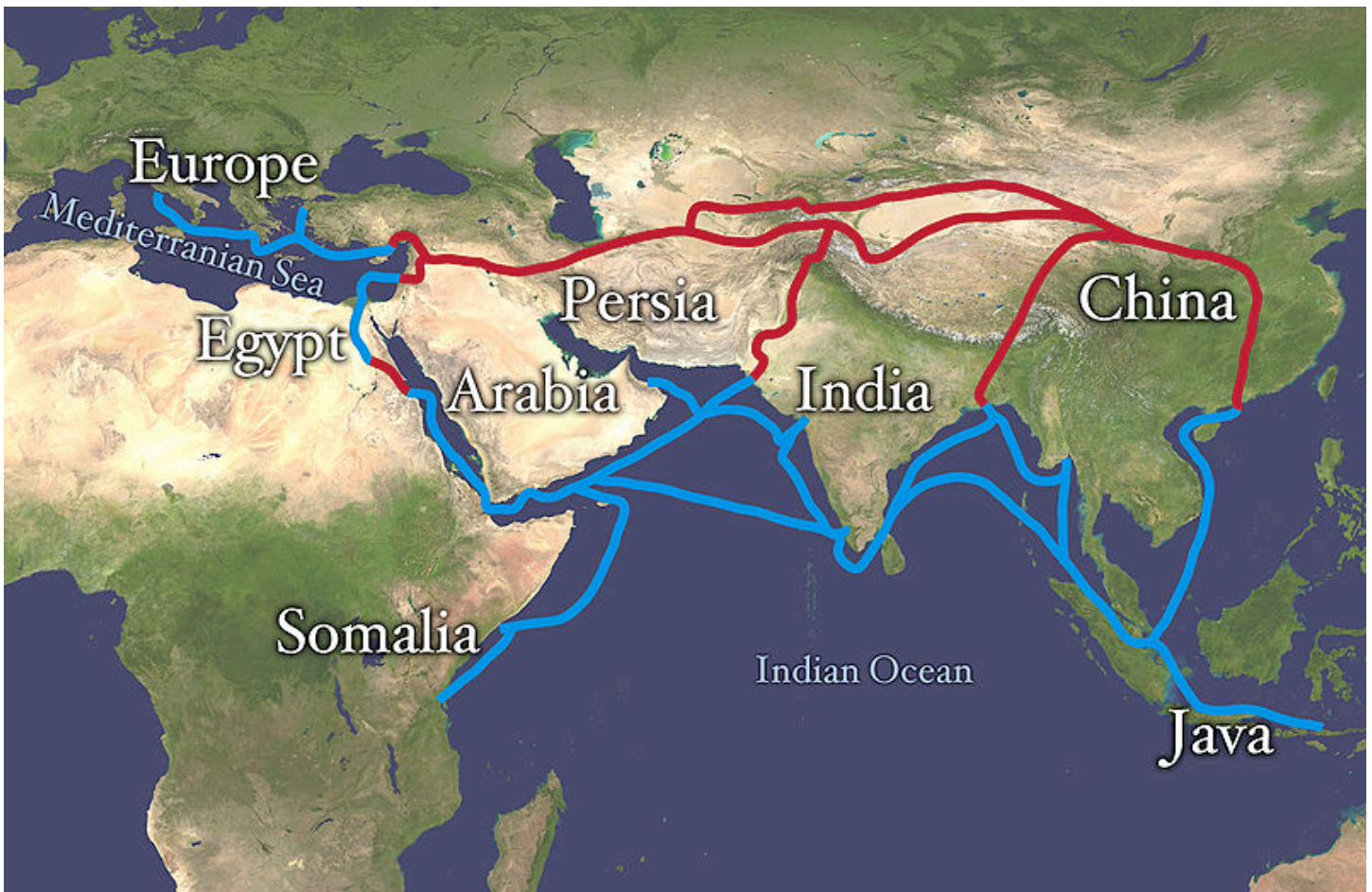


THE SILK ROAD

During the Han Dynasty (200 BCE - 200 CE) a trans-continental network of trading trails developed that stretched over 4,000 miles from China to the Roman Empire. The Chinese were the only people who knew how to raise silkworms and weave silk. Chinese silk was worth its weight in gold in Rome. Thus the trade route became known as the Silk Road, or Silk Routes. Europeans also acquired a taste for other luxury goods from Asia including spices, a taste that would later send Christopher Columbus on his voyages of discovery.

The Silk Road was a two-way street. Asian goods were traded for western goods, which flowed back along the Silk Road to China. Imports from the west to China included gold, silver, powerful horses, new foods, and the religion of Buddhism. The Silk Road in the north joined the southern ocean shipping routes to form the core of a vast trading web that connected Asia, Europe, and North Africa.

Overland trade routes such as the Silk Road were pioneered by nomads moving their animal herds between grazing lands. For a price, nomads provided caravans with pack animals and protection.



1. Quickly chart the Silk Road routes on your map.
2. What impact do you think the Silk Road had on various civilizations in Eurasia? Identify one specific example of one civilization influencing another through trade.
3. What did the Silk Road have to do with European exploration and colonization throughout the world?