

Chapter 1- New World Beginnings

33,000 B.C.E. – 1769 C.E

- I. The shaping of North America
 1. Earth's continent took their positions slowly; they used to all be one giant mass-continent.
 - Shifting caused mountain ranges to form
 2. About 2 million years ago a great chill covered the planet beginning the Great Ice Age
 - When the glaciers receded and melted they scraped away topsoil and the great lakes were formed and filled.
- II. Peopling the Americas
 1. The Great Ice Age did more than change the environment, it contributed to the origins of the continent's human history.
 - As the sea level dropped, it exposed a land bridge connecting Eurasia with North America in the area of the present-day Bering Sea.
 - Across that bridge, probably following migratory herds of game, ventured small bands of nomadic Asian hunters. They spread to all parts of America in over 2,000 years.
 2. Incas in Peru, Mayans in Central America, and Aztecs in Mexico shaped stunningly sophisticated civilizations.
- III. The Earliest Americans
 1. Corn growing helped the population grow and quickly became a staple crop.
 2. Everywhere it was planted, corn began to transform nomadic hunting bands into settled agricultural villagers.
 - Corn cultivation reached other parts of North America considerably later. The Mound Builders of the Ohio River valley, the Mississippian culture of the lower Midwest, and the desert-dwelling Anasazi peoples of the Southwest did sustain some large settlements after the incorporation of corn planting.
 - But mysteriously, perhaps due to prolonged drought, all those ancient cultures fell into decline by about 1300 c.e.
 3. Maize, Beans and Squash made possible three-sister farming.
 4. The Iroquois in the northeastern woodlands, inspired by a legendary leader named Hiawatha, created in the sixteenth century perhaps the closest North American approximation to the great empires of Mexico and Peru.
 - But for the most part, the native peoples of North America were living in small, scattered, and impermanent settlements.
 5. In more settled agricultural groups, women tended the crops while men hunted, fished, gathered fuel, and cleared fields for planting.
 - The Native Americans had neither the desire nor the means to manipulate nature aggressively. They revered the physical world and endowed nature with spiritual properties.

IV. Indirect Discoverers of the New World

1. The Scandinavians were actually the first to encounter the continent of North America.
 - They landed near Newfoundland but since their governments weren't looking to expand or settle they lost the new settlements and America was forgotten about except in song and stories.
2. Christian crusaders must rank high among America's indirect discoverers.
 - Looking to expand their beliefs to Asia they eventually acquired a taste for the foreign goods.
 - The expense of transporting items from Asia to Europe was so much that they started to look for alternate ways.

V. Europeans Enter Africa

1. Marco Polo's travels inspired Europeans to look for cheaper ways to get to desirable goods.
2. Europeans had invented new ships-caravels- that could help them travel more and had discovered new trade winds that would take them home easier.
3. The Portuguese were the first to travel to southern Africa.
 - They quickly set up trading posts for gold and slaves.
 - Slave trading became a big business
 - The seafaring Portuguese pushed still farther southward in search of the water route to Asia. Bartholomeu Dias rounded the southernmost tip of Africa in 1488. ten years later Vasco da Gama finally reached India.
4. Meanwhile, Spain was growing stronger and also wanted to reach new wealth and discovery.

VI. Columbus Comes upon a New World

1. Spain was ready for new power and riches. The dawn of the Renaissance in the fourteenth century nurtured an ambitious spirit of optimism and adventure.
2. Christopher Columbus persuaded the Spanish monarchs to outfit him with three tiny but seaworthy ships.
 - Seeking a new water route to the fabled Indies, he in fact had bumped into an enormous land barrier blocking the ocean pathway. He was so sure that he had reached the Indies that he called the natives there Indians which stuck.
 - His discovery would join the four continents- Europe, Africa and the two Americas.
3. For Europeans as well as for Africans and Native Americans, the world after 1492 would never be the same, for better or worse.

VII. When Worlds Collide

1. New world plants such as tobacco, maize, beans, tomatoes, and especially the lowly potato eventually revolutionized the international economy as well as the European diet. In exchange the Europeans introduced Old World crops and animals to the Americas.

2. Unwittingly, the Europeans also brought other organisms in the dirt on their boots and the dust on their clothes
 - Such as the seeds of Kentucky bluegrass, dandelions, and daisies.
3. Most ominous of all, in their bodies they carried the germs that caused smallpox, yellow fever, and malaria.
 - The Natives didn't have any antibodies against the diseases.
4. Enslavement and armed aggression took their toll, but the deadliest killers were microbes.

VIII. The Spanish Conquistadores

1. The Europeans realized that there were riches in the Americas.
2. The Treaty of Tordesillas was established dividing the new world between Portugal and Spain.
 - Lots of explorers then thirsted for riches and went forth to discover new things and conquer people both in North and South America.
 - The New World gold helped transform the world economy.
3. The Europeans used techniques to subdue the natives; the most popular one was the Encomienda system which was still slavery.

IX. The Conquest of Mexico

1. In about 1519, Hernan Cortes set sail from Cuba with men and horses. Along the way, he picked up two translators - A Spanish prisoner of Mayan-speaking Indians, and an Indian slave named Malinche.
2. The Spaniards arrived at Tenochtitlan, the Aztec capital with the intention of stealing all of the gold and other riches; superstitious Moctezuma- the Aztec ruler also believed that Cortés was the god Quetzalcoatl.
 - He allowed Cortez to come near the city unopposed.
3. Because of the Spanish treatment, the Indian population in Mexico went from 20 million to 2 million in less than a century.
4. The invader brought more than conquest and death. He brought his crops and his animals, laws and language.

X. The Spread of Spanish America

1. Spain's colonial empire grew swiftly and impressively.
 - A lot of Spanish cities flourished and by this time other countries wanted in on the wealth.
 - The Spanish began to fortify and settle their North American borderlands and to block the entrance of the French and others.
2. The natives, tired of being forced into a different religion, launched a rebellion known as Popes Rebellion, where they burned down churches and killed priests.
 - It took nearly half a century for the Spanish fully to reclaim New Mexico from the insurrectionary Indians.
3. The Spaniards, who had more than a century's head start over the English, were genuine empire builders and cultural innovators in the New World.

- They eventually intermarried and mixed their culture with the indigenous people instead of shunning them like the English did.
- The Spanish invaders did indeed kill, enslave, and infect countless natives, but they also erected a colossal empire and set the foundation for many Spanish-speaking nations.