

Theme 2.4, Connections Across Water; Water & Land Trade

Use the following sources to analyze how water-based trade routes and land-based trade routes were connected. Create a series of letters between members of a trade diaspora who travel across both land and water.

There is a tradition that Al-Mansur, the caliph who founded Baghdad, remarked at the time, 'This is the Tigris, there is no obstacle between us and China; everything on the sea can come to us.' (Lynda N. Shaffer, *Maritime Trade in Southeast Asia to 1500* [Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1996], 40–42.)

Svear (Swedish Viking) made excursions down to Byzantium to trade honey, mead, and wax needed for Church candles (better than tallow) for textiles, jewelry, coins, and etc. There was some population pressure (more people, not enough land, and not a long enough growing season=migration), which prompted the trading and pillaging migrations of the Svears. Tver was the center of the water route from the Viking lands to Greece, as it is possible to sail down the Volga all the way to Astrakhan. (<http://www-personal.umich.edu/~lars/thesis3.html#Chapter3>.)

Because of the general insecurity and the slowness of communications, international trade was largely dependent on personal relations and mutual confidence. A man shipping goods overseas normally had to wait months before he could know what happened to them. He had to rely on his friends in the country of destination for the proper handling of his affairs. Mostly, though by no means exclusively, friends were chosen from one's own religious community. (S. D. Goiten, *Medieval Jewish Traders* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973], 6.)

Many of these visitors settled in the foreign quarters of Canton (China), which by imperial sanction was set aside south of the river for the convenience of the many persons of diverse race and nationality who chose to remain in Canton to do business or to wait for favorable winds. They were ruled by a specially designated elder, and enjoyed some extraterritorial privileges. (Lynda N. Shaffer, *Maritime Southeast Asia to 1500* [Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1996].)

"Archaeological digs at Cahokia produced fascinating materials: obsidian, that very hard, black rock that can be shaped into knife edges, tools; mica, that can be turned into decorative jewelry; copper, that can be shaped and embossed. Things of this sort. And what's interesting is that these come from specific areas. You can trace the copper to a certain part of the Lake Superior area. You can find this kind of obsidian only in certain parts of the Rocky Mountains. So now we know that Cahokia was at the center of a huge exchange system that covered really from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico, and from the Rockies all the way toward and past the Mississippi Valley." (Gary Nash, interview with Oregon Public Broadcasting, *Bridging World History*, Oregon Public Broadcasting, October 2004.)