Post-Classical World
600 CE - 1450

An Overview

General Characteristics

- <u>In 600CE</u>
  - Western Rome is gone.
  - Eastern Rome reconstituted (Byzantine).
  - India has been deconstructed.
  - Chinese have gone through 350years of chaos, but has reconstituted imperial idea.

General Characteristics

- <u>By 1450CE</u>
  - Collapse of Byzantine Empire.
  - Rise of Ottoman Empire in its place.
  - Decline of Arab domination.
  - End of Mongolian Era.
  - Acceleration of European exploration of African Coast.

General Characteristics

- More civilizations than in the Classical Period – and over a larger geographic area.

- Fall of Roman Empire has split Mediterranean region in to 3 chunks: eastern – Islam, North East – Byzantine, S. W. Europe.

- Do the previous definitions of civilization still apply?

Seven Civilization Areas

1. <u>East Asia</u>: China, Korea, Vietnam, Japan.
2. <u>S. & S.E. Asia</u>: India, and S.E. Asia in general.
3. <u>Middle East</u>: W. Asia and now including North Africa.
4. <u>Sub-Saharan Africa</u>: Sudanic Kingdoms, West Africa, East Africa, Swahili coast.
5. <u>Eastern Europe</u>: Byzantine, Balkans, Russia.
6. <u>Western Europe</u>.
7. <u>Americas</u>: Meso- and S. America.

Periodization

- How do we use periodization in history?
  - Historical device.
  - Attempt to manage process of change.
  - When "features" change the period changes.
  - Changes among relationships between areas of the world: Period defined by Civilizations' responses to these changes.
- What sets the beginning of a period and what sets the end?

Periodization

- **Basic themes/issues should be different from previous period's themes/issues.**

- **Classical Era:** Empire & Integrating devices.

- **Post-Classical Era**: Smaller political units (China/Arabs exc.) and no political pattern.

Themes

- *So, if the themes are different, what are they?*

1. Spread of major world religions (Missionary Religions: Christianity [late Classical], Islam [post-Classical], Buddhism)– <u>a cultural change</u>.
   a. 100s and 1000s of people changed their belief systems – not common in history (residue of past religions still around).

Themes

2. Development of sets of systems of interregional trade – more regular and more expansive than in Classical period – this trade becomes fundamental to many civs. -**and has remained fundamental**.

    a. **Localism v. Globalism**

    b. Divergence v. convergence

Themes

- All of these changes are Afro-Eurasian (no Americas) – interregional – not international.
- The rise of unified religion supports the rise of trade (they go hand in hand).
  - One god wherever you are.
  - Polytheism is more localized – harder to take your god with you.
  - Qu'ran gives guidelines for traders: think about fiscal and economic motives to join Islam.
  - Early Christianity suspicious of traders.

However . . .

- The fact that there are a number of world religions leads to new cultural and political boundaries, which lead to conflict – we are still living with this dilemma.

- This dilemma first appears in the post-classical era.

Trade

Trade Axis:

1. **Indian Ocean:** Persian Gulf, India, S.E. Asia, Pacific Coast of China.

a. **Launched by Arabs.**

b. Enhanced during post-classical period by technology – new ship design for Indian Ocean Winds (the Arab Dow) and new navigation devices (Compass 12th century) and more complete maps (Arabs lead the world in this).

Trade

***Monsoon Winds**: Winter: Himalayas act as a freezer. Dry winds originate over land. Early Spring: Wet Monsoons as Himalayas warm-up. Traders would leave Africa in the Spring following monsoon winds (Cold to Warm).

2. **Feeder Routes**: East African Coast south to Tanzania. Up the Swahili Coast, across the Mediterranean. Down rivers in Scandinavia and Russia to Constantinople. West Africa across the Sahara. Japan to Korea and China.

Trade

- **Why is trade so important?**

- New "World" network diffuses ideas (i.e. Paper: China has it in Classical Period – Arabs come across it in 8th century – Europeans learn about it in 12th century).
  - o Technology transfer faster than before – not as fast as today!
  - o Mathematics – Algebra, Arabic numerals. Arabs got numerals from India in this period – should be Indian numerals!

Trade

- Growing numbers of elites take a liking to products that they can get from other places – upper class consumerism (not yet mass consumerism) – silk, pepper, sugar – widespread among landowners and urban elite.

- **Is this the effective beginning of globalization (c. 1000)?**

Islamic Civilization and Cultural Diffusion

- Read the article.
- On a sheet of paper note as many examples as you can of when Islamic Civilization was the agent of diffusion.
  - <u>List</u> each example and <u>describe</u> the process of diffusion.

Trade

- **Problems for Arabs**
- ·   Caliphs loosing control of N. Africa. Lose it in 13ᵗʰ Century.
- ·   Rise of Sufism – religious enthusiasm (emotional) – less philosophy and art.
- ·   Result in terms of World Network is that Arabs become increasingly unable to maintain their network.

Trade

- In 13th and 14th Century a new system of interregional interaction appears:

  The Mongols.

Religion

- *What is a world religion?*
  - A religion that has the capacity to spread across traditional political and cultural boundaries.
  - Missionary religions.
  - Buddhism, Christianity (late classical), Islam (post-classical).

Religion

- Judaism – gains global standing, but not a missionary religion.

- Christianity not originally a missionary religion.

- Islam makes a conscious decision to spread Islam beyond Arabs.

Religion

- *Why did the post-classical period prove to be a time of conversion?*
  - Collapse of classical empires.
  - Less political stability, less material goods, increased disease.
  - People looking for stability.
  - Charitable impulses in religions?
  - Often a ruler decided the faith and pushed it on his people.
  - But there was often genuine spiritual conversion.

Religion

So What?

- No one political entity has ever controlled an entire religious area.

- Money to religious organization – "tithing" – money not available to secular government – helps explain lack on strong government in some areas.

- Reorients emphasis away from state to religious activities - Chinese government went against Buddhism precisely because of this.

- Bulk of artistic activity generated by religion.

Religion

- Christianity was born <u>outside</u> the state – developed institutions outside of the state.

- Islam was born <u>inside</u> the state. Ideal Islamic leader is a religious leader who does what secular rulers are expected to do – no clear boundary between religion and state.

Religion

- *Were most caliphs in post-classical state religious?*
  - Not particularly. Rise of Arabs simultaneous with Islam, but not necessarily because of Islam – Arabs were traders.

- *Why are Muslim's encouraged to accept the state regardless?*
  - Mohammed said "accept the state regardless."
  - State should be carrying out religious law – but not always the case.
  - Don't think about the state, heavenly stuff is more important.

Religion

- Ideal Christian ruler is similar – one who sees the separation and superiority of the church.
- *In the absence of a church structure, how do you prevent Islam from becoming fragmented and incoherent?*
  - No single authority in Islam.
  - Have centers of religious authority.
  - Major Law Schools provide the definitive understanding of the Qur'an.
  - Islam developed through these legal centers – could influence state or be in conflict with it.

Implications of World Religions

- All world religions encourage travel – pilgrimage.
- Through travel they meet fellow religionists – most developed in Islam.
- Intermixing of people who are different in many ways.
- Literacy in Islam and Christianity, not necessarily in Buddhism.

Implications of World Religions

- Encouragement of education – training in spiritual matters.

- Encourage merchant activity.

- Most of the post-classical period defined by tolerance between the Christians and Muslims – but this will change when we see the Crusades and the *Reconquista*.

- Buddhism has lots of different regional types of Buddhism – most tolerant, most willing to compromise and bend.

Implications of World Religions

- *How does the spread of world religions impact the social structure?*
  - They say all people are equal, and be suspicious of the wealthy.
  - Purpose of life is the afterlife.
  - Confirm social inequality by pulling people's interest away from their plight on earth (dominant).
  - Every so often a group will say "we need equality on earth!"

Implications of World Religions

- Christian leaders on the whole argued against slavery – too blatant material inequality.

- Muslims can't own another Muslim – many Africans converted to slavery to stop being taken – didn't always work, but Muslims treated them better.

Gender

- Islam protective of women, but also patriarchal.
- Men and women spiritually equal (contradicts patriarchy) – strongest in Buddhism.
- There are roles that men play and women don't (imams, priests etc).
- Women get opportunities for religious expression – distracts them from other forms of inequality.
- Patriarchy does not end and is often reinforced.