

Srivijaya

Powerful kingdoms also developed on Southeast Asia's islands. For example, a dynasty called Sailendra ruled an agricultural kingdom on the island of Java. The Sailendra kings left behind another of the world's great architectural monuments, the Buddhist temple at Borobudur. Built around 800, this temple—like Angkor Wat—reflects strong Indian influence. The massive complex has nine terraced levels like a stepped pyramid.

The Sailendra Dynasty eventually fell under the domination of the powerful island empire of Srivijaya. At its height from the 7th to the 13th centuries, Srivijaya ruled the Strait of Malacca and other waters around the islands of Sumatra, Borneo, and Java. It grew wealthy by taxing the trade that passed through its waters. The Srivijayas established their capital, Palembang, on Sumatra. Palembang became a great center of Buddhist learning, where Chinese monks could study instead of traveling to India.

Source: "Kingdoms of Southeast Asia and Korea," Roger B. Beck et al., World History: Patterns of Interaction, McDougal Littell

In Indonesia, the trading empire of Srivijaya flourished from the 600s to the 1200s. Srivijaya controlled the Strait of Malacca, which was vital to shipping. Both Hinduism and Buddhism reached this island empire. As elsewhere in Southeast Asia, however, the local people often blended Indian beliefs into their own forms of worship based on nature spirits. Later, Islam spread to Sumatra, Java, and other islands. Local rulers adopted the new religion, which cemented commercial links with other Muslim trading centers around the Indian Ocean.

Source: "Diverse Cultures of Southeast Asia," Elizabeth Gaynor Ellis and Anthony Esler, World History, Prentice Hall

SONG DYNASTY CHINA

Under the Tang and Song emperors, foreign trade flourished. Tang imperial armies guarded the great Silk Roads, which linked China to the West. Eventually, however, China lost control over these routes during the long Tang decline. After this time, Chinese merchants relied increasingly on ocean trade. Chinese advances in sailing technology, including use of the magnetic compass, made it possible for sea trade to expand. Up and down China's long coastline, the largest port cities in the world bustled with international trade. Merchant ships carried trade goods to Korea and Japan. They sailed across the Indian Ocean to India, the Persian Gulf, and even the coast of Africa. Chinese merchants established trading colonies around Southeast Asia. Many foreign traders, mostly Arabs, resided in Chinese cities. Through trade and travel, Chinese culture spread throughout East Asia. One major cultural export was Buddhism. This religion spread from China to Vietnam, Korea, and Japan. The exchange of goods and ideas was two-way. For example, foreign religions, including Islam and some Eastern sects of Christianity, spread to China and won followers.

Source: "Tang and Song China," Roger B. Beck et al., World History: Patterns of Interaction, McDougal Littell

Under both the Tang and Song, foreign trade flourished. Merchants arrived from India, Persia, and Arabia. Chinese merchants carry goods to Southeast Asia in exchange for spices and special woods. Song porcelain has been found as far away as East Africa. To improve trade, the government issued paper money. China's cities, which had been mainly centers of government, now prospered as centers of trade.

Source: "Two Golden Ages of China," Elizabeth Gaynor Ellis and Anthony Esler, World History, Prentice Hall

Aksuṃ/Ethiopia

After 100 B.C., the kingdom of Axum spread from the Ethiopian highlands to the Red Sea coast. Axum included the upland capital city of Axum and the port of **Adulis** on the Red Sea. The peoples of Axum were descended from African farmers and people from the Middle East. By about A.D. 400, Axum controlled a rich trade network connecting Africa, India, and the Mediterranean. Traders exchanged many cultural influences in their travels.

Axum became a Christian kingdom in the 300s. At first, this helped strengthen trade ties with other Christian countries. When Islam began spreading across North Africa in the 600s, however, Axum became isolated and lost power. Civil war and economic decline combined to weaken Axum.

Axum's legacy, however, survived for centuries in a portion of present-day **Ethiopia**. There, Christianity was a unifying influence that helped give Ethiopia a unique identity among Muslim neighbors. A distinct culture developed in Ethiopia. In the 1200s, under **King Lalibela**, Christian churches were carved below ground into mountain rocks. Ethiopian Christianity absorbed local customs.

Source: "Kingdoms and Trading States of East Africa," Elizabeth Gaynor Ellis and Anthony Esler, World History, Prentice Hall

Swahili City-States

The coastal city-states of East Africa, such as Mogadishu, Mombasa, Kilwa, and Sofala, linked merchants from overseas with traders from Africa's interior. In the city-states' markets, merchants from overseas sold luxury items such as glass-ware, East Asian porcelain, and silk and cotton from China and India. In exchange for these manufactured luxury items, foreign merchants obtained raw materials from Africa's interior. These goods included coconut oil, copper, leopard skins, and shells. African ivory, which was highly prized in many countries, was another valuable trade item along with gold from southern Africa. In addition, enslaved Africans captured in the interior were exported through the coastal city-states to slave markets in Arabia, Persia, and India...

Trade along East Africa's coast reached its peak during the 1300s and 1400s. By this time, Kilwa had become the wealthiest and most powerful of the coastal city-states...

Trade led to a blending of African, Arab, and Asian cultural influences along East Africa's coast. Over time, many Muslim Arabs and Persians settled in Africa's coastal city-states. These groups intermarried with the local African population and gradually influenced the local culture and ways of life.

For example, local architecture featured coral stone walls and roofs of mangrove poles as well as Arab influences such as carved doors and decorative niches. In addition, local Africans, who spoke a Bantu language, adopted many Arab words. As the two languages blended, a new language called **Swahili** (swah-HEE-lee) developed. The term *Swahili* has also come to refer to the blended African-Arab culture that developed along East Africa's coast.

Because many foreign traders were Muslim, Islam gained hold along the East African coast as well. Many African rulers who governed the coastal city-states adopted Islam, and mosques appeared in cities and towns. At the same time, many Africans continued to practice local traditional religions such as animism.

Source: "Trading States of East Africa," Susan Ramirez et al., *World History: Human Legacy*, Holt

Great Zimbabwe

For a long time, many Westerners refused to believe that such amazing structures could have been crafted in Africa without European influence or assistance. These notions reflect ethnocentrism that was common in the West at the time. When European nations colonized the region, they sponsored an investigation with the goal of proving the white origins of Great Zimbabwe. Despite the overwhelming evidence, the people they sent, who were not professional archeologists or experts, insisted that Africans could not have built the structure. One, Richard Nicklin Hall, even went so far in an attempt to remove what he called the "filth and decadence of the [black] occupation" that he tore up large areas of land around the site looking for proof for his theory, destroying enormous amounts of archeological material in the process. An archeologist who visited the site shortly after Hall left deemed his fieldwork "reckless blundering ... worse than anything I have ever seen." With the help of modern dating techniques, today's archaeologists have been able to disprove these arguments and expose the truth. Africans, and Africans alone, were responsible for building this astounding and complex city.

Discoveries of Chinese porcelain, engraved glass from the Middle East, and metal ornaments from West Africa provide evidence that Great Zimbabwe participated in extensive trade during the 13th and 14th centuries. The settlements on the East African Coast such as Kilwa, Malindi, and Mogadishu would have been primary trading partners, connecting Great Zimbabwe to the entire Indian Ocean trade network, reaching as far as China. The wealth of Great Zimbabwe was in cattle production and gold, and there are a number of mines to the west of Great Zimbabwe. One theory is that the rulers of Great Zimbabwe did not have direct control over the gold mines, but rather managed the trade in it, buying up huge quantities in exchange for cattle.

Source: "Mystery of Great Zimbabwe" adapted from USHistory.org

india

“...In the eleventh century, new maritime powers arose to contest the dominance of Srivijaya. The strongest new player the Indian Ocean trade was the Chola Kingdom (907-1279), at the southeastern tip of the Indian peninsula. At first Chola maintained good relations with Srivijaya. Chola ports flourished as centers of international trade under both the Chola and Srivijaya rulers, who funded the construction of mosques, temples, and shrines for the city’s communities of Muslims, Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians, and Chinese...”

Chola’s foreign trade was controlled by powerful Tamil (South Indian) merchant guilds (organizations) that mobilized convoys and founded trading settlements overseas. Tamil merchants carried cargoes of Indian pepper and cotton cloth and Sumatran ivory, camphor, and sandalwood to the southern Chinese ports of Guangzhou and Quanzhou. Numerous architectural and sculptural fragments from new temples found in China are proof of the city’s once thriving Tamil Hindu merchant colony.”

Source: “Maritime Traders of the Indian Ocean,” Marc Van De Mieroop, Richard von Glahn, Kris Lane, Crossroads and Cultures, Combined Volume: A History of the World's Peoples (adapted)