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Autore	Abu-Lughod Janet L. <1928->
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Sommario/riassunto	By the end of the thirteenth century the regions of Europe, the Middle East, the Indian Ocean area, and China were becoming integrated--through activities in an archipelago of cities located along major land and sea routes--into a world system of commerce and production, albeit one in which Europe still played a minor role. This book traces the formation of the system and explores how the Black Death, circa 1350, and the subsequent isolation of China under the Ming dynasty interrupted its further development. Abu-Lughod argues that demographic, geographic, and political factors, rather than any unique qualities of Western capitalism or "personality," account for the eventual triumph of "the West" during the ensuing period of six hundred years, and suggests that current transformations in the world system may signal the end of this aberrant phase of world history.