

Economy and Trade / Trading routes

As overland routes directly connecting Europe and the Arab and Ottoman territories did not exist, goods between these regions were exchanged mainly through seaborne commerce across the Mediterranean. In the 19th century, maritime trade networks expanded, as mass-produced goods from Europe were imported by the Arab and Ottoman world in exchange for important raw materials. Meanwhile, trading routes criss-crossing the interior ensured that those goods – carried by caravans sometimes numbering thousands of pack animals – could reach the ports or be transported inland from there. Both in Europe and the Middle East, river systems often helped to further interconnect the commercial routes by land and sea.



Working Number: SP 101
Name: Postcard: The Strait of Gibraltar in the Future
Holding Museum: Cerralbo Museum
Date: 1902–1922
Materials: Paper; colour print
Curator Justification: One of the most important trade routes for the commerce between Europe and the Arab and Ottoman world was the Mediterranean Sea, on which commodities were shipped to and from Western European ports and North African and Levantine ones.



Working Number: FR 025
Name: Egypt. Suez canal.
Holding Museum: National Library of France
Date: 1880s
Materials: -
Curator Justification: The commerce of Europe with the Arabian Peninsula benefited from the construction of the Suez Canal, because by connecting the Mediterranean to the Red Sea the distance between the two geographical regions was drastically shortened and the duration of commercial transports was significantly reduced.



Working Number: RO 018
Name: Valahian Caravan
Holding Museum: National Museum of Romanian History
Date: 1869
Materials: -
Curator Justification: In North Africa, the Middle East and the Balkans, caravans remained the main method of transporting commodities overland well into the 19th century. In the Arab and Ottoman world goods were carried using camels, whereas in the Balkans horses, mules or donkeys were used.



Working Number: LB 111
Name: Photograph of the Beirut–Aleppo railway
Holding Museum: Ministry of Transportation
Date: 1906

Materials:

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Curator Justification:

In the second half of the 19th century the first railways began to be built in the Middle East, the Balkans and North Africa. As the railway system expanded, caravan trade gradually disappeared because carrying merchandise overland by train was more profitable since it allowed the transportation of larger quantities of products in less time.
