

R8 MERCHANTS AND TRADE

Trade was always important to Muslims. Muhammad himself was a trader and his people operated caravan routes from Mecca. In the winter they traded with merchants in Yemen and in summer they ventured to the borders of the old Roman Empire. In addition to goods, the traders and merchants spread the faith of Islam and soon there were followers in Malaysia and India, and everywhere else that there were markets to exploit. Archaeologists unearthing coins marked with Arabic symbols have used these as evidence that Muslim traders traveled to Sri Lanka, China, and other locations. The trading colonies that Muslim merchants established helped the spread of Islam.

In an age when preservation of food was important, salt was a critical item. It was also used for seasoning. There were sources of salt in Africa near today's Algeria. Muslims took this product south and elsewhere, charging huge sums for this precious resource. And where they went, Islam went with them. Their caravans were made up of long lines of camels, a beast of burden that could survive for days in the desert without food and water.

A very sturdy boat, the dhow, carried traders and their cargo from the Arabian peninsula across the Indian Ocean to ports in Africa, India, and Indonesia. Captains used their knowledge of wind and water currents, and at night navigated with star patterns, the astrolabe, and the magnetic compass. These boats used a triangular sail, allowing them to catch the wind from any direction.

Muslim merchants going to Europe introduced rice, coffee, sugar, tea, spices, cherries, apricots, dates, and figs to that continent. While fresh fruit did not last, apricots, dates, and figs could be dried for sale on the longer trade routes. With sugar from Iran and Iraq, Muslims made candy and other sweets and even used it to make a confection from the licorice plant.

Write the answers on your paper. **DO NOT WRITE ON THIS CARD.**

1. What is the relationship between trade and followers of Islam?
2. What food products were traded for goods in Europe?
3. Why were camels used by caravan traders?
4. Why are found coins useful to archaeologists?
5. How was salt used by the people that bought it?
6. How were sea captains able to reach their destinations?