

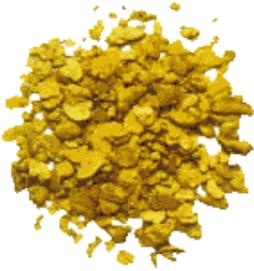
OLD WORLD TRADE GOODS



Salt

was and still is a necessary component of the daily diet. In the time of these explorers it was used as a preserving agent for foods such as dried meat. It was as necessary, as it is today in warmer regions, for the replacement of lost salt due to perspiration. Found along the coast where sea water evaporates, as well as in inland areas where mineral deposits occur, this precious trade item was once used as a form of payment. Today people are paid a 'salary', and this word developed from the tradition of salt payment. Salt trade was very active in dry areas such as the [Sahara](#) Desert and it was carried by camel trains to the Mediterranean where it was shipped to various European ports.

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Gold

was mainly obtained from West Africa before 1350 AD. Muslim caravans crossed the [Sahara](#) to trade valued goods for gold, in turn trading the gold to the Chinese and Europeans in exchange for other goods (such as Chinese silk or porcelain).

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Silk

cloth was an item valued not only for its strength and beauty, but also for the unique process involved in making it. In a very time-consuming and therefore costly process, Chinese workers unraveled the fine threads of the silkworm cocoon, twisted them together, and wove them into cloth on a loom. The trade of this luxury item occurred along what is known as the [Silk Road](#) which led from China to the Middle East, and northward into Russian and European regions. Popular routes, such as this one, had places called 'caravanserais' (inns) for the many caravans of merchants with their loaded down camels to stop, and rest, and collect water.

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Jade,

a green gemstone, was a highly valued item both in China and abroad. Merchants traveling the [Silk Road](#) often traded their goods for items such as carvings made from jade.

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Porcelain,

a type of pottery invented in the 8th century by the Chinese, had a semitransparent and delicate quality that was unique. This made it attractive to those who were concerned with fashion in wealthy European cities. Consequently, merchants often traded their goods for Chinese porcelain.

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Spice

trading was conducted largely by [sea routes](#) with stops along ports in China, the East Indies (Spice Islands), India, the Middle East into the Mediterranean, and extending to ports in Genoa, Venice, and on to Britain. At one time Middle Eastern peoples valued spices as highly as gold. In Europe, where meat was often preserved in nothing more than salt, spices became a mandatory ingredient to flavor the meat in order to make it palatable. Pepper became a precious commodity and was used as money both in the West and East. Cinnamon is said to have once been more valuable than gold. Trade in nutmeg, cloves and cinnamon in the Spice Islands enabled the Dutch to become extremely wealthy. When the Portuguese discovered a sea route around the tip of

Africa to the Spice Islands in the 15th century, traditional spice trade routes were altered forever.

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