

AP PRACTICES & SKILLS**CONTEXTUALIZATION**

Why were West African leaders eager to engage in trade with Europeans?

the Akan states lay the Bight of Benin, which became an early center of the slave trade and thus came to be called the Slave Coast. Bending south, fifteenth-century sailors encountered the Kingdom of Kongo in Central Africa, the largest state on the Atlantic seaboard, with a coastline that ran for some 250 miles. It was here in 1578 that Duarte Lopez visited the capital city of more than 100,000 residents. Wherever they went ashore along this route, European traders had to negotiate contacts on local terms (AP® Thinking Like a Historian).

The Spirit World

Some West Africans who lived immediately south of the Sahara—the Fulanis in Senegal, the Mande-speakers in Mali, and the Hausas in northern Nigeria—learned about Islam from Arab merchants and Muslim leaders called imams. Converts to Islam knew the Koran and worshipped only a single God. Some of their cities, like Timbuktu, the legendary commercial center on the Niger River, became centers of Islamic learning and instruction. But most West Africans acknowledged multiple gods, as well as spirits that lived in the earth, animals, and plants.

Like animists in the Americas and Europe, African communities had wise men and women adept at manipulating these forces for good or ill. The Sudanic tradition of divine kingship persisted, and many people believed that their kings could contact the spirit world. West Africans treated their ancestors with great respect, believing that the dead resided in a nearby spiritual realm and interceded in their lives. Most West African peoples had secret societies, such as the Poro for men and the Sande for women, that united people from different lineages and clans. These societies conducted rituals that celebrated male virility and female fertility. “Without children you are naked,” said a Yoruba proverb. Happy was the man with a big household, many wives, many children, and many relatives—and, in a not very different vein, many slaves.

IN YOUR OWN WORDS How was sub-Saharan Africa affected by the arrival of European traders?

Exploration and Conquest

Beginning around 1400, the Portuguese monarchy propelled Europe into overseas expansion. Portugal soon took a leading role in the African slave trade, while the newly unified kingdom of Spain undertook Europe’s first conquests in the Americas. These two ventures, though not initially linked, eventually became cornerstones in the creation of the “Atlantic World,” which connected Europe, Africa, and the Americas.

Portuguese Expansion

As a young soldier fighting in the Crusades, Prince Henry of Portugal (1394–1460) learned about the trans-Saharan trade in gold and slaves. Seeking a maritime route to the source of this trade in West Africa, Henry founded a center for oceanic navigation. Henry’s mariners, challenged to find a way through the treacherous waters off the northwest African coast, designed a better-handling vessel, the caravel, which was rigged with a lateen (triangular) sail that enabled the ship to tack into the wind. This innovation allowed them to sail far into the Atlantic, where they discovered and colonized the Madeira and Azore islands. From there, they sailed in 1435 to sub-Saharan Sierra Leone, where they exchanged salt, wine, and fish for African ivory and gold.

Henry’s efforts were soon joined to those of Italian merchants, who were being forced out of eastern Mediterranean trade routes by the rising power of the Ottoman Empire. Cut off from Asia, Genoese traders sought an Atlantic route to the lucrative

AP EXAM TIP

Take detailed notes on the impact of technology on Europeans’ ability to explore away from the Atlantic coast and reach the Americas.



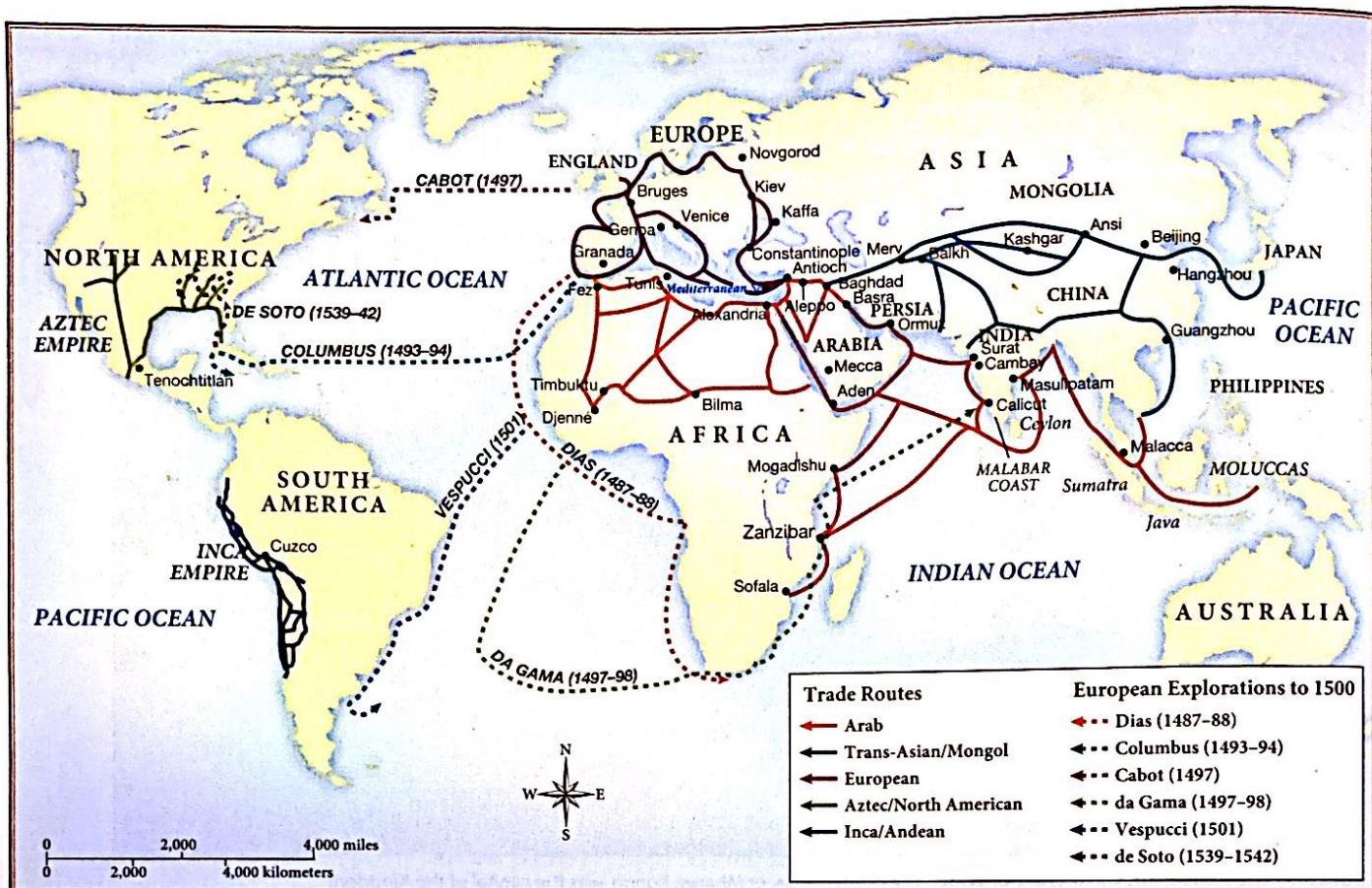
Banza in the Kingdom of Kongo, c. 1668 The city of Banza, or Mbanza Kongo, was the capital of the Kingdom of Kongo when Portuguese traders first arrived in 1483. Kongo's king, Nzinga a Nkuwu, chose to be baptized to cement an alliance with Portugal and took the name João I. Kongo became officially Christian, and Banza came to be known as São Salvador. Duarte Lopez visited and described the city in 1578; this engraving shows the city as it appeared a century later. *Banza in the Kingdom of Kongo, San Salvador*, from Olfert Dapper, c. 1668. Picture Research Consultants & Archives.

markets of the Indian Ocean. They began to work with Portuguese and Castilian mariners and monarchs to finance trading voyages, and the African coast and its offshore islands opened to their efforts. European voyagers discovered the Canaries, the Cape Verde Islands, and São Tomé; all of them became laboratories for the expansion of Mediterranean agriculture.

On these Atlantic islands, planters transformed local ecosystems to experiment with a variety of familiar cash crops: wheat, wine grapes, and woad, a blue dye plant; livestock and honeybees; and, where the climate permitted, sugar. By 1500, Madeira was producing 2,500 metric tons a year, and Madeira sugar was available—in small, expensive quantities—in London, Paris, Rome, and Constantinople. Most of the islands were unpopulated. The Canaries were the exception; it took Castilian adventurers decades to conquer the Guanches who lived there. Once defeated, they were enslaved to labor in the Canaries or on Madeira, where they carved irrigation canals into the island's steep rock cliffs.

Europeans made no such inroads on the continent of Africa itself. The coastal kingdoms were well defended, and yellow fever, malaria, and dysentery quickly struck down Europeans who spent any time in the interior of West Africa. Instead they maintained small, fortified trading posts on offshore islands or along the coast, usually as guests of the local king.

Portuguese sailors continued to look for an Atlantic route to Asia. In 1488, Bartolomeu Dias rounded the Cape of Good Hope, the southern tip of Africa. Vasco da Gama reached East Africa in 1497 and India in the following year; his ships were mistaken for those of Chinese traders, the last pale-skinned men to arrive by sea. Although



MAP 1.4 The Eurasian Trade System and European Maritime Ventures, c. 1500

For centuries, the Mediterranean Sea was the meeting point for the commerce of Europe, North Africa, and Asia—via the Silk Road from China and the Spice Route from India. Beginning in the 1490s, Portuguese, Spanish, and Dutch rulers and merchants subsidized Christian maritime explorers who discovered new trade routes around Africa and new sources of wealth in the Americas. These initiatives undermined the commercial primacy of the Arab Muslim-dominated Mediterranean.

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CAUSATION

How did Europe's desire for an ocean route to Asia shape its contacts with Africa?

da Gama's inferior goods—tin basins, coarse cloth, honey, and coral beads—were snubbed by the Arab and Indian merchants along India's Malabar Coast, he managed to acquire a highly profitable cargo of cinnamon and pepper. Da Gama returned to India in 1502 with twenty-one fighting vessels, which outmaneuvered and outgunned the Arab fleets. Soon the Portuguese government set up fortified trading posts for its merchants at key points around the Indian Ocean, in Indonesia, and along the coast of China (Map 1.4). In a transition that sparked the momentous growth of European wealth and power, the Portuguese and then the Dutch replaced the Arabs as the leaders in Asian commerce.

The African Slave Trade

Portuguese traders also ousted Arab merchants as the leading suppliers of African slaves. **Coerced** labor—through slavery, serfdom, or indentured servitude—was the norm in most premodern societies, and in Africa slavery was widespread. Some Africans were held in bondage as security for debts; others were sold into servitude by their kin in exchange for food in times of famine; many others were war captives. Slaves were a key **commodity**, sold as agricultural laborers, concubines, or military recruits. Sometimes their descendants were freed, but others endured hereditary bondage. Sonni Ali (r. 1464–1492), the ruler of the powerful Songhai Empire, personally owned twelve “tribes” of hereditary agricultural slaves, many of them seized in raids against neighboring peoples.

AP EXAM TIP

Identifying the origins of the slave trade system in the Atlantic world is critical to success on the AP® exam.

Slaves were also central to the trans-Saharan trade. When the renowned Tunisian adventurer Ibn Battuta crossed the Sahara from the Kingdom of Mali around 1350, he traveled with a caravan of six hundred female slaves, destined for domestic service or concubinage in North Africa, Egypt, and the Ottoman Empire. Between A.D. 700 and 1900, it is estimated that as many as nine million Africans were sold in the trans-Saharan slave trade.

Europeans initially were much more interested in trading for gold and other commodities than in trading for human beings, but gradually they discovered the enormous value of human trafficking. To exploit and redirect the existing African slave trade, Portuguese merchants established fortified trading posts like those in the Indian Ocean beginning at Elmina in 1482, where they bought gold and slaves from African princes and warlords. First they enslaved a few thousand Africans each year to work on sugar plantations on São Tomé, Cape Verde, the Azores, and Madeira; they also sold slaves in Lisbon, which soon had an African population of 9,000. After 1550, the Atlantic slave trade, a forced diaspora of African peoples, expanded enormously as Europeans set up sugar plantations across the Atlantic, in Brazil and the West Indies.

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CHANGE OVER TIME

How was the African slave trade adapted to European needs?

Sixteenth-Century Incursions

As Portuguese traders sailed south and east, the Spanish monarchs Ferdinand II of Aragon and Isabella I of Castile financed an explorer who looked to the west. As Renaissance rulers, Ferdinand (r. 1474–1516) and Isabella (r. 1474–1504) saw national

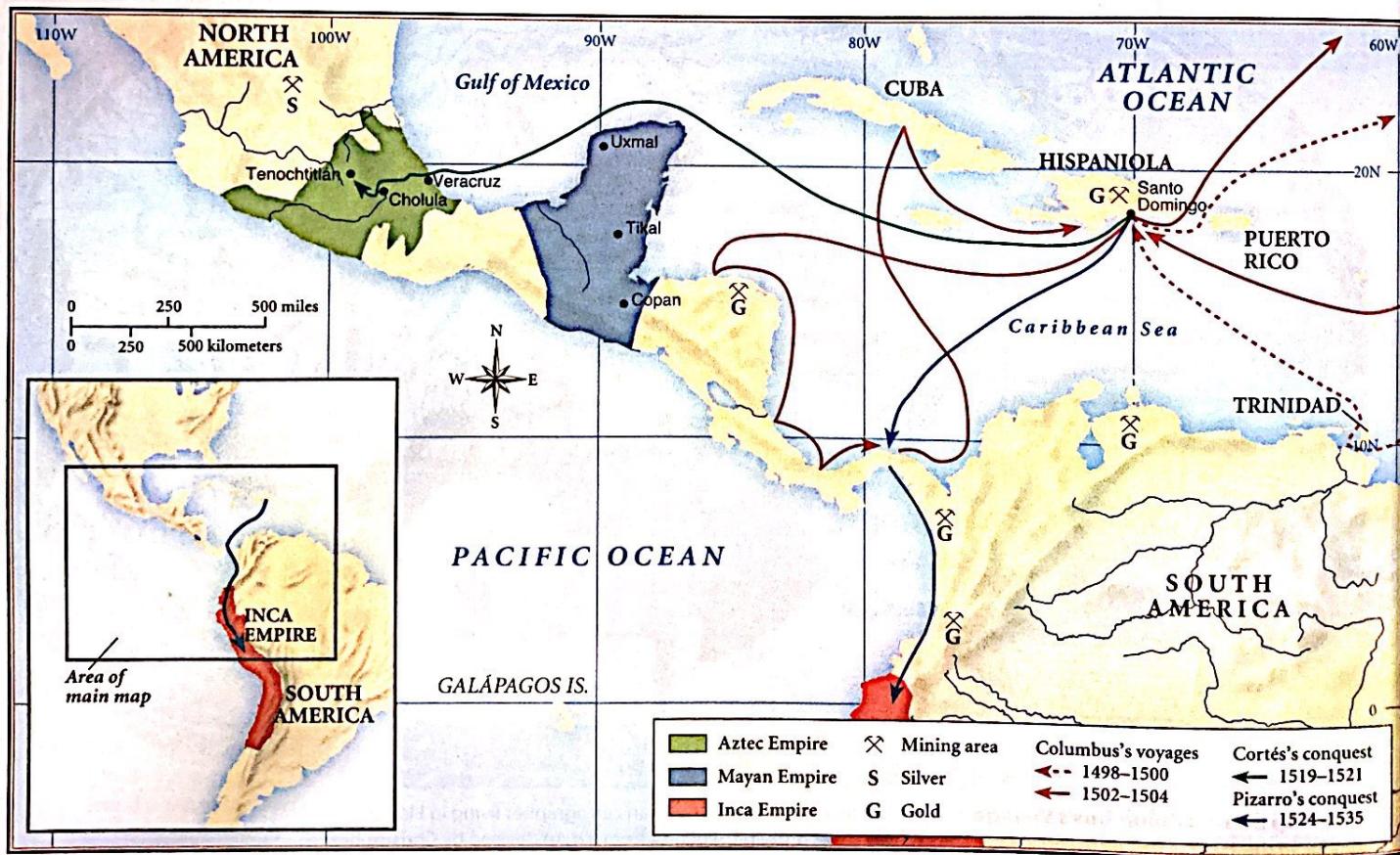


The Map Behind Columbus's Voyage In 1489, Henricus Martellus, a German cartographer living in Florence, produced this huge (4 feet by 6 feet) view of the known world, probably working from a map devised by Christopher Columbus's brother, Bartholomew. The map uses the spatial projection of the ancient Greek philosopher Claudius Ptolemy (A.D. 90–168) and incorporates information from Marco Polo's explorations in Asia and Bartolomeu Dias's recent voyage around the tip of Africa. Most important, it greatly exaggerates the width of Eurasia, thereby suggesting that Asia lies only 5,000 miles west of Europe (rather than the actual distance of 15,000 miles). Using Martellus's map, Columbus persuaded the Spanish monarchs to support his westward voyage. bpk Bildagentur Berlin/Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz/Ruth Schacht/Art Resource, NY.

unity and foreign commerce as the keys to power and prosperity. Married in an arranged match to combine their Christian kingdoms, the young rulers completed the centuries-long *reconquista*, the campaign by Spanish Catholics to drive Muslim Arabs from the European mainland, by capturing Granada, the last Islamic territory in Western Europe, in 1492. Using Catholicism to build a sense of “Spanishness,” they launched the brutal Inquisition against suspected Christian heretics and expelled or forcibly converted thousands of Jews and Muslims.

Columbus and the Caribbean Simultaneously, Ferdinand and Isabella sought trade and empire by subsidizing the voyages of Christopher Columbus, an ambitious and daring mariner from Genoa. Columbus believed that the Atlantic Ocean, long feared by Arab merchants as a 10,000-mile-wide “green sea of darkness,” was a much narrower channel of water separating Europe from Asia. After six years of lobbying, Columbus persuaded Genoese investors and Ferdinand and Isabella to accept his dubious theories and finance a western voyage to Asia.

Columbus set sail in three small ships in August 1492. Six weeks later, after a perilous voyage of 3,000 miles, he disembarked on an island in the present-day Bahamas. Believing that he had reached Asia—“the Indies,” in fifteenth-century parlance—Columbus called the native inhabitants Indians and the islands the West Indies. He was surprised by the crude living conditions but expected the Native peoples “easily [to] be made Christians.” He claimed the islands for Spain and then explored the neighboring Caribbean islands, demanding tribute from the local Taino, Arawak, and Carib peoples. Columbus left forty men on the island of Hispaniola (present-day Haiti and the Dominican Republic) and returned triumphantly to Spain (Map 1.5).



MAP 1.5 The Spanish Conquest of America's Great Empires

The Spanish first invaded the islands of the Caribbean, largely wiping out the Native peoples. Rumors of a gold-rich civilization led to Cortés's invasion of the Aztec Empire in 1519. By 1535, other Spanish conquistadors had conquered the Mayan temple cities and the Inca Empire in Peru, completing one of the great conquests in world history.

The Spanish monarchs supported three more voyages. Columbus colonized the West Indies with more than 1,000 Spanish settlers—all men—and hundreds of domestic animals. But he failed to find either golden treasures or great kingdoms, and his death in 1506 went virtually unnoticed.

A German geographer soon named the newly found continents “America” in honor of a different explorer. Amerigo Vespucci, a Florentine explorer who had visited the coast of present-day South America around 1500, denied that the region was part of Asia. He called it a *nuevo mundo*, a “new world.” The Spanish crown called the two continents *Las Indias* (“the Indies”) and wanted to make them a new Spanish world.

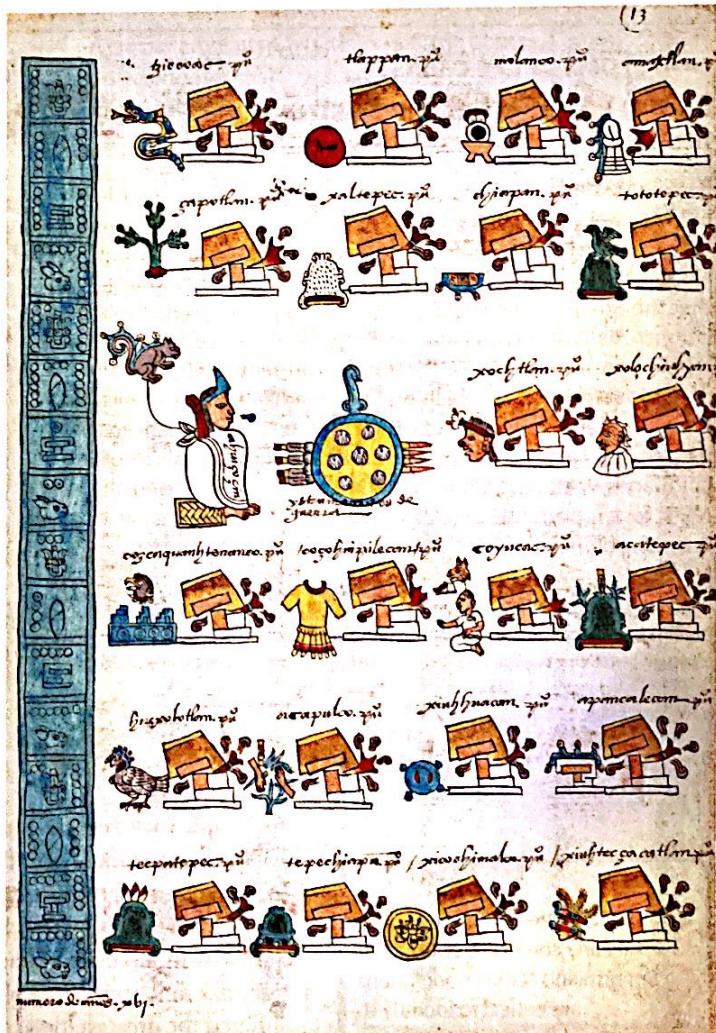
 To see a longer excerpt of Columbus's views of the West Indies, along with other primary sources from this period, see *Sources for America's History*.

The Spanish Invasion After brutally subduing the Arawaks and Tainos on Hispaniola, the Spanish probed the mainland for gold and slaves. In 1513, Juan Ponce de León explored the coast of Florida and gave that peninsula its name. In the same year, Vasco Núñez de Balboa crossed the Isthmus of Darien (Panama) and became the first European to see the Pacific Ocean. Rumors of rich Indian kingdoms encouraged other Spaniards, including hardened veterans of the *reconquista*, to invade the mainland. The Spanish monarchs offered successful conquistadors noble titles, vast estates, and Indian laborers (AP® Analyzing Voices).

With these inducements before him, in 1519 Hernán Cortés (1485–1547) led an army of 600 men to the Yucatán Peninsula. Gathering allies among Native peoples who chafed under Aztec rule, he marched on Tenochtitlán and challenged its ruler, Moctezuma. Awed by the Spanish invaders, Moctezuma received Cortés with great ceremony. But Cortés soon took the emperor captive, and after a long siege he and his men captured the city. The conquerors cut off the city’s supply of food and water, causing great suffering for the residents of Tenochtitlán. By 1521, Cortés and his men had toppled the Aztec Empire.

The Spanish had a silent ally: disease. Having been separated from Eurasia for thousands of years, the inhabitants of the Americas had no immunities to common European diseases. After the Spaniards arrived, a massive smallpox epidemic ravaged Tenochtitlán, “striking everywhere in the city,” according to an Aztec source, and killing Moctezuma’s brother and thousands more. “They could not move, they could not stir. . . . Covered, mantled with pustules, very many people died of them.” Subsequent outbreaks of smallpox, influenza, and measles killed hundreds of thousands of Indians and sapped the survivors’ morale. Exploiting this advantage, Cortés quickly extended Spanish rule over the Aztec Empire. His lieutenants then moved against the Mayan city-states of the Yucatán Peninsula, eventually conquering them as well.

In 1524, Francisco Pizarro set out to accomplish the same feat in Peru. By the time he and his small force of 168 men and 67 horses finally reached their destination in 1532, half of the Inca population had already died from European diseases. Weakened militarily and divided between rival claimants to the throne, the Inca nobility was easy prey. Pizarro killed Atahualpa, the last Inca emperor, and seized his enormous wealth.



The Codex Mendoza Millions of people spoke Nahuatl, the language of the Aztec Empire. It was also a written language: a pictographic system allowed scribes to record histories, tribute lists, and other official texts. Spanish colonizers systematically destroyed Aztec records but later encouraged Native scribes to re-create them. The Codex Mendoza, which dates to the 1540s, gives a history of the Aztec Empire. This page depicts the conquests of Ahuitzotl, the figure in a white cloak and turquoise crown. The toppling temples surrounding him symbolize the city-states he conquered. © Bodleian Libraries/early 1540s/shelfmark Ms. Arch. Selden A. 1 fol. 013r/The Art Archive at Art Resource.



ANALYZING VOICES

Primary sources are documents, images, or artifacts that were created during the time you are studying. To analyze a primary source, you need to ask some basic questions about the source:

- Who is the author, and what circumstances led to the document's creation?
- Who was the author's intended audience?
- What was the author's goal in creating the document?
- What ideas, arguments, and images does the author use to make his or her point? How effective are they?
- What outside information can you bring to bear on this document? How does the primary source enhance your understanding of the textbook, and how does the textbook enhance your understanding of the source?
- What does this source tell you about the society in which it was produced?

These are general questions that you should have in mind whenever you read a primary source. Try to answer them for yourself as you read the following document. Then, once you have read it, answer the Questions for Analysis that follow.

BARTOLOMÉ DE LAS CASAS

A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies

Bartolomé de las Casas first emigrated from Spain to the island of Hispaniola as a colonist and slave owner. After determining that Spain's treatment of Native Americans was cruel and unjust, Las Casas became a Dominican friar, or preacher, and argued that the Spanish king should intervene to protect Native populations. His writings persuaded King Charles V to impose the "New Laws of the Indies for the Good Treatment and Preservation of the Indians" (1542), which outlawed Indian slavery. Ironically, because they depicted Spanish cruelty to Native Americans so vividly, Las Casas's writings were quickly translated into other languages, including English, and Spain's enemies used these texts to support the so-called Black Legend—the view that Spanish colonization was uniquely exploitative and cruel.

SOURCE: *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies* by Bartolomé De Las Casas, edited and translated by Nigel Griffin, introduction by Anthony Pagden (Penguin Classics, 2008). The Translation and Notes copyright © Nigel Griffin, 1992. Introduction copyright © Anthony Pagden, 1992. Reproduced by permission of Penguin Books Ltd.

"Most high and most mighty Lord:

As Divine Providence has ordained that the world shall, for the benefit and proper government of the human race, be divided into kingdoms and peoples and that these shall be ruled by kings, who are . . . the noblest and most virtuous of beings, there is no doubt . . . that these kings entertain nothing save that which is morally unimpeachable. It follows that if the commonwealth suffers from some . . . evil, the reason can only be that the ruler is unaware of it; once the matter is brought to his notice, he will work with the utmost diligence to set matters right. . . .

God made all the peoples of this area [the Americas], many and varied as they are, as open and as innocent as can be imagined. The simplest people in the world—unassuming, long-suffering, unassertive, and submissive—they are without malice or guile, and are utterly faithful and obedient both to their own native lords and to the Spaniards in whose service they now find themselves. . . . They are also among the poorest people on the face of the earth; they own next to nothing and

AP EXAM TIP

The patterns established by the early conflicts between the Spanish and Native populations are critical to identify to evaluate colonial systems.

Although Inca resistance continued for a generation, the conquest was complete by 1535, and Spain was now the master of the wealthiest and most populous regions of the Western Hemisphere.

The Spanish invasion changed life forever in the Americas. Disease and warfare wiped out virtually all of the Indians of Hispaniola—at least 300,000 people. In Peru, the population of 9 million in 1530 plummeted to fewer than 500,000 a century later. Mesoamerica suffered the greatest losses: in one of the great demographic disasters in world history, its population of 20 million Native Americans in 1500 had dwindled to just 3 million in 1650.

Cabral and Brazil At the same time, Portuguese efforts to sail around the southern tip of Africa led to a surprising find. As Vasco da Gama and his contemporaries experimented with winds and currents, their voyages carried them ever farther away from the African coast and into the Atlantic. On one such voyage in 1500, the Portuguese

have no urge to acquire material possessions. As a result they are neither ambitious nor greedy, and are totally uninterested in worldly power. . . . They are innocent and pure in mind and have a lively intelligence, all of which makes them particularly receptive to learning and understanding the truths of our Catholic faith and to being instructed in virtue. . . .

It was upon these gentle lambs, imbued by the Creator with all the qualities we have mentioned, that from the very first day they clapped eyes on them the Spanish fell like ravening wolves upon the fold, or like tigers and savage lions who have not eaten meat for days. The pattern established at the outset has remained unchanged to this day, and the Spaniards still do nothing save tear the natives to shreds, murder them and inflict upon them untold misery, suffering and distress, tormenting, harrying and persecuting them mercilessly. . . .

When the Spanish first journeyed there, the indigenous population of the island of Hispaniola stood at some three million; today only two hundred survive. The island of Cuba, which extends for a distance almost as great as that separating Valladolid from Rome, is now to all intents and purposes uninhabited; and two other large, beautiful and fertile islands, Puerto Rico and Jamaica, have been similarly devastated. Not a living soul remains today on any of the islands of the Bahamas. . . . On the mainland, we know for sure that our fellow-countrymen have, through their cruelty and wickedness, depopulated and laid waste an area which once boasted more than ten kingdoms, each of them larger in area than the whole of the Iberian Peninsula. . . . At a conservative estimate, the despotic and diabolical behaviour of the Christians has, over the last forty years, led to the unjust and totally unwarranted deaths of more than twelve million souls, women and children among them, and there are grounds for believing my own estimate of more than fifteen million to be nearer the mark.

There are two main ways in which those who have travelled to this part of the world pretending to be Christians have uprooted these pitiful peoples and wiped them from the face of the earth. First, they have waged war on them: unjust, cruel, bloody and tyrannical war. Second, they have

murdered anyone and everyone who has shown the slightest sign of resistance, or even of wishing to escape the torment to which they have subjected him. This latter policy has been instrumental in suppressing the native leaders, and, indeed, given that the Spaniards normally spare only women and children, it has led to the annihilation of all adult males, whom they habitually subject to the harshest and most iniquitous and brutal slavery that man has ever devised for his fellow-men, treating them, in fact, worse than animals. . . .

The reason the Christians have murdered on such a vast scale and killed anyone and everyone in their way is purely and simply greed. They have set out to line their pockets with gold and to amass private fortunes as quickly as possible so that they can then assume a status quite at odds with that into which they were born. Their insatiable greed and overweening ambition know no bounds. . . .

One fact in all this is widely known and beyond dispute, for even the tyrannical murderers themselves acknowledge the truth of it: the indigenous peoples never did the Europeans any harm whatever; on the contrary, they believed them to have descended from the heavens, at least until they or their fellow-citizens had tasted, at the hands of these oppressors, a diet of robbery, murder, violence, and all other manner of trials and tribulations. ’’

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. Who is Las Casas's intended audience? What does the opening passage tell you about his view of royal authority?
2. How does Las Casas want the king to view Native Americans? Why does he think it is especially important to treat Native Americans humanely?
3. How does Las Casas want the king to view Spanish colonists? What imagery does he use to make his point?
4. How does the use of population figures strengthen the case Las Casas is presenting?
5. Using the information on pages 31–36, how would you place Las Casas's argument in context? What does Las Casas's writing tell you about Spanish colonial society?

commander Pedro Alvares Cabral and his fleet were surprised to see land loom in the west. Cabral named his discovery Ilha da Vera Cruz—the Island of the True Cross—and continued on his way toward India. Others soon followed and changed the region's name to Brazil after the indigenous tree that yielded a valuable red dye; for several decades, Portuguese sailors traded with the Tupi Indians for brazilwood. Then in the 1530s, to secure Portugal's claim, King Dom João III sent settlers, who began the long, painstaking process of carving out sugar plantations in the coastal lowlands.

For several decades, Native Americans supplied most of the labor for these operations, but African slaves gradually replaced them. Brazil would soon become the world's leading producer of sugar; it would also devour African lives. By introducing the plantation system to the Americas—a form of estate agriculture using slave labor that was pioneered by Italian merchants and crusading knights in the twelfth century and transplanted to the islands off the coast of Africa in the fifteenth century—the Portuguese

AP EXAM TIP

Take detailed notes on the Portuguese plantation system since it will be important to compare it to the Spanish *encomienda* system that will be introduced in Ch 2.



European Map of Brazil, c. 1519 This lavishly illustrated map of Brazil is drawn from the Miller Atlas, made by order of King Manuel I of Portugal around 1519. It features images of Indians harvesting brazilwood; macaws and other colorful birds; a monkey; and—improbably—a fire-breathing dragon. Note, too, the dense annotations and place names along the coast—a reminder that Portuguese familiarity with Brazil was confined almost entirely to the seaboard. Scala/White Images/Art Resource, NY

set in motion one of the most significant developments of the early modern era.

By the end of the sixteenth century, the European colonization of the Americas had barely begun. Yet several of its most important elements were already taking shape. Spanish efforts demonstrated that densely populated empires were especially vulnerable to conquest and were also especially valuable sources of wealth. The Portuguese had discovered the viability of sugar plantations in the tropical regions of the Americas and pioneered the transatlantic slave trade as a way of manning them. And contacts with Native peoples revealed their devastating vulnerabilities to Eurasian diseases—one part of the larger phenomenon of the Columbian Exchange (discussed in Chapter 2).

IN YOUR OWN WORDS What motivated Portuguese and Spanish expansion into the Atlantic, and what were its unintended consequences?

SUMMARY

Native American, European, and African societies developed independently over thousands of years before they experienced direct contacts with one another. In the Americas, residents of Mesoamerica and the Andes were fully sedentary (with individual ownership of land and intensive agriculture), but elsewhere societies were semi-sedentary (with central fields and villages that were occupied seasonally) or non-sedentary (hunter-gatherers). West and Central Africa also had a mix of sedentary, semi-sedentary, and non-sedentary settlements. Western Europe, by contrast, was predominantly sedentary. All

three continents had a complex patchwork of political organizations, from empires, to kingdoms and chiefdoms, to principalities, duchies, and ministates; everywhere, rulership was imbued with notions of spiritual power. Ruling classes relied on warfare, trade, and tribute (or taxes) to dominate those around them and accumulate precious goods that helped to set them apart from ordinary laborers, but they also bore responsibility for the well-being of their subjects and offered them various forms of protection.

As sailors pushed into the Atlantic, they set in motion a chain of events whose consequences they could scarcely imagine. From a coastal trade with Africa that was secondary to their efforts to reach the Indian Ocean, from the miscalculations of Columbus and the happy accident of Cabral, developed a pattern of transatlantic exploration, conquest, and exploitation that no one could have foretold or planned. In the tropical zones of the Caribbean and coastal Brazil, invading Europeans enslaved Native Americans and quickly drove them into extinction or exile. The demands of plantation agriculture soon led Europeans to import slaves from Africa, initiating a transatlantic trade that would destroy African lives on both sides of the ocean. And two of the greatest empires in the world—the Aztec and Incan empires—collapsed in response to unseen biological forces that acted in concert with small invading armies.