

Periodization IV-Connecting Hemispheres Era (1450-1750)

The World in 1450

The post-classical period came to a close when the Mongol Empire declined and the **Ming** restored China to rule by the Chinese. In 1453 the **Ottoman Turks** invaded the capital of the Byzantine Empire at Constantinople and a new, but smaller, Muslim Empire was built in the heartlands of the post-classical Muslim areas. Muslim empires were also built in Persia, modern Iran, and the **Mughals** built a Muslim empire in India.



By the end of the post-classical period

Europeans had replaced feudal kingdoms with centralized governments in nation-states, like England, France and Spain. Competition between powerful European states manifested itself in a race to get to the Indian Ocean trade routes and eventually to claim colonies in the New World.

With the expulsion of the Mongols, the Russians expanded their territory east and established a consolidated empire stretching across the European and Asian landmasses. Under the **Romanov dynasty** Russian rulers created a powerful centralized government. Russia was a large supplier of grain to the Europeans and as a result serfdom expanded in Russia during this time period. When more land needed to be cultivated for the economy, more workers were needed and serfs met that demand.

The Rise of the West

No other theme played a larger role in the changes of this time period than the rising power of the Europeans. With the discovery of the **New World** the Europeans built large overseas empires that helped to fuel economic and population growth in Europe. While the Europeans were able to dominate the native populations of the Americas, they were limited in the areas they controlled in Africa and Asia. The real goal for the Europeans had been to gain access to the lucrative markets in the Indian Ocean Complex. By the end of the early modern period the Europeans began to industrialize.

With Portugal and later Spain taking the lead, European exploration began at the end of the 15th century. Partly because the Muslim regions blocked the European's access to Indian Ocean markets, the Europeans began to open up more maritime routes for trade. The Europeans used new naval technologies like an improved compass, larger ships, triangular sails and cannons for ships to their advantage. Most of these technologies were first developed by the Arabs and the Chinese in the post-classical period. Additionally in 1433, the Chinese ended their voyages of exploration and the Europeans were more than happy to take the lead in overseas exploration.

Consequences of the New Globalization

During this time period, the first truly global trade routes developed after European contact with the Americas. Profound changes happened throughout the world once the Americas were no longer isolated from the Eastern hemisphere. The Americas were the home of two large empires-**Aztec** and **Inca** when Europeans arrived. With smaller numbers, but more effective weapons the Europeans dominated over the Aztec and Inca populations. It was disease that

really conquered the Native Americans. Europeans brought diseases, most notably, smallpox that had devastating effects on the Native American populations.

New global markets gave way to a massive exchange of plants and animals. Horses and cattle were taken to the Americas, while crops from the Americas were transported all over the world. Sweet potatoes, corn, and peanuts were exported to China, while corn and cassava went to Africa. Some very significant transplants were the potato taken from the Americas to Europe and sugarcane from Asia taken to the Americas. The exchange of these products came to be called the **Columbian Exchange** and it facilitated rapid population expansion in Asia and Western Europe.

Additionally the exporting of silver from Latin America, by the Spanish helped to expand the European influence in the world. Initially the Europeans had few products others wanted, especially the Chinese. With a new demand for silver in China during this time period, the Spanish now had a highly demanded product to trade.

The Expansion of Slavery

Along with the devastation of Native American populations one of the worst themes of this time period was the massive expansion of slavery. Slavery had existed since ancient time and Africa had been a source of slaves throughout most of the post-classical period. Most slaves during the post-classical period were taken from the eastern coast of Africa to the Muslim heartlands. With the introduction of sugarcane to the Americas, the new sugar plantations demanded a cheap labor source. Europeans found those labor demands met by importing slaves from Africa. The slave trade shifted to the west coast of Africa in what became known as the **trans-Atlantic slave trade**.



Europeans were unable to invade the interiors of Africa, because they would die of malaria, so European traders worked with African traders to obtain slaves. Large trade kingdoms like Asante and Dahomey developed in Africa along the “Gold Coast”. These trade kingdoms were able to rise to power because their leaders obtained guns as part of the slave trade.

The Role of Gunpowder

Gunpowder was invented by the Chinese during the post-classical Period, and it was during this time period that gunpowder was adapted to use with cannons and guns. Every major empire of this time period and the small trade kingdoms in Africa all used guns as a way to maintain power. Europeans introduced guns to the Japanese at this time. At first the Japanese were very open to the European visitors, but after a while the Japanese sensed that the rising power of the Europeans could threaten them. In response the Europeans were expelled from Japan. Guns help bring an end to the feudal systems in Europe and Japan. The use of guns also meant that nomadic groups would no longer be a threat to civilizations.

So What-Why does this time period matter?

The legacy of the connection of hemispheres time period is very evident in the trade patterns still in place today. Many of the world's early colonies were the suppliers of raw materials and still are today. Latin America and Africa are both examples of this.

The rise of the Western Europe in the period had many implications for history. Growing wealth in Europe changed the social structure and new ideas were introduced about religion, society, and science. Changes that happened within Europe like the Renaissance, Reformation, and Scientific Revolution affected attitudes into the next time period. These new attitudes lead to the Enlightenment along with the American and French Revolutions. Western Europe's rising power in this time period set the stage for industrialization.

The massive exchange of products and peoples during the Early Modern Period still has implications today. The colonization of the Americas and the importation of the large numbers of Africans to Latin America resulted in a mixed society in Latin America. Latin Americans today have a unique culture that blends European, African and Native American elements. The slave trade to the North American colonies still has implications today in the racial relations of the United States. The colonization of the Americas by the British has roots in the United States and Canada's legal systems and the ideas Americans have about limited government. Remember the **Magna Carta**.

Global contact continued to grow. Today products from all areas of the world are traded globally. Global travel and global communication have become more common also. Those patterns were established during this time period making it one of the most vibrant chapters in world history.