Period 4
Global Interactions
c. 1450 to c. 1750

Key Concept 4.1. Globalizing Networks of Communication and Exchange

- The interconnection of the Eastern and Western hemispheres made possible by transoceanic voyaging marked a key transformation of this period. Technological innovations helped to make transoceanic connections possible. Changing patterns of long-distance trade included the global circulation of some commodities and the formation of new regional markets and financial centers. Increased transregional and global trade networks facilitated the spread of religion and other elements of culture as well as the migration of large numbers of people. Germs carried to the Americas ravaged the indigenous peoples, while the global exchange of crops and animals altered agriculture, diets, and populations around the planet.

I. In the context of the new global circulation of goods, there was an intensification of all existing regional trade networks that brought prosperity and economic disruption to the merchants and governments in the trading regions of the Indian Ocean, Mediterranean, Sahara and overland Eurasia.

II. European technological developments in cartography and navigation built on previous knowledge developed in the classical, Islamic and Asian worlds, and included the production of new tools (such as the astrolabe or revised maps), innovations in ship designs (such as caravels), and an improved understanding of global wind and currents patterns — all of which made transoceanic travel and trade possible.

III. Remarkable new transoceanic maritime reconnaissance occurred in this period.
- Portuguese development of maritime technology and navigational skills led to increased travel to and trade with West Africa, and resulted in the construction of a global trading-post empire.
- Spanish sponsorship of the first Columbian and subsequent voyages across the Atlantic and Pacific dramatically increased European interest in transoceanic travel and trade.
- Northern Atlantic crossings for fishing and settlements continued and spurred European searches for multiple routes to Asia.

IV. The new global circulation of goods was facilitated by royal chartered European monopoly companies that took silver from Spanish colonies in the Americas to purchase Asian goods for the Atlantic markets. Regional markets continued to flourish in Afro-Eurasia by using established commercial practices and new transoceanic shipping services developed by European merchants.
- European merchants’ role in Asian trade was characterized mostly by transporting goods from one Asian country to another market in Asia or the Indian Ocean region.
- Commercialization and the creation of a global economy were intimately connected to new global circulation of silver from the Americas.
- Influenced by mercantilism, joint-stock companies were new methods used by European rulers to control their domestic and colonial economies and by European merchants to compete against one another in global trade.
- The Atlantic system involved the movement of goods, wealth, and free and unfree laborers, and the mixing of African, American and European cultures and peoples.
V. The new connections between the Eastern and Western hemispheres resulted in the Columbian Exchange.

A. European colonization of the Americas led to the spread of diseases – including smallpox, measles and influenza – that were endemic in the Eastern Hemisphere among Amerindian populations, and the unintentional transfer of vermin, including mosquitoes and rats.

B. American foods (such as potatoes, maize and manioc) became staple crops in various parts of Europe, Asia and Africa. Cash crops (such as sugar and tobacco) were grown primarily on plantations with coerced labor and were exported mostly to Europe and the Middle East in this period.

C. Afro-Eurasian fruit trees, grains, and domesticated animals (such as horses, pigs and cattle) were deliberately brought by Europeans to the Americas, while other foods (such as okra and rice) were brought by African slaves.

D. Populations in Afro-Eurasia benefitted nutritionally from the increased diversity of American food crops.

E. European colonization and the introduction of European agriculture and settlements practices in the Americas often affected the physical environment through deforestation and soil depletion.

VI. The increase in interactions between newly connected hemispheres and intensification of connections within hemispheres expanded the spread and reform of existing religions and created syncretic belief systems and practices. Examples include:

- The continuing importance of Sufi practices contributed to the further spread of Islam in Afro-Eurasia as believers adapted Islam to local cultural practices.
- The political rivalry between the Ottomans and Safavids intensified the split between Sunni and Shi’a.
- The practice of Christianity continued to spread throughout the world and was increasingly diversified by the process of diffusion and the Reformation.
- Vodun developed in the Caribbean in the context of interactions between Christianity and African religions.
- Sikhism developed in South Asia in the context of interactions between Hinduism and Islam.
- While the practice of Buddhism declined in South Asia and island Southeast Asia, different sects of Buddhism and Buddhist practices spread in Northeast Asia and mainland Southeast Asia.

VII. As merchants’ profits increased and governments collected more taxes, funding for the visual and performing arts, even for popular audiences, increased along with an expansion of literacy.

Key Concept 4.2. New Forms of Social Organization and Modes of Production

- Although the world’s productive systems continued to be heavily centered on agricultural production throughout this period, major changes occurred in agricultural labor, the systems and locations of manufacturing, gender and social structures, and environmental processes. Adapting to the Little Ice Age, farmers increased agricultural productivity by introducing new crops and using new methods in crop-and-field rotation. Economic growth also depended on new forms of manufacturing and new commercial patterns, especially in long-distance trade. Political and economic centers within regions shifted, and merchants’ social status tended to rise in various states. Demographic growth — even in areas such as the Americas, where disease had ravaged the population — was restored by the 18th century and surged in many regions, especially with the introduction of American food crops throughout the Eastern Hemisphere. The Columbian Exchange led to new ways of humans interacting with their environments. New forms of coerced and semi-coerced labor emerged in Europe, Africa, and the Americas, and affected ethnic and racial classifications and gender roles.
I. Beginning in the 14th century, there was a decrease in mean temperatures, often referred to as the Little Ice Age, around the world that lasted until the 19th century, contributing to changes in agricultural practices and the contraction of settlement in parts of the Northern Hemisphere.

II. Traditional peasant agriculture increased and changed, plantations expanded, and demand for labor increased. These changes both fed and responded to growing global demand for raw materials and finished products.
A. Peasant labor intensified in many regions (such as the development of frontier settlements in Russian Siberia, cotton textile production in India, and silk textile production in China).
B. Slavery in Africa continued both the traditional incorporation of slaves into households and the export of slaves to the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean.
C. The growth of the plantation economy increased the demand for slaves in the Americas.
D. Colonial economies in the Americas depended on a range of coerced labor (such as chattel slavery, indentured servitude, the encomienda and hacienda systems, and the Spanish adaptation of the Inca mit’a).

III. As social and political elites changed, they also restructured ethnic, racial and gender hierarchies.
A. Both imperial conquests and widening global economic opportunities contributed to the formation of new political and economic elites (such as the Manchus in China, Creole elites in Spanish America, European gentry, and urban commercial entrepreneurs in all major port cities in the world).
B. The power of existing political and economic elites (such as the zamindars in the Mughal Empire, the nobility in Europe, and the daimyo in Japan) fluctuated as they confronted new challenges to their ability to affect the policies of the increasingly powerful monarchs and leaders.
C. Some notable gender and family restructuring occurred (such as the dependence of European men on Southeast Asian women for conducting trade in that region, and the smaller size of European families), including the demographic changes in Africa that resulted from the slave trades.

Key Concept 4.3. State Consolidation and Imperial Expansion

- Empires expanded and conquered new peoples around the world, but they often had difficulties incorporating culturally, ethnically, and religiously diverse subjects, and administering widely dispersed territories. Agents of the European powers moved into existing trade networks around the world. In Africa and the greater Indian Ocean, nascent European empires consisted mainly of interconnected trading posts and enclaves. In the Americas, European empires moved more quickly to settlement and territorial control, responding to local demographic and commercial conditions. Moreover, the creation of European empires in the Americas quickly fostered a new Atlantic trade system that included the trans-Atlantic slave trade and transpacific exchange network. Around the world, empires and states of varying sizes pursued strategies of centralization, including more efficient taxation systems that placed strains on peasant producers, sometimes prompting local rebellions. Rulers used public displays of art and architecture to legitimize state power. African states shared certain characteristics with larger Eurasian empires. Changes in African and global trading patterns strengthened some West and Central African states — especially on the coast; this led to the rise of new states and contributed to the decline of states on both the coast and in the interior.

I. Rulers used a variety of methods to legitimate and consolidate their power.
A. Rulers continued to use religious ideas (such as European notions of divine right, Safavid use of Shiism, Mexica or Aztec use of human sacrifice, Songhay promotion of Islam, and Chinese emperors’ public performance of Confucian rituals), and art and monumental architecture (such as Ottoman
miniature painting, Qing imperial portraits, Mughal mausolea and mosques [e.g., the Taj Mahal], and European palaces like Versailles), to legitimize their rule.

B. States treated different ethnic and religious groups in ways that utilized their economic contributions while limiting their ability to challenge the authority of the state (such as the Ottoman treatment of non-Muslim subjects, Manchu policies toward Chinese, the Spanish creation of a separate “República de Indios,” and Spanish and Portuguese creation of new racial classifications in the Americas, including mestizo, mulatto and creole).

C. Recruitment and use of bureaucratic elites, as well as the development of military professionals (such as the Ottoman devshirme, Chinese examination system, and salaried samurai in Japan), became more common among rulers who wanted to maintain centralized control over their populations and resources.

D. Rulers used tribute collection and tax farming to generate revenue for territorial expansion.

II. Imperial expansion relied on the increased use of gunpowder, cannons and armed trade to establish large empires in both hemispheres.

A. Europeans established new trading-post empires in Africa and Asia, which proved profitable for the rulers and merchants involved in new global trade networks, but these empires also affected the power of the states in interior West and Central Africa.

B. Land empires – including the Manchus, Mughals, Ottomans and Russians – expanded dramatically in size.

C. European states – including Portugal, Spain, the Netherlands, France and Britain – established new maritime empires in the Americas.

III. Competition over trade routes (such as Omani-European rivalry in the Indian Ocean, and piracy in the Caribbean), state rivalries (such as the Thirty Years War, and the Ottoman-Safavid conflict) and local resistance (such as food riots, samurai revolts, and peasant uprisings) all provided significant challenges to state consolidation and expansion.