

Chapter 8
Commerce & Culture
500-1500



A. Modern highways are being built across Africa and Asia.

1. part of modern process of globalization
2. but also evoke older patterns of global commerce

B. The roots of economic globalization lie deep in the past.

1. exchange of goods between people of different ecological zones is a major feature of human history

2. at times, some societies have monopolized desirable products (like silk)

3. long-distance trade became more important than ever in 500–1500 C.E.

- a. most trade was indirect

- b. creation of a network of communication and exchange across the Afro-Eurasian world; a separate web in parts of the Americas

I. Opening Vignette

C. Why was trade significant?

1. altered consumption
2. encouraged specialization
3. diminished economic self-sufficiency of local societies
4. traders often became a distinct social group
5. sometimes was a means of social mobility
6. provided prestige goods for elites
7. sometimes the wealth from trade motivated state creation
8. religious ideas, technological innovations, plants and animals, and disease also spread along trade routes

D The network of long-distance commerce is a notable feature of the third-wave civilizations.

A. The Growth of the Silk Roads

1. Eurasia is often divided into inner and outer zones with different ecologies
 - a. outer Eurasia: relatively warm, well-watered (China, India, Middle East, Mediterranean)
 - b. inner Eurasia: harsher, drier climate, much of it pastoral (eastern Russia, Central Asia)
 - c. steppe products were exchanged for agricultural products and manufactured goods
2. creation of classical civilizations and imperial states in 500–0 B.C.E. included efforts to control pastoral peoples
3. trading networks did best when large states provided security for trade
 - a. when Roman and Chinese empires anchored commerce
 - b. in seventh and eighth centuries, the Byzantine Empire, Abbasid dynasty, and Tang dynasty created a belt of strong states
 - c. in thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Mongol Empire controlled almost the entirety of the Silk Roads

II. Silk Roads: Exchange across Eurasia

B. Goods in Transit

1. a vast array of goods traveled along the Silk Roads, often by camel
 - a. mostly luxury goods for the elite
 - b. high cost of transport did not allow movement of staple goods
2. silk symbolized the Eurasian exchange system
 - a. at first, China had a monopoly on silk technology
 - b. by the sixth century C.E., other peoples produced silk
 - c. silk was used as currency in Central Asia
 - d. silk was a symbol of high status
 - e. silk industry only developed in Western Europe in twelfth century
3. volume of trade was small, but of economic and social importance
 - a. peasants in the Yangzi River delta of southern China produced market goods (silk, paper, porcelain, etc.) instead of crops
 - b. well-placed individuals could make enormous profits

II. Silk Roads: Exchange across Eurasia



Map 8.1 The Silk Roads
 Chapter 8, *Ways of the World: A Brief Global History with Sources*, First Edition
 Copyright © 2011 by Bedford/St. Martin's
 Page 335

C. Cultures in Transit

1. cultural transmission was more important than exchange of goods

2. the case of Buddhism

a. spread along Silk Roads through Central and East Asia

b. had always appealed to merchants

c. conversion was heavy in the oasis cities of Central Asia

d. conversion was voluntary

e. many of the Central Asian cities became centers of learning and commerce

i. e.g., Buddhist texts and cave temples of Dunhuang

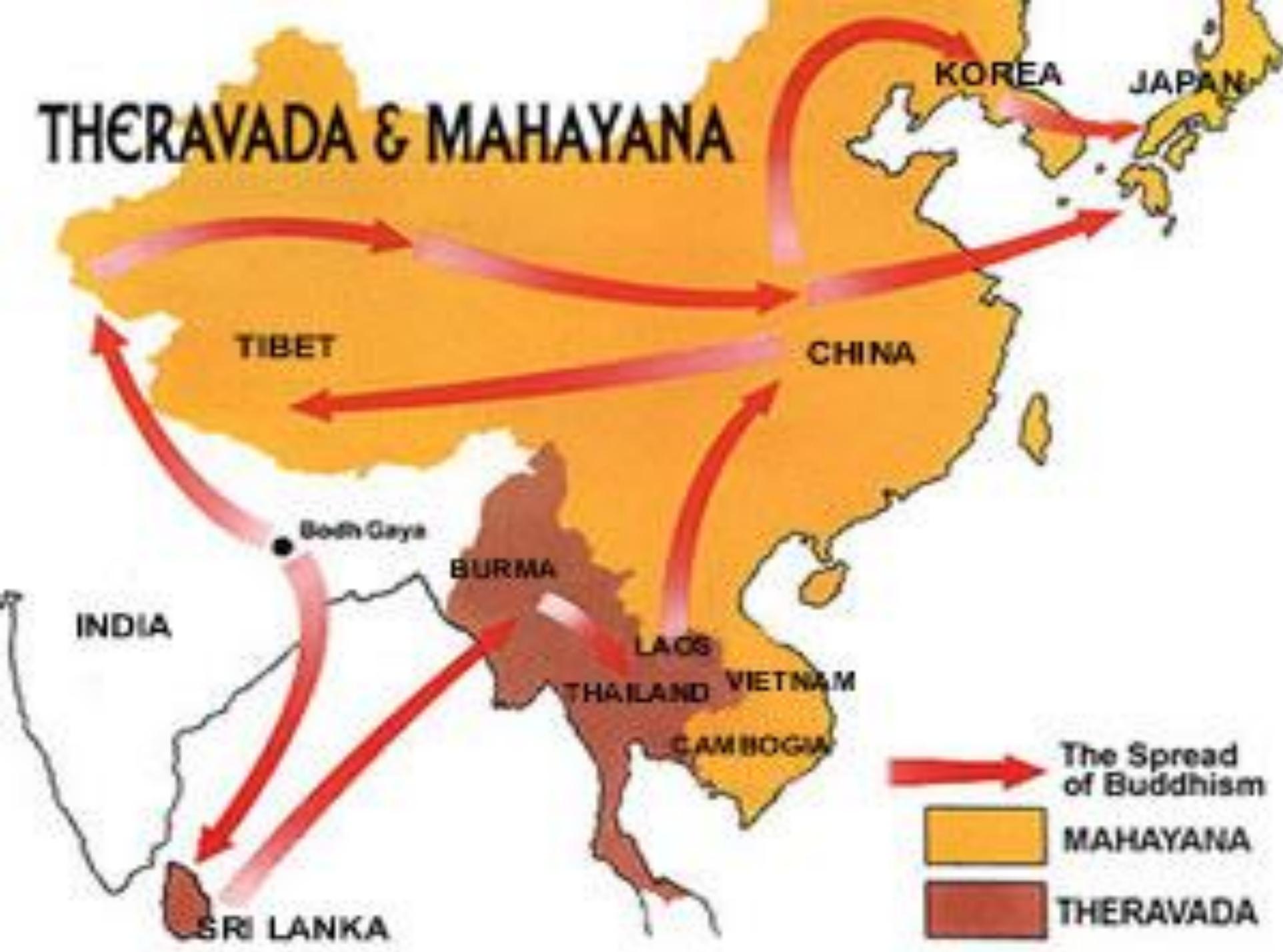
f. spread much more slowly among Central Asian pastoralists

g. in China, was the religion of foreign merchants or rulers for centuries

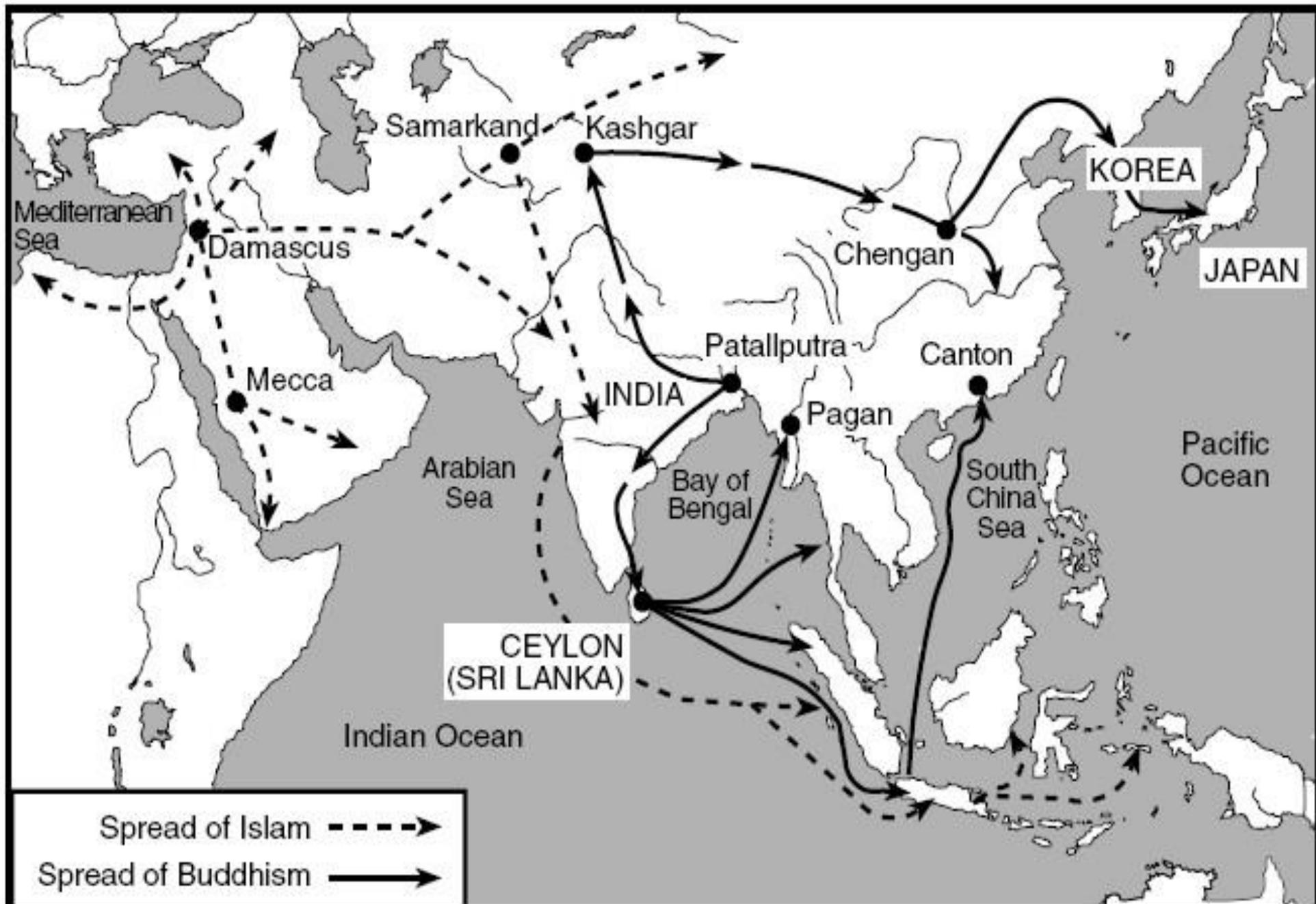
h. Buddhism was transformed during its spread

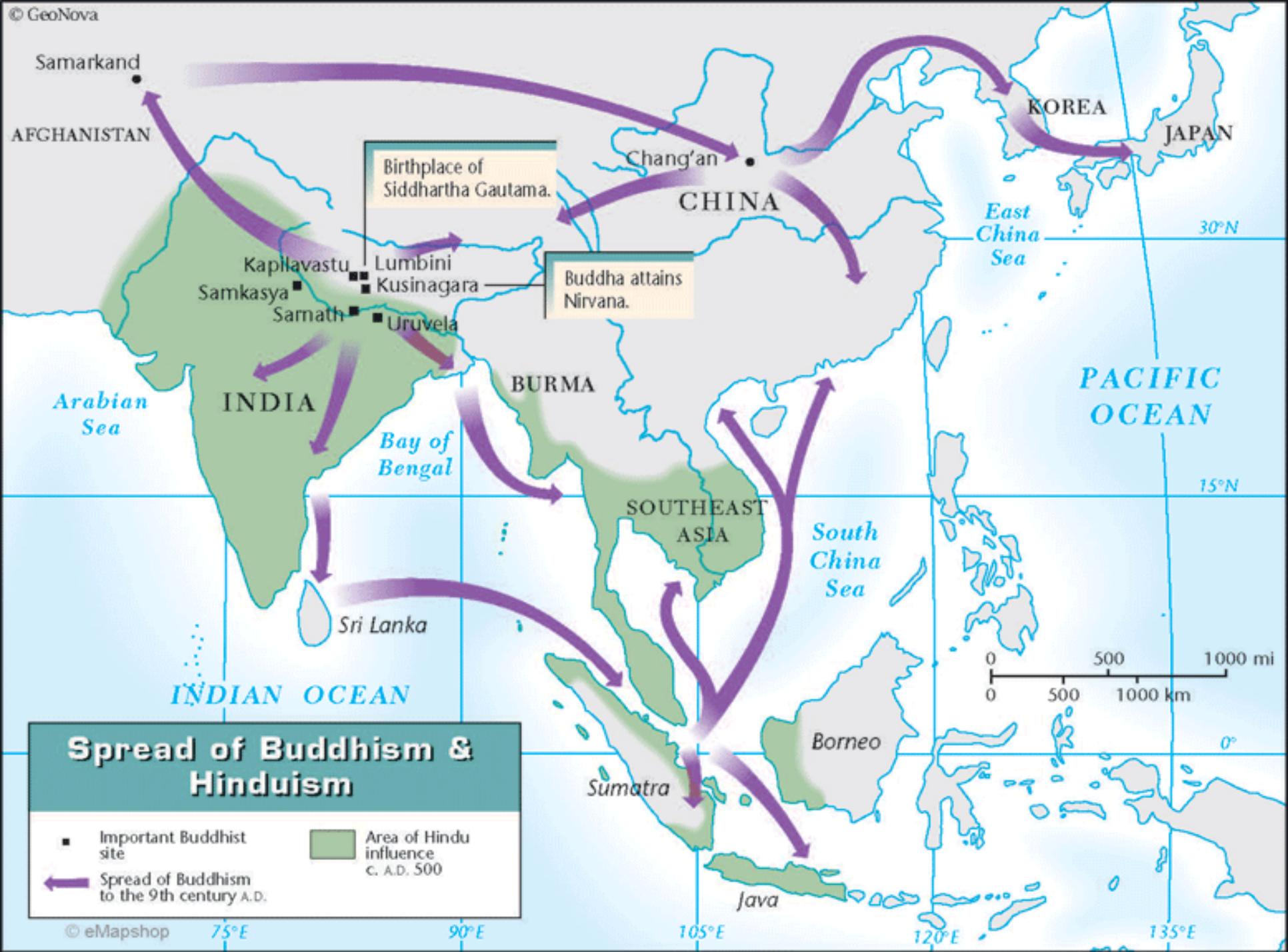
II. Silk Roads: Exchange across Eurasia

THERAVADA & MAHAYANA



The Spread of Islam and Buddhism, 200 B.C. — A.D. 1450





Birthplace of Siddhartha Gautama.

Buddha attains Nirvana.

Spread of Buddhism & Hinduism

- Important Buddhist site
- Area of Hindu influence c. A.D. 500
- ← Spread of Buddhism to the 9th century A.D.

D. Disease in Transit

1. the major population centers of the Afro-Eurasian world developed characteristic disease patterns and ways to deal with them
2. long-distance trade meant exposure to unfamiliar diseases
 - a. early case: great epidemic in Athens in 430–429 B.C.E.
 - b. during the Roman and Han empires, smallpox and measles devastated both populations
 - c. in 534–750 C.E., bubonic plague from India ravaged Mediterranean world
3. the Black Death spread thanks to the Mongol Empire's unification of much of Eurasia (thirteenth–fourteenth centuries)
 - a. could have been bubonic plague, anthrax, or collection of epidemic diseases
 - b. killed one-third of European population between 1346 and 1350
 - c. similar death toll in China and parts of the Islamic world
 - d. Central Asian steppes were badly affected (undermined Mongol power)
4. disease exchange gave Europeans an advantage when they reached the Western Hemisphere after 1500

II. Silk Roads: Exchange across Eurasia

A. The Mediterranean Sea was an avenue for commerce from the time of the Phoenicians.

1. Venice was a center of commerce by 1000 c.E.
2. controlled trade of imports from Asia
3. linked Europe to the much greater trade network of the Indian Ocean

B. The Indian Ocean network was the world's most important until after 1500.

1. trade grew from environmental and cultural diversity
2. transportation was cheaper by sea than by land
3. made transportation of bulk goods possible (textiles, pepper, timber, rice, sugar, wheat)
4. commerce was possible thanks to monsoons (alternating wind currents)
5. commerce was between towns, not states



III. Sea Roads: Exchange across the Indian Ocean



Map 8.2 The Sea Roads
 Chapter 8, *Ways of the World: A Brief Global History with Sources*, First Edition
 Copyright © 2011 by Bedford/St. Martin's
 Page 342

C. Weaving the Web of an Indian Ocean World

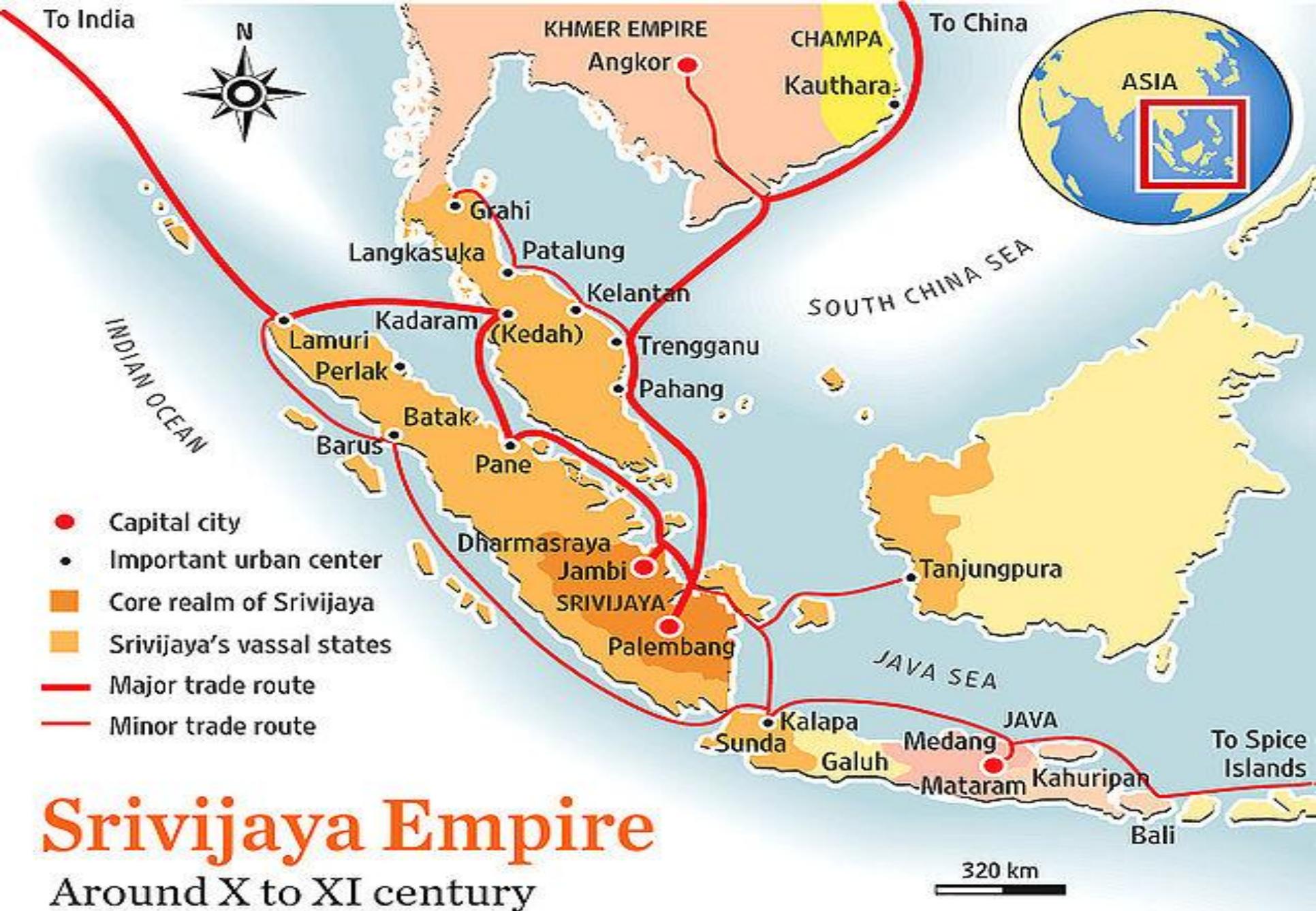
1. Indian Ocean trade started in the age of the First Civilizations
 - a. Indus Valley writing may have been stimulated by cuneiform
 - b. ancient Egyptians and Phoenicians traded down the Red Sea
 - c. Malay sailors reached Madagascar in the first millennium B.C.E.
2. tempo of commerce increased in early centuries C.E. with greater understanding of monsoons
 - a. merchants from Roman Empire settled in southern India and East African coast
 - b. growing trade in eastern Indian Ocean and South China Sea
3. fulcrum of trade was India
4. two great encouragers for the Indian Ocean exchange:
 - a. economic and political revival of China
 - b. rise of Islam in seventh century C.E.

III. Sea Roads: Exchange across the Indian Ocean

D. Sea Roads as a Catalyst for Change: Southeast Asia and Srivijaya

1. ocean commerce transformed Southeast Asia and East Africa
 - a. trade stimulated political change
 - b. introduction of foreign religious ideas
2. Southeast Asia: location between China and India made it important
 - a. Malay sailors opened an all-sea route between India and China through the Straits of Malacca ca. 350 c.E.
 - b. led many small ports to compete to attract traders
3. Malay kingdom of Srivijaya emerged from competition, dominated trade from 670 to 1025 c.E.
 - a. gold, access to spices, and taxes on ships provided resources to create a state
 - b. local belief: chiefs possessed magical powers
 - c. also used Indian political ideas and Buddhism

III. Sea Roads: Exchange across the Indian Ocean



Srivijaya Empire

Around X to XI century



Borobudur
Ways of the World, First Edition
Robert Harding World Imagery/Alamy

2. Swahili civilization flourished on East African coast between 1000 and 1500 c.E.

- a. very urban, with cities of 15,000–18,000 people
- b. each city was politically independent, ruled by a king
- c. accumulated goods from the interior and traded for Asian goods
- d. sharp class distinctions

3. most of trade was in Arab ships; Swahili craft traveled coastal waterways



III. Sea Roads: Exchange across the Indian Ocean



4. deep participation in the Indian Ocean world

- a. regular visits by Arab and Indian (perhaps Persian) merchants; some settled
- b. many ruling families claimed Arab or Persian origins
- c. Swahili was written in Arabic script, with Arabic loan words
- d. widespread conversion to Islam

5. Islam and Swahili culture didn't reach much beyond coast until the nineteenth century

- a. but Swahili region traded with the interior, had an impact
- b. trade with interior for gold led to emergence of Great Zimbabwe (flourished in 1250–1350 C.E.)

III. Sea Roads: Exchange across the Indian Ocean

A. Commercial Beginnings in West Africa

1. trans-African trade was also based on environmental variation

a. North Africa manufactured goods

b. Sahara had copper and salt deposits, dates

c. agricultural peoples further south grew crops, mined gold

2. earliest trade in the region was among agricultural peoples in the Sudan

a. emergence of urban clusters in the early centuries C.E.

b. most famous was Jenne-jeno (Niger Valley civilization)



IV. Sand Roads: Exchange across the Sahara

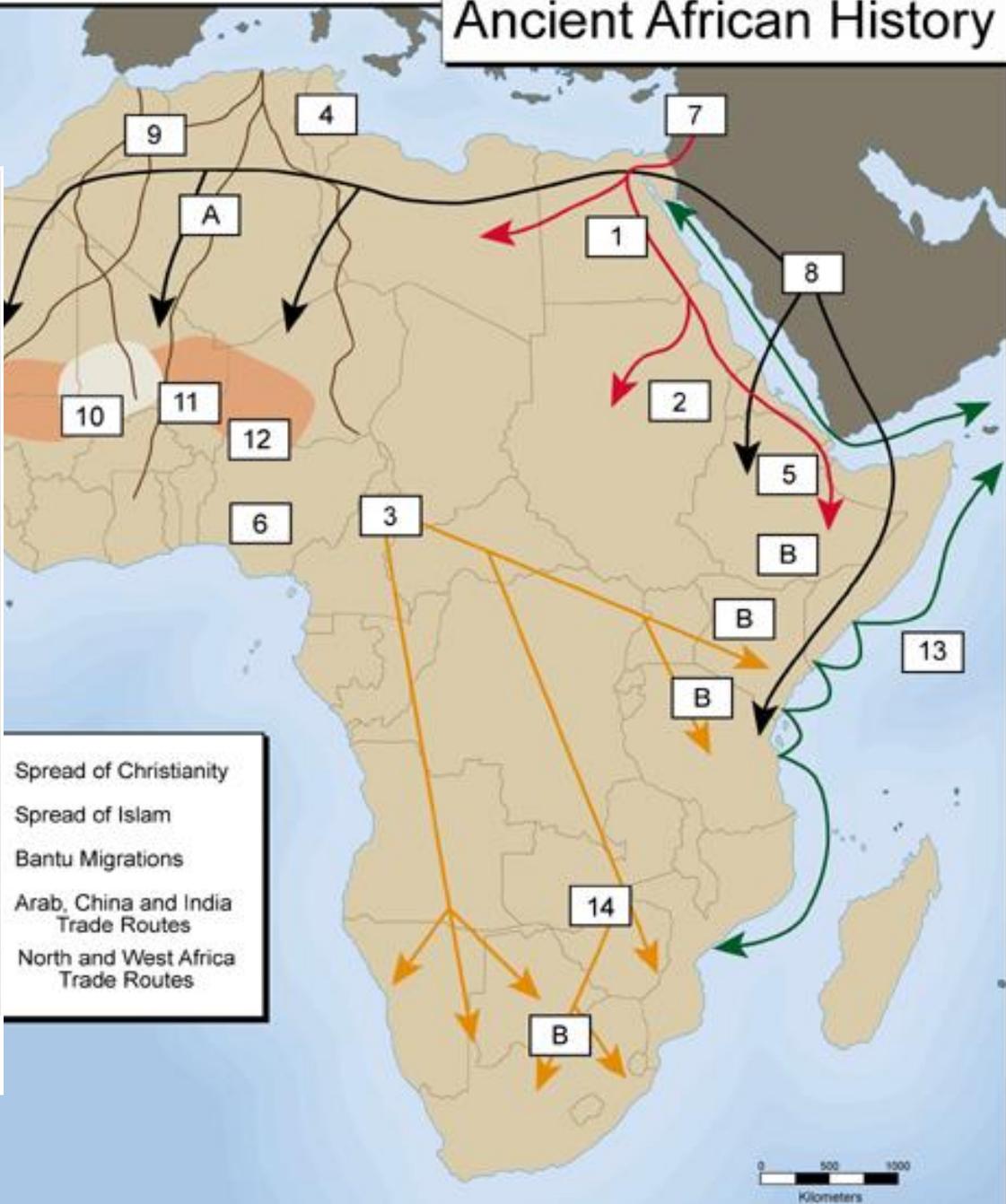
B. Gold, Salt, and Slaves: Trade and Empire in West Africa

1. introduction of the camel in early centuries C.E. was a turning point
 - a. camels can go 10 days without water
 - b. made it possible to cross the Sahara
2. regular trans-Saharan commerce by 300–400 C.E.
3. merchants especially wanted gold from West Africa (along with ivory, kola nuts, slaves)
4. the Sahara became a major international trade route
 - a. huge caravans (as many as 5,000 camels)
 - b. caravans traveled the desert for over 1,000 years



IV. Sand Roads: Exchange across the Sahara

Ancient African History



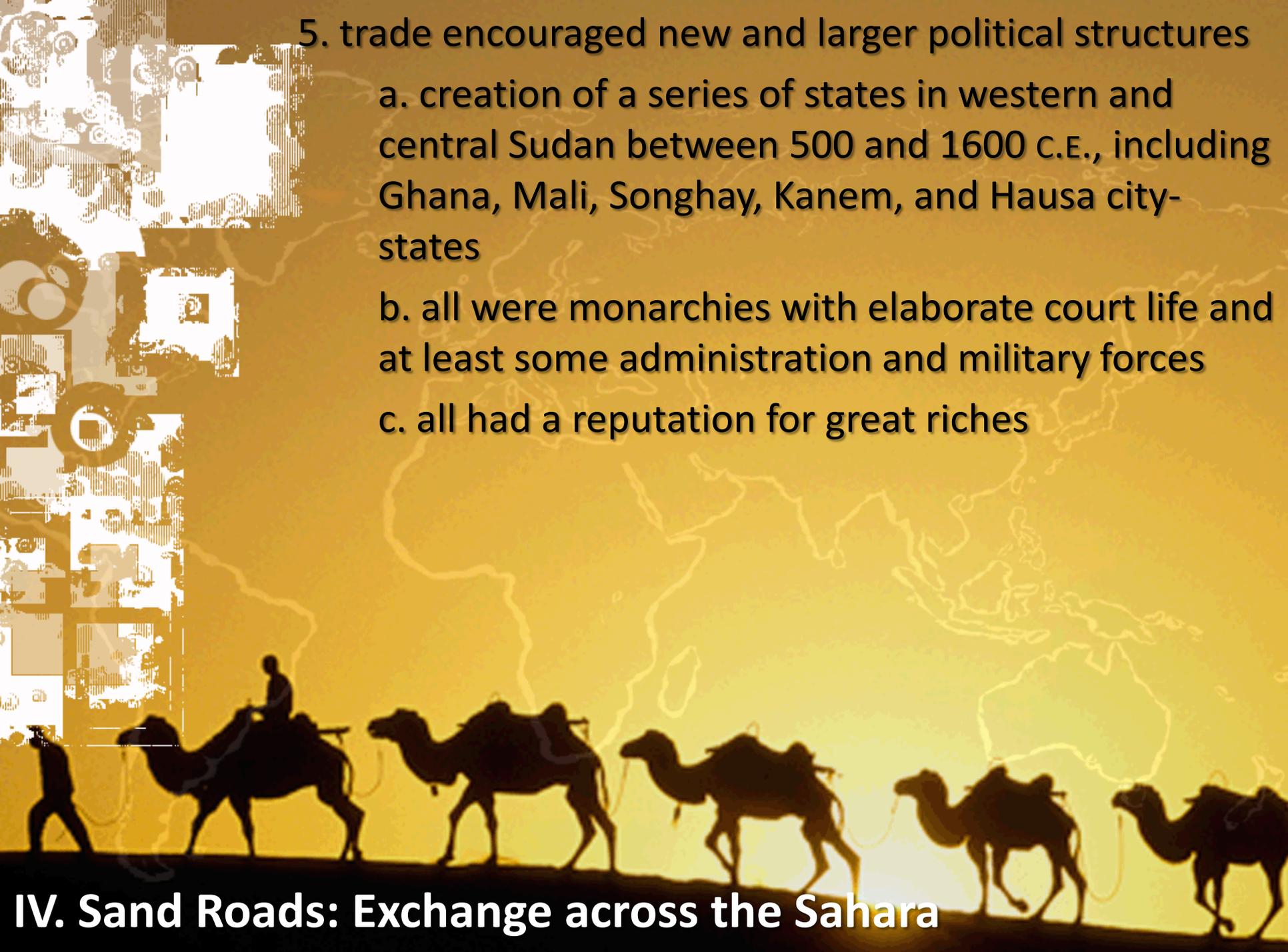
Spread of Christianity
 Spread of Islam
 Bantu Migrations
 Arab, China and India
 Trade Routes
 North and West Africa
 Trade Routes

Map 8.3 The Sand Roads
 Chapter 8, *Ways of the World: A Brief Global History with Sources*, First Edition
 Copyright © 2011 by Bedford/St. Martin's
 Page 350

5. trade encouraged new and larger political structures

- a. creation of a series of states in western and central Sudan between 500 and 1600 c.E., including Ghana, Mali, Songhay, Kanem, and Hausa city-states
- b. all were monarchies with elaborate court life and at least some administration and military forces
- c. all had a reputation for great riches

IV. Sand Roads: Exchange across the Sahara





The Gold of Mali
 Ways of the World, First Edition
 Bibliothèque nationale de France

A. There was no sustained interaction between the Western and Eastern hemispheres before the voyages of Columbus.

B. American trade networks were not as dense as Afro-Eurasian ones.

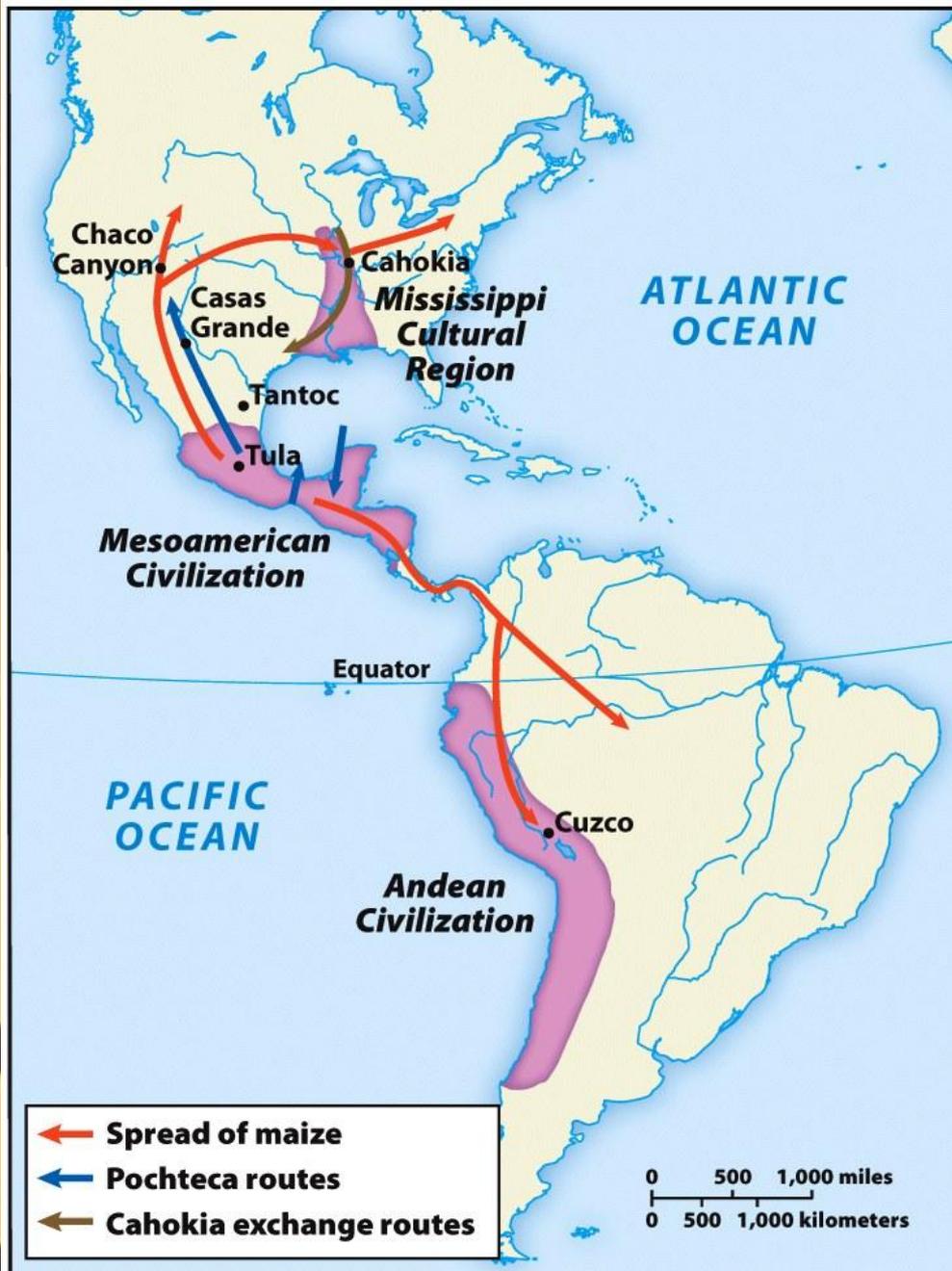
1. important limitations:

a. lack of domesticated large mammals, wheeled vehicles, large oceangoing ships

b. geographical or environmental obstacles, including north/south orientation



V. An American Network: Commerce and Connection in the Western Hemisphere



Map 8-4
Ways of the World, First Edition
 © 2009 Bedford/St. Martin's



2. local and regional commerce flourished, but not long-distance trade

3. cultural traditions did not spread as widely as in Eastern Hemisphere

C. But there was a “loosely interactive web” from the Great Lakes to the Andes.

1. cultural elements spread gradually

2. evidence of at least indirect contact

3. Cahokia was at center of a widespread trading network



V. An American Network: Commerce and Connection in the Western Hemisphere



4. Chaco canyon culture also interacted with Mesoamerica

5. Amazon and Orinoco river exchange networks

6. Caribbean peoples conducted interisland trade

7. Chincha people traded along Pacific coast of South America

D. There was a major trade network in Mesoamerica.

1. Maya and Teotihuacán traded by land

2. Maya traded by sea on both coasts (with dugout canoes)

3. Aztecs of fifteenth century had professional merchants (*pochteca*)

E. There was a major trade network in the Andes.



V. An American Network: Commerce and Connection in the Western Hemisphere

- Sea trade routes
- Land trade routes
- Region borders
- ▲ Maya ports
- Archaeological areas

PRODUCTS

- | | |
|--|--|
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

