

PART FOUR

# THE EARLY MODERN WORLD

1450–1750



## Contents

**Chapter 13.** Political Transformations: Empires and Encounters, 1450–1750

**Chapter 14.** Economic Transformations: Commerce and Consequence, 1450–1750

**Chapter 15.** Cultural Transformations: Religion and Science, 1450–1750

photos: left, Illustration from the *Padshahnama*, ca. 1630–1640 (bodycolour with gold on paper)/Royal Collection Trust © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, 2014/Bridgeman Images; center, Slave Merchant in Gorée Island, Senegal, from *Encyclopédie des Voyages*, engraved by L. F. Labrousse, 1796/Bibliothèque des Arts Décoratifs, Paris, France/Archives Charmet/Bridgeman Images; right, National Palace, Mexico City, Mexico/The Art Archive at Art Resource, NY

## THE BIG PICTURE

---

### DEBATING THE CHARACTER OF AN ERA

For the sake of clarity and coherence, historians often characterize a particular period of time in a brief phrase—the age of First Civilizations, the age of empires, the era of revolutions, and so on. Though useful and even necessary, such capsule descriptions leave a lot out and vastly oversimplify what actually happened. Historical reality is always more messy, more complicated, and more uncertain than any shorthand label can convey. Such is surely the case when we examine the three centuries spanning the years from roughly 1450 to 1750.

#### *An Early Modern Era?*

Those three centuries, which are addressed in Chapters 13 through 15, are conventionally labeled as “the early modern era.” In using this term, historians are suggesting that during these three centuries we can find some initial signs or markers of the modern world, such as those described at the end of Chapter 12: the beginnings of genuine globalization, elements of distinctly modern societies, and a growing European presence in world affairs.

The most obvious expression of globalization, of course, lay in the oceanic journeys of European explorers and the European conquest and colonial settlement of the Americas. The Atlantic slave trade linked Africa permanently to the Western Hemisphere, while the global silver trade allowed Europeans to use New World precious metals to buy their way into ancient Asian trade routes. The massive transfer of plants, animals, diseases, and people, known to historians as the Columbian exchange, created wholly new networks of interaction across both the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, with enormous global implications. Missionaries carried Christianity far beyond Europe, allowing it to become a genuinely world religion, with a presence in the Americas, China, Japan, the Philippines, and south-central Africa. Other threads in the emerging global web were also woven as Russians marched across Siberia to the Pacific, as China expanded deep into Inner Asia, and as the Ottoman Empire encompassed much of the Middle East, North Africa, and southeastern Europe (see Chapter 13).

Scattered signs of what later generations thought of as “modernity” appeared in various places around the world. The most obviously modern cultural development took place in Europe, where the Scientific Revolution transformed, at least for a few people, their view of the world, their approach to knowledge, and their understanding of traditional Christianity. Demographically, China,

#### AP® EXAM TIP

The historical processes and events in Part Four make up 20 percent of the AP® exam.

Japan, India, and Europe experienced the beginnings of modern population growth as Eurasia recovered from the Black Death and Mongol wars and as the foods of the Americas—corn and potatoes, for example—provided nutrition to support larger numbers. World population more than doubled between 1400 and 1800 (from about 374 million to 968 million), even as the globalization of disease produced a demographic catastrophe in the Americas and the slave trade limited African population growth. More highly commercialized economies centered in large cities developed in various parts of Eurasia and the Americas. By the early eighteenth century, for example, Japan was one of the most urbanized societies in the world, with Edo (Tokyo) housing more than a million inhabitants and ranking as the world's largest city. In China, Southeast Asia, India, and across the Atlantic basin, more and more people found themselves, sometimes willingly and at other times involuntarily, producing for distant markets rather than for the use of their local communities.

Stronger and more cohesive states represented yet another global pattern as they incorporated various local societies into larger units while actively promoting trade, manufacturing, and a common culture within their borders. France, the Dutch Republic, Russia, Morocco, the Mughal Empire, Vietnam, Burma, Siam, and Japan all represent this kind of state.<sup>1</sup> Their military power likewise soared as the “gunpowder revolution” kicked in around the world. Thus large-scale empires proliferated across Asia and the Middle East, while various European powers carved out new domains in the Americas. Within these empires, human pressures on the land intensified as forests were felled, marshes drained, and the hunting grounds of foragers and the grazing lands of pastoralists were confiscated for farming or ranching.

### *A Late Agrarian Era?*

All of these developments give some validity to the notion of an early modern era. But this is far from the whole story, and it may be misleading if it suggests that European world domination and more fully modern societies were a sure thing, an inevitable outgrowth of early modern developments. In fact, that future was far from clear in 1750.

Although Europeans ruled the Americas and controlled the world's sea routes, their political and military power in mainland Asia and Africa was very limited. Eighteenth-century China and Japan strictly controlled the European missionaries and merchants who operated in their societies, and African authorities frequently set the terms under which the slave trade was conducted. Islam, not Christianity, was the most rapidly spreading faith in much of Asia and Africa, and in 1750 Europe, India, and China were roughly comparable in their manufacturing output. In short, it was not obvious that Europeans would soon dominate the planet. Moreover, populations and economies had surged at various points in the past, only to fall back again in a cyclical pattern. Nothing guaranteed that the early modern surge would be any more lasting than the others.

Nor was there much to suggest that anything approaching modern industrial society was on the horizon. Animal and human muscles, wind, and water still provided almost all of the energy that powered human economies. Handicraft techniques of manufacturing had nowhere been displaced by factory-based production or steam power. Long-established elites, not middle-class upstarts, everywhere provided leadership and enjoyed the greatest privileges, while rural peasants, not urban workers, represented the primary social group in the lower classes. Kings and nobles, not parliaments and parties, governed. Female subordination was assumed to be natural almost everywhere. While the texture of patriarchy varied among cultures and fluctuated over time, nowhere had ideas of gender equality taken root. Modern society, with its promise of liberation from ancient inequalities and from mass poverty, hardly seemed around the corner.

Most of the world's peoples, in fact, continued to live in long-established ways, and their societies operated according to traditional principles. Kings ruled most of Europe, and male landowning aristocrats remained at the top of the social hierarchy. Another change in ruling dynasties occurred in China, while that huge country affirmed Confucian values and a social structure that privileged landowning and office-holding elites, all of them men. Most Indians practiced some form of Hinduism and owed their most fundamental loyalty to local castes, even as South Asia continued its centuries-long incorporation into the Islamic world. The realm of Islam maintained its central role in the Eastern Hemisphere as the Ottoman Empire revived the political fortunes of Islam, and the religion sustained its long-term expansion into Africa and Southeast Asia.

In short, for the majority of humankind, the three centuries between 1450 and 1750 marked less an entry into the modern era than the continuing development of older agrarian societies. It was as much a late agrarian era as an early modern age. Persistent patterns rooted in the past characterized that period, along with new departures and sprouts of modernity. And change was not always in the direction of what we now regard as "modern." In European, Islamic, and Chinese societies alike, some people urged a return to earlier ways of living and thinking rather than embracing what was new and untried. Although Europeans were increasingly prominent on the world stage, they certainly did not hold all the leading roles in the global drama of these three centuries.

From this mixture of what was new and what was old during the early modern era, the three chapters that follow highlight the changes. Chapter 13 turns the spotlight on the new empires of those three centuries—European, Middle Eastern, and Asian. New global patterns of long-distance trade in spices, sugar, silver, fur, and slaves represent the themes of Chapter 14. New cultural trends—both within the major religious traditions of the world and in the emergence of modern science—come together in Chapter 15. With the benefit of hindsight, we may see many of these developments as harbingers of a modern world to come, but from the viewpoint of 1700 or so, the future was open and uncertain, as it almost always is.

# Landmarks in World History (ca. 1450–ca. 1750)

1400

1450

1500

1550

1600

## EUROPE

1400–1600

The Renaissance

■ 1415

Beginning of Portuguese maritime voyages along West Africa

■ 1492

Columbus's first voyage to the Americas

■ 1497

Vasco da Gama sails to India

■ 1517

Beginning of Protestant Reformation

■ 1543 Copernicus publishes sun-centered view of universe; Scientific Revolution begins

## ASIA

■ 1433

Withdrawal of Chinese fleet from Indian Ocean

■ 1526

Mughal Empire established in India

■ 1550 Russia begins expansion across Siberia

■ 1600–1602

British and Dutch East Indies companies begin operations in Asia

■ 1565

Spanish takeover of Philippines begins

■ 1603

Tokugawa shogunate established in Japan

## ISLAMIC WORLD



■ 1453

Ottoman conquest of Constantinople

1501–1722

Safavid Empire in Persia

By 1500

Islam established in Southeast Asia

1520–1566

Reign of Ottoman emperor Suleiman

1526–1707

Flourishing of Mughal Empire in India

■ 1529 Ottoman siege of Vienna

## AFRICA

1440s

Beginning of Atlantic slave trade

1464–1591

Songhay Empire in West Africa

1620s

Kingdom of Dahomey established

1505

Portuguese attacks on Swahili cities in East Africa

1500–1530

Christian/Muslim conflict in Ethiopia

1506–1542

Reign of King Affonso I in Kongo

## THE AMERICAS AND PACIFIC OCEANIA

1492–1550

Decimation of Caribbean populations by disease and forced labor

■ 1519–1521

Spanish conquest of Aztec Empire

1530s

First Portuguese plantations in Brazil

1532–1540

Spanish conquest of Inca Empire

1560s

Taki Onqoy movement in Peru

1540s

Discovery of silver near Potosí

1607

Jamestown established

1650

1700

1750

1800

1618–1648

Thirty Years' War

1689–1725

Peter the Great begins westernization of Russia

1642–1727

Life of Isaac Newton; culmination of Scientific Revolution

18th century

European Enlightenment

■ 1644

Ming/Qing transition in China

1680–1760

Chinese expansion in Inner Asia

1700–1715

Missionaries lose favor at Chinese court

■ 1750s

British begin military conquest of India

1631–1648

Taj Mahal constructed in Mughal Empire

1707–1800

Fragmentation of Mughal Empire

1683 ■

Second Ottoman siege of Vienna

1740–1818

Wahhabi movement of Islamic reform in Arabia

■ 1652

Dutch settlement in South Africa established

1670s–1820s Wars of Islamic renewal in West Africa

1690 ■

High point of Palmares, Brazil's largest runaway slave community

18th century

Peak of Atlantic slave trade

17th century

Initial European penetration of Oceania

1600–1722

Ecological collapse on Rapa Nui (Easter Island)

18th century  
Flourishing of plantation system

■ 1780–1781

Tupac Amaru rebellion

# UNDERSTANDING AP<sup>®</sup> THEMES IN PART FOUR

---

## Global Interactions

Part Four of this text corresponds to Period 4 of the AP<sup>®</sup> course outline and constitutes 20 percent of the AP<sup>®</sup> exam. Encompassing the three centuries between 1450 and 1750, this part is commonly referred to as the “early modern era.” While this designation remains controversial among some historians, these centuries represent a new phase in the human journey because for the first time the interactions among distinct cultures and societies occurred on a genuinely global scale. Now the Americas became permanently linked into a network of communication and exchange with the Afro-Eurasian world, and sub-Saharan Africa was more thoroughly connected to an emerging world system. The three chapters of Part Four are organized thematically, with Chapter 13 dealing with empire building, Chapter 14 with the making of a global economy, and Chapter 15 with transregional cultural developments, both religious and secular. These processes in turn had major effects on the social evolution of human cultures around the world and on the demographic and environmental settings in which they operated.

Environment	Cultures	State Building	Economies	Social Structures
<p>Global population growth and environmental change</p> <p>Disease and demographic collapse: the Americas and Siberia</p> <p>The Columbian exchange: global biological transformations</p> <p>The Little Ice Age: global cooling and its consequences</p> <p>Environmental effects of silver mining in Bolivia</p> <p>Reforestation in Japan</p> <p>Deforestation in China</p> <p>Species depletion and the fur trade (in Russia and North America)</p> <p>Demographic history of slave trade</p>	<p>Muslim/Hindu encounters in India</p> <p>Muslim/Christian encounters in Ottoman realm</p> <p>Protestant Reformation</p> <p>Christianity in</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The Philippines</li> <li>▪ Siberia</li> <li>▪ Spanish America</li> <li>▪ Russia</li> <li>▪ China</li> <li>▪ Japan</li> <li>▪ Mughal India</li> </ul> <p>African religious cultures in the Americas</p> <p>Islamic expansion in Southeast Asia</p> <p>Islamic renewal: the Wahhabi example</p> <p>Neo-Confucianism, <i>kaozheng</i>, and popular culture in China</p> <p><i>Bhakti</i> tradition in India</p> <p>Emergence of Sikhism in India</p> <p>Emergence of modern science in Europe</p> <p>The European Enlightenment</p> <p>Responses to European science: China, Japan, and the Islamic world</p>	<p>European conquest and empire building in the Americas</p> <p>A Spanish colonial state in the Philippines</p> <p>The making of a Russian Empire</p> <p>Peter the Great and Russia's "catching up" efforts</p> <p>A Central Asian Chinese empire</p> <p>The Mughals: a Muslim empire in India</p> <p>The Ottomans: a Muslim empire in the Middle East and Southeast Europe</p> <p>The Tokugawa state in Japan</p> <p>Japan and China: limiting European incursions</p> <p>African state building and state disintegration in the slave-trade era</p> <p>Early modern state building: primary sources from Asia, the Middle East, Europe, and the Americas</p>	<p>The spice trade: empires of European commerce in Asia</p> <p>Asian commercial networks in Asia</p> <p>Global silver trade: effects on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Spanish America</li> <li>▪ Japan</li> <li>▪ China</li> <li>▪ Europe</li> </ul> <p>The fur trade: North America and Russia compared</p> <p>The Atlantic slave trade</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Origins</li> <li>▪ Operations</li> <li>▪ Outcomes</li> </ul> <p>Plantation economies in the Americas</p> <p>Forced labor and the hacienda system</p> <p>Silver-mining economy: Potosí</p> <p>Settler economies in the Americas</p> <p>Erosion of hunting and herding economies in Russian Empire</p>	<p>Class and gender in the early modern era</p> <p>Comparing colonial social structures in North and South America</p> <p>Women in American colonial societies</p> <p>Emergence of mestizo/mulatto classes in the Americas</p> <p>The fur trade and gender roles in North America</p> <p>Erosion of women's roles in the colonial Philippines</p> <p>Female merchants in Southeast Asia</p> <p>Erosion of pastoralism in Russian and Chinese empires</p> <p>Multiculturalism in China</p> <p>Women in Mughal and Ottoman empires</p> <p>Slavery in Africa</p> <p>Gender and social change in Africa as a result of the slave trade</p> <p>Expressing social status via trade goods</p> <p>Women in the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment</p>