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Worlds
Entangled

1600–1750



CHAPTER OUTLINE

- [Global Commerce and Climate Change](#)
- [Exchanges and Expansions in the Americas](#)
- [The Plantation Complex in the Caribbean](#)
- [The Slave Trade and Africa](#)
- [Asia in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries](#)
- [Transformations in Europe](#)
- [Conclusion](#)

CORE OBJECTIVES

- DESCRIBE** and **EXPLAIN** the impact of climate change on societies and economies around the globe.
- IDENTIFY** and **EXPLAIN** the major steps in the integration of global trade networks in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and **ANALYZE** examples of resistance to this integration.

ANALYZE the consequences of the Atlantic slave trade across the Atlantic world.

EXPLAIN the effects of New World silver and increased trade on the Asian empires, and their response to them.

COMPARE the impact of trade and religion on state power in various regions.

EXPLAIN the significance of European consumption of goods (like tobacco, textiles, and sugar) for the global economy.

The leading Ottoman intellectual of the sixteenth century, Mustafa Ali, was a gloomy man, convinced that the Ottoman Empire had slipped into an irreversible decline. When he published his magnum opus, *The Essence of History* (1591), the empire’s fortunes looked grim. The first half of the century had witnessed the conquest of Egypt and the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent and the Lawgiver, arguably the most successful of sultans. But by century’s end, the Ottomans had lost territory to their main European adversaries, payments in debased silver coinage sparked military riots, and general protests against the empire spread in eastern Anatolia. In addition, Ottoman rulers had to grapple with the fusing of two biomes, the New World and Afro–Eurasia, and a wave of environmental shocks to their agrarian systems. Entangling these worlds brought bounty and opportunity, but also competition and disruption. How different parts of the world responded to those upheavals over the 1600s would have deep, long-term consequences. It was these transformations that Mustafa Ali struggled to explain.

As we become more aware of the impact of climate change on human evolution, we have learned how many problems of the seventeenth century stemmed from a severe cold and arid spell that swept the entire world, now known as the Little Ice Age. The era saw a plunge in global temperatures lasting from 1620 to 1680 and, in some regions, they remained low into the next century. The decline in precipitation, more early frosts, and shortened growing seasons laid waste to agricultural and pastoral lands. Hunger, famine, and misery spread around the world.

The result was a double-edged crisis. As competition and warfare ramped up after the European conquest of the Americas and the resurgence of Asian empires, those empires squeezed peasants for resources to pay for the fighting. At the same time, global cooling meant that peasants produced less food and fewer surpluses and could ill afford the exactions of their rulers. Across much of Afro–Eurasia, the result was mass suffering and a wave of peasant unrest and political upheaval.

Mustafa Ali captured the sentiments of this age well: “Prosperity had turned to famine, the government careers had become confused, venality was rampant, and the military class was being overrun by *re’aya* [tax-paying subjects].” His poems lamented what appeared to him a terminal decline: “in the social sphere the world is upside down; the *ulama* are no longer learned or pious; the pillars of the state are fiends and lions; the truly learned are disdained and dismissed and government service now brings pain and poverty rather than pride and wealth. The plague destroying the world is moral as well as physical, for bribery and corruption are the order of the day.” This was surely premature for an empire that survived into the twentieth century, but it captured the vast new challenges that emerged for even the most powerful empires.

In spite of the turmoil, the period 1600–1750 saw the world’s oceans give way to booming sea-lanes for global trading networks. Sugar flowed from Brazil and the Caribbean, spices from Southeast Asia, cotton textiles from India, silks from China, and silver from Mesoamerica and the Andes. New World silver was crucial to these networks: it gave Europeans a commodity to exchange with Asians, and it tilted the balance of wealth and power in a westerly direction across Afro–Eurasia.

Europeans conquered and colonized more of the Americas, the demand for enslaved Africans to work New World plantations leaped upward, and global trade intensified, fueled by New World silver. In the Americas, Spain and Portugal faced new competitors—primarily England and France. At the same time, in the East, rulers in India, China, and Japan enlarged their empires, while Russia’s tsars incorporated Siberian territories into their domain. Meanwhile, the Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal dynasties, though resisting most European intrusions, found their stability profoundly shaken by climate change and global commerce.

Global Storyline

The Emergence of Global Trade

- Transoceanic trade networks (on an unprecedented scale) create vast wealth and new kinds of inequality.
- Silver gives Europeans a commodity to exchange with Asians and begins to tilt the balance of wealth and power from Asia toward Europe.
- New World sugar accelerates the shift of power in the Atlantic world from the Spanish and Portuguese to the British and French.
- European merchants and African leaders radically increase the volume and violence of the slave trade, destabilizing African societies.
- Russian tsars and Asian rulers in India, China, and Japan enlarge their empires.
- The Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal dynasties all struggle to resist European assaults.

Check Your Understanding: 1 of 15

INCOMPLETE

Question

Why did Mustafa Ali believe that the Ottoman Empire was irreversibly declining at the beginning of the seventeenth century?

Select an Answer

☐ A.

The Ottoman Empire was losing territory to its rivals amidst uprisings. Meanwhile, peasants were producing less food and could not afford to pay tribute to their rulers.

☐ B.

The reign of Suleiman the Magnificent and the Lawgiver was an abject failure from which the Ottomans could not recover.

☐ C.

Ottoman rulers refused to participate in trade with the New World, dooming the empire’s economy by cutting it off from the bounties of the Americas.

☐ D.

The Ottoman government was refusing to abide by the advice of the *ulama*, whom Ali believed were prepared to lead the empire into the new century.

Report Issue

Check Answer

Check Your Understanding: 2 of 15

INCOMPLETE

Question

What major developments affected the entire globe during the seventeenth century?

Select an Answer

☐ A.

global warming, increased agricultural outputs, and world wars

☐ B.

the Little Ice Age, imperial expansion, and transoceanic trade

☐ C.

decreased global competition, the Little Ice Age, and the eastern movement of wealth and power

☐ D.

imperial expansion, economic collapse, and global warming

Report Issue

Check Answer