

goods, people and money on the move, and who paid for it

The pre-modern world and the silk routes

- the world has been tied together for thousands of years by travellers, traders, priests and pilgrims carrying goods, money, skills, ideas and germs
- the **silk routes** are named for the west bound Chinese silk cargoes, they existed before the Christian era and thrived almost till the fifteenth century
- historians count several such routes, over land and by sea, knitting together Asia, Europe and northern Africa
- Chinese pottery went west, textiles and spices came from India and Southeast Asia, and precious metals, gold and silver, flowed from Europe to Asia
- Buddhism** emerged from eastern India and spread outward through the points where these routes crossed

Food travels: noodles, potatoes and the Americas

- noodles are thought to have travelled west from China to become spaghetti, or Arab traders may have taken pasta to fifth century Sicily
- potatoes, soya, groundnuts, maize, tomatoes, chillies and sweet potatoes were unknown to our ancestors until about five centuries ago
- they reached Europe and Asia only after **Christopher Columbus** came upon the Americas
- Ireland's poorest peasants grew so dependent on the potato that when disease destroyed the crop in the **mid 1840s**, hundreds of thousands died of starvation

Conquest, disease and a westward shift

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- the Portuguese and Spanish conquest of America was decisively under way by the **mid sixteenth century**, and firepower alone did not win it
- smallpox** carried on the bodies of the conquerors killed whole communities, because America's original inhabitants had no immunity to it
- until the nineteenth century poverty, hunger, crowded cities and deadly disease were common in Europe, and thousands fled to America
- until well into the eighteenth century **China and India** were among the world's richest countries, and from the fifteenth century China restricted overseas contact
- China's retreat and the rising importance of the Americas moved the centre of world trade **westwards** to Europe

asked rarely, scores big

The Columbian exchange

- historians call the two way traffic that followed **1492** the Columbian exchange
- west to east came maize, potatoes, tomatoes, chillies, cocoa and tobacco, east to west went wheat, sugarcane, horses and cattle, and the diseases travelled with them
- it is the largest single change in what the world eats, and no treaty or factory had anything to do with it