

## **Portuguese Impact on the Indian Ocean Trade: Document-Based Question & Argumentative Essay Task**

**Task:** Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama sailed around the southern tip of Africa and reached India in 1498. Portugal, over the next centuries, changed the flourishing trade relationships in the Indian Ocean. Your task is to read the maps and documents below to determine how Portugal impacted trade in the Indian Ocean.

**Essay question:** How did Portugal impact the Indian Ocean trade in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries?

**Guidelines:** In your essay be sure to:

- create a thesis statement.
- use evidence from the primary and secondary documents and outside information to support your thesis.
- provide analysis of how each piece of evidence helps to support your position.
- use each document at least once; cite each document you use.
- include an introduction, body paragraphs, and a conclusion.

### **Chronology**

1454- Pope Nicholas V gives Portugal's Prince Henry the right to navigate "as far as India" to help Christians "against enemies of the faith."

1487- Bartholomew Dias, a Portuguese explorer, rounds the Cape of Good Hope, the southern tip of Africa.

May 1498- Vasco da Gama, sent by the King of Portugal, leads four ships around the Cape of Good Hope to India in eleven months. He returns to Portugal in 1499 with pepper.

1507-1515- Portugal attacks and captures several strategic cities: Goa (along India's west coast) in 1510, Malacca (a strait between India and China) in 1512, and Hormuz (at the entrance of the Persian Gulf) in 1515.

## **Historical Overview**

The population of Asia in 1500 was five times as big as that of Western Europe (284 million compared with 57 million), and the ratio was about the same in 1600. It was a very large market with a network of Asian traders operating between East Africa and India, and from Eastern India to Indonesia. East of the straits of Malacca, trade was dominated by China. Indian ships were not sturdy enough to withstand the typhoons of the China sea, and not adequately armed to deal with pirate activity off the China coast

The Portuguese displaced Asian traders who had supplied spices to Red Sea and Persian Gulf ports for onward sale to Venetian, Genoese and Catalan traders. But this was only a fraction, perhaps a quarter, of Asian trade in one group of commodities. In addition there was trade within Asian waters in textiles, porcelain, precious metals, carpets, perfume, jewelery, horses, timber, salt, raw silk, gold, silver, medicinal herbs and many other commodities...

The headquarters of the Portuguese trading empire was established in 1510 at the captured Arab port of Goa, an island harbour halfway up the west Indian coast which was a Portuguese colony for nearly 460 years.... Malacca, the port which controlled trade and shipping from India to Indonesia and China, was captured in 1511 and kept until 1641 when it was taken by the Dutch. A base was established at Jaffna in Sri Lanka for trade in cinnamon. Most Portuguese shipments of pepper and ginger originated from the Malabar coast of India, but for higher value spices they obtained a base at Ternate in the Moluccas (between Celebes and New Guinea) for trade in cloves, nutmeg and mace.

**Source:** From “The World Economy”, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, United Kingdom,

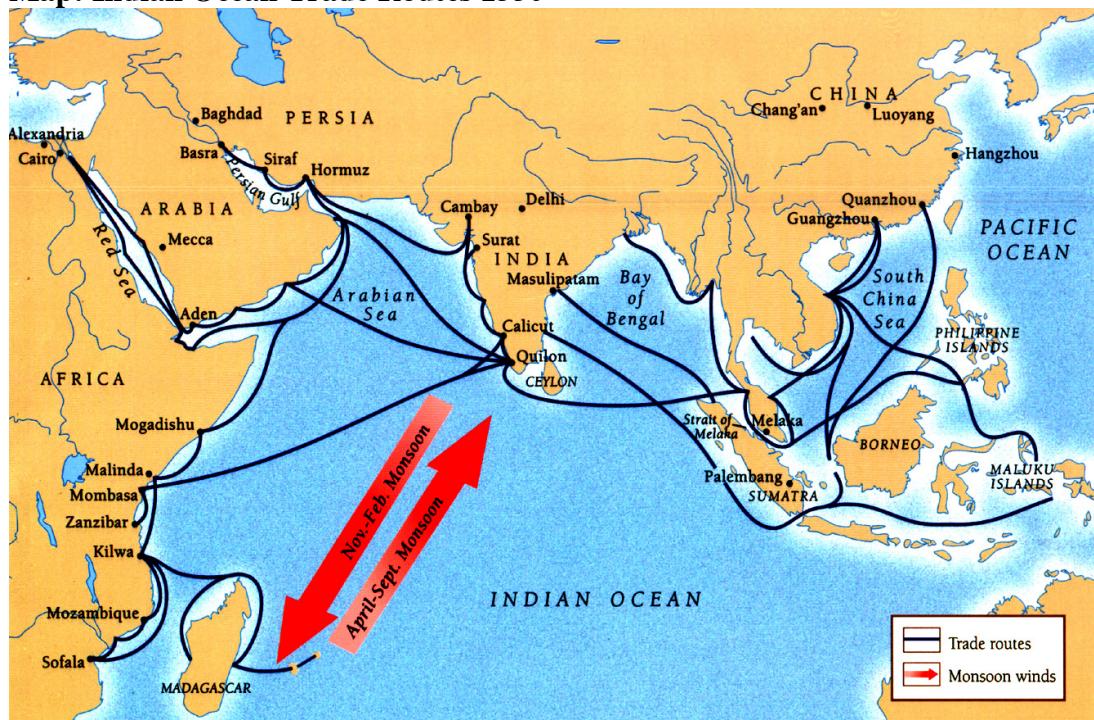
[http://www.theworldeconomy.org/impact/The\\_Trading\\_World\\_of\\_the\\_Indian\\_Ocean.html](http://www.theworldeconomy.org/impact/The_Trading_World_of_the_Indian_Ocean.html)

**Vocabulary:**

*Commodity:* an item that can be bought and sold.

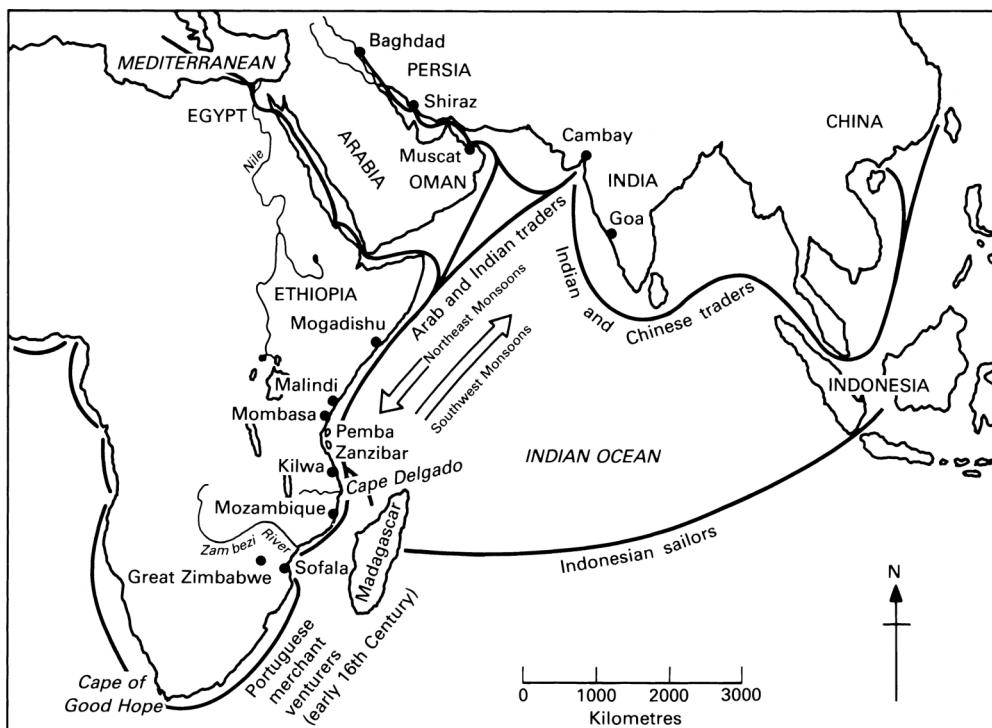
## Maps

Map: Indian Ocean Trade Routes 1350



Source: <http://www.columbia.edu/~amm2009/3956/Earlymod.html>

Map: Indian Ocean Trade Routes 1600



Source: <http://www.palgrave.com/history/shillington/resources/maps.html>

## **Documents**

### **DOCUMENT A**

*King Manuel of Portugal sent instructions to Viceroy Francisco de Almeida, in 1505.*

It seems to us nothing would serve us better than to have a fortress at the mouth of the Red Sea or near to it – rather inside it than outside might afford better control – because from there we could see to it that no spices might pass to the land of the sultan of Egypt, and all those in India would lose the false notion that they could trade any more, save through us . . .

**Source:** from *Foundations of the Portuguese Empire: 1415-1580* by Bailey Wallys Diffie, George George Davison Winius (University of Minnesota, 1977).

### **DOCUMENT B**

*Portuguese noble Afonso de Albuquerque became the Governor of the State of India in 1509. He led an assault on Malacca in 1511. He explained to his soldiers why the Portuguese wanted to capture Malacca.*

The king of Portugal has often commanded me to go to the Straits [of Malacca], because...this was the best place to intercept the trade which the Moslems...carry on in these parts. So it was to do Our Lord's service that we were brought here; by taking Malacca, we would close the Straits so that never again would the Moslems be able to bring their spices by this route.... I am very sure that, if this Malacca trade is taken out of their hands, Cairo and Mecca will be completely lost.

**Source:** *The Commentaries of the Great Afonso de Albuquerque*, vol. 3, in Glenn Ames, *The Globe Encompassed* (Pearson, 2007) 56-57.

### **DOCUMENT C**

*This document is from the royal court in Sri Lanka, in 1507 and describes the arrival of the Portuguese to Colombo, Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka is an island off of India's southern tip.*

And now it came to pass that a ship from Portugal arrived at Colombo, and information was brought to the king that . . . they have guns with a noise like thunder and a ball from one of them, after traversing a league, will break a castle of marble.

**Source:** Rajavali, a chronicle of Sri Lanka's royal court, 1507, from *The Travel of Lodovico Di Varthema*, editor George Percy Badger (Cambridge University Press, 2010), 193.

### **DOCUMENT D**

*This document is from Portuguese historian Gaspar Correa who sailed with Portugal's Vasco da Gama around the tip of Africa and across the Indian Ocean. This passage, describing Calcuuta, India, is from Correa's account of da Gama's second voyage to India, in 1502.*

As these things were so, the Moors of Calecut [Calcutta] in which city there were many who were acquainted with the affairs of Christendom, perceived the great inconvenience and certain destruction which would fall upon them and upon their trade, if the Portuguese should establish trade in Calecut [Calcutta] which they would immediately afterwards do throughout all the Indian countries. And taking counsel amongst one another, they all agreed that with all the power of themselves and their property, they should get the Portuguese turned out of the country, which they would also do in all the other parts in such manner as that they should not be able to trade nor profit, nor establish men at arms....

**Source:** *The Three Voyages of Vasco da Gama* by Gaspar Correa (The Hakluyt Society, 1869).

**Vocabulary:**

*Moor-* a name for Muslims used by some Europeans.

#### **DOCUMENT E**

*The economic fate of Venice Italy, as well as of Muslim traders, was endangered by Portugal's breakthrough into the Indian Ocean. Girolamo Priuli, a noble in Venice, wrote in an entry in his diary from 1501.*

This news, as has been said above, was considered very bad news for the city of Venice... Whence it is that the King of Portugal has found this new voyage, and that the spices which were expected which should come from Calicut [Calcutta], Cochin, and other places in India, to Alexandria or Beyrout [Beirut], and later come to Venice, and in this place become monopolized, whence all the world comes to buy such spicery and carry gold, silver, and every other merchandise, with which money the war is sustained; today, with this new voyage by the King of Portugal, all the spices which came by way of Cairo will be controlled in Portugal, because of the caravels which will go to India, to Calicut, and other places to take them. And in this way the Venetians will not be able to take spices either in Alexandria or Beyrout [Beirut].

**Source:** *Asia in the Making of Europe, Volume I: The Century of Discovery, Volume 1* by Donald F. Lach (University of Chicago, 1965).

**Vocabulary:**

*Caravels-* the type of ship used by the Portuguese.

#### **DOCUMENT F**

*This document records advice given to Sultan Nasir al-Din Nusrat Shah's (Bengal's ruler) by a member of his court in 1520. Bengal is located on India's east coast.*

[This is advice to the Sultan regarding a dispute between two factions in the court:] As for what these lords say, that Your Highness should not make peace with the Portuguese, they say this because they have sufficient revenues that Your Highness has given them in grant, and they are [high-ranking nobles], and above all they are [400 miles] inland, where they expect to receive no harm, and they do not remember that the poor [Bengali] merchants, who sail on the sea pay for all these things, because Your Highness should certainly be aware that the Portuguese are so powerful on the sea that nothing can escape them, and that if their very smallest boat ... is placed at the bar of Chatigao or off Satigao,

no other ship would be powerful enough to go out or to come in. And if this were to happen, and if the merchants cannot sell the merchandise of the land in it, while at the same time the goods from outside cannot enter the kingdom either, I believe that the governors would be hard put to pay the required to. . .

**Source:** Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *From the Tagus to the Ganges* (Oxford, 2005), 61.

## DOCUMENT G

*The secondary text below is by Sushil Chaudhury, a professor at the University of Calcutta, from a speech given in 2010 in Bangladesh.*

From the very beginning of their trading operations in India, the Portuguese tried to monopolize all trade in spices. The principal item sought by the Portuguese Crown in Asia was no doubt spices but overwhelmingly pepper. Indeed, pepper was the *raison d'être* of the Portuguese-Asian trade in the beginning, accounting for in the first two decades of the sixteenth century as much as 95 percent of the total Asian cargo in physical and 85 percent in value terms. Pepper for the most part came from Malabar in India and spices - cloves and nutmeg - came mainly from the Moluccas and cinnamon from Sri Lanka. Before the Cape route was opened up, pepper and other spices were exported to Europe by a complex land and sea-route. The Indian and southeastern ports exported these commodities to Hormuz and Aden from where they were taken by caravans to the ports of eastern Mediterranean. The merchants of west Asia and North Africa played a significant role in this trade. Once in the Mediterranean, the carrying trade was in the hands of another set of merchants of the Italian city-states and a few other nationalities...

Another area of the Portuguese involvement was the attempt to control and tax the trade carried on by Asian merchants in the Indian Ocean... The main instrument used for this was the cartaz or passport backed by armadas. Under the cartaz system, every Asian ship was required to take a cartaz from the Portuguese... If a ship was found without a cartaz, it was automatically confiscated and its crew immediately killed or sent to the galleys.

**Source:** "Maritime Trade in the Indian Ocean, 1600-1800" by Sushil Chaudhury  
[http://www.asiaticssociety.org.bd/journals/June\\_2010/contents/01\\_SusilChow.htm](http://www.asiaticssociety.org.bd/journals/June_2010/contents/01_SusilChow.htm)

**Vocabulary:**

*raison d'être*- an expression in French meaning "the reason for being."

## **Questions**

1. Look closely at the two maps.
  - a. What similarities do you see between the trading patterns in 1350 and 1600?
  - b. What differences do you see between the trading patterns in 1350 and 1600?
2. Look closely at documents A and B. What do you learn about Portugal's goals in the Indian Ocean in the 16<sup>th</sup> century? Use quotes from the two documents to support your answers.
3. Look closely at document C. What do you learn about Portuguese ships?
4. Look closely at documents D, E and F. How do the Portuguese impact different traders in the Indian Ocean? Use quotes from the three documents to support your answers.
5. What additional information does document G give you about Portugal's impact on the Indian Ocean trade?