



## CHAPTER PREVIEW

- What was the Afro-Eurasian trading world before Columbus?
- How and why did Europeans undertake ambitious voyages of expansion?
- What was the impact of European conquest on the New World?
- How did Europe and the world change after Columbus?
- How did expansion change European attitudes and beliefs?

### Life in the Age of Discovery

The arrival of the Portuguese in Japan in 1543 inspired a series of artworks depicting the *namban-jin*, or southern barbarians, as the Japanese called them. This detail from an early-seventeenth-century painted screen shows a Portuguese merchant with three South Asian slaves unloading trade goods from a merchant ship. (Museu Nacional de Soares dos Reis, Porto, Portugal/Bridgeman Images)

## What was the Afro-Eurasian trading world before Columbus?

Columbus did not sail west on a whim. To understand his and other Europeans' voyages of exploration, we must first understand late medieval trade networks. Historians now recognize that a type of world economy, known as the Afro-Eurasian trade world, linked the products, people, and ideas of Africa, Europe, and Asia during the Middle Ages. The West was not the dominant player before Columbus, and the voyages derived from a desire to gain direct access to the goods of overseas trade. European monarchs and explorers also wished to spread Christianity. Their projects for exploration and conquest received support from the papacy in Rome.

### The Trade World of the Indian Ocean

Covering 20 percent of the earth's total ocean area, the Indian Ocean is the globe's third-largest waterway (after the Atlantic and Pacific). Moderate and predictable, monsoon winds blow from the northwest or northeast between November and January and from the south and southwest between April and August. These wind patterns enabled cross-oceanic travel and shaped its rhythms, creating a vibrant trade world in which goods, people, and ideas circulated among China, India, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and Africa (Map 14.1). From the seventh through the fourteenth centuries, the volume and integration of Indian Ocean trade steadily increased, favored by two parallel movements: political unification and economic growth in China and the spread of Islam through much of the Indian Ocean world.

Merchants congregated in a series of cosmopolitan port cities strung around the Indian Ocean. Most of these cities had some form of autonomous self-government, and no one state or region dominated. Ethnic, religious, and family ties encouraged trust among traders and limited violence.

Located at the northeastern edge of the Indian Ocean trade world, China exercised a powerful economic and cultural influence. In addition to safeguarding the famous Silk Road overland trade routes through Central Asia and the Middle East, the Mongols also increased connections with Indian Ocean trade. The Venetian trader Marco Polo's tales of his travels from 1271 to 1295, including his encounter with the Great Khan, fueled Western fantasies about the exotic Orient. Polo vividly recounted the splendors of the khan's court and the city of Hangzhou, which he described as "the finest and noblest in the world" in which "the number and wealth of the merchants, and the amount of goods that passed through their hands, was so enormous that no man could form a just estimate thereof."<sup>1</sup>

After the Mongols fell to the Ming Dynasty in 1368, China entered a new period of economic expansion, population growth, and urbanization. China's huge cities hungered for luxury products of the Indian Ocean world, and its artisans produced goods highly prized in export markets, especially porcelain and silk. The Ming emperor dispatched Admiral Zheng He (JEHNG HUH) on a remarkable series of naval expeditions that traveled the oceanic web as far west as Egypt. From 1405 to 1433 each of his seven expeditions involved hundreds of ships and tens of thousands of men. In one voyage alone, Zheng He sailed more than 12,000 miles.<sup>2</sup> Although the ships brought back many wonders, such as giraffes and zebras, the purpose of the voyages was primarily diplomatic, to enhance China's prestige and seek tribute-paying alliances. After the deaths of Zheng He and the emperor, the voyages ceased, but Chinese overseas traders continued vigorous activity in the South China Sea and throughout the Indian Ocean.

India was the central hinge of Indian Ocean trade. Muslim Arab and Persian merchants who circumnavigated India on their way to trade in the South China Sea established trading posts along the southern coasts of east and west India. Cities such as Calicut and Quilon became thriving commercial centers. India was also an important contributor of goods to the world trading system. Most of the world's pepper was grown in India, and Indian cotton and silk textiles, mainly from the Gujarat region, were also highly prized.

Southeast Asia maintained an active trade with China across the South China Sea and with ports on the Coromandel Coast of southeast India. In the fifteenth century the strategically located port of Malacca became a great commercial entrepôt (AHN-truh-poh), a trading post to which goods were shipped for storage while awaiting redistribution. To Malacca came porcelains, silks, and camphor (used in the manufacture of many medications) from China; pepper, cloves, nutmeg, and raw materials such as sandalwood from the Moluccas; and textiles, copper weapons, incense, and dyes from India.

### The Trading States of Africa

By 1450 Africa had a few large empires along with hundreds of smaller states. After the Mongol invasion of Baghdad in 1258, the Mamluk rulers of Egypt proclaimed a new Abbasid caliphate. Until its defeat by the Ottomans in 1517, the Mamluk empire was one of the most powerful on the continent. Its capital, Cairo, was a center of Islamic learning and religious authority as well as being a major hub for goods

# TIMELINE

| 1400  | 1450   | 1500   | 1550  | 1600  |
|---|--|--|---|---|
| ◀ <b>1271–1295</b><br>Marco Polo travels to China |  |  |   |   |
|   | ■ <b>1443</b><br>Portuguese establish first African trading post at Arguin |  |   |   |
|   |  | ■ <b>1498</b><br>Vasco da Gama lands in Calicut, India | ■ <b>1518</b><br>Spanish king authorizes slave trade to New World colonies                    | ■ <b>1602</b> ■<br>Dutch East India Company established |
|   |  | ■ <b>1492</b><br>Columbus lands in the Americas        | ■ <b>1519–1522</b><br>Magellan's expedition circumnavigates the world                         |   |
|   |  |  | ■ <b>1521</b><br>Fall of Tenochtitlan, leading to Spanish takeover of the Aztec Empire        |   |
|   |  |  | ■ <b>1533</b><br>Spanish execution of the Inca emperor  |   |
|   |  |  | ■ <b>1510–1515</b><br>Portuguese capture trading centers at Goa, Malacca, Calicut, and Hormuz |   |

moving between the Indian Ocean trade world and the Mediterranean.

On the east coast of Africa, Swahili-speaking city-states engaged directly in the Indian Ocean trade, exchanging ivory, rhinoceros horn, tortoise shells, and slaves for textiles, spices, cowrie shells, porcelain, and other goods. Cities such as Kilwa, Malindi, Mogadishu, and Mombasa, dominated by Muslim merchants, were known for their prosperity and culture.

In the fifteenth century most of the gold that reached Europe came from the western part of the Sudan region in West Africa and from the Akan (AH-kahn) peoples living near present-day Ghana. Transported across the Sahara by Arab and African traders on camels, the gold was sold in the ports of North Africa. Other trading routes led to the Egyptian cities of Alexandria and Cairo, where the Venetians held commercial privileges.

Inland nations that sat astride the north-south caravan routes grew wealthy from this trade. In the mid-thirteenth century the kingdom of Mali emerged as an important player on the overland trade route, gaining prestige from its ruler Mansa Musa's fabulous pilgrimage to Mecca in 1324/25. Desire to gain direct access to African gold motivated the initial Portuguese voyages into northern and western Africa.

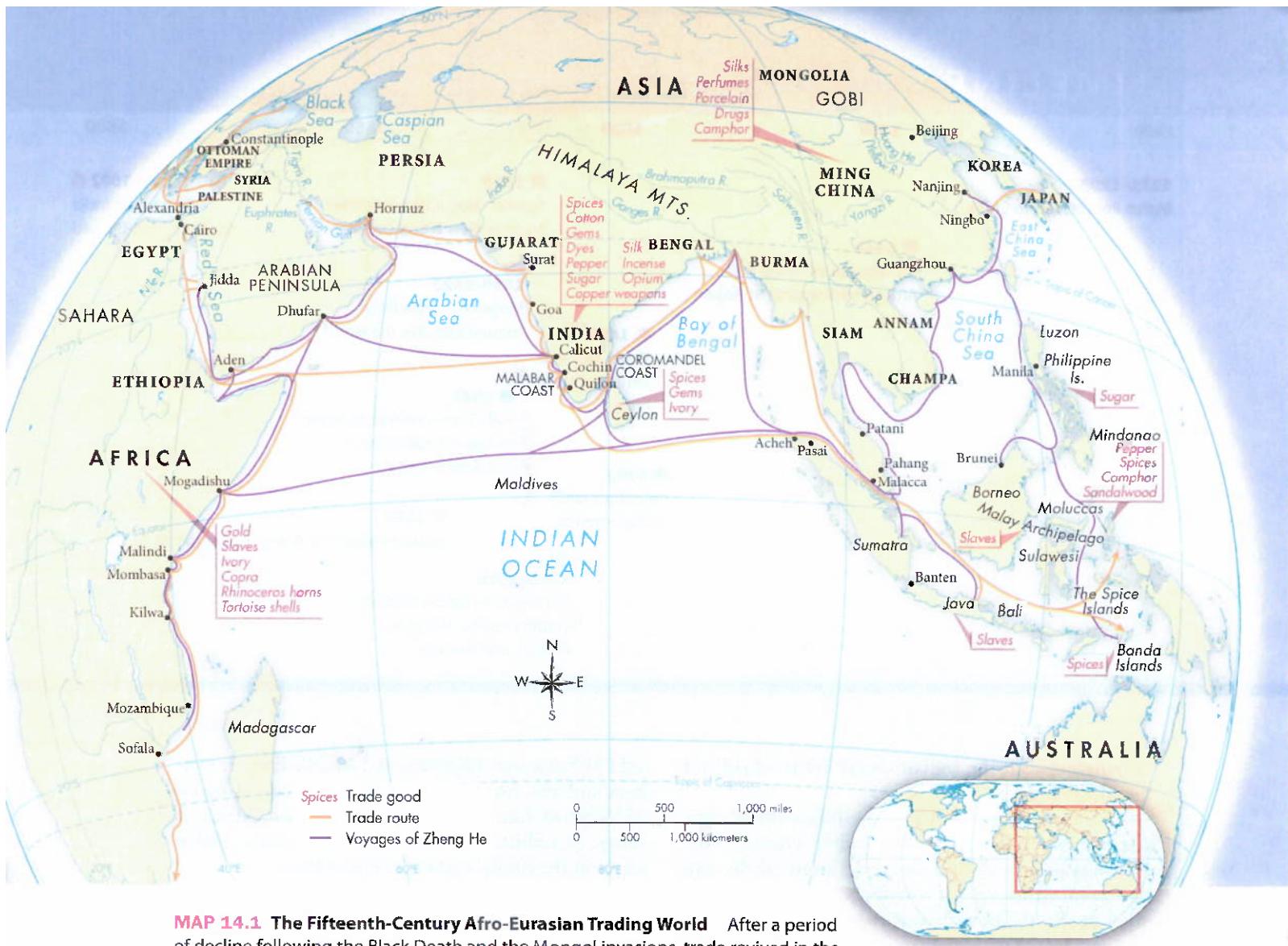
Gold was one important object of trade; slaves were another. Slavery was practiced in Africa, as it was virtually everywhere else in the world, long before the arrival of Europeans. Arab and East African merchants took West African slaves to the Mediterranean to be

sold in European, Egyptian, and Middle Eastern markets and also brought eastern Europeans—a major element of European slavery—to West Africa as slaves. In addition, Indian and Arab merchants traded slaves in the coastal regions of East Africa.

## The Middle East

From its capital in Baghdad, the Abbasid caliphate (750–1258) controlled an enormous region from Spain to the western borders of China, including the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf, the two major waterways linking the Indian Ocean trade world to the West. The political stability enshrined by the caliphate, along with the shared language, legal system, and culture of Islam, served to foster economic prosperity and commercial activity. During this period, Muslim Arab traders, who had spread through eastern Africa and western India in the early Middle Ages, reached even further across the trade routes of the Indian Ocean to obtain spices, porcelain, and other goods for the bustling cities of the caliphate.

After the Abbasids fell to Mongol invasions, two great rival Muslim empires, the Persian Safavids (sah-FAH-vidz) and the Turkish Ottomans, dominated the region and competed for control of east-west trade. Like Arabs, Persian merchants could be found in trading communities in India and throughout the Afro-Eurasian trade world. Persia was also a major producer and exporter of silk cloth.



**MAP 14.1 The Fifteenth-Century Afro-Eurasian Trading World** After a period of decline following the Black Death and the Mongol invasions, trade revived in the fifteenth century. Muslim merchants dominated trade, linking ports in East Africa and the Red Sea with those in India and the Malay Archipelago. Chinese admiral Zheng He's voyages (1405–1433) followed the most important Indian Ocean trade routes.

Under Sultan Mohammed II (r. 1451–1481), the Ottomans captured Europe's largest city, Constantinople, in May 1453. The city became the capital of the Ottoman Empire. By the mid-sixteenth century the Ottomans had established control over the maritime trade in the eastern Mediterranean and their power extended into Europe as far west as Vienna. The extension of Ottoman control provided impetus for European traders to seek direct access to Eastern trade goods.

### Genoese and Venetian Middlemen

In the late Middle Ages, the Italian city-states of Venice and Genoa controlled the European luxury trade with the East. In 1304 Venice established formal relations with the sultan of Mamluk Egypt, opening operations in Cairo, a major outlet for Asian trade goods brought through the Red Sea. Venetian merchants

purchased goods such as spices, silks, and carpets in Cairo for re-export throughout Europe. Venetians funded these purchases through trade in European woolen cloth and metal goods, as well as through shipping and trade in firearms and slaves.

Venice's ancient rival was Genoa. In the wake of the Crusades, Genoa dominated the northern route to Asia through the Black Sea. Expansion in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries took the Genoese as far as Persia and the Far East. In 1291 they sponsored an expedition into the Atlantic in search of India. The ships were lost, and their exact destination and motivations remain unknown. This voyage reveals the long roots of Genoese interest in Atlantic exploration.

In the fifteenth century, with Venice claiming victory in the spice trade, the Genoese shifted their focus from trade to finance and from the Black Sea to the western Mediterranean. When Spanish and Portuguese voyages began to explore the western Atlantic,



**Detail from the Catalan Atlas, 1375** This detail from a medieval map depicts Mansa Musa (lower right), who ruled the powerful West African empire of Mali from 1312 to 1337. Musa's golden crown and scepter, and the gold ingot he holds in his hand, represent the empire's wealth. The map also depicts Catalan sailors heading from the Balearic Islands out to the Atlantic Ocean. (From *The Catalan Atlas*, 1375, by Abraham Cresques/Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, France/Getty Images)

Genoese merchants, navigators, and financiers provided their skills and capital to the Iberian monarchs, whose own subjects had less commercial experience. Genoese merchants would eventually help finance Spanish colonization of the New World.

A major element of Italian trade was slavery. Merchants purchased slaves, many of whom were fellow Christians, in the Balkans. The men were sold to Egypt for the sultan's army or sent to work as agricultural laborers in the Mediterranean. Young girls, who constituted the majority of the trade, were sold

in western Mediterranean ports as servants and concubines. After the loss of the Black Sea—and thus the source of slaves—to the Ottomans, the Genoese sought new supplies of slaves in the West, taking the Guanches (indigenous peoples from the Canary Islands), Muslim prisoners, Jewish refugees from Spain, and by the early 1500s both sub-Saharan and Berber Africans. With the growth of Spanish colonies in the New World in the sixteenth century, Genoese and Venetian merchants would become important players in the transatlantic slave trade.

## How and why did Europeans undertake ambitious voyages of expansion?

As we have seen, Europe was by no means isolated before the voyages of exploration and the “discovery” of the New World. Italian merchants traded actively in North Africa for gold and in eastern

Mediterranean depots for Indian Ocean luxury goods, but trade through intermediaries was slow and expensive. In the first decades of the fifteenth century, new players entered the scene with novel technology, eager

to spread Christianity and to obtain direct access to trade. First Portuguese and then Spanish expeditions undertook long-distance voyages that helped create the modern world, with tremendous consequences for their own continent and the rest of the planet.

## Causes of European Expansion

European expansion had multiple causes. The first was economic. The Portuguese and Spanish, the first to undertake voyages of exploration, sought new sources of gold and silver as well as a direct route to the Asian trade in spices and other luxury goods. Financial incentives became even more important in the mid-fifteenth century as the revival of population after the Black Death increased demand and Ottoman control of eastern trade routes reduced the flow of trade.

Why were spices so desirable? Introduced into western Europe by the Crusaders in the twelfth century, pepper, ginger, mace, cinnamon, nutmeg, and cloves added flavor and variety to the monotonous European diet. Not only did spices serve as flavorings for food, but they were also used in anointing oil and as incense for religious rituals, and as perfumes, medicines, and dyes in daily life. Apart from their utility, the expense and exotic origins of spices meant that they were a high-status good, which European elites could use to demonstrate their social standing.

Religious fervor and the crusading spirit were another cause of expansion. From the eleventh through the thirteenth century, the Christian kingdoms of the Iberian Peninsula emerged through warfare against Muslim states, a process that became known as the *reconquista*. Portugal's expansion across the Mediterranean to North Africa in 1415 and Christopher Columbus's voyage in 1492 thus represented overseas extensions of the crusading spirit. Only seven months separated Isabella and Ferdinand's conquest of the emirate of Granada, the last remaining Muslim state on the Iberian Peninsula, and Columbus's departure across the Atlantic in 1492. As they conquered indigenous empires in the Americas, Iberians brought attitudes and administrative practices developed during the

reconquista to the New World. **Conquistadors** (kohn-KEEs-tuh-dorz) (Spanish for "conquerors") fully expected to be rewarded with land, titles, and power over conquered peoples, just as the leaders of the reconquista had been.

To gain authorization and financial support for their expeditions, explorers sought official sponsorship from the state. Competition among European monarchs for the prestige and profit of overseas exploration was thus another crucial factor in encouraging the steady stream of expeditions that began in the late fifteenth century.

Like other men of the Renaissance era, explorers demonstrated a genuine passion for expanding human knowledge. The European discoveries thus constituted one manifestation of Renaissance curiosity about the physical universe. The detailed journals many voyagers kept attest to their wonder and fascination with the new peoples and places they visited.

The small number of Europeans who could read provided a rapt audience for tales of fantastic places and unknown peoples. Cosmography, natural history, and geography aroused enormous interest among educated people in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. One of the most popular books of the time was the fourteenth-century text *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, which purported to be a firsthand account of the author's travels in the Middle East, India, and China.

## Technology and the Rise of Exploration

The Portuguese were pioneers in seeking technological improvements in shipbuilding, weaponry, and navigation in order to undertake successful voyages of exploration and trade. Medieval European seagoing vessels consisted of single-masted sailing ships or narrow, open galleys propelled by oars, which were common in Mediterranean trade. Though adequate for short journeys that hugged the shoreline, such vessels were incapable of long-distance journeys or high-volume trade. In the fifteenth century, the Portuguese developed the **caravel**, a two- or three-masted sailing ship. Its multiple sails and sternpost rudder made the caravel a highly maneuverable vessel that required fewer crewmen to operate. The Portuguese were also the first to fit their ships with cannon, which produced immense advantages for naval warfare and bombardment of port cities, both of which were to play a crucial role in their expansion into Asia.<sup>3</sup>

This period also saw great strides in cartography and navigational aids. Around 1410 Arab scholars reintroduced Europeans to **Ptolemy's Geography**. Written in the second century C.E., the work synthesized the geographical knowledge of the classical world. It represented

■ **conquistadors** Spanish for "conquerors"; armed Spaniards such as Hernán Cortés and Francisco Pizarro, who sought to conquer people and territories in the New World for the Spanish crown.

■ **caravel** A small, maneuverable, two- or three-masted sailing ship developed by the Portuguese in the fifteenth century that gave them a distinct advantage in exploration and trade.

■ **Ptolemy's Geography** A second-century-C.E. work that synthesized the classical knowledge of geography and introduced the concepts of longitude and latitude. Reintroduced to Europeans about 1410 by Arab scholars, its ideas allowed cartographers to create more accurate maps.

a major improvement over medieval cartography by depicting the world as round and introducing the idea of latitude and longitude markings, but it also contained crucial errors. Unaware of the Americas, Ptolemy showed the world as much smaller than it is, so that Asia appeared not very much to the west of Europe.

Originating in China, the compass was brought to the West in the late Middle Ages. By using the compass to determine their direction and estimating their speed of travel over a set length of time, mariners could determine the course of a ship's voyage, a system of navigation known as "dead reckoning." In the late fifteenth century Portuguese scholars devised a new technique of "celestial reckoning," which involved using the astrolabe, an instrument invented by the ancient Greeks to determine the position of the stars and other celestial bodies. Commissioned by Portuguese king John II, a group of astronomers in the 1480s showed that mariners could determine their latitude at sea by using a specially designed astrolabe to determine the altitude of the polestar or the sun, and by consulting tables of these

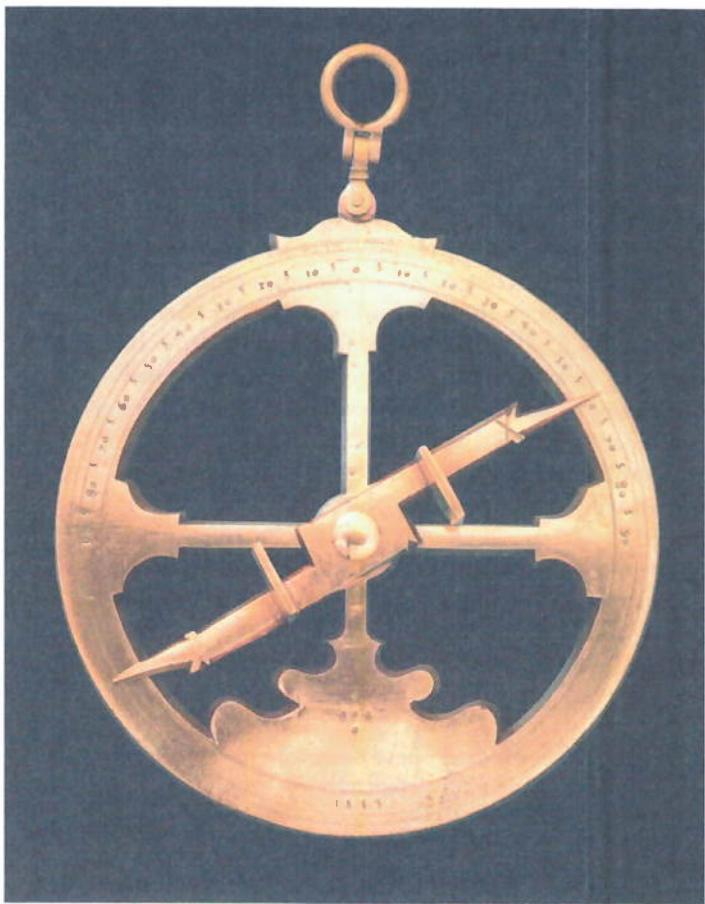
bodies' movements. This was a crucial step forward in maritime navigational techniques.

Much of the new technology that Europeans used on their voyages originated in the East. Gunpowder, the compass, and the sternpost rudder were Chinese inventions. The triangular lateen sail, which allowed caravels to tack against the wind, was a product of the Indian Ocean trade world. Advances in navigational techniques and cartography, including the maritime astrolabe, drew on the rich tradition of Judeo-Arabic mathematical and astronomical learning in Iberia. In exploring new territories, European sailors thus called on techniques and knowledge developed over centuries in China, the Muslim world, and the Indian Ocean.

Despite technological improvements, life at sea meant danger, overcrowding, and hunger. For months at a time, 100 to 120 poorly paid crew members lived and worked in a space of 1,600 to 2,000 square feet. A lucky sailor would find enough space on deck to unroll his sleeping mat. Horses, cows, pigs, chickens, rats, and lice accompanied sailors on the voyages.

**Ptolemy's Geography** The recovery of Ptolemy's *Geography* in the early fifteenth century gave Europeans new access to ancient geographical knowledge. This 1486 world map, based on Ptolemy, is a great advance over medieval maps but contains errors with significant consequences for future exploration. It shows a single continent watered by a single ocean, with land covering three-quarters of the world's surface. Africa and Asia are joined with Europe, making the Indian Ocean a landlocked sea and rendering the circumnavigation of Africa impossible. Australia and the Americas are nonexistent, and the continent of Asia is stretched far to the east, greatly shortening the distance from Europe to Asia via the Atlantic. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, France/Bridgeman Images)





**Portuguese Mariner's Astrolabe, 1555** Between 1500 and 1635 over nine hundred ships sailed from Portugal to ports on the Indian Ocean, in annual fleets composed of five to ten ships. Portuguese sailors used astrolabes, such as the bronze example shown here, to accurately plot their position. (Granger/Granger—All rights reserved)

### The Portuguese Overseas Empire

Established during the reconquista in the mid-thirteenth century, the kingdom of Portugal had a long Atlantic coastline that favored fishing and maritime trading. By the end of the thirteenth century Portuguese merchants were trading fish, salt, and wine to ports in northern England and the Mediterranean. Nature favored the Portuguese: winds blowing along their coast offered passage to Africa, its Atlantic islands, and, ultimately, Brazil. Once they had mastered the secret to sailing against the wind to return to Europe (by sailing further west to catch winds from the southwest), they were ideally poised to pioneer Atlantic exploration.

In the early phases of Portuguese exploration, Prince Henry (1394–1460), a younger son of the king, played a leading role. A nineteenth-century scholar dubbed Henry “the Navigator” because of his support for Portuguese *voyages* of discovery. Henry participated in Portugal’s conquest of Ceuta, an Arab city in northern Morocco in 1415, an event that marked

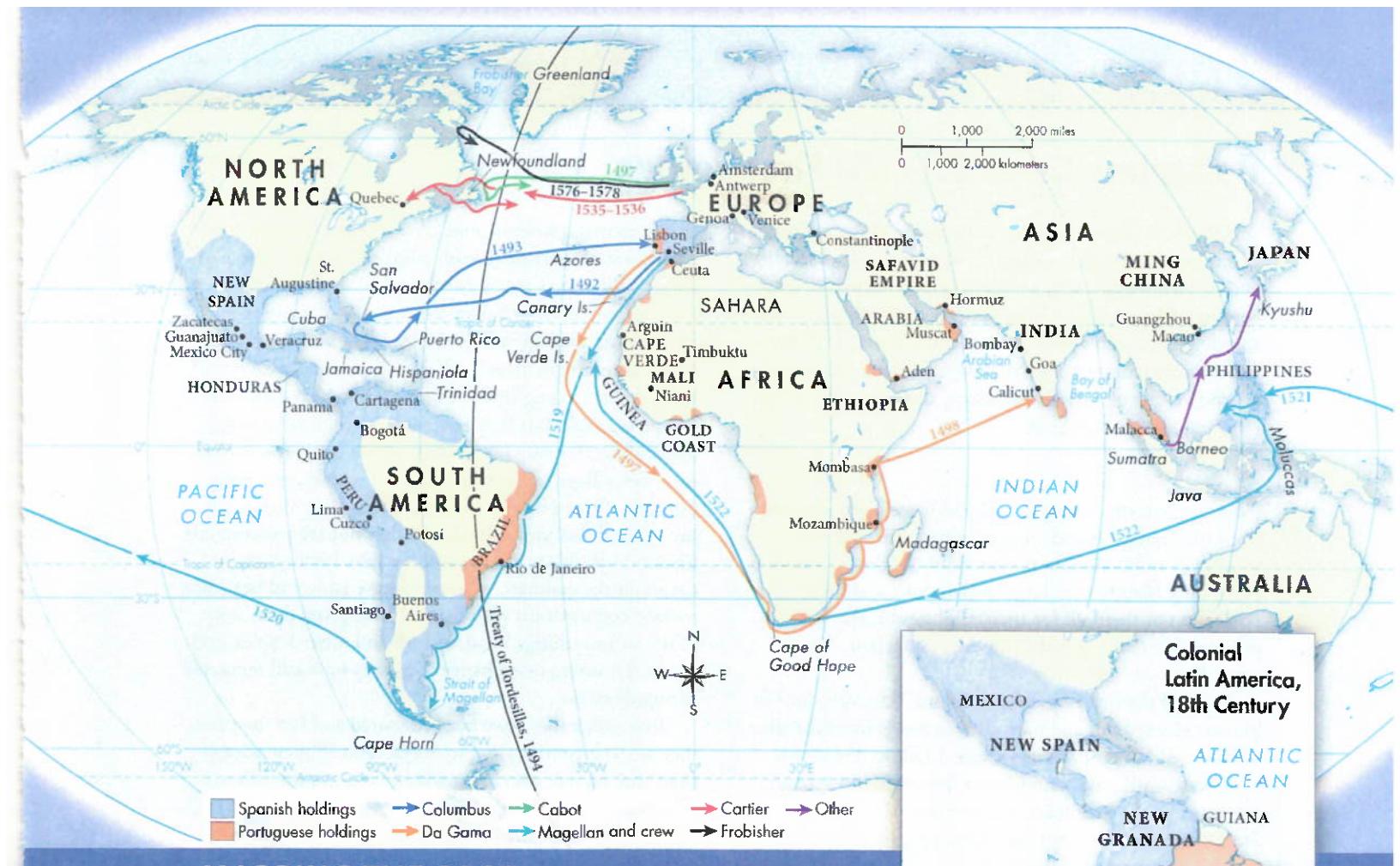
the beginning of European overseas expansion. In the 1420s, under Henry’s direction, the Portuguese claimed sovereignty over islands in the Atlantic off the northwest coast of Africa, Madeira (ca. 1420) and the Azores (1427). In 1443 they founded their first African commercial settlement at Arguin in North Africa.

By the time of Henry’s death in 1460, his support for exploration was vindicated—from the Portuguese point of view—by thriving sugar plantations on the Atlantic islands, the first arrival of enslaved Africans in Portugal, and new access to African gold. It was also authorized and legitimized by the Catholic Church. In 1454, Pope Nicholas V issued a bull reiterating the rights of the Portuguese crown to conquer and enslave non-Christians and recognizing Portuguese possession of territories in West Africa. Such papal proclamations legitimized Portuguese—and later Spanish—seizure of land and people in their own eyes, but of course it meant nothing to those suffering invasion and conquest.

The Portuguese next established fortified trading posts, called factories, on the gold-rich Guinea coast (Map 14.2). By 1500 Portugal controlled the flow of African gold to Europe. In contrast to the Spanish conquest of the Americas, the Portuguese did not seek to establish large settlements in West Africa or to control the political or cultural lives of those with whom they traded. Instead, they pursued easier and faster profits by inserting themselves into pre-existing trading systems. For the first century of their relations, African rulers were equal partners with the Portuguese, benefiting from their experienced armies and European vulnerability to tropical diseases.

The Portuguese then pushed farther south down the west coast of Africa. In 1487 Bartholomeu Dias rounded the Cape of Good Hope at the southern tip of Africa, but poor conditions forced him to turn back. A decade later Vasco da Gama succeeded in rounding the Cape while commanding a fleet of four ships in search of a sea route to India. With the help of an Arab guide, da Gama reached the port of Calicut in India in 1498. He returned to Lisbon loaded with spices and samples of Indian cloth, having proved the possibility of lucrative trade with the East via the Cape route. Thereafter, a Portuguese convoy set out for passage around the Cape every year in March or April.

Lisbon became the major entrance port for Asian goods into Europe, but this was not accomplished without a fight. Muslim-controlled port city-states had long controlled the rich trade of the Indian Ocean, and they did not surrender their dominance willingly. From 1500 to 1515 the Portuguese used a combination of bombardment and diplomatic treaties to establish trading forts at Goa, Malacca, Calicut, and Hormuz, thereby laying the foundation for a Portuguese trading empire in the sixteenth and



## MAPPING THE PAST

### MAP 14.2 Overseas Exploration and Conquest in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries

The voyages of discovery marked a dramatic new phase in the centuries-old migrations of European peoples. This world map depicts the voyages of the most significant European explorers of this period, while the inset map shows Spanish and Portuguese colonies of the eighteenth century.

**ANALYZING THE MAP** Consider the routes and dates of the voyages shown. How might the successes of the earlier voyages have contributed to the later expeditions? Which voyage had the most impact, and why?

**CONNECTIONS** How would you compare Spanish and Portuguese New World holdings in the sixteenth century with those of the eighteenth century? How would you explain the differences and continuities over time?



seventeenth centuries. The acquisition of port cities and their trade routes allowed Portugal to dominate trade in the Indian Ocean, but, as in Africa, the Portuguese did not seek to transform the lives and religious faith of peoples beyond their coastal holdings.

Inspired by the Portuguese, the Spanish had also begun to seek direct access to the wealth of Asian trade. Theirs was to be a second, entirely different, mode of colonization, leading to the conquest of existing empires, large-scale settlement, and the assimilation of a subjugated indigenous population.

### Spain's Voyages to the Americas

Christopher Columbus was not the first to explore the Atlantic. Ninth-century Vikings established short-lived settlements in Newfoundland, and it is probable that others made the voyage, either on purpose or accidentally, carried by westward currents off the coast of Africa. In the late fifteenth century the achievements of Portugal's decades of exploration made the moment right for Christopher Columbus's attempt to find a westward route across the Atlantic to Asia.

## Columbus Describes His First Voyage

On his return voyage to Spain in February 1493, Christopher Columbus composed a letter intended for wide circulation and had copies of it sent ahead to Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand. Because the letter sums up Columbus's understanding of his achievements, it is considered the most important document of his first voyage. Remember that his knowledge of Asia rested heavily on Marco Polo's *Travels*, published around 1298.



I write to inform you how in thirty-three days I crossed from the Canary Islands to the Indies, with the fleet which our most illustrious sovereigns gave me. I found very many islands with large populations and took possession of them all for their Highnesses; this I did by proclamation and unfurled the royal standard. No opposition was offered.

I named the first island that I found "San Salvador," in honour of our Lord and Saviour who has granted me this miracle. . . . When I reached Cuba, I followed its north coast westwards, and found it so extensive that I thought this must be the mainland, the province of Cathay. . . .<sup>\*</sup> From there I saw another island eighteen leagues eastwards which I then named "Hispaniola." . . .<sup>†</sup>

Hispaniola is a wonder. The mountains and hills, the plains and meadow lands are both fertile and beautiful. They are most suitable for planting crops and for raising cattle of all kinds, and there are good sites for building towns and villages. The harbours are incredibly fine and there are many great rivers with broad channels and the majority contain gold.<sup>‡</sup>

The inhabitants of this island, and all the rest that I discovered or heard of, go naked, as their mothers bore

\* Cathay is the old name for China. In the logbook and later in this letter, Columbus accepts the native story that Cuba is an island that can be circumnavigated in something more than twenty-one days, yet he insists here and during the second voyage that it is part of the Asiatic mainland.

† Hispaniola is the second-largest island of the West Indies. Haiti occupies the western third of the island, the Dominican Republic the rest.

‡ This did not prove to be true.

them, men and women alike. A few of the women, however, cover a single place with a leaf of a plant or piece of cotton which they weave for the purpose. They have no iron or steel or arms and are not capable of using them, nor because they are not strong and well built but because they are amazingly timid. All the weapons they have are canes cut at seeding time, at the end of which they fix a sharpened stick, but they have not the courage to make use of these, for very often when I have sent two or three men to a village to have conversation with them a great number of them have come out. But as soon as they saw my men all fled immediately, a father not even waiting for his son. And this is not because we have harmed any of them; on the contrary, wherever I have gone and been able to have conversation with them, I have given them some of the various things I had, a cloth and other articles, and received nothing in exchange. But they have still remained incurably timid.

True, when they have been reassured and lost their fear, they are so ingenuous and so liberal with all their possessions that no one who has not seen them would believe it. If one asks for anything they have they never say no. On the contrary, they offer a share to anyone with demonstrations of heartfelt affection, and they are immediately content with any small thing, valuable or valueless, that is given them. I forbade the men to give them bits of broken crockery, fragments of glass or tags of laces, though if they could get them they fancied them the finest jewels in the world. . . .

I hoped to win them to the love and service of their Highnesses and of the whole Spanish nation and to persuade them to collect and give us of the things which they possessed in abundance and which we needed. They have no religion and are not idolaters; but all believe that power and goodness dwell in the sky and they are firmly convinced that I have come from the sky with these ships and people. In this belief they gave me a good reception everywhere, once they had overcome their fear; and this is not because they are stupid—far from it, they are men of great intelligence, for they navigate all those seas, and give a marvellously good

Christopher Columbus, a native of Genoa, was an experienced seaman and navigator, with close ties to the world of Portuguese seafaring. He had worked as a mapmaker in Lisbon and spent time on Madeira, where his wife's father led the Portuguese colony. He was familiar with *portolans*—written descriptions of the courses along which ships sailed—and the use of the compass for dead reckoning. (He carried an astrolabe on his first voyage, but did not use it for navigation.) Columbus was also a deeply religious man. He

had witnessed the Spanish conquest of Granada and shared fully in the religious and nationalistic fervor surrounding that event. Like the Spanish rulers and most Europeans of his age, Columbus understood Christianity as a missionary religion that should be carried to all places of the earth.

Given Portugal's leading role in Atlantic exploration and his personal connections, Columbus first appealed to the Portuguese rulers for support for a voyage to find a westward passage to the Indies in 1483.

account of every thing—but because they have never before seen men clothed or ships like these. . . .

In all these islands the men are seemingly content with one woman, but their chief or king is allowed more than twenty. The women appear to work more than the men and I have not been able to find out if they have private property. As far as I could see whatever a man had was shared among all the rest and this particularly applies to food. . . . In another island, which I am told is larger than Hispaniola, the people have no hair. Here there is a vast quantity of gold, and from here and the other islands I bring Indians as evidence.

In conclusion, to speak only of the results of this very hasty voyage, their Highnesses can see that I will give them as much gold as they require, if they will render me some very slight assistance; also I will give them all the spices and cotton they want. . . . I will also bring them as much aloes as they ask and as many slaves, who will be taken from the idolaters.<sup>5</sup>

### EVALUATE THE EVIDENCE

1. What was Columbus's view of the Native Americans he met, and what does he want the Spanish rulers to know about them?
2. How trustworthy do you think Columbus's account of the wealth of the Caribbean islands in gold, cotton, and spices is, and the Native Americans' eagerness to share their possessions with the Spanish? Why would he exaggerate these elements of his voyage?
3. What impression does Columbus seem to want to convey of his treatment of the people he encountered? What does this convey about Europeans' attitudes to the peoples they encountered in the New World?

Source: *The Four Voyages of Christopher Columbus*, pp. 115–123, ed. and trans. J. M. Cohen (Penguin Books, 1992). Copyright © J. M. Cohen 1969, 1992. Reproduced by permission of Penguin Books Ltd.

<sup>5</sup> This contradicts his earlier statement that the natives were not "idolaters"; elsewhere in the letter he comments that the inhabitants of the Caribbean could be easily enslaved.

When they refused, he turned, unsuccessfully, to Ferdinand and Isabella in 1486 and then finally won the backing of the Spanish monarchy in 1492. Buoyed by the success of the reconquista and eager to earn profits from trade, the Spanish crown named Columbus viceroy over any territory he might discover and promised him one-tenth of the material rewards of the journey.

Columbus and his small fleet left Spain on August 3, 1492. Inspired by the stories of Mandeville and Marco Polo, Columbus dreamed of reaching the court

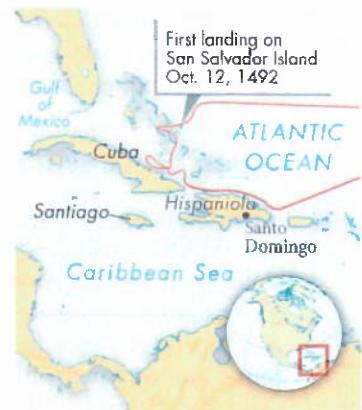
of the Great Khan (not realizing that the Ming Dynasty had overthrown the Mongols in 1368). Based on Ptolemy's *Geography* and other texts, he expected to pass the islands of Japan and then land on the east coast of China.

On October 12, 1492, he landed in the Bahamas, which he christened San Salvador and claimed for the Spanish crown. In a letter submitted to Ferdinand and Isabella on his return to Spain, Columbus described the natives as handsome, peaceful, and primitive people whose body painting reminded him of that of the Canary Islands natives. Believing he was somewhere off the east coast of Japan, in what he considered the Indies, he called them "Indians," a name later applied to all inhabitants of the Americas. Columbus concluded that they would make good slaves and could easily be converted to Christianity. (See "Evaluating Written Evidence: Columbus Describes His First Voyage," left.)

Scholars have identified the inhabitants of the islands as the Taino people, who inhabited Hispaniola (modern-day Haiti and Dominican Republic) and other islands in the Caribbean. From San Salvador, Columbus sailed southwest, landing on Cuba on October 28. Deciding that he must be on the mainland near the coastal city of Quinsay (now Hangzhou), described by Marco Polo, he sent a small embassy inland with letters from Ferdinand and Isabella and instructions to locate the grand city. Although they found no large settlement or any evidence of a great kingdom, the sight of Taino people wearing gold ornaments on Hispaniola suggested that gold was available in the region. In January, confident that its source would soon be found, Columbus headed back to Spain to report on his discovery.<sup>4</sup>

On his second voyage in 1493, Columbus brought with him settlers for the new Spanish territories, along with agricultural seed and livestock. Columbus and his followers forcibly took control of the island of Hispaniola and enslaved its indigenous people. Columbus himself, however, had limited skills in governing. Revolt soon broke out against him and his brother on Hispaniola. A royal expedition sent to investigate his leadership returned the brothers to Spain in chains, and a royal governor assumed control of the colony.

Columbus was very much a man of his times. To the end of his life in 1506, he incorrectly believed that he had found small islands off the coast of Asia. He



Columbus's First Voyage to the New World, 1492–1493

could not know that the scale of his discoveries would revolutionize world power and set in motion a new era of trade, conquest, and empire.

### Spain “Discovers” the Pacific

The Florentine navigator Amerigo Vespucci (veh-SPOO-chee) (1454–1512) was one of the first to begin to perceive what Columbus had not. Writing about his discoveries on the coast of modern-day Venezuela, Vespucci stated: “Those new regions which we found and explored with the fleet . . . we may rightly call a New World.” This letter, titled *Mundus Novus* (The New World), was the first document to describe America as a continent separate from Asia. In recognition of Amerigo’s bold claim, a German mapmaker named the new continent for him in 1507.

As soon as Columbus returned from his first voyage, Isabella and Ferdinand sought to establish their claims to the new territories and forestall potential opposition from Portugal, which had previously dominated Atlantic exploration. Spanish-born Pope Alexander VI, to whom they appealed for support, proposed drawing an imaginary line down the Atlantic, giving Spain possession of all lands discovered to the west and Portugal everything to the east. The pope enjoined both powers to carry the Christian faith to these newly discovered lands and their peoples. The **Treaty of Tordesillas** (tor-duh-SEE-yuhs) negotiated between Spain and Portugal in 1494 retained the pope’s idea, but moved the line further west as a concession to the Portuguese. This arbitrary division worked in Portugal’s favor when in 1500 an expedition led by Pedro Álvares Cabral, en route to India, landed on the coast of Brazil, which Cabral claimed as Portuguese territory. (Because the line was also imagined to extend around the globe, it meant that the Philippine Islands would eventually end up in Spanish control.)

The search for profits determined the direction of Spanish exploration. Because its revenue from Hispaniola and other Caribbean islands was insignificant compared to the enormous riches that the Portuguese were reaping in Asia, Spain renewed the search for a western passage to Asia. In 1519 Charles I of Spain (who was also Holy Roman emperor Charles V) sent the Portuguese mariner Ferdinand Magellan (1480–1521) to find a sea route to the spices of Southeast Asia. Magellan sailed southwest across the Atlantic to Brazil, and after a long search along the coast he located the treacherous straits that now bear his name (see Map 14.2). The new ocean he sailed into after a rough passage through the straits seemed so calm that Magellan dubbed it the Pacific, from the Latin word for peaceful. His fleet sailed north up the west coast of South America and then headed west into the

immense expanse of the Pacific in 1520 toward the Malay Archipelago, which includes modern-day Indonesia and other island nations.

Magellan’s first impressions of the Pacific were terribly mistaken. Terrible storms, disease, starvation, and violence devastated the expedition. Magellan himself died in a skirmish in the Malay Archipelago, and only one of the five ships that began the expedition made it back to Spain. The ship returned home in 1522 with only 18 of the approximately 270 men who originally set out, having traveled from the east by way of the Indian Ocean, the Cape of Good Hope, and the Atlantic. The voyage—the first to circumnavigate the globe—had taken close to three years.

Despite the losses, this voyage revolutionized Europeans’ understanding of the world by demonstrating the vastness of the Pacific. The earth was clearly much larger than Ptolemy’s map had shown. Although the voyage made a small profit in spices, it also demonstrated that the westward passage to the Indies was too long and dangerous for commercial purposes. Spain’s rulers soon abandoned the attempt to oust Portugal from the Eastern spice trade and concentrated on exploiting its New World territories.

### Early Exploration by Northern European Powers

Shortly following Columbus’s voyages, northern European nations entered the competition for a northwest passage to the Indies. In 1497 John Cabot, a Venetian merchant living in London, obtained support from English king Henry VII for such a voyage. Following a northern route that he believed would provide shorter passage to Asia, Cabot and his crew landed on Newfoundland. In subsequent years, Cabot made two additional *voyages* to explore the northeast coast of Canada. These forays did not reveal a passage to the Indies, and Cabot made no attempt to establish settlements in the coastal areas he explored.

News of the riches of Mexico and Peru later inspired the English to renew their efforts to find a westward passage, this time in the extreme north. Between 1576 and 1578 Martin Frobisher made three voyages in and around the Canadian bay that now bears his name. Frobisher brought a quantity of ore back to England with him, hoping he had found a new source of gold or silver, but it proved to be worthless.

The French crown also sponsored efforts to find a westward passage to Asia. Between 1534 and 1541 Frenchman Jacques Cartier made several *voyages* and explored the St. Lawrence River of Canada. His exploration of the St. Lawrence was halted at the great rapids west of the present-day island of Montreal; he named the rapids “La Chine” in the optimistic belief that China lay just beyond. When this hope proved

vain, the French turned to a new source of profit within Canada itself: trade in beavers and other furs. As had the Portuguese in Asia, French traders bartered with local people, who maintained autonomous control of their trade goods.

French fishermen also competed with Portuguese and Spanish, and later English, ships for the

teeming schools of cod they found in the Atlantic waters around Newfoundland, one of the richest fish stocks in the world. Fishing vessels salted the catch on board and brought it back to Europe, where a thriving market for fish was created by the Catholic prohibition on eating meat on Fridays and during Lent.

## What was the impact of European conquest on the New World?

Before Columbus's arrival, the Americas were inhabited by thousands of groups of indigenous peoples with different languages and cultures. These groups ranged from hunter-gatherer tribes organized into tribal confederations to settled agriculturalists to large-scale empires containing bustling cities and towns. The best estimate is that the peoples of the Americas numbered between 35 and 50 million in 1492. Their lives were radically transformed by the arrival of Europeans.

The growing European presence in the New World transformed its land and its peoples forever. While Iberian powers conquered enormous territories in Central and South America, incorporating pre-existing peoples and empires, the northern European powers came later to colonization and established scattered settlements hugging the North American Atlantic coastline.

### Conquest of the Aztec Empire

The first two decades after Columbus's arrival in the New World saw Spanish settlement of Hispaniola, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and other Caribbean islands. Based on rumors of a wealthy mainland civilization, the Spanish governor in Cuba sponsored expeditions to the Yucatán coast of the Gulf of Mexico, including one in 1519 under the command of Hernán Cortés (1485–1547), a minor Spanish nobleman who had spent fifteen years in the Caribbean as an imperial administrator. Alarmed by Cortés's ambition, the governor decided to withdraw his support, but Cortés quickly set sail before being removed from command. Cortés, accompanied by several hundred fellow conquistadors as well as Taino and African slaves, landed on the Mexican coast on April 21, 1519. His camp soon received visits by delegations from the Aztec emperor bearing gifts and news of their great emperor.

The **Aztec Empire** was formed in the early fifteenth century through an alliance of the Mexica people of Tenochtitlan (tay-nawch-teet-LAHN) with other city-states in the Valley of Mexico. Over the next decades, the empire expanded rapidly through conquest. At the time of the Spanish arrival, emperor

Moctezuma II (r. 1502–1520) ruled an empire of several million inhabitants from the capital at Tenochtitlan, now Mexico City. The Aztec Empire had a highly developed culture with advanced mathematics, astronomy, and engineering, as well as oral poetry and written record keeping. Aztec society was highly hierarchical. A hereditary nobility dominated the army, the priesthood, and the state bureaucracy, and lived from tribute collected from conquered states and its own people. The Aztec state practiced constant warfare against neighboring peoples to secure captives for religious sacrifices and laborers for agricultural and building projects.

After arriving on the mainland, Cortés took steps to establish authority independent of Cuba and the Spanish governor. He formally declared the establishment of a new town called Vera Cruz, naming his leading followers as town councilors and himself as military commander. He then sent letters to the Spanish crown requesting authorization to conquer and govern new lands.

The brutal nature of the Aztec Empire provided an opening for Cortés to obtain local assistance, a necessity for conquistadors throughout the Americas given their small numbers and ignorance of local conditions. Within weeks of his arrival, Cortés acquired translators who provided vital information on the empire and its weaknesses (see "Thinking Like a Historian: Who Was Doña Marina?" page 404). In September 1519, after initial hostilities in which many Spaniards died, Cortés formed an alliance with Tlaxcala (tlah-SKAH-lah), an independent city-state that had successfully resisted incorporation into the Aztec Empire.

In October a combined Spanish-Tlaxcalan force marched to the city of Cholula, which had recently switched loyalties from Tlaxcala to the Aztec Empire and massacred many thousands of inhabitants,

■ **Treaty of Tordesillas** A 1494 treaty that settled competing claims to newly discovered Atlantic territories by giving Spain everything to the west of an imaginary line drawn down the Atlantic and giving Portugal everything to the east.

■ **Aztec Empire** A large and complex Native American civilization in modern Mexico and Central America that possessed advanced mathematical, astronomical, and engineering technology.

# THINKING LIKE A HISTORIAN

## Who Was Doña Marina?

In April 1519 Doña Marina was among twenty women given to the Spanish as slaves. Fluent in Nahuatl (NAH-wah-tuhl) and Yucatec Maya (spoken by a Spanish priest accompanying Cortés), she acted as an interpreter and diplomatic guide for the Spanish. She had a close relationship with Cortés and bore his son, Don Martín Cortés, in 1522. Although no writings by Doña Marina survive, she figures prominently in both Spanish and indigenous sources on the conquest.

**1 Cortés's letter to Charles V, 1522.** This letter to Charles V contains one of only two written references to Doña Marina found in Cortés's correspondence with the emperor. He describes her as his "Interpreter."

During the three days I remained in that city they fed us worse each day, and the lords and principal persons of the city came only rarely to see and speak with me. And being somewhat disturbed by this, my interpreter, who is an Indian woman from Putunchan, which is the great river of which I spoke to Your Majesty in the first letter, was told by another Indian woman and a native of this city that very close by many of Mutezuma's men were gathered, and that the people of the city had sent away their women and children and all their belongings, and were about to fall on us and kill us all; and that if she wished to escape she should go with her and she would shelter her. All this she told to Gerónimo de Aguilar, an interpreter whom I acquired in Yucatán, of whom I have also written to Your Highness; and he informed me.

**2 Díaz's account of the conquest of the Aztecs.** Bernal Díaz del Castillo participated in the conquest of the Aztecs alongside Cortés. His historical account of the conquest, written much later in life, provides the lengthiest descriptions of Doña Marina.

Early the next morning many Caciques and chiefs of Tabasco and the neighbouring towns arrived and paid great respect to us all, and they brought a present of gold, . . . and some other things of little value. . . . This present, however, was worth nothing in comparison with the twenty women that were given us, among them one very

excellent woman called Doña Marina, for so she was named when she became a Christian.

. . . Cortés allotted one of the women to each of his captains and Doña Marina, as she was good looking and intelligent and without embarrassment, he gave to Alonzo Hernández Puertocarrero. When Puertocarrero went to Spain, Doña Marina lived with Cortés, and bore him a son named Don Martín Cortés.

. . . Her father and mother were chiefs and Caciques of a town called Paynala. . . . Her father died while she was still a little child, and her mother married another Cacique, a young man, and bore him a son. It seems that the father and mother had a great affection for this son and it was agreed between them that he should succeed to their honours when their days were done. So that there should be no impediment to this, they gave the little girl, Doña Marina, to some Indians from Xicalango, and this they did by night so as to escape observation, and they then spread the report that she had died, and as it happened at this time that a child of one of their Indian slaves died they gave out that it was their daughter and the heiress who was dead.

The Indians of Xicalango gave the child to the people of Tabasco and the Tabasco people gave her to Cortés.

. . . As Doña Marina proved herself such an excellent woman and good interpreter throughout the wars in New Spain, Tlaxcala and Mexico (as I shall show later on) Cortés always took her with him, and during that expedition she was married to a gentleman named Juan Jaramillo at the town of Orizaba.

Doña Marina was a person of the greatest importance and was obeyed without question by the Indians throughout New Spain.

## ANALYZING THE EVIDENCE

- How would you compare the attitudes toward Doña Marina displayed in Cortés's letter to the Spanish crown (Source 1) and Díaz's account of the conquest (Source 2)? Why would Cortés downplay his reliance on Doña Marina in correspondence with the Spanish emperor?
- What skills and experience enabled Doña Marina to act as an intermediary between the Spanish and the Aztecs? Based on the evidence, what role did she play in interactions between the Spanish and the Aztecs?
- According to Díaz (Source 2), how did Doña Marina feel about her relationship with Cortés and the Spanish? How do you interpret this passage? Is there any evidence in the other sources that supports or undermines the sentiments he attributed to her?
- Based on the evidence of these sources, what role did indigenous women play in relations between Spanish and Aztec men? How exceptional was Doña Marina?



3

### Doña Marina translating for Hernán Cortés during his meeting with Moctezuma.

This image was created by Tlaxcalan artists approximately six decades after the conquest of Mexico and represents one indigenous perspective on the events.

(Granger/Granger — All rights reserved)

Marina . . . said that God had been very gracious to her in freeing her from the worship of idols and making her a Christian, and letting her bear a son to her lord and master Cortés and in marrying her to such a gentleman as Juan Jaramillo, who was now her husband. That she would rather serve her husband and Cortés than anything else in the world, and would not exchange her place to be Cacica of all the provinces in New Spain.

Doña Marina knew the language of Coatza-coalcos, which is that common to Mexico, and she knew the language of Tabasco, as did also Jerónimo de Aguilar, who spoke the language of Yucatan and Tabasco, which is one and the same. So that these two could understand one another clearly, and Aguilar translated into Castilian for Cortés.

This was the great beginning of our conquests and thus, thanks be to God, things prospered with us. I have made a point of explaining this matter, because without the help of Doña Marina we could not have understood the language of New Spain and Mexico.

4

**The Florentine Codex.** In the decades following the conquest, a Franciscan monk, Bernardino de Sahagún, worked with indigenous partners to compile a history of Aztec society. Known today as the *Florentine Codex*, it contains images and text written in both Nahuatl and Spanish. The following excerpt describes the entry of the victorious Spanish into Tenochtitlan.

Next they went to Motecuhzoma's storehouse, in the place called Totocalco, where his personal treasures were kept. The Spaniards grinned like little beasts and parted each other with delight.

When they entered the hall of treasures, it was as if they had arrived in Paradise. They searched everywhere and coveted everything; they were slaves to their own greed. . . .

They seized these treasures as they were their own, as if this plunder were merely a stroke of good luck. And when they had taken all the gold, they heaped up everything else in the middle of the patio.

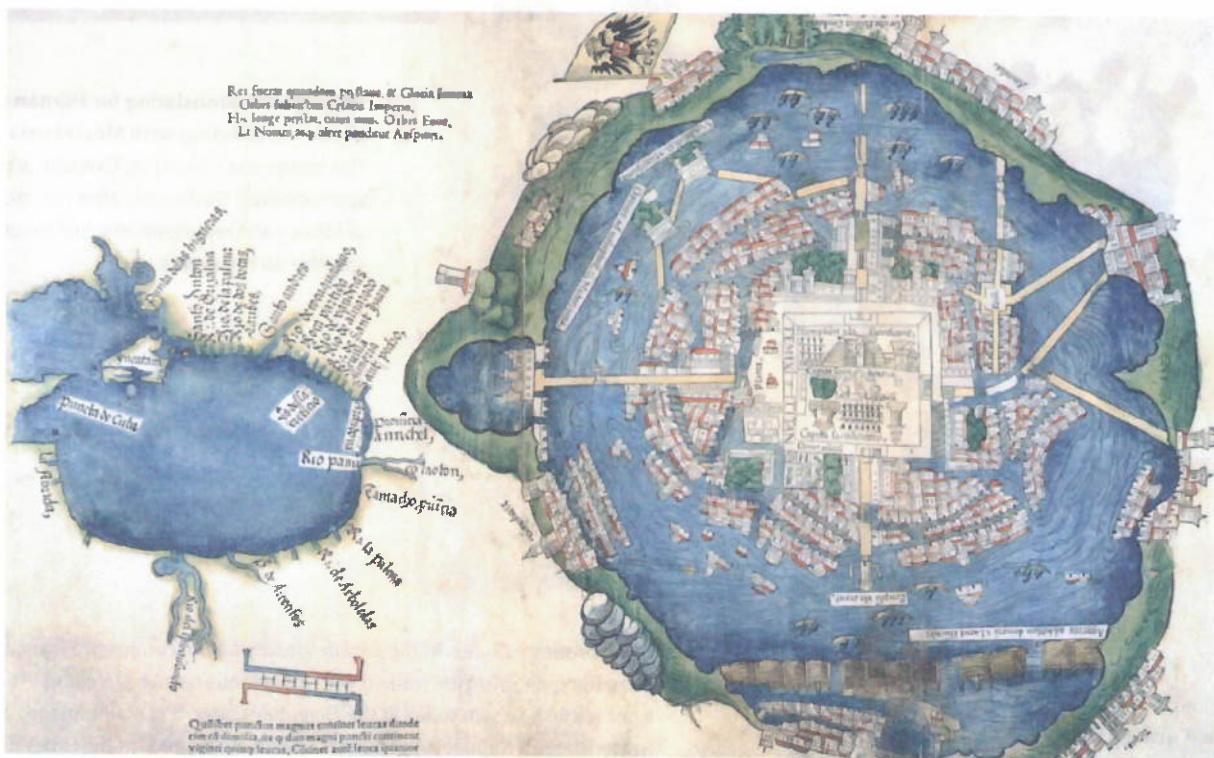
La Malinche [Doña Marina] called all the nobles together. She climbed up to the palace roof and cried: "Mexicanos, come forward! The Spaniards need your help! Bring them food and pure water. They are tired and hungry; they are almost fainting from exhaustion! Why do you not come forward? Are you angry with them?"

The Mexicas were too frightened to approach. They were crushed by terror and would not risk coming forward. They shied away as if the Spaniards were wild beasts, as if the hour were midnight on the blackest night of the year. Yet they did not abandon the Spaniards to hunger and thirst. They brought them whatever they needed, but shook with fear as they did so. They delivered the supplies to the Spaniards with trembling hands, then turned and hurried away.

## PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Using the sources above, along with what you have learned in class and in this chapter, imagine the events and experiences described in these sources from Doña Marina's point of view. Reflect on the various aspects of Doña Marina described in the sources—betrayed daughter, slave, concubine, mother, wife, interpreter, and commander—and write an essay that uses her experience to explore the interaction among Spanish, Aztec, and other indigenous groups during the conquest period.

Sources: (1) Hernán Cortés to Emperor Carlos V, 1522, in *Hernán Cortés: Letters from Mexico*, trans. and ed. Anthony Pagden (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), pp. 72–74; (2) Bernal Diaz del Castillo, *The Discovery and Conquest of Mexico, 1517–1521*, trans. A. P. Maudslay (New York: Noonday Press, 1965), pp. 62–63, 64, 66–67; (4) Miguel León-Portilla, ed., *The Broken Spears: The Aztec Account of the Conquest of Mexico*, pp. 68–69. Copyright © 1962, 1990 by Miguel León-Portilla. Expanded and Updated Edition © 1992 by Miguel León-Portilla. Reprinted by permission of Beacon Press, Boston.



**The Mexica Capital of Tenochtitlan** This woodcut map was published in 1524 along with Cortés's letters describing the conquest of the Aztec Empire. As it shows, Tenochtitlan occupied an island and was laid out in concentric circles. The administrative and religious buildings were at the heart of the city, which was surrounded by residential quarters. Cortés himself marveled at the city in his letters: "The city is as large as Seville or Cordoba. . . . There are bridges, very large, strong, and well constructed, so that, over many, ten horsemen can ride abreast. . . . The city has many squares where markets are held. . . . There is one square . . . where there are daily more than sixty thousand souls, buying and selling. In the service and manners of its people, their fashion of living was almost the same as in Spain, with just as much harmony and order." (Newberry Library, Chicago, Illinois, USA/Bridgeman Images)

including women and children. Impressed by this display of ruthless power, the other native kingdoms joined Cortés's alliance against Aztec rule. In November 1519, these combined forces marched on Tenochtitlan.

Historians have long debated Moctezuma's response to the arrival of the Spanish. Despite the fact that Cortés was allied with enemies of the empire, Moctezuma refrained from attacking the Spaniards and instead welcomed Cortés and approximately 250 Spanish followers into Tenochtitlan. Cortés later claimed that at this meeting the emperor, inspired by prophecies of the Spaniards' arrival, agreed to become a vassal of the Spanish king. Although impossible for historians to verify, Cortés and later Spanish colonists used this claim to legitimate violence against any who resisted their rule.

After spending more than seven months in the city, in an ambiguous

position that combined the status of honored guests, occupiers, and detainees, the Spanish seized Moctezuma as a hostage. During the ensuing attacks and counterattacks, Moctezuma was killed. The city's population rose up against the Spaniards, who fled with heavy losses. In May 1521 the Spanish-Tlaxcalan alliance assaulted Tenochtitlan a second time with an army of approximately one thousand Spanish and seventy-five thousand native warriors.<sup>5</sup>

The fall of the Aztec capital in late summer 1521 was hard-won and greatly facilitated by the effects of smallpox, which had devastated the besieged population of the city. After establishing a new capital in the ruins of Tenochtitlan, Cortés and other conquistadors began the systematic conquest of Mexico. Major campaigns continued in Mesoamerica for at least two decades against ongoing resistance.



**Invasion of Tenochtitlan, 1519–1521**

## The Fall of the Incas

More surprising than the defeat of the Aztecs was the fall of the remote **Inca Empire**. Living in a settlement located more than 9,800 feet above sea level, the Incas were isolated from North American indigenous cultures and knew nothing of the Aztec Empire or its collapse. In 1438 the hereditary ruler of the Incas had himself crowned emperor and embarked on a successful campaign of conquest. At its greatest extent, the empire extended to the frontier of present-day Ecuador and Colombia in the north and to present-day Chile in the south, an area containing some 16 million people and 350,000 square miles.

Ruled from the capital city of Cuzco, the empire was divided into four major regions containing eighty provinces and twice as many districts. Officials at each level used an extensive network of roads to transmit information and orders back and forth through the empire. While the Aztecs used a system of glyphs for writing, the Incas had devised a complex system of colored and knotted cords, called *khipus*, for administrative bookkeeping. The empire also benefited from the use of llamas as pack animals (by contrast, no beasts of burden existed in Mesoamerica). The Incas integrated regions they conquered by spreading their religion and imposing their language, Quechua, as the official language of the empire.

By the time of the Spanish invasion, however, the Inca Empire had been weakened by a civil war over succession and an epidemic of disease, possibly smallpox, which may have spread through trade with groups in contact with Europeans. Francisco Pizarro (ca. 1475–1541), a conquistador of modest Spanish origins, landed on the northern coast of Peru on May 13, 1532, the very day the Inca leader Atahualpa (ah-tuh-WAHL-puh) won control of the empire after five years of fighting. As Pizarro advanced across the steep Andes toward Cuzco, the capital of the Inca Empire, Atahualpa was also heading there for his coronation.

Like Moctezuma in Mexico, Atahualpa was aware of the Spaniards' movements. He sent envoys to invite the Spanish to meet him in the provincial town of Cajamarca. His plan was to lure the Spanish into a trap, seize their horses and ablest men for his army, and execute the rest. With an army of some forty thousand men stationed nearby, Atahualpa felt he had little to fear. Instead, the Spaniards ambushed and captured him, collected an enormous ransom in gold, and then executed him in 1533 on trumped-up charges. The Spanish then marched on to Cuzco, profiting once again from internal conflicts to form alliances with local peoples. When Cuzco fell in 1533, the Spanish plundered the empire's wealth in gold and silver.

As with the Aztec Empire, the fall of the imperial capital did not end hostilities. Warfare between

Spanish and Inca forces continued to the 1570s. During this period, civil war broke out among Spanish settlers vying for power.

For centuries students have wondered how it was possible for several hundred Spanish conquistadors to defeat powerful empires commanding large armies, vast wealth, and millions of inhabitants. This question is based on a mistaken understanding of the conquest as the rapid work of Spaniards acting alone, ideas that were spread in the aftermath by the conquistadors themselves. Instead, the defeat of the Aztec and Inca Empires was a long process enabled by divisions within the empires that produced political weakness and many skilled and motivated native allies who fought alongside the Spanish. Spanish steel swords, guns, horses, and dogs produced military advantages, but these tools of war were limited in number and effectiveness. Very few of the conquistadors were experienced soldiers. Perhaps the most important factor was the devastating impact of contagious diseases among the indigenous population, which swept through the Aztec and Inca Empires at the time of the conquest.

## Portuguese Brazil

Unlike Mesoamerica or the Andes, the territory of Brazil contained no urban empires, but instead roughly 2.5 million nomadic and settled people divided into small tribes and many different language groups. In 1500 the Portuguese crown named Pedro Álvares Cabral commander of a fleet headed for the spice trade of the Indies. En route the fleet sailed far to the west, accidentally landing on the coast of Brazil, which Cabral claimed for Portugal under the terms of the Treaty of Tordesillas. The Portuguese soon undertook a profitable trade with local people in brazilwood, a valued source of red dye.

Portuguese settlers began arriving in the 1530s, with numbers rising after 1550. In the early years of settlement, the Portuguese brought sugarcane production to Brazil. They initially used enslaved indigenous laborers on sugar plantations, but the rapid decline in the indigenous population soon led to the use of forcibly transported Africans. In Brazil the Portuguese thus created a new form of colonization in the Americas: large plantations worked by enslaved people. This model would spread throughout the Caribbean along with sugar production in the seventeenth century.

## Colonial Empires of England and France

For almost a century after the fall of the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan, the Spanish and Portuguese dominated European overseas trade and colonization. In the

■ **Inca Empire** The vast and sophisticated Peruvian empire centered at the capital city of Cuzco that was at its peak from 1438 until 1533.

early seventeenth century, however, northern European powers began to challenge the Iberian monopoly. They eventually succeeded in creating multisited overseas empires, consisting of settler colonies in North America, slave plantations in the Caribbean, and scattered trading posts in West Africa and Asia. Competition among European states for colonies was encouraged by mercantilist economic doctrine, which dictated that foreign trade was a zero-sum game in which one country's gains necessarily entailed another's losses.

Unlike the Iberian powers, whose royal governments financed exploration and directly ruled the colonies, England, France, and the Netherlands conducted the initial phase of colonization via chartered

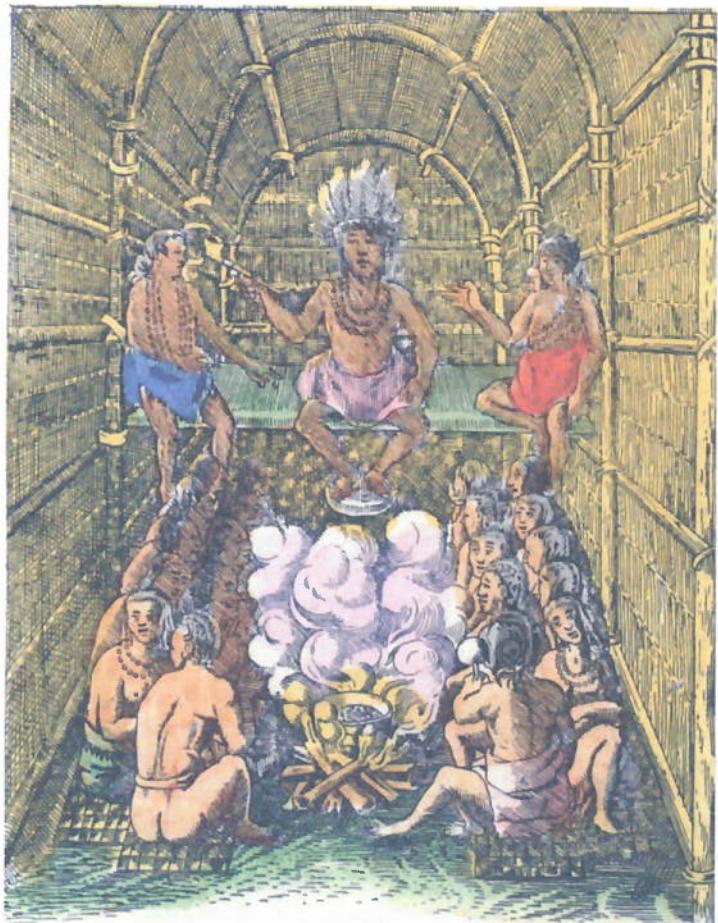
companies endowed with government monopolies over settlement and trade in a given area. These corporate bodies were granted extensive powers over far-away colonies, including exclusive rights to conduct trade, wage war, raise taxes, and administer justice.

The colony of Virginia, founded at Jamestown in 1607, initially struggled to grow sufficient food and faced hostility from the Powhatan Confederacy, a military alliance composed of around thirty Algonquian-speaking Native American tribes. Eventually it thrived by producing tobacco for a growing European market. Indentured servants obtained free passage to the colony in exchange for several years of work and the promise of greater opportunity for economic and social advancement than in England. In the 1670s English colonists from the Caribbean island of Barbados settled Carolina, where conditions were suitable for large rice plantations. During the late seventeenth century, following the Portuguese model in Brazil, enslaved Africans replaced indentured servants as laborers on tobacco and rice plantations, and a harsh racial divide was imposed.

Settlement on the coast of New England was undertaken for different reasons. There, radical Protestants sought to escape Anglican repression in England and begin new lives. The small and struggling outpost of Plymouth Colony (1620), founded by the Pilgrims who arrived on the *Mayflower*, was followed by Massachusetts Bay Colony (1630), which grew into a prosperous settlement. Because New England lacked the conditions for plantation agriculture, slavery was always a minor element of life there.

French navigator and explorer Samuel de Champlain founded the first permanent French settlement, at Quebec, in 1608. Ville-Marie, later named Montreal, was founded in 1642. Following the waterways of the St. Lawrence, the Great Lakes, and the Mississippi, the French ventured into much of modern-day Canada and at least thirty-five of the fifty states of the United States. French traders forged relations with the Huron Confederacy, a league of four indigenous nations that dominated a large region north of Lake Erie, as a means of gaining access to hunting grounds and trade routes for beaver and other animals. In 1682, French explorer René-Robert Cavelier LaSalle descended the Mississippi to the Gulf of Mexico, opening the way for French occupation of Louisiana.

Spanish expansion shared many similarities with that of other European powers, including the use of violence against indigenous populations and efforts toward Christian conversion, but there were important differences. Whereas the Spanish conquered indigenous empires, forcing large population groups to render tribute and enter state labor systems, English settlements merely hugged the Atlantic coastline and did not seek to incorporate the indigenous population. The English



**The Chief of the Powhatan Tribe** In the first years of the seventeenth century, Native American leader Wahunsenacawh, known as Chief Powhatan of the Powhatan people, ruled some thirty tribal groups in the Chesapeake Bay region. After initially assisting the Jamestown colony, in 1609 Chief Powhatan began to resent English demands and became hostile to them. After his daughter Pocahontas married an English settler (after having been captured and converted to Christianity), peaceful relations returned. This image, which shows the ruler in a traditional Powhatan wooden house, is a detail from a map of the Chesapeake Bay based on an original by John Smith, who spent several weeks as a captive of Powhatan. (Detail from the "Nova Virginiae Tabula," 1647/Bibliothèque des Arts Décoratifs, Paris, France/Archives Charmet/Bridgeman Images)

disinterest in full-scale conquest did not prevent conflict with native groups over land and resources, however. At Jamestown, for example, English expansion undermined prior cooperation with the Powhatan Confederacy; disease and warfare with the English led to drastic population losses among the Powhatans.

In the first decades of the seventeenth century, English and French naval captains also defied Spain's hold over the Caribbean Sea (see Map 14.2). The English seized control of Bermuda (1612), Barbados (1627), and a succession of other islands. The French took Cayenne (1604), St. Christophe (1625), Martinique and Guadeloupe (1635), and, finally, Saint-Domingue (1697) on the western half of Spanish-occupied Hispaniola. These islands acquired new importance after 1640, when the Portuguese brought sugar plantations to Brazil. Sugar and slaves quickly followed in the West Indies (see "Sugar and Slavery"), making the Caribbean plantations the most lucrative of all colonial possessions.

Northern European expansion also occurred in West Africa. In the seventeenth century France and England—along with Denmark and other northern European powers—established fortified trading posts in West Africa as bases for purchasing enslaved people and in India and the Indian Ocean as bases for purchasing spices and other luxury goods. Thus, by the end of the seventeenth century, a handful of European powers possessed overseas empires that truly spanned the globe.

## Colonial Administration

In 1482, King John II of Portugal established a royal trading house in Lisbon to handle gold and other goods (including enslaved people) being extracted from Africa. After Portuguese trade expanded into the Indian Ocean spice trade, it was named the *Casa da India* (House of the Indies). Through the Casa, the Crown exercised a monopoly over the export of European goods and the import and distribution of spices and precious metals. It charged taxes on all other incoming goods. The Casa also established a viceroy in the Indian city of Goa to administer Portuguese trading posts and naval forces in Africa and Asia.

To secure the vast expanse of Brazil, in the 1530s the Portuguese implemented the system of captaincies, hereditary grants of land given to nobles and loyal officials who were to bear the costs of settling and administering their territories. The failure of this system led the Crown to bring the captaincies under state control by appointing royal governors to act as administrators. The captaincy of Bahia was the site of the capital, Salvador, home to the governor general and other royal officials.

Spain adopted a similar system for overseas trade. In 1503 the Spanish granted the port of Seville a monopoly

over all traffic to the New World and established the *Casa de la Contratación* (House of Trade) to oversee economic matters. In 1524 Spain created the Royal and Supreme Council of the Indies, with authority over all colonial affairs, subject to approval by the king.

By the end of the sixteenth century the Spanish had successfully overcome most indigenous groups and expanded their territory throughout modern-day Mexico, the southwestern United States, and Central and South America (with the exception of Portuguese Brazil). In Mesoamerica and the Andes, the Spanish had taken over the cities and tribute systems of the Aztecs and the Incas, leaving in place well-established cities and towns, but redirecting tribute payments toward the Crown. Through laws and regulations, the Spanish crown strove to maintain two separate populations, a "Spanish Republic" and an "Indian Republic," with distinct rights and duties for each group.

The Spanish crown divided its New World possessions initially into two **viceroyalties**, or administrative divisions: New Spain, created in 1535, with its capital at Mexico City, and Peru, created in 1542, with its capital at Lima. In the eighteenth century two additional viceroyalties were added: New Granada, with Bogotá as its administrative center; and La Plata, with Buenos Aires as its capital (see Map 14.2).

Within each territory the viceroy, or imperial governor, exercised broad military and civil authority as the direct representative of Spain. The viceroy presided over the *audiencia* (ow-dee-EHN-see-ah), a board of twelve to fifteen judges that served as his advisory council and the highest judicial body. As in Spain, settlement in the Americas was centered on cities and towns. In each city, the municipal council, or *cabildo*, exercised local authority. Women were denied participation in public life, a familiar pattern from both European and precolonial indigenous society.

By the end of the seventeenth century the French crown had followed the Iberian example and imposed direct rule over its North American colonies. The king appointed military governors to rule alongside intendants, royal officials possessed of broad administrative and financial authority within their intendancies. In the mid-eighteenth century reform-minded Spanish king Charles III (r. 1759–1788) adopted the intendant system for the Spanish colonies.

England's colonies followed a distinctive path. Drawing on English traditions of representative government, its colonists established their own proudly autonomous assemblies to regulate local affairs. Wealthy merchants and landowners dominated the assemblies, yet common men had more say in politics than was the case in England.

**viceroyalties** The name for the four administrative units of Spanish possessions in the Americas: New Spain, Peru, New Granada, and La Plata.

## How did Europe and the world change after Columbus?

The New and Old Worlds were brought into contact and forever changed by the European voyages of discovery and their aftermath. For the first time, a global economy emerged in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and it forged new links among far-flung peoples, cultures, and societies. The ancient civilizations of Europe, Africa, the Americas, and Asia confronted each other in new and rapidly evolving ways. Those confrontations led to conquest, voluntary and forced migration, devastating population losses, and brutal exploitation. The exchange of goods and people between Europe and the New World brought highly destructive diseases to the Americas, but it also gave both the New and Old Worlds new crops that eventually altered consumption patterns across the globe.

### Economic Exploitation of the Indigenous Population

From the first decades of settlement, the Spanish made use of the **encomienda system**, by which the Crown granted the conquerors the right to employ groups of Native Americans as laborers or to demand tribute from them in exchange for providing food and shelter. The encomiendas were also intended as a means to organize indigenous people for missionary work and Christian conversion. This system was first used in Hispaniola to work goldfields, then in Mexico for agricultural labor, and, when silver was discovered in the 1540s, for silver mining.

A 1512 Spanish law authorizing the use of encomiendas called for indigenous people to be treated fairly, but in practice the system led to terrible abuses, including overwork, beatings, and sexual violence. Spanish missionaries publicized these abuses, leading to debates in Spain about the nature and proper treatment of indigenous people (see “Religious Conversion” ahead in this chapter). King Charles I responded to complaints in 1542 with the New Laws, which set limits on the authority of encomienda holders, including their ability to transmit their privileges to heirs. The New Laws recognized indigenous people who accepted Christianity and Spanish rule as free subjects of the Spanish crown. According to these laws, they had voluntarily accepted to be vassals of the Spanish king and thereby gained personal liberty and the right to form their own communities.

The New Laws provoked a revolt in Peru among encomienda holders, and they were little enforced throughout Spanish territories. For example, although the laws forbade enslavement of indigenous people, the practice did not end completely. To respond to persistent abuses in the encomiendas and a growing shortage of indigenous workers, royal officials established a new government-run system of forced labor, called *repartimiento* in New Spain and *mita* in Peru. Administrators assigned a certain percentage of the inhabitants of native communities to labor for a set period each year in public works, mining, agriculture, and other tasks. Laborers received modest wages in exchange, which they could use to fulfill tribute obligations. In the seventeenth century, as land became a more important source of wealth than labor, elite settlers purchased *haciendas*, large tracts of farmland worked by dependent indigenous laborers and slaves.

Spanish systems for exploiting the labor of indigenous peoples were both a cause of and a response to the disastrous decline in their numbers that began soon after the arrival of Europeans. Some indigenous people died as a direct result of the violence of conquest and the disruption of agriculture and trade caused by warfare, but the most important cause of death was infectious disease. (See “The Columbian Exchange and Population Loss” ahead in this chapter.)

Colonial administrators responded to native population decline by forcibly combining dwindling indigenous communities into new settlements and imposing the rigors of the encomienda and the repartimiento. By the end of the sixteenth century the search for fresh sources of labor had given birth to the new tragedy of the transatlantic slave trade (see “Sugar and Slavery”).

### Society in the Colonies

Many factors helped shape life in European colonies, including geographical location, pre-existing indigenous cultures, patterns of settlement, and the policies and cultural values of the different nations that claimed them as empire. Throughout the New World, colonial settlements were hedged by immense borderlands where European power was weak and Europeans and non-Europeans interacted on a more equal basis.

Women played a crucial role in the emergence of colonial societies. The first explorers formed unions with native women, many of whom were enslaved, and relied on them as translators and guides and to form alliances with indigenous powers. As settlement developed, the character of each colony was

■ **encomienda system** A system whereby the Spanish crown granted the conquerors the right to forcibly employ groups of Indians in exchange for providing food, shelter, and Christian teaching.

■ **Columbian Exchange** The exchange of animals, plants, and diseases between the Old and the New Worlds.

influenced by the presence or absence of European women. Where women and children accompanied men, as in the Spanish mainland and British colonies, new settlements took on European languages, religion, and ways of life that have endured, with strong input from local cultures, to this day. Where European women did not accompany men, as on the west coast of Africa and most European outposts in Asia, local populations largely retained their own cultures, to which male Europeans acclimatized themselves.

Most women who crossed the Atlantic were captive Africans, constituting four-fifths of the female newcomers before 1800.<sup>6</sup> Wherever slavery existed, masters profited from their power to coerce sexual relations with enslaved women. One important difference among European colonies was in the status of children born from such unions. In some colonies, mostly those dominated by the Portuguese, Spanish, or French, substantial populations of free people of color descended from the freed children of such unions. In English colonies, masters were less likely to free children they fathered with female slaves. The mixing of indigenous peoples with Europeans and Africans created whole new populations and ethnicities and complex forms of identity (see “New Ideas About Race”).

### The Columbian Exchange and Population Loss

The migration of people to the New World led to an exchange of animals, plants, and diseases, a complex process known as the **Columbian exchange**.

Everywhere they settled, the Spanish and Portuguese brought and raised wheat with labor provided by the encomienda system. Grapes and olives brought over from Spain did well in parts of Peru and Chile. Perhaps the most significant introduction to the diet

of Native Americans came via the meat and milk of the livestock that the early conquistadors brought with them, including cattle, sheep, and goats. The horse allowed for faster travel and easier transport of heavy loads.

In turn, Europeans returned home with many food crops that became central elements of their diet. Crops originating in the Americas included tomatoes, squash, pumpkins, peppers, and many varieties of beans, as well as tobacco. One of the most important of such crops was maize (corn). By the late seventeenth century maize had become a staple in Spain, Portugal, southern France, and Italy, and in the eighteenth century it became one of the chief foods of southeastern Europe and southern China. Even more valuable was the nutritious white potato, which slowly spread from west to east, contributing everywhere to a rise in population.

While the exchange of foods was a great benefit to both cultures, the introduction of European pathogens to the New World had a disastrous impact on the native population. In Europe, infectious diseases like smallpox, measles, and influenza—originally passed on from domestic animals living among the population—killed many people each year. Given the size of the population and the frequency of outbreaks, in most of Europe these diseases were experienced in childhood, and survivors carried immunity or resistance. Over centuries of dealing with these diseases, the European population had had time to adapt. Prior to contact with Europeans, indigenous peoples of the New World suffered from insect-borne diseases and some infectious ones, but their lack of domestic livestock spared them the host of highly infectious diseases known in the Old World. The arrival of Europeans spread these microbes among a completely unprepared population, and they fell victim in vast numbers.

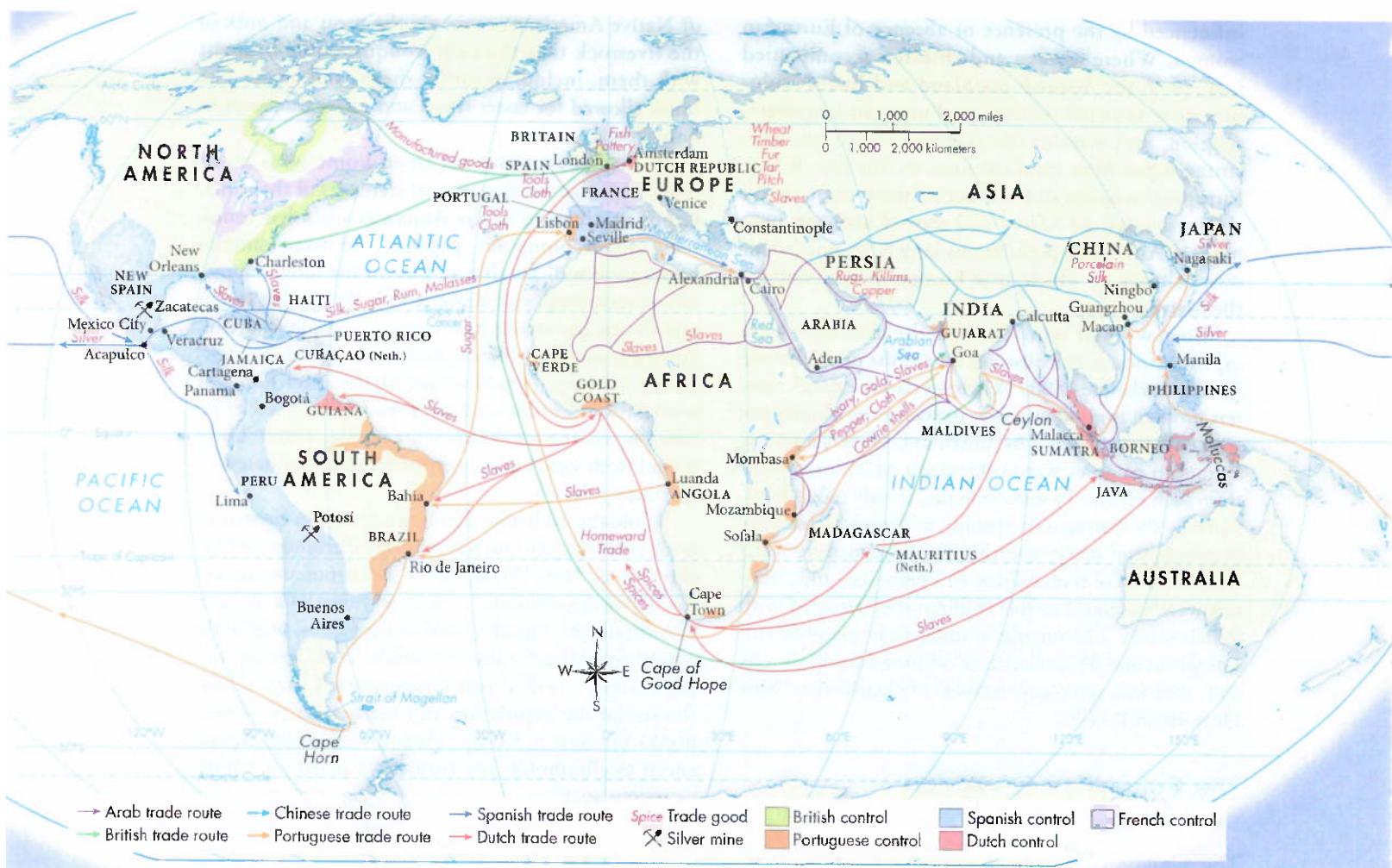
Overall, the indigenous population declined by as much as 90 percent or more, but with important regional variations.

In general, densely populated urban centers were worse hit than rural areas, and tropical, low-lying regions suffered more than cooler, higher-altitude ones. The world after Columbus was thus marked by disease as well as by trade and colonization.



**A Mixed-Race Procession** The Incas used drinking vessels, known as *keros*, for the ritual consumption of maize beer at feasts. This *kero* from the early colonial period depicts a multiracial procession: an Inca dignitary is preceded by a Spanish trumpet player and an African drummer. This is believed to be one of the earliest visual representations of an African in the Americas.

(British Museum, London, UK/Werner Forman/Universal Images Group/Getty Images)



**MAP 14.3 Seaborne Trading Empires in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries** By the mid-seventeenth century trade linked all parts of the world except for Australia. Notice that trade in slaves was not confined to the Atlantic but involved almost all parts of the world.

### Sugar and Slavery

Throughout the Middle Ages slavery was deeply entrenched in the Mediterranean. The constant warfare of the reconquista had supplied captive Muslims for domestic slavery in Iberia, but the success of these wars meant that the number of captives had greatly dwindled by the mid-fifteenth century.

As Portuguese explorers began their voyages along the western coast of Africa, one of the first commodities they sought was enslaved human beings. In 1444 the first ship returned to Lisbon with a cargo of enslaved Africans. While the first slaves were simply seized by small raiding parties, Portuguese merchants soon found that it was easier to trade with local leaders, who were accustomed to dealing in captives acquired through warfare with neighboring powers. In 1483 the Portuguese established an alliance with the kingdom of Kongo. The royal family eventually

converted to Christianity, and Portuguese merchants intermarried with Kongoese women, creating a permanent Afro-Portuguese community. From 1490 to 1530 Portuguese traders brought hundreds of enslaved Africans to Lisbon each year (Map 14.3) to work as domestic slaves.

In this stage of European expansion, the history of slavery became intertwined with the history of sugar. Originally sugar was an expensive luxury, but population increases and monetary expansion in the fifteenth century led to increasing demand. Native to the South Pacific, sugar was taken in ancient times to India, where farmers learned to preserve cane juice as granules that could be stored and shipped. From there, sugar crops traveled to China and the Mediterranean, where islands like Crete and Sicily had the warm and humid climate needed for growing sugarcane. When Genoese and other Italians colonized the Canary



### Indians Working in a Spanish Sugar Mill

**Mill** Belgian engraver Theodor de Bry published many images of the European exploration and settlement of the New World. De Bry never crossed the Atlantic himself, instead drawing on images and stories from those who did. This image depicts the exploitation of indigenous people in a Spanish sugar mill. (ca. 1540 engraving by Theodore de Bry [1528–1598]/Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, France/Snark/Art Resource, NY)

Islands and the Portuguese settled on the Madeira Islands, which possessed the requisite climate conditions, sugar plantations came to the Atlantic.

Sugar was a difficult and demanding crop to produce for profit. Seed-stems were planted by hand, thousands to the acre. When mature, the cane had to be harvested and processed rapidly to avoid spoiling. Moreover, sugar has a virtually constant growing season, meaning that there was no fallow period when workers could recuperate from the arduous labor. The invention of roller mills to crush the cane more efficiently meant that yields could be significantly augmented, but only if a sufficient labor force was found to supply the mills. Europeans solved the labor problem by forcing first native islanders and then enslaved Africans to provide the backbreaking work.

The transatlantic slave trade began in 1518 when Spanish king Charles I authorized traders to bring enslaved Africans to the Americas. The Portuguese brought the first slaves to Brazil around 1550; by 1600 four thousand were being imported annually. After its founding in 1621, the Dutch West India Company transported thousands of Africans to Brazil and the Caribbean, mostly to work on sugar plantations. In the mid-seventeenth century the English got involved.

Before 1700, when slavers decided it was better business to improve conditions for the slaves, some 20 percent of captives died on the voyage across the Atlantic.<sup>7</sup> The most common cause of death was

dysentery induced by poor-quality food and water, crowding, and lack of sanitation. Men were often kept in irons during the passage, while women and girls suffered sexual violence from sailors. On sugar plantations, death rates from the brutal pace of labor were extremely high, leading to demand for a constant stream of new shipments from Africa.

### Spanish Silver and Its Economic Effects

In 1545, at an altitude of fifteen thousand feet, the Spanish discovered an extraordinary source of silver at Potosí (poh-toh-SEE) (in present-day Bolivia) in territory conquered from the Inca Empire. By 1550 Potosí yielded perhaps 60 percent of all the silver mined in the world. From Potosí and the mines at Zacatecas (za-kuh-TAY-kuhhs) and Guanajuato (gwah-nah-HWAH-toh) in Mexico, huge quantities of precious metals poured forth.

Mining became the most important industry in the colonies. Millions of indigenous laborers suffered brutal conditions and death in the silver mines. Demand for new sources of labor for the mines also contributed to the intensification of the African slave trade. Profits for the Spanish crown were immense. The Crown claimed the quinto, one-fifth of all precious metals mined in South America, which represented 25 percent of its total income. Between 1503 and 1650, 35



**Philip II, ca. 1533** This portrait of Philip II as a young man and crown prince of Spain is by the celebrated artist Titian, court painter to Philip's father, Charles V. After taking the throne, Philip became another great patron of the artist. (Palazzo Pitti, Florence, Italy/Bridgeman Images)

million pounds of silver and over 600,000 pounds of gold entered Seville's port.

Spain's immense profits from silver paid for the tremendous expansion of its empire and for the large armies that defended it. However, the easy flow of money also dampened economic innovation. It exacerbated the rising inflation Spain was already experiencing in the mid-sixteenth century, a period of growing population and stagnant production. Several times between 1557 and 1647, King Philip II and his successors wrote off the state debt, thereby undermining confidence in the government and damaging the economy. Only after 1600, when the population declined, did prices gradually stabilize.

Philip II paid his armies and foreign debts with silver bullion, and thus Spanish inflation was transmitted to the

rest of Europe. Between 1560 and 1600 much of Europe experienced large price increases. Because money bought less, people who lived on fixed incomes, such as nobles, were badly hurt. Those who owed fixed sums of money, such as the middle class, prospered because in a time of rising prices, debts lessened in value each year. Food costs rose most sharply, and the poor fared worst of all.

In many ways, though, it was not Spain but China that controlled the world trade in silver. The Chinese demanded silver for their products and for the payment of imperial taxes. China was thus the main buyer of world silver, absorbing half the world's production. The silver market drove world trade, with New Spain and Japan being mainstays on the supply side and China dominating the demand side. The world trade in silver is one of the best examples of the new global economy that emerged in this period.

### The Birth of the Global Economy

With the Europeans' discovery of the Americas and their exploration of the Pacific, the entire world was linked for the first time in history by seaborne trade. The opening of that trade brought into being three commercial empires: the Portuguese, the Spanish, and the Dutch.

The Portuguese were the first worldwide traders. In the sixteenth century they controlled the sea route to India (see Map 14.3). From their fortified bases at Goa on the Arabian Sea and at Malacca on the Malay Peninsula, ships carried goods to the Portuguese settlement at Macao, founded in 1557, in the South China Sea. From Macao Portuguese ships loaded with Chinese silks and porcelains sailed to the Japanese port of Nagasaki and the Philippines, where Chinese goods were exchanged for Spanish silver from New Spain. Throughout Asia the Portuguese traded in slaves, some of whom were brought all the way across the Pacific to Mexico. (See "Individuals in Society: Catarina de San Juan," page 415.) Returning to Portugal, they brought Asian spices that had been purchased with textiles produced in India and with gold and ivory from East Africa. From their colony in Brazil, they shipped sugar produced by enslaved Africans whom they had forcibly transported across the Atlantic.

Coming to empire a few decades later than the Portuguese, the Spanish were determined to claim their place in world trade. The Spanish Empire in the New World was basically a land empire, but across the Pacific the Spaniards built a seaborne empire centered at Manila in the Philippines. Established in 1571, the city of Manila served as a transpacific link between Spanish America and China. In Manila, Spanish traders used silver from American mines to purchase Chinese silk for European markets (see Map 14.3).

In the final years of the sixteenth century the Dutch challenged the Spanish and Portuguese

# INDIVIDUALS IN SOCIETY

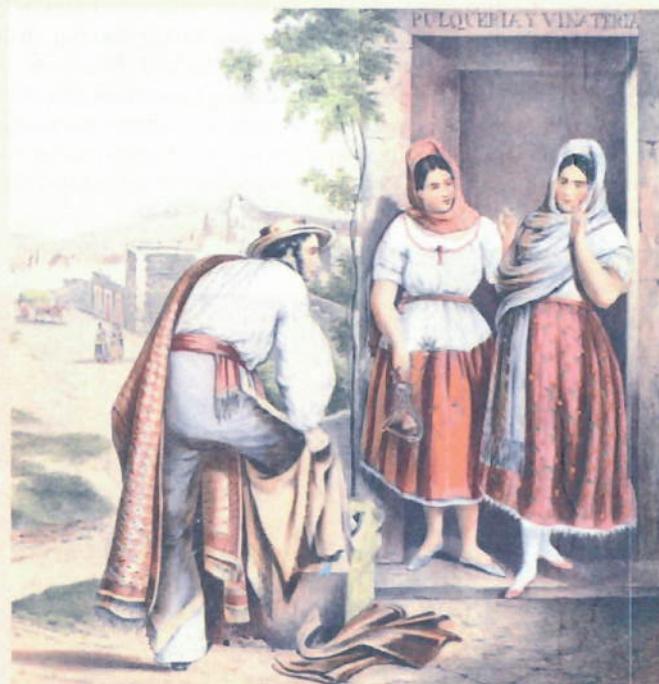
## Catarina de San Juan

A long journey led Catarina de San Juan from enslavement in South Asia to adulation as a popular saint in Mexico. Her journey began on the west coast of India around 1610 when Portuguese traders captured a group of children, including the small girl who would become Catarina. Their ship continued around the southern tip of India, across the Bay of Bengal, through the Strait of Malacca, and across the South China Sea. It docked at Manila, a Spanish city in the Philippines, where the girl was sold at a slave auction. In 1619 Catarina boarded a ship that was part of the Manila Galleon, the annual convoy of Spanish ships that crossed the Pacific between Manila and the Mexican port of Acapulco. After a six-month voyage, Catarina arrived in Acapulco; she then walked to Mexico City and continued on to the city of Puebla.

In Puebla, Catarina became the property of a Portuguese merchant and worked as a domestic servant. She was one of thousands of *chinos*, a term for natives of the East Indies who were brought via the Philippines to Spanish America. Many were slaves, transported as part of a transoceanic slave trade that reached from the Indian Ocean to the South China Sea and across the Pacific to the Atlantic world. They constituted a small but significant portion of people forcibly transported by Europeans to the Americas in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century to replace dwindling numbers of indigenous laborers. Chinos were considered particularly apt for domestic labor, and many wealthy Spanish Americans bought them in Manila.

Before crossing the Pacific, Catarina converted to Catholicism and chose her Christian name. In Puebla her master encouraged Catarina's faith and allowed her to attend Mass every day. He also drafted a will emancipating her after his death, which occurred in 1619. With no money of her own, Catarina became the servant of a local priest. On his advice, Catarina reluctantly gave up her dream of becoming a lay sister and married a fellow chino named Domingo. The marriage was unhappy; Catarina reportedly refused to enter sexual relations with her husband and suffered from his debts, infidelity, and hostility to her faith. She found solace in renewed religious devotion, winning the admiration of priests and neighbors who flocked to her for spiritual comfort and to hear about her ecstatic visions. After fourteen years of marriage, Catarina became a widow and lived out her life in the home of wealthy supporters.

Catarina's funeral in 1688 drew large crowds. Her followers revered her as an unofficial saint, and soon the leaders of Puebla began a campaign to have Catarina beatified (officially recognized by the Catholic Church as a saint). Her former confessors published accounts of her life emphasizing her piety, beauty, and exotic Asian origins and marveling at



Nineteenth-century painting of Puebla women in traditional clothing. (De Agostini Picture Library/G. Dagli Orti/Bridgeman Images)

the miraculous preservation of her virginity through the perils of enslavement, long journeys at sea, and marriage. Much of what we know about Catarina derives from these sources and must be viewed as idealized, rather than as strictly historically accurate. The Spanish Inquisition, which oversaw the process of beatification, rejected Catarina's candidacy and, fearing that popular adulation might detract from the authority of the church, forbade the circulation of images of and texts about her. Despite this ban, popular reverence for Catarina de San Juan continued, and continues to this day in Mexico.

### QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. Why would the Inquisition react so negatively to popular devotion to Catarina? What dangers did she pose to the Catholic Church in New Spain?
2. What does Catarina's story reveal about the global nature of the Spanish Empire and the slave trade in this period? What does it reveal about divisions within the Catholic Church?

Sources: Tatiana Seijas, *Asian Slaves in Colonial Mexico: From Chinos to Indians* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 8–26; Ronald J. Morgan, *Spanish American Saints and the Rhetoric of Identity, 1600–1810* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2002), pp. 119–142.

**Goods from the Global Economy** Spices from Southeast Asia were a driving force behind the new global economy and among the most treasured European luxury goods. They were used not only for cooking but also as medicines and health tonics. This fresco (below right) shows a fifteenth-century Italian pharmacist measuring out spices for a customer. After the discovery of the Americas, a wave of new items entered European markets, silver foremost among them. The incredibly rich silver mines at Potosí (modern-day Bolivia) were the source of this eight-real coin (right) struck at the mine during the reign of Charles II. Such coins were the original “pieces of eight” prized by pirates and adventurers. Soon Asian and American goods were mixed together by enterprising tradesmen. This mid-seventeenth-century Chinese teapot (below left) was made of porcelain with the traditional Chinese design prized in the West, but with a silver handle added to suit European tastes. (teapot: Private Collection/Bridgeman Images; spice shop: Issogne Castle, Val d'Aosta, Italy/Alfredo Dagli Orti/Shutterstock; coin: Hoberman Collection/Hoberman Collection/Superstock)



Empires. During this period the Protestant Dutch were engaged in a long war of independence from their Spanish Catholic overlords. The joining of the Portuguese crown to Spain in 1580 meant that the Dutch had both strategic and commercial reasons to attack Portugal's commercial empire. In 1599 a Dutch fleet returned to Amsterdam carrying 600,000 pounds of pepper and 250,000 pounds of cloves and nutmeg. Those who had invested in the expedition received a 100 percent profit. The voyage led to the establishment in 1602 of the Dutch East India Company, founded with the stated intention of capturing the Asian spice trade from the Portuguese.

In return for assisting Indonesian princes in local conflicts and disputes with the Portuguese, the Dutch won broad commercial concessions and forged military alliances. With Indonesian assistance, they captured the strategically located fort of Malacca in 1641, gaining western access to the Malay Archipelago. Gradually, they acquired political domination over the archipelago itself. The Dutch were willing to use force more ruthlessly than the Portuguese and had superior organizational efficiency. These factors allowed them to expel the Portuguese from Sri Lanka in 1660 and henceforth control the immensely lucrative production and trade of spices. The company also established

the colony of Cape Town on the southern tip of Africa as a provisioning point for its Asian fleets.

Not content with challenging the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean, the Dutch also aspired to a role in the Americas. Founded in 1621, during their war with Spain, the Dutch West India Company aggressively sought to open trade with North and South America

and capture Spanish territories there. The company captured or destroyed hundreds of Spanish ships, seized the Spanish silver fleet in 1628, and captured portions of Brazil and the Caribbean. The Dutch also successfully interceded in the transatlantic slave trade, establishing a large number of trading stations on the west coast of Africa.

## How did expansion change European attitudes and beliefs?

The age of overseas expansion heightened Europeans' contacts with the rest of the world. Religion was one of the most important arenas of cultural contact, as European missionaries aimed to spread Christianity throughout the territories they acquired, with mixed results. While Christianity was embraced in parts of the New World, it was met largely with suspicion in places such as China and Japan. However, the East-West contacts did lead to exchanges of influential cultural and scientific ideas.

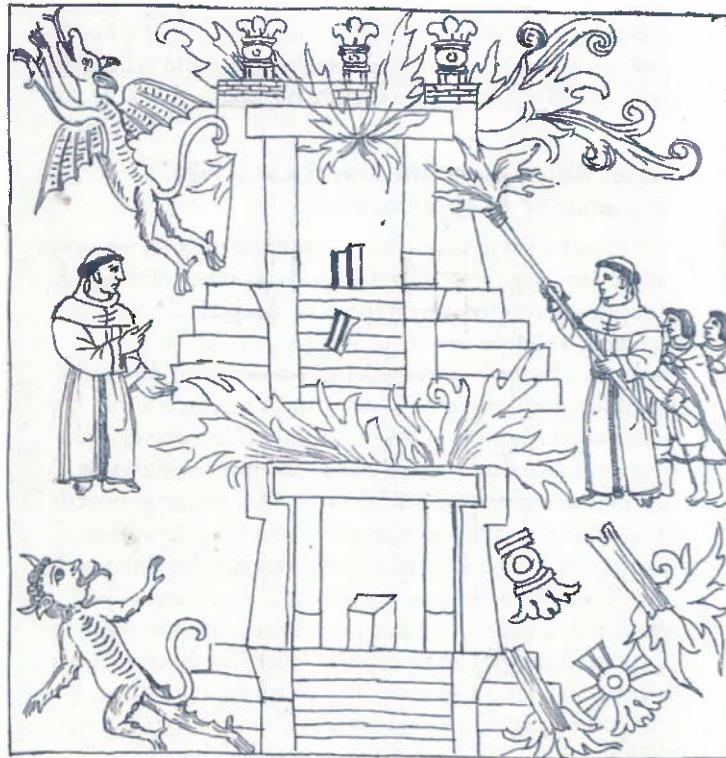
These contacts also gave birth to new ideas about the inherent superiority or inferiority of different races, sparking vociferous debate about the status of Africans and indigenous peoples of the Americas. The essays of Michel de Montaigne epitomized a new spirit of skepticism and cultural relativism, while the plays of William Shakespeare reflected the efforts of one great writer to come to terms with the cultural complexity of his day.

### Religious Conversion

Conversion to Christianity was one of the most important justifications for European expansion. Jesuit missionaries were active in Japan and China in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, until authorities banned their teachings. The first missionaries to the New World accompanied Columbus on his second voyage, and more than 2,500 priests and friars of the Franciscan, Dominican, Jesuit, and other Catholic orders crossed the Atlantic in the following century. Later French explorers were also accompanied by missionaries who preached to the Native American tribes with whom the French traded. Protestants also led missionary efforts, but in much smaller numbers than Catholics. Colonial powers built convents, churches, and cathedrals for converted indigenous people and European settlers, and established religious courts to police correct beliefs and morals.

To stamp out old beliefs and encourage sincere conversions, colonial authorities destroyed shrines and objects of religious worship. They harshly persecuted men and women who continued to practice and participate in traditional spiritual rituals. They imposed European Christian norms of family life, especially

monogamous marriage. While many resisted these efforts, over time a larger number accepted Christianity. (See "Viewpoints: Aztec and Spanish Views on Christian Conversion in New Spain," page 418.) It is estimated that missionaries had baptized between 4 and 9 million indigenous people in New Spain by the mid-1530s.<sup>8</sup>



**Franciscan Monks Burning Indigenous Temples** In the late sixteenth century, more than six decades after the fall of Tenochtitlan, Diego Muñoz Camargo, an educated *mestizo*, was chosen to draft a report on the province of Tlaxcala in response to a questionnaire issued by the king of Spain. Camargo produced a history of the Tlaxcala people—one of the first and most important Spanish allies against the Aztecs—starting from the time of conquest. An important theme of the text and its accompanying images was the efforts made by Franciscan missionaries to stamp out polytheistic indigenous religions in favor of Catholicism. This included, as shown here, burning temples, as well as destroying religious texts and punishing lapsed converts. (From "Historia de Tlaxcala" by Diego Muñoz Camargo/Glasgow University Library, Scotland/Bridgeman Images)



# VIEWPOINTS

## Aztec and Spanish Views on Christian Conversion in New Spain

In justifying their violent conquest of the Aztec and Inca civilizations, Spanish conquistadors emphasized the need to bring Christianity to heathen peoples. For the conquered, the imposition of Christianity and the repression of their pre-existing religions were often experienced as yet another form of loss. The first document recounts the response of vanquished Aztec leaders of Tenochtitlan to Franciscan missionaries. It was written forty years after the events described by the Spanish missionary and scholar Bernardino de Sahagún based on what he learned from Spanish chroniclers and surviving Aztec leaders. Despite resistance, missionaries eventually succeeded in converting much of the indigenous population to Catholicism. In the second document, an account of the Spanish conquest and its aftermath written in the 1560s by a man who had participated in the conquest, Bernal Díaz del Castillo professes great satisfaction at the Catholic piety of converted indigenous communities and their assimilation into European culture. As you read, ask yourself what motivations Díaz may have had to present such a positive picture.

### Aztec Response to the Franciscans' 1524 Explanation of Mission, 1564

You have told us that we do not know the One who gives us life and being, who is Lord of the heavens and of the earth. You also say that those we worship are not gods. This way of speaking is entirely new to us, and very scandalous. We are frightened by this way of speaking because our forebears who engendered and governed us never said anything like this. On the contrary, they left us this our custom of worshiping our gods, in which they believed and which they worshiped all the time that they lived here on earth. They taught us how to honor them. And they taught us all the ceremonies and sacrifices that we make. They told us that through them [our gods] we live and are, and that we were beholden to them, to be theirs and to serve countless centuries before the sun began to shine and before there was daytime. They said that these gods that we worship give us everything we need for our physical existence: maize, beans, chia seeds, etc. . . .

All of us together feel that it is enough to have lost, enough that the power and royal jurisdiction have been taken from us. As for our gods, we will die before giving up serving and worshiping them.

Rather than a straightforward imposition of Christianity, conversion entailed a complex process of cultural exchange. Catholic friars were among the first Europeans to seek an understanding of native cultures and languages as part of their effort to render Christianity comprehensible to indigenous people. In Mexico they not only learned the Nahuatl

### Bernal Díaz del Castillo on the Spread of Christianity in New Spain, 1560s

It is a thing to be grateful for to God, and for profound consideration, to see how the natives assist in celebrating a holy Mass. . . . There is another good thing they do [namely] that both men, women and children, who are of the age to learn them, know all the holy prayers in their own languages and are obliged to know them. They have other good customs about their holy Christianity, that when they pass near a sacred altar or Cross they bow their heads with humility, bend their knees, and say the prayer "Our Father," which we Conquistadores have taught them, and they place lighted wax candles before the holy altars and crosses. . . . In addition to what I have said, we taught them to show great reverence and obedience to all the monks and priests. . . . Beside the good customs reported by me they have others both holy and good, for when the day of Corpus Christ comes, or that of Our Lady, or other solemn festivals when among us we form processions, most of the pueblos in the neighbourhood of this city of Guatemala come out in procession with their crosses and lighted wax tapers, and carry on their shoulders, on a litter, the image of the saint who is the patron of the pueblo.

### QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

- What reasons do the leaders of Tenochtitlan offer for rejecting the teachings of Franciscan missionaries? What importance do they accord their own religious traditions?
- What evidence does Díaz provide for the conversion of the indigenous people in the city of Guatemala?
- How and why do you think the attitudes of indigenous peoples might have evolved from those described in the first document to those praised in the second? Why do you think Díaz may have exaggerated the Christian fervor of indigenous people?

Sources: "The Lords and Holy Men of Tenochtitlan Reply to the Franciscans Bernardino de Sahagún, *Coloquios y doctrina Cristiana*," ed. Miguel León-Portilla, in *Colonial Spanish America: A Documentary History*, ed. Kenneth Mills and William B. Taylor, pp. 20–21. Reproduced with permission of Rowman & Littlefield Publishers; Bernal Díaz, *The True History of the Conquest of New Spain*, in Stuart B. Schwartz, *Victors and Vanquished: Spanish and Nahua Views of the Conquest of Mexico* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2000), pp. 218–219.

language, but also taught it to non-Nahuatl-speaking groups to create a shared language for Christian teaching. In translating Christianity, missionaries, working in partnership with indigenous converts, adapted it to the symbols and ritual objects of pre-existing cultures and beliefs, thereby creating distinctive forms of Catholicism.

## European Debates About Indigenous Peoples

Iberian exploitation of the native population of the Americas began from the moment of Columbus's arrival in 1492. Denunciations of this abuse by Catholic missionaries, however, quickly followed, inspiring vociferous debates both in Europe and in the colonies about the nature of indigenous peoples and how they should be treated. Bartolomé de Las Casas (1474–1566), a Dominican friar and former encomienda holder, was one of the earliest and most outspoken critics of the brutal treatment inflicted on indigenous peoples. He wrote:

It was upon these gentle lambs [that] . . . 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. . . .<sup>9</sup>

Mounting criticism in Spain led King Charles I to assemble a group of churchmen and lawyers to debate the issue in 1550 in the city of Valladolid. One side, led by Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, argued that conquest and forcible conversion were both necessary and justified to save indigenous people from the horrors of human sacrifice, cannibalism, and idolatry. He described them as barbarians who belonged to a category of inferior beings identified by the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle as naturally destined for slavery. Against these arguments, Las Casas and his supporters depicted indigenous people as rational and innocent children, who deserved protection and tutelage from more advanced civilizations. Although Las Casas was more sympathetic to indigenous people, both sides thus agreed on the superiority of European culture.

While the debate did not end exploitation of indigenous people, the Crown did use it to justify limiting the rights of settlers in favor of the Catholic Church and royal authorities and to increase legal protections for their communities. In 1573, Philip II issued detailed laws regulating how new towns should be formed and administered, and how Spanish settlers should interact with indigenous populations. The impact of these laws can still be seen in Mexico's colonial towns, which are laid out as grids around a central plaza.

## New Ideas About Race

European conquest and settlement led to the emergence of new ideas about "race" as a form of biological difference among humans. In medieval Spain and

Portugal, sharp distinctions were drawn between, on the one hand, supposedly "pure-blooded" Christians and, on the other hand, Jews and *conversos*, people of Jewish origins who had converted to Christianity. In the fifteenth century, Iberian rulers issued discriminatory laws against conversos as well as against Muslims and their descendants. Feeling that conversion could not erase the taint of heretical belief, they came to see Christian faith as a type of inherited identity that was passed through the blood.

The idea of "purity of blood" changed through experiences in the colonies. There the transatlantic slave trade initiated in the sixteenth century meant that the colonial population comprised people of European, indigenous, and African descent. Spanish colonizers came to believe that the indigenous people of the Americas were free from the taint of unbelief because they had never been exposed to Christianity. Accordingly, the ideology of "purity of blood" they brought from Iberia could more easily incorporate indigenous populations; by contrast, Africans—viewed as having refused the message of Christ that was preached in the Old World—were seen as impure, as much on the grounds of religious difference as physical characteristics. (See "Evaluating Visual Evidence: Depictions of Africans in European Portraiture," page 420.)

Despite later efforts by colonial officials to segregate Europeans, Native Americans, and people of African descent, racial mixing began as soon as the first conquistadors arrived in the Americas. A complex system of racial classification, known as *castas* in Spanish America, emerged to describe different proportions of European, indigenous, and African parentage. Spanish concerns about religious purity were thus transformed in the colonial context into concerns about racial bloodlines, with "pure" Spanish blood occupying the summit of the racial hierarchy and indigenous and African descent ranked in descending order. These concerns put female chastity at the center of anxieties about racial mixing, heightening scrutiny of women's sexual activities.

All European colonies in the New World relied on racial distinctions drawn between Europeans and indigenous people and those of African descent, including later French and English settlements. With its immense slave-based plantation agriculture system, large indigenous population, and relatively low Portuguese immigration, Brazil developed a particularly complex racial and ethnic mosaic.

After 1700 the emergence of new methods of observing and describing nature led to the use of scientific frameworks to define race. Although it originally referred to a nation or an ethnic group, henceforth the term *race* would be used to describe supposedly biologically distinct groups of people, whose physical differences produced differences in culture, character, and intelligence. This occurred at the same time as a shift to defining gender differences as inherent in the biological differences between

## Depictions of Africans in European Portraiture

Starting in the Italian Renaissance, with the emergence of portraiture as a new genre, European elites began to commission images of themselves accompanied by slaves of African descent. Their intentions in doing so were to accentuate their wealth and power. Like imported Persian carpets, spices, and exotic animals, images of enslaved people demonstrated their owners' possession of valuable and exotic foreign goods. The depiction of enslaved Africans in aristocratic portraits began in Portugal and Spain in the mid-1550s and spread to other European nations in the seventeenth century. In this painting by Flemish painter Anthony Van Dyke, Marchesa Elena Grimaldi Cattaneo is shown lavishly dressed and confidently gazing at the viewer.\* A young boy of African descent holds a parasol over her head to shield the Marchesa from the sun. In this image, the dark skin of the attendant contrasts with the Marchesa's aristocratic pallor, suggesting that another function of depicting people of African descent was to valorize whiteness as an attribute of European superiority.

### EVALUATE THE EVIDENCE

- What elements of the painting suggest the Marchesa's elite status within her society and her attendant's servile status? What impression are we meant to have of each of these people?
- How does the color scheme of the painting help to convey its meaning? How do you explain the different colors used to depict the two people in the painting?

\*Marchesa (marquise in English) is a high-ranking noble title.



(By Anthony Van Dyck [1599–1641], 1623 [oil on canvas]/Widener Collection, 1942.9.92/image courtesy National Gallery of Art, Washington)

male and female bodies (see “Women and the Enlightenment” in Chapter 16). Science thus served to justify and naturalize existing inequalities between Europeans and non-Europeans and between men and women.

### Michel de Montaigne and Cultural Curiosity

Decades of religious fanaticism and civil war led some Catholics and Protestants to doubt that any one faith contained absolute truth. Added to these doubts was the discovery of peoples in the New World who had radically different ways of life. These shocks helped produce ideas of skepticism and cultural relativism. Skepticism is a school of thought founded on doubt that total certainty or definitive knowledge is ever attainable. Cultural

relativism suggests that one culture is not necessarily superior to another, just different. Both notions found expression in the work of Frenchman Michel de Montaigne (duh mahn-TAYN) (1533–1592).

Montaigne developed a new literary genre, the essay, to express his ideas. Intending his works to be accessible, he wrote in French rather than Latin and in an engaging conversational style. His essays were quickly translated into other European languages and became some of the most widely read texts of the early modern period. Montaigne's essay “Of Cannibals” reveals the impact of overseas discoveries on one thoughtful European. In contrast to the prevailing views of his day, he rejected the notion that one culture is superior to another. Speaking of native Brazilians, he wrote: “I find that there is nothing barbarous

and savage in this nation [Brazil], . . . except, that everyone gives the title of barbarism to everything that is not according to his usage.”<sup>10</sup>

In his own time, few would have agreed with Montaigne’s challenge to ideas of European superiority or his even more radical questioning of the superiority of humans over animals. Nevertheless, his popular essays contributed to a basic shift in attitudes. “Wonder,” he said, “is the foundation of all philosophy, research is the means of all learning, and ignorance is the end.”<sup>11</sup> Montaigne thus inaugurated an era of doubt.

## William Shakespeare and His Influence

In addition to the essay as a literary genre, the period fostered remarkable creativity in other branches of literature, which also reflected the impact of European expansion and changing ideas about race. England—especially in the latter part of Queen Elizabeth I’s reign and in the first years of her successor, James I (r. 1603–1625)—witnessed remarkable developments in theater and poetry. The undisputed master of the period was the dramatist William Shakespeare. Born in 1564 to a successful glove manufacturer in Stratford-upon-Avon, his genius lay in the originality of his characterizations, the diversity of his plots, his understanding of human psychology, and his unsurpassed gift for language. Although he wrote sparkling comedies and stirring historical plays, his greatest masterpieces were his later tragedies, including *Hamlet*, *Othello*, and *Macbeth*, which explore an enormous range of human problems and are open to an almost infinite variety of interpretations.

Like Montaigne’s essays, Shakespeare’s work reveals the impact of the new discoveries and contacts of his day. The title character of *Othello* is described as a “Moor,” a term that in Shakespeare’s day referred to Muslims of North African origin, including those who had migrated to the Iberian Peninsula. It could also be applied, though, to natives of the Iberian Peninsula who converted to Islam or to non-Muslim Berbers in North Africa. To complicate things even

more, references in the play to Othello as “black” in skin color have led many to believe that Shakespeare intended him to be a sub-Saharan African.

This confusion in the play aptly reflects the important links in this period between racial and religious classifications. In contrast to the prevailing view of Moors as inferior, a view echoed by the Venetian characters in the play, Shakespeare presents Othello as a complex human figure, capable of great courage and nobility, but flawed by jealousy and credulity.

The play also exposes women’s suffering at the hands of the patriarchal family. In *Othello*, fathers treat unmarried daughters as property and husbands murder wives they suspect of infidelity. Revealing anxieties about racial purity and miscegenation, several characters assert that Othello’s “blackness” has tainted his Venetian wife. The play thus shows how racial ideologies very similar to those developed in the Spanish Empire existed in Elizabethan England.

## NOTES

1. Marco Polo, *The Book of Ser Marco Polo, the Venetian: Concerning the Kingdoms and Marvels of the East*, vol. 2, trans. and ed. Colonel Sir Henry Yule (London: John Murray, 1903), pp. 185–186.
2. Thomas Benjamin, *The Atlantic World: Europeans, Africans, Indians and Their Shared History, 1400–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 56.
3. John Law, “On the Methods of Long Distance Control: Vessels, Navigation, and the Portuguese Route to India,” in *Power, Action and Belief: A New Sociology of Knowledge?* ed. John Law, Sociological Review Monograph 32 (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986), pp. 234–263.
4. Peter Hulme, *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean, 1492–1797* (London: Methuen, 1986), pp. 22–31.
5. Benjamin, *The Atlantic World*, p. 141.
6. Geoffrey Vaughn Scammell, *The First Imperial Age: European Overseas Expansion, c. 1400–1715* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 432.
7. Herbert S. Klein, “Profits and the Causes of Mortality,” in *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, ed. David Northrup (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath and Co., 1994), p. 116.
8. David Carrasco, *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Mesoamerican Cultures* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 208.
9. Bartolomé de las Casas, *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*, trans. Nigel Griffin (New York: Penguin, 2004), p. 11.
10. C. Cotton, trans., *The Essays of Michel de Montaigne* (New York: A. L. Burt, 1893), pp. 207, 210.
11. Cotton, *The Essays*, p. 523.



## LOOKING BACK LOOKING AHEAD

In 1517 Martin Luther issued his “Ninety-five Theses,” launching the Protestant Reformation; just five years later, Ferdinand Magellan’s expedition sailed around the globe, shattering European notions of terrestrial geography. Within a few short years, old medieval certainties about Heaven and

earth began to collapse. In the ensuing decades, Europeans struggled to come to terms with religious difference at home and the multitudes of new peoples and places they encountered abroad. While some Europeans were fascinated and inspired by this new diversity, much more often the result was

hostility and violence. Europeans endured decades of civil war between Protestants and Catholics, and indigenous peoples suffered massive population losses as a result of European warfare, disease, and exploitation. Tragically, both Catholic and Protestant religious leaders condoned the African slave trade that brought suffering and death to millions of people as well as the conquest of Native American land and the subjugation of indigenous people.

Even as the voyages of discovery coincided with the fragmentation of European culture, they also played a role in longer-term processes of state centralization and consolidation. The new monarchies

of the Renaissance produced stronger and wealthier governments capable of financing the huge expenses of exploration and colonization. Competition to gain overseas colonies became an integral part of European politics. Spain's investment in conquest proved spectacularly profitable, and yet, as we will see in Chapter 15, the ultimate result was a weakening of its power. Over time the Netherlands, England, and France also reaped tremendous profits from colonial trade, which helped them build modernized, centralized states. The path from medieval Christendom to modern nation-states led through religious warfare and global encounter.

### Make Connections

Think about the larger developments and continuities within and across chapters.

1. Michel de Montaigne argued that people's assessments of what was "barbaric" merely drew on their own habits and customs; based on the earlier sections of this chapter, how widespread was this openness to cultural difference? Was he alone, or did others share this view?
2. To what extent did the European voyages of expansion and conquest inaugurate an era of global history? Is it correct to date the beginning of "globalization" from the late fifteenth century? Why or why not?

## 14 REVIEW & EXPLORE

### Identify Key Terms

Identify and explain the significance of each item below.

conquistadors (p. 396)  
caravel (p. 396)  
Ptolemy's *Geography* (p. 396)  
Treaty of Tordesillas (p. 402)  
Aztec Empire (p. 403)

Inca Empire (p. 407)  
viceroyalties (p. 409)  
encomienda system (p. 410)  
Columbian exchange (p. 411)

### Review the Main Ideas

Answer the section heading questions from the chapter.

1. What was the Afro-Eurasian trading world before Columbus? (p. 392)
2. How and why did Europeans undertake ambitious voyages of expansion? (p. 395)
3. What was the impact of European conquest on the New World? (p. 403)
4. How did Europe and the world change after Columbus? (p. 410)
5. How did expansion change European attitudes and beliefs? (p. 417)