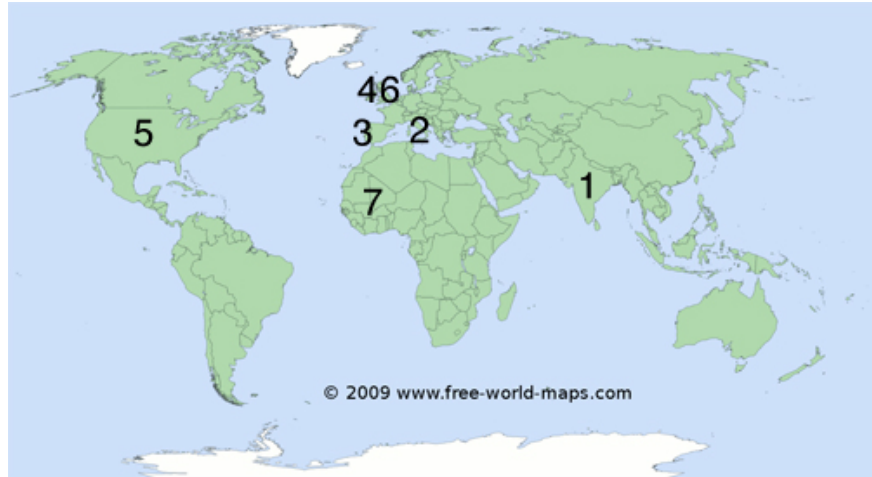


The stages of cotton's history

1) Cotton is a very old plant which science says has its origins in two regions: one in India and the other in the region of modern-day Peru and Guatemala. Cotton fabrics found in Pakistan for example can be dated back to the year 3200BC.



2) Around 600BC cotton moved along trade routes such as the Silk Road across the former Mesopotamia which is now Iraq, Iran, Turkey and Syria as far as Rome.

3) Trade in cotton began to flourish with the discovery of sea routes around the Cape of Good Hope and the establishment of trading states in India. For a long time the Portuguese dominated the cotton trade, until they had to compete more intensively with other European states like France and England towards the end of the 17th century.

4) The first industrial cotton mill opened its doors in Manchester in 1641 and this marked the beginning of the industrial processing of cotton in Europe.

5) With the arrival of European immigrants in the USA the growing of cotton on plantations began. The fibres became more and more popular and the planted areas expanded. The planting and production of yarn were very labour intensive and the demand for workers was high. Slaves carried out these tasks and the slave trade intensified along with the increasing demand for cotton. Scientists estimate that a total of 15 million black Africans had to leave their homelands in the course of three centuries of a flourishing slave trade and were shipped like goods to South and North America as well as Europe to carry out forced labour.

6) The invention of the „Spinning Jenny“ (1764) and the „Cotton Gin“ (1793) revolutionized the processing of cotton and made a faster and higher rate of production possible. In order to address the increasing demand, the plantations were, and still are, treated with fertilizers and pesticides.

7) Today, cotton is planted in a total of 70 countries in tropical and subtropical regions. With a market share of 38%, it is one of the most important fibres for the global textile industry. Indeed „white gold“ has become an object of speculation on the commodity exchanges. The price fluctuations hit farmers in Southern countries particularly hard.

Sources

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