

Assignment: selections from Menocal, *The Ornament of the World*

Discussion questions:

1. What were some of the cultural characteristics of Al-Andalus?
2. What was going on in Christian Europe between the fall of classical civilization and the end of the Middle Ages (more or less 1492)?
3. What were some of the competing Moslem groups?
4. What new forms of hybrid groups emerged?
5. Think about: “The enemy of my enemy is my friend” as a political philosophy: does it still exist today? Consider examples. (Taliban, Shah of Iran, Battista in Cuba)
6. Why was the battle “Las Navas de Tolosa” important?
7. Why did the “spell of Arabic” take over Al-Andalus? What was Latin associated with? What is Mozarabic?
8. Why were the “ring songs” (lyrical songs) so important? How did they break the rules of classical Arabic poetry; why were the refrains important?

Assignment: Chanda, Ch. 2

Discussion questions:

1. Chanda and Menocal describe multi-cultural universes linked through trade. How do you predict the emergence of rapid transportation and the electronic revolution will change cultural diasporas?
2. Why was the evolution of the “Arabian saddle” crucial for trade between 500 BCE and 200 BC?
3. What was the Silk Road? Where did it go? Why was it important?
4. Why did the speed of boats remain stable between 1st century CE and 1780? How did that affect cultural exchange?
5. Who was Ben Yiju? Why was his story important?
6. What are government chartered trading companies? Why is their emergence important? (think of the British and Dutch East India Company)
7. What inventions speeded world trade?
8. How did the invention of bills of exchange change commerce? When was the first credit card invented?
9. When was the bar code invented? Why was it crucial for international trade?
10. HTML, lasers, fiber-optics, computers=24 hr. a day marketplaces—virtual trade: will this change cultural exchange?

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