Agricultural products, iron weapons | Diverse peoples in sub-Saharan Africa | Bantu language, "Africanity" |