

Chapter 2: Old Worlds, New Worlds

Fishing Nets and Far Horizons

- Fifteenth century search for cod had drawn West Country sailors north/west towards Iceland
 - 1480s-90s: English try luck further west, looking for Hy-Brasil—Galic for “Isle of the Blessed”—somewhere west of Ireland.
 - 1497: Giovanni Caboto, called *John Cabot* by the English, sailed west from port of Bristol, returning with news of a “new-found” island
 - * received 10 pounds as reward
 - 1498: Cabot’s 5 new ships set out in search of the northwest passage never to be heard from again
- 1450s: Gradual changes in European Society
 - Technological: advances in navigating & building ships, use of gun powder gunpowder,
 - Economic: Involving development of trade networks
 - **Demographic**: Bringing about a rise in European population after a century of plague
 - Religious: Adding dimension of faith to rivalries fueling discoveries in Americas
 - Political: Making it possible for kingdoms to centralize & expand influence overseas

Eurasia and Africa in the Fifteenth Century

- 1405-1433: China’s “*Treasure Fleet*”—300 ships manned by 28K sailors & commanded by Zheng He (“Jung Huh”)—traveled as far as eastern coast of Africa
- Ottomans next mightiest world power
 - 1453: Sultan Mehmet II conquered “impregnable” Christian city Constantinople

Europe’s Place in the World

- 1340s-50s: Bubonic plague—Black Death—killed 1Q of Europe’s population
- 1450: Monarchs steadily enlarge sphere of royal power at the expense of warrior lords
 - Such large, centrally organized states were able to attain the resources need to support colonial outposts, professional armies, & navies capable of creating overseas empires

Africa and the Portuguese Wave

- For centuries, Eurasian markets sought African spices, gold, & ivory which were transported along trade routes controlled by powerful African nations, inflating the price
 - Sailing up the African coast w/good impossible at time due to tides & technology
- Prince Henry “the Navigator”: Passionate advocate for Portuguese maritime interests
 - Funded exploratory voyages, established a maritime school, & challenged sailors & engineers to solve the problem of the African current
 - Advocacy helped Portugal develop the *Caravel*, a lighter more maneuverable ship
 - * Allowed travel to & from African west coast
- Pre-Nineteenth Century: W/few exceptions, colonization of west Africa by Europeans was impossible due to disease, large groups of organized natives, & mature commercial networks
 - newcomers had to seed partners to forge trade relationships w/coastal elites
- The Portuguese establish forts & trading houses on the coast
 - give tax to local powers in return for trade privileges
 - * expressed interest in slaves

Sugar and the Origins of the Slave Trade