



CHAPTER PREVIEW

- Why did European agriculture grow between 1650 and 1800?
- Why did the European population rise dramatically in the eighteenth century?
- How and why did rural industry intensify in the eighteenth century?
- What important changes occurred in economic thought and practice in the eighteenth century?
- What role did colonial markets play in Europe's development?

The Port of Bristol

Starting in the late seventeenth century the English port of Bristol prospered through colonial trade with the West Indies and North America. In the eighteenth century it became a major hub of the slave trade, shipping finished goods to Africa to purchase captives, who were in turn transported to the Americas in exchange for sugar, rum, and tobacco for English markets. (*Bristol Docks and Quay, ca. 1760* [oil on canvas]/© Bristol Museum and Art Gallery, UK/Bridgeman Images)

Why did European agriculture grow between 1650 and 1800?

At the end of the seventeenth century the economy of Europe was agrarian. With the exception of the Dutch Republic and England, at least 80 percent of the people of western Europe drew their livelihoods from agriculture. In eastern Europe the percentage was considerably higher. Men and women were tied to the land, plowing fields and sowing seed, reaping harvests and storing grain. Yet even in a rich agricultural region such as the Po Valley in northern Italy, every bushel of wheat seed sown yielded on average only five or six bushels of grain at harvest. By modern standards, output was distressingly low.

In most regions of Europe, climatic conditions produced poor or disastrous harvests every eight or nine years. In famine years the number of deaths soared far above normal. A third of a village's population might disappear in a year or two. But new developments in agricultural technology and methods gradually brought an end to the ravages of hunger in western Europe.

The Legacy of the Open-Field System

Why, in the late seventeenth century, did many areas of Europe produce barely enough food to survive? The answer lies in patterns of farming inherited from the Middle Ages, which sustained fairly large numbers of people but did not produce material abundance. From the Middle Ages up to the seventeenth century, much of Europe was farmed through the open-field system. The land to be cultivated was divided into several large fields, which were in turn cut up into long, narrow strips. The fields were open, and the strips were not enclosed into small plots by fences or hedges. The whole peasant village followed the same pattern of plowing, sowing, and harvesting in accordance with long-standing traditions.

The ever-present problem was soil exhaustion. Wheat planted year after year in a field will deplete nitrogen in the soil. Since the supply of manure for fertilizer was limited, the only way for the land to recover was to lie fallow for a period of time. Clover and other annual grasses that sprang up in unplanted fields restored nutrients to the soil and also provided food for livestock. In the early Middle Ages a year of fallow was alternated with a year of cropping; then three-year rotations were introduced. On each strip of land, a year of wheat or rye was followed by a year of oats or beans and only then by a year of fallow. The three-year system was an important achievement because cash crops could be grown two years out of three, rather than only one year in two.

Traditional village rights reinforced communal patterns of farming. In addition to rotating field crops in a uniform way, villages maintained open meadows for hay and natural pasture. After the harvest villagers also pastured their animals on the wheat or rye stubble. In many places such pasturing followed a brief period, also established by tradition, for the gleaning of grain. In this process, poor women would go through the fields picking up the few single grains that had fallen to the ground in the course of the harvest. Many villages were surrounded by woodlands, also held in common, which provided essential firewood, building materials, and nutritional roots and berries.

The state and landlords continued to levy heavy taxes and high rents, thereby stripping peasants of much of their meager earnings. The level of exploitation varied. Generally speaking, the peasants of eastern Europe were worst off. As we saw in Chapter 15, they were serfs bound to their lords in hereditary service. In much of eastern Europe, working several days per week on the lord's land was not uncommon. Well into the nineteenth century, individual Russian serfs and serf families were regularly bought and sold.

Social conditions were better in western Europe, where peasants were generally free from serfdom. In France, western Germany, England, and the Low Countries (modern-day Belgium and the Netherlands), peasants could own land and could pass it on to their children. Even in these regions, however, life in the village was hard, and poverty was the reality for most people.

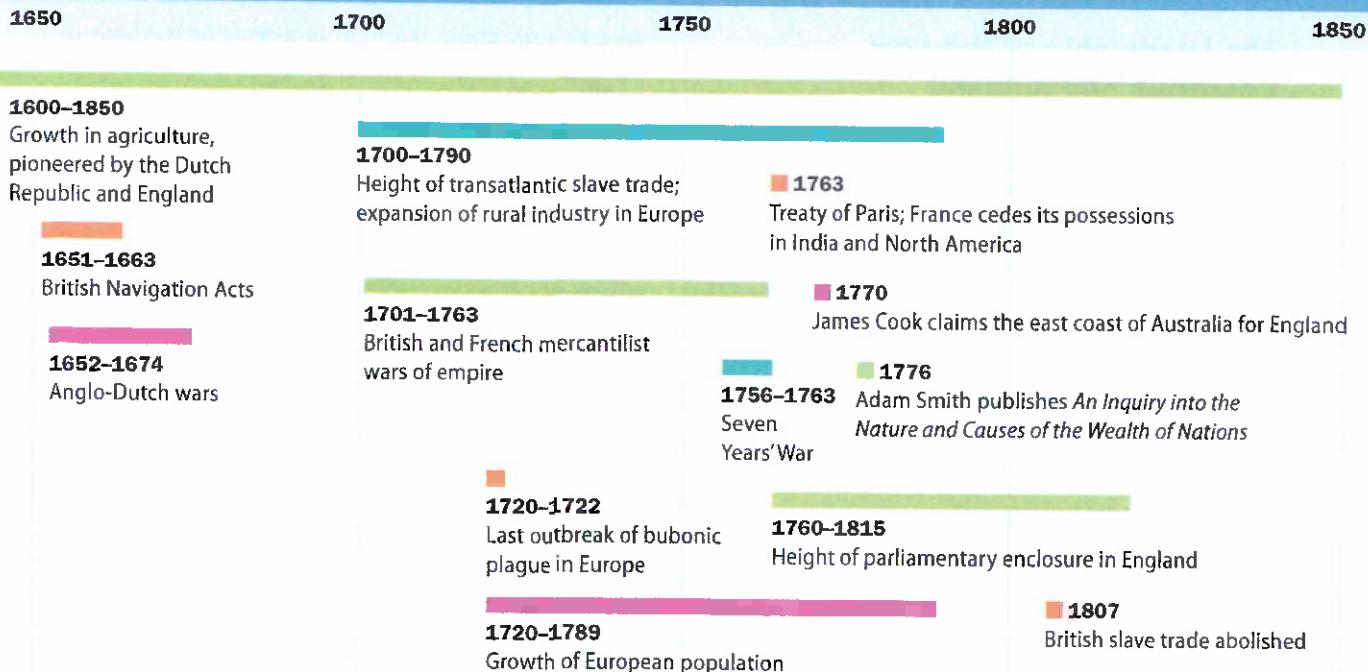
New Methods of Agriculture

The seventeenth century saw important gains in productivity in some regions that would slowly extend to the rest of Europe. By 1700 less than half of the population of Britain and the Dutch Republic worked in agriculture, producing enough to feed the remainder of the population. Many elements combined in this production growth, but the key was new ways of rotating crops that allowed farmers to forgo the unproductive fallow period altogether and maintain their land in continuous cultivation. The secret to eliminating the fallow lay in deliberately alternating grain with crops that restored nutrients to the soil, such as peas and beans, root crops like turnips and potatoes, and clover and other grasses.

Clover was one of the most important crops, because it restores nitrogen directly to the soil through its roots. Other crops produced additional benefits. Potatoes and many types of beans came to Europe as part of the sixteenth-century Columbian exchange between

enclosure The movement to fence in fields in order to farm more effectively, at the expense of poor peasants, who relied on common fields for farming and pasture.

TIMELINE



the New and the Old Worlds (see “The Columbian Exchange and Population Loss” in Chapter 14). These crops were widely adopted, starting in Spain and Italy in the early seventeenth century, and spread across the continent by the end of the eighteenth century. Rich in nutrients, they provided a welcome supplement to the peasant’s meager diet. With more fodder, hay, and root vegetables for the winter months, peasants and larger farmers could build up their herds of cattle and sheep. More animals meant more manure to fertilize and restore the soil. More animals also meant more meat and dairy products as well as more power to pull plows in the fields and bring carts to market.

Over time, crop rotation spread to other parts of Europe, and farmers developed increasingly specialized patterns of rotation to suit different kinds of soils. For example, in the late eighteenth century farmers in French Flanders near Lille alternated a number of grain, root, and hay crops in a given field on a ten-year schedule. Ongoing experimentation, fueled by developments in the Scientific Revolution, led to more methodical farming.

Advocates of the new crop rotations, who included an emerging group of experimental scientists, some government officials, and a few big landowners, believed that new methods were scarcely possible within the traditional framework of open fields and common rights. A farmer who wanted to experiment with new methods would have to get all the landholders in the village to agree to the plan. Advocates of improvement argued that innovating agriculturalists needed to enclose

and consolidate their scattered holdings into compact, fenced-in fields in order to farm more effectively. In doing so, the innovators also needed to enclose the village’s natural pastureland, or common, into individual shares. According to proponents of this movement, known as **enclosure**, the upheaval of village life was the necessary price of technical progress.

That price seemed too high to many rural people who had small, inadequate holdings or very little land at all. Traditional rights were precious to these poor peasants, who used commonly held pastureland to graze livestock, and marshlands or forest outside the village as a source for foraged goods. Thus, when the small landholders and the village poor could effectively oppose the enclosure of the open fields and the common lands, they did so. In many countries they found allies among the larger, predominantly noble landowners who were also wary of enclosure because it required large investments in purchasing and fencing land and thus posed risks for them as well.

The old system of unenclosed open fields and the new system of continuous rotation coexisted in Europe for a long time. Open fields could still be found in much of France and Germany as late as the nineteenth century because peasants there had successfully opposed eighteenth-century efforts to introduce the new techniques. Through the end of the eighteenth century, the new system of enclosure was extensively adopted only in the Low Countries and England.

The Leadership of the Low Countries and England

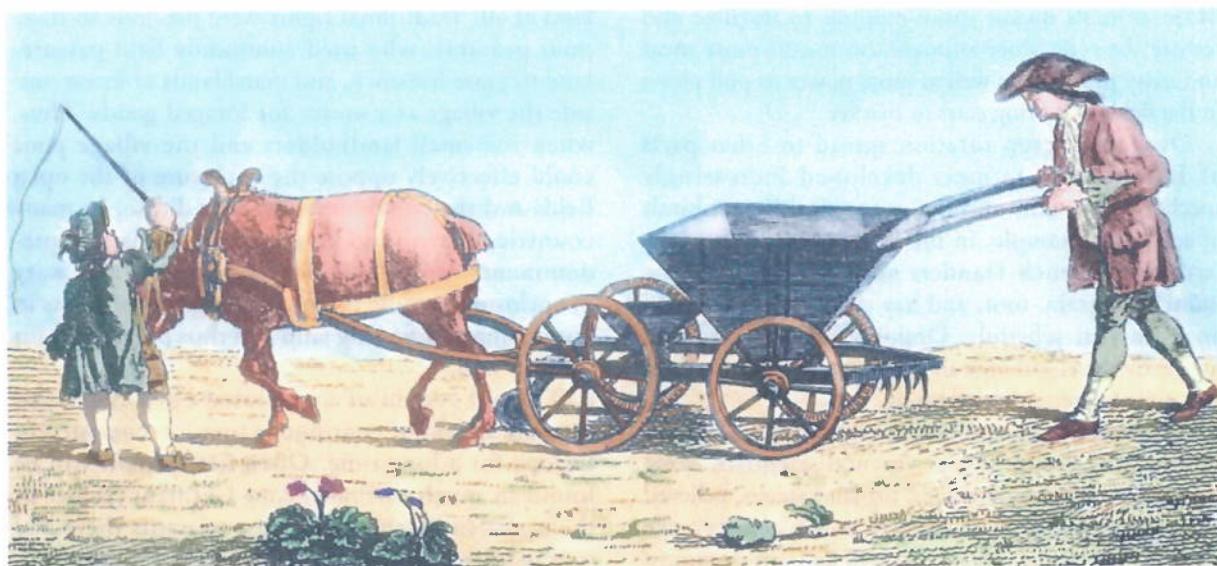
The seventeenth-century Dutch Republic, already the most advanced country in Europe in many areas of human endeavor (see “The Dutch Republic in the Seventeenth Century” in Chapter 15), pioneered advancements in agriculture. By the middle of the seventeenth century intensive farming was well established, and the innovations of enclosed fields, continuous rotation, heavy manuring, and a wide variety of crops were all present. Agriculture was highly specialized and commercialized, especially in the province of Holland.

One reason for early Dutch leadership in farming was that the area was one of the most densely populated in Europe. To feed themselves and provide employment, the Dutch were forced at an early date to seek maximum yields from their land and to increase the cultivated area through the steady draining of marshes and swamps. The pressure of population was connected with the second cause: the growth of towns and cities. Stimulated by commerce and overseas trade, Amsterdam grew from thirty thousand to two hundred thousand inhabitants in its golden seventeenth century. The growing urban population provided Dutch peasants with markets for all they could produce and allowed each region to specialize in what it did best. Thus the Dutch could develop their potential, and the Low Countries became, as one historian wrote, “the Mecca of foreign agricultural experts who came . . . to see Flemish agriculture with their own

eyes, to write about it and to propagate its methods in their home lands.”¹

The English were among their best students. In the mid-seventeenth century English farmers borrowed the system of continuous crop rotation from the Dutch. They also drew on Dutch expertise in drainage and water control. Large parts of seventeenth-century Holland had once been sea and sea marsh, and the efforts of centuries had made the Dutch the world’s leaders in drainage. In the first half of the seventeenth century, Dutch experts also helped to drain the extensive marshes, or fens, of wet and rainy England. The most famous of these Dutch engineers, Cornelius Vermuyden, directed one large drainage project in Yorkshire and another in Cambridgeshire. In the Cambridge fens, Vermuyden and his Dutch workers eventually reclaimed forty thousand acres, which were then farmed intensively in the Dutch manner. Swampy wilderness was converted into thousands of acres of some of the best land in England.

Based on the seventeenth-century achievements, English agriculture continued to progress during the eighteenth century, growing enough food to satisfy a rapidly growing population. Jethro Tull (1674–1741) was an important English innovator. A true son of the early Enlightenment, Tull adopted a critical attitude toward accepted ideas about farming and tried to develop better methods through empirical research. He was especially enthusiastic about using horses, rather than slower-moving oxen, for plowing. He also advocated sowing seed with drilling equipment rather than scattering it by hand. Drilling distributed seed



The Seed Drill The seed drill had a metal plow in front (depicted behind the horse’s back feet) to dig channels in the earth and a container behind it that distributed seed evenly into the channels. The drill allowed farmers to plant seeds at consistent depths and in straight lines, a much more efficient system than the old method of simply scattering seed across the field. (Universal Images Group/Getty Images)

in an even manner and at the proper depth. There were also improvements in livestock, inspired in part by the earlier successes of English country gentlemen in breeding ever-faster horses for the races and fox hunts that were their passions. Selective breeding of ordinary livestock was a marked improvement over the haphazard breeding of the past.

One of the most important—and bitterly contested—aspects of English agricultural development was the enclosure of open fields and commons. More than half the farmland in England was enclosed through private initiatives prior to 1700; Parliament completed this work in the eighteenth century. From the 1760s to 1815 a series of acts of Parliament enclosed most of the remaining common land. Arthur Young, another agricultural experimentalist, celebrated large-scale enclosure as a necessary means to achieve progress. (See “Evaluating Written Evidence: Arthur Young on the Benefits of Enclosure,” page 500.) Many of his contemporaries, as well as the historians that followed him, echoed that conviction. More recent research, however, has shown that regions that maintained open-field farming were still able to adopt crop rotation and other innovations, suggesting that enclosures were not a prerequisite for increased production.

By eliminating common rights and greatly reducing the access of poor men and women to the land, the eighteenth-century enclosure movement marked the completion of two major historical developments in England—the rise of capitalist market-oriented estate agriculture and the emergence of a landless rural

proletariat. By the early nineteenth century a tiny minority of wealthy English and Scottish landowners held most of the land and pursued profits aggressively, leasing their holdings through agents at competitive prices to middle-size farmers, who relied on landless laborers for their workforce. These landless laborers worked very long hours, usually following a dawn-to-dusk schedule six days a week all year long. Not only was the small landholder deprived of his land, but improvements in technology meant that fewer laborers were needed to work the large farms, and unemployment spread throughout the countryside. As one observer commented:

It is no uncommon thing for four or five wealthy graziers to engross a large inclosed lordship, which was before in the hands of twenty or thirty farmers, and as many smaller tenants or proprietors. All these are thereby thrown out of their livings, and many other families, who were chiefly employed and supported by them, such as blacksmiths, carpenters, wheelwrights and other artificers and tradesmen, besides their own labourers and servants.²

In no other European country had this **proletarianization**—this transformation of large numbers of small peasant farmers into landless rural wage earners—gone so far. England’s village poor found the cost of change heavy and unjust.

Why did the European population rise dramatically in the eighteenth century?

Another factor that affected the existing order of life and drove economic changes in the eighteenth century was the beginning of the population explosion. Explosive growth continued in Europe until the twentieth century, by which time it was affecting non-Western areas of the globe. In this section we examine the background and causes of the population growth; the following section considers how the challenge of more mouths to feed and more hands to employ affected the European economy.

Long-Standing Obstacles to Population Growth

Until 1700 the total population of Europe grew slowly much of the time, and it followed an irregular cyclical pattern (Figure 17.1). This cyclical pattern had a great influence on many aspects of social and economic life.

The terrible ravages of the Black Death of 1348–1350 caused a sharp drop in population and food prices after 1350 and also created a labor shortage throughout Europe. Some economic historians calculate that for those common people in western Europe who managed to steer clear of warfare and power struggles within the ruling class, the later Middle Ages was an era of exceptional well-being.

But this well-being eroded in the course of the sixteenth century. The second great surge of population growth outstripped the growth of agricultural production after about 1500. There was less food per person, and food prices rose more rapidly than wages, a development intensified by the inflow of precious metals from the Americas and a general, if uneven, European price revolution. The result was a substantial decline

■ proletarianization The transformation of large numbers of small peasant farmers into landless rural wage earners.

Arthur Young on the Benefits of Enclosure

In the 1760s Arthur Young farmed his family property in Essex, England, devoting himself to experiments in the latest techniques of agriculture and animal husbandry. He traveled through the British Isles and France, meeting with farmers and collecting information on their crop yields and methods of cultivation. His published observations—and his optimistic views on progress in agriculture—were widely read and acclaimed in his day. In the passage below, Young expounds on the benefits of enclosing open fields.



Respecting open field lands, the quantity of labour in them is not comparable to that of enclosures; for, not to speak of the great numbers of men that in enclosed countries are constantly employed in winter in hedging and ditching, what comparison can there be between the open field system of one half or a third of the lands being in fallow, receiving only three ploughings; and the same portion now tilled four, five, or six times by Midsummer, then sown with turnips, those hand-hoed twice, and then drawn by hand, and carted to stalls for beasts; or else hurdled out in portions for fattening sheep! What a scarcity of employment in one case, what a variety in the other! And consider the vast tracts of land in the kingdom (no less than the whole upon which turnips are cultivated) that have undergone this change since the last century. I should also remind the reader of other systems of management; beans and peas hand-hoed for a fallow—the culture of potatoes—of carrots, of coleseed, &c.—the hoeing of white corn—with the minuter improvements in every part of the culture of all crops—every article of which is an increase of labour. Then he should remember the vast tracts of country uncultivated in the last century, which

have been enclosed and converted into new farms, a much greater tract in 80 years than these writers dream of: all this is the effect of enclosures, and consequently they also have yielded a great increase of employment. . . .

The fact is this; in the central counties of the kingdom, particularly Northamptonshire, Leicestershire, and parts of Warwick, Huntingdon and Buckinghamshires, there have been within 30 years large tracts of the open field arable under that vile course, 1 fallow, 2 wheat, 3 spring corn, enclosed and laid down to grass, being much more suited to the wetness of the soil than corn; and yields in beef, mutton, hides and wool, beyond comparison a greater neat produce than when under corn. . . . Thus the land yields a greater neat produce in food for mankind—the landlord doubles his income, which enables him to employ so many more manufacturers and artisans—the farmer increases his income, by means of which he also does the same—the hides and wool are a creation of so much employment for other manufacturers.

EVALUATE THE EVIDENCE

1. What are the various improvements in agriculture described by Young in this passage? How do they relate to one another?
2. Why does Young think that enclosures produce more employment opportunities than open fields do? Based on your reading in the chapter, did everyone perceive the benefits produced by enclosure in the same way as Young?

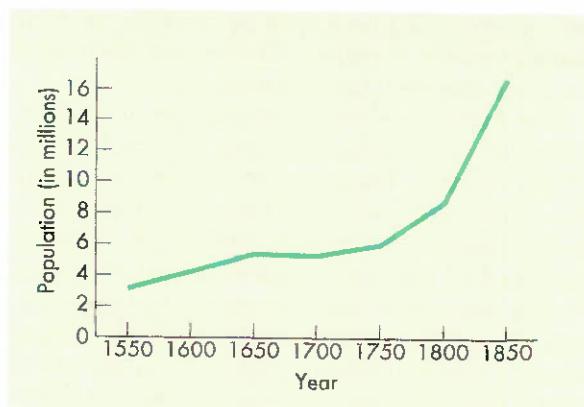
Source: Arthur Young, *Political Arithmetic: Containing Observations on the Present State of Great Britain; and the Principles of Her Policy in the Encouragement of Agriculture* (London: W. Nicoll, 1774), pp. 72–73, 148.

in living standards throughout Europe. By 1600 the pressure of population on resources was severe in much of Europe, and widespread poverty was an undeniable reality.

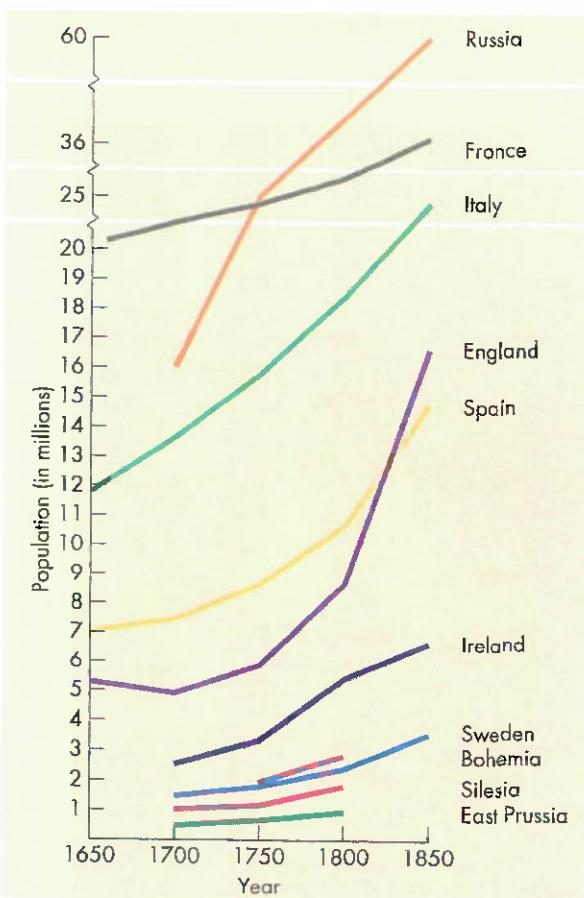
For this reason, population growth slowed and stopped in seventeenth-century Europe. Births and deaths, fertility and mortality, were in a crude but effective balance. The population grew modestly in normal years at a rate of perhaps 0.5 to 1 percent, or enough to double the population in 70 to 140 years. This is, of course, a generalization encompassing many different patterns. In areas such as Russia and colonial New England, where there was a great deal of frontier to be settled, the annual rate of natural increase,

not counting immigration, might well have exceeded 1 percent. (The New England increase did not include Native Americans, whose numbers diminished sharply in the seventeenth century as a result of European diseases and, to a lesser extent, warfare.) In a country such as France, where the land had long been densely settled, the rate of increase might have been less than 0.5 percent.

Although a population growth of even 1 percent per year seems fairly modest, it will produce a very large increase over a long period: in three hundred years it will result in sixteen times as many people. Yet such significant increases did not occur in agrarian Europe. In certain abnormal years and tragic periods—the Black

**FIGURE 17.1** The Growth of Population in England,

1650–1850 England is a good example of both the uneven increase of European population before 1700 and the third great surge of growth that began in the eighteenth century. (Source: Data from E. A. Wrigley et al., *English Population History from Family Reconstitution, 1580–1837* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997], p. 614.)

**FIGURE 17.2** The Increase of Population in Europe,

1650–1850 Population grew across Europe in the eighteenth century, though the most dramatic increases occurred after 1750. Russia experienced the largest increase and emerged as Europe's most populous state, as natural increase was complemented by growth from territorial expansion. (Source: Data from Massimo Livi Bacci, *The Population of Europe* [Wiley-Blackwell, 2000], p. 8.)

Death was only the most extreme example—many more people died than were born, and total population fell sharply, even catastrophically. A number of years of modest growth would then be necessary to make up for those who had died in an abnormal year. Such savage increases in deaths occurred periodically in the seventeenth century on a local and regional scale, and these demographic crises combined to check the growth of population until after 1700.

The grim reapers of demographic crisis were famine, epidemic disease, and war. Episodes of famine were inevitable in all eras of premodern Europe, given low crop yields and unpredictable climatic conditions. In the seventeenth century much of Europe experienced unusually cold and wet weather, which produced even more severe harvest failures and food shortages than usual. Contagious diseases, like typhus, smallpox, syphilis, and the ever-recurring bubonic plague, also continued to ravage Europe's population on a periodic basis and to inflict grievous losses on indigenous populations in European colonies, which are estimated to have reached their lowest numbers by the end of the seventeenth century. War was another scourge, and its indirect effects were even more harmful than the purposeful killing during military campaigns. Soldiers and camp followers passed all manner of contagious diseases throughout the countryside. Armies requisitioned scarce food supplies and disrupted the agricultural cycle while battles destroyed precious crops, livestock, and farmlands. The Thirty Years' War (1618–1648) witnessed all possible combinations of distress (see "The Thirty Years' War" in Chapter 15). The number of inhabitants in the German states alone declined by more than two-thirds in some large areas and by at least one-third almost everywhere else.

The New Pattern of the Eighteenth Century

In the eighteenth century the traditional demographic pattern of Europe was transformed. Growth took place unevenly, with Russia growing very quickly after 1700 and France much more slowly. Nonetheless, the explosion of population was a major phenomenon in all European countries. Europeans grew in numbers steadily from 1720 to 1789, with especially dramatic increases after about 1750 (Figure 17.2). Between 1700 and 1835 the population of Europe doubled in size.

What caused this population growth? In some areas, especially England, women had more babies than before because new opportunities for employment in rural industry (see "The Industrious Revolution" later in this chapter) allowed them to

marry at an earlier age. But the basic cause of European population increase as a whole was a decline in mortality—fewer deaths.

One of the primary reasons behind this decline was the still-unexplained disappearance of the bubonic plague. Following the Black Death in the fourteenth century, plague had remained part of the European experience, striking again and again with savage force, particularly in towns. In 1720 a ship from Syria and the Levant brought the disease to Marseilles. As a contemporary account described it, “The Porters employ’d in unloading the Vessel, were immediately seiz’d with violent Pains in the Head . . . soon after they broke out in Blotches and Buboes, and died in three Days.”³ Plague quickly spread within and beyond Marseilles, killing up to one hundred thousand. By 1722 the epidemic had passed, and that was the last time plague fell on western and central Europe. Exactly why plague disappeared is unknown. Stricter measures of quarantine in Mediterranean ports and along the Austrian border with

the Ottoman Empire helped by carefully isolating human carriers of plague. Chance and plain good luck were probably just as important.

Advances in medical knowledge did not contribute much to reducing the death rate in the eighteenth century. The most important advance in preventive medicine in this period was inoculation against smallpox, a disease that killed approximately four hundred thousand people each year in Europe. Widely practiced in the Ottoman Empire, inoculation was popularized in England in the 1720s by the wife of the former English ambassador to the empire, but it did not spread to the rest of the continent for decades. Improvements in the water supply and sewage, which were frequently promoted by strong absolutist monarchies, did contribute to somewhat better public health and helped reduce such diseases as typhoid and typhus in urban areas of western Europe. Improvements in water supply and the drainage of swamps also reduced Europe’s large insect population. Flies and mosquitoes played



Eighteenth-Century Road Construction Eighteenth-century European states undertook important projects to improve and extend infrastructure, drawing on coerced labor from local peasants to build a network of new roads, bridges, and canals across their territories. (Gianni Dagli Orti/Shutterstock)

a major role in spreading diseases, especially those striking children and young adults. Thus early public health measures contributed to the decline in mortality that began with the disappearance of plague and continued into the early nineteenth century.

Human beings also became more successful in safeguarding the supply of food. The eighteenth century was a time of considerable canal and road building in western Europe. These advances in transportation, which were also among the more positive aspects of strong absolutist states, lessened the impact of local crop failure and famine. Emergency supplies could be brought in, and localized starvation became less frequent.

A final significant factor in preventing deaths in the eighteenth century was that wars became less destructive than in the previous century. Fewer people died in

warfare and, even more important, there were fewer armies on the move to spread epidemic disease.

None of the population growth would have been possible if not for the advances in agricultural production in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which increased the food supply and contributed nutritious new foods, particularly the potato from South America. In short, population grew in the eighteenth century primarily because years of higher-than-average death rates were less catastrophic. Famines, epidemics, and wars continued to occur and to affect population growth, but their severity moderated.

Population growth intensified the imbalance between the number of people and the economic opportunities available to them. Deprived of land by the enclosure movement, the rural poor were forced to look for new ways to make a living.

How and why did rural industry intensify in the eighteenth century?

The growth of population increased the number of rural workers with little or no land, and this in turn contributed to the development of industry in rural areas. The poor in the countryside increasingly needed to supplement their agricultural earnings with other types of work, and urban capitalists were eager to employ them, often at lower wages than urban workers received. **Cottage industry**, which consisted of manufacturing with hand tools in peasant cottages and work sheds, grew markedly in the eighteenth century and became a crucial feature of the European economy. The growth of rural industry led to far-reaching changes in daily life in the countryside.

The Putting-Out System

Cottage industry was often organized through the **putting-out system**. The two main participants in this system were the merchant capitalist and the rural worker. The merchant loaned, or “put out,” raw materials to cottage workers, who processed the raw materials in their own homes and returned the finished products to the merchant. The relative importance of earnings from the land and from industry varied greatly for handicraft workers, although industrial wages usually became more important for a given family with time.

As industries grew in scale and complexity, production was often broken into many stages. For example, a merchant would provide raw wool to one group of workers for spinning into thread. He would then pass

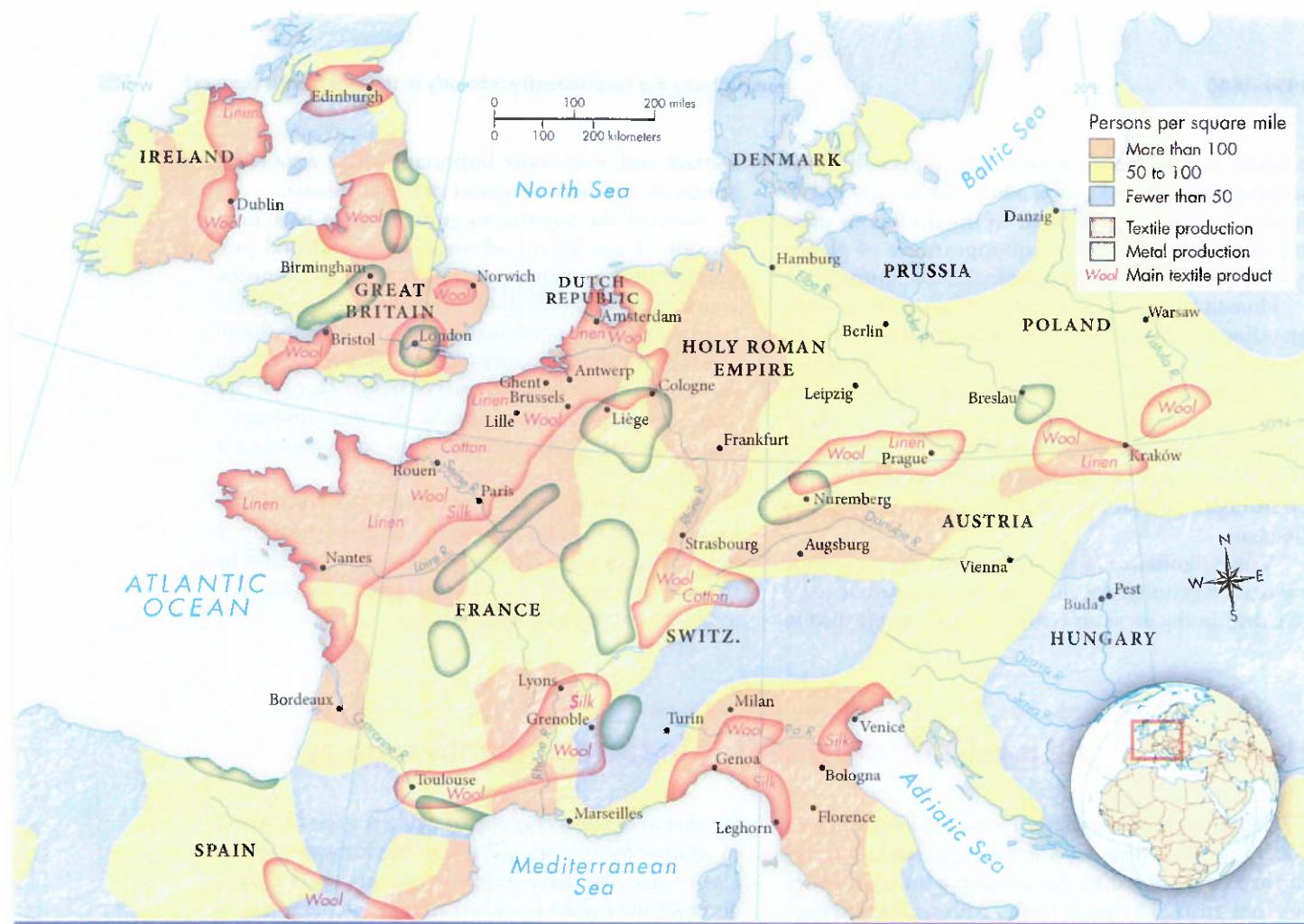
the thread to another group of workers to be bleached, to another for dyeing, and to another for weaving into cloth. The merchant paid outworkers by the piece and sold the finished product to regional, national, or international markets.

The putting-out system grew because it had competitive advantages. Underemployed labor was abundant, and poor peasants and landless laborers would work for low wages. Since production in the countryside was unregulated, workers and merchants could change procedures and experiment as they saw fit. Because workers did not need to meet rigid guild standards, cottage industry became capable of producing many kinds of goods. Textiles; all manner of knives, forks, and housewares; buttons and gloves; and clocks could be produced quite satisfactorily in the countryside. Although luxury goods for the rich, such as exquisite tapestries and fine porcelain, demanded special training, close supervision, and centralized workshops, the limited skills of rural industry were sufficient for everyday articles.

Rural manufacturing did not spread across Europe at an even rate. It developed most successfully in England, particularly for the spinning and

cottage industry A stage of industrial development in which rural workers used hand tools in their homes to manufacture goods on a large scale for sale in a market.

putting-out system The eighteenth-century system of rural industry in which a merchant loaned raw materials to cottage workers, who processed them and returned the finished products to the merchant.



MAPPING THE PAST

MAP 17.1 Industry and Population in Eighteenth-Century Europe

The growth of cottage manufacturing in rural areas helped country people increase their income and contributed to population growth. The putting-out system began in England, and much of the work was in the textile industry. Cottage industry was also strong in the Low Countries—modern-day Belgium and the Netherlands.

ANALYZING THE MAP What does this map suggest about the relationship between population density and the growth of textile production? What geographical characteristics seem to have played a role in encouraging this industry?

CONNECTIONS How would you account for the distribution of each type of cloth across Europe? Did metal production draw on different demographic and geographical conditions? Why do you think this was the case?

weaving of woolen cloth. By 1500 half of England's textiles were being produced in the countryside. By 1700 English industry was generally more rural than urban and heavily reliant on the putting-out system. Most continental countries, with the exception of Flanders and the Dutch Republic, developed rural industry more slowly. The latter part of the eighteenth century witnessed a remarkable expansion of rural industry in certain densely populated regions of continental Europe. This was in contrast to metal

production, which usually occurred in areas of less dense population (Map 17.1).

The Lives of Rural Textile Workers

Until the nineteenth century the industry that employed the most people in Europe was textiles. The making of linen, woolen, and eventually cotton cloth was the typical activity of cottage workers engaged in the putting-out system. A look inside the cottage of

the English weaver illustrates a way of life as well as an economic system. The rural worker lived in a small cottage with tiny windows and little space. The cottage was often a single room that served as workshop, kitchen, and bedroom. There were only a few pieces of furniture, of which the weaver's loom was by far the largest and most important. That loom changed somewhat in the early eighteenth century when John Kay's invention of the flying shuttle enabled the weaver to throw the shuttle back and forth between the threads with one hand. Aside from that improvement, however, the loom was as it had been for much of history and as it would remain until the arrival of mechanized looms in the first decades of the nineteenth century.

Handloom weaving was a family enterprise. All members of the family helped in the work, so that "every person from seven to eighty (who retained their sight and who could move their hands) could earn their bread," as one eighteenth-century English observer put it.⁴ Operating the loom was usually considered a man's job, reserved for the male head of the family. Women and children worked at auxiliary tasks; they prepared the warp (vertical) threads and mounted them on the loom, wound threads on bobbins for the weft (horizontal) threads, and sometimes operated the warp frame while the father passed the shuttle.

The work of four or five spinners was needed to keep one weaver steadily employed. Since the weaver's family usually could not produce enough thread, merchants hired the wives and daughters of agricultural workers, who took on spinning work in their spare time. In England, many widows and single women also became spinners or "spinsters," so many in fact that the word became a synonym for an unmarried woman. In parts of Germany, spinning employed whole families and was not reserved for women.

Relations between workers and employers were often marked by sharp conflict. (See "Thinking Like a Historian: Rural Industry: Progress or Exploitation?" page 506.) There were constant disputes over the weights of materials and the quality of finished work. Merchants accused workers of stealing raw materials, and weavers complained that merchants delivered underweight bales. Suspicion abounded.

Conditions were particularly hard for female workers. While men could earn decent wages through long hours of arduous labor, women's wages were usually much lower because they were not considered the family's primary wage earner. In England's Yorkshire wool industry, a male wool comber earned a good wage of 12 shillings or more a week, while a female spinner could hope for only 3½ shillings.⁵ A single or widowed spinner faced a desperate struggle with

poverty. Any period of illness or unemployment could spell disaster for her and any children she might have.

From the merchant capitalist's point of view, the problem was not low wages but maintaining control over the labor force. Cottage workers were scattered across the countryside, and their work depended on the agricultural calendar. In spring and late summer planting and haymaking occupied all hands in the rural village, leading to shortages in the supply of thread. Merchants bitterly resented their lack of control over rural labor because their own livelihood depended on their ability to meet orders on time. They accused workers—especially female spinners—of laziness, drunkenness, and immorality. If workers failed to produce enough thread, they reasoned, it must be because their wages were too high and they had little incentive to work.

Merchants thus insisted on maintaining the lowest possible wages to force the "idle" poor into productive labor. They also lobbied for, and obtained, new police powers over workers. Imprisonment and public whipping became common punishments for pilfering small amounts of yarn or cloth. For poor workers, their right to hold on to the bits and pieces left over in the production process was akin to the traditional peasant right of gleaning in common lands. With progress came the loss of traditional safeguards for the poor.

The Industrious Revolution

One scholar has used the term **industrious revolution** to summarize the social and economic changes taking place in northwestern Europe in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.⁶ This occurred as households reduced leisure time, stepped up the pace of work, and, most important, redirected the labor of women and children away from the production of goods for household consumption and toward wage work. In the countryside the spread of cottage industry can be seen as one manifestation of the industrious revolution, while in the cities there was a rise in female employment outside the home. By working harder and increasing the number of wageworkers, rural and urban households could purchase more goods, even in a time of stagnant or falling wages.

The effect of these changes is still debated. While some scholars lament the encroachment of longer work hours and stricter discipline on traditional

industrious revolution The shift that occurred as families in northwestern Europe focused on earning wages instead of producing goods for household consumption; this reduced their economic self-sufficiency but increased their ability to purchase consumer goods.

THINKING LIKE A HISTORIAN

Rural Industry: Progress or Exploitation?

Eighteenth-century commentators noted the effects of the growth of rural industry on families and daily life. Some were greatly impressed by the rise in living standards made possible by the putting-out system, while others criticized the rising economic inequality between merchants and workers and the power the former acquired over the latter.

- 1 Daniel Defoe's observations of English industry.** Novelist and economic writer Daniel Defoe claimed that the labor of women and children in spinning and weaving brought in as much income as or more income than the man's agricultural work, allowing the family to eat well and be warmly clothed.

Being a compleat prospect of the trade of this nation, as well the home trade as the foreign, 1728.

[A] poor labouring man that goes abroad to his Day Work, and Husbandry, Hedging, Ditching, Threshing, Carting, &c. and brings home his Week's Wages, suppose at eight Pence to twelve Pence a Day, or in some Counties less; if he has a Wife and three or four Children to feed, and who get little or nothing for themselves, must fare hard, and live poorly; 'tis easy to suppose it must be so.

But if this Man's Wife and Children can at the same Time get Employment, if at next Door, or at the next Village there lives a Clothier, or a Bay Maker, or a stuff or Drugget Weaver;* the Manufacturer sends the poor Woman combed Wool, or carded Wool every Week to spin, and she gets eight Pence or nine Pence a day at home; the Weaver sends for her two little Children, and they work by the Loom, winding, filling quills, &c. and the two bigger Girls spin at home with their Mother, and these earn three Pence or four Pence a Day each: So that put it together, the Family at Home gets as much as the Father gets Abroad, and generally more.

This alters the Case extremely, the Family feels it, they all feed better, are cloth'd warmer, and do not so easily nor so often fall into Misery and Distress; the Father gets them Food, and the Mother gets them Clothes; and as they grow, they do not run away to be Footmen and Soldiers, Thieves and Beggars or sell themselves to the Plantations to avoid the Gaol and the Gallows, but have a Trade at their Hands, and every one can get their Bread.

*Bay, stuff, and drugget were types of coarse woolen cloth typical of the inexpensive products of rural weaving.

- 2 Anonymous, "The Clothier's Delight."** Couched in the voice of the ruthless cloth merchant, this song from around 1700 expresses the bitterness and resentment textile workers felt against the low wages paid by employers. One can imagine a group of weavers gathered at the local tavern singing their protest on a rare break from work.

Of all sorts of callings that in England be
There is none that liveth so gallant as we;
Our trading maintains us as brave as a knight,
We live at our pleasure and take our delight;
We heareth up richest treasure great store
Which we get by griping and grinding the poor.
And this is a way for to fill up our purse
Although we do get it with many a curse.

Throughout the whole kingdom, in country and town,
There is no danger of our trade going down,
So long as the Comber can work with his comb,
And also the Weaver weave with his lomb;
The Tucker and Spinner that spins all the year,
We will make them to earn their wages full dear.
And this is a way, etc.

- 3 Late-eighteenth-century diary.** This diary entry from 1788 illustrates the dangers of bringing textile manufacture into the family home.

Fire at Isaac Hardy's, which burnt 6 lbs. of cotton, 5 pairs of stockings and set the cradle on fire, with a child in which was much burnt. It happened through the wife improvidently holding the candle under the cotton as it was drying.

ANALYZING THE EVIDENCE

1. What impression of cottage industry does the painting of the Irish linen industry in Source 4 present? How does this contrast with the impressions from the written sources?
2. Do you think the personal accounts of a diary (Source 3) or a memoir (Source 5) are more reliable sources on rural industry than a social commentator's opinion (Source 1) or a song (Source 2)? Why or why not?
3. Who was involved in the work of rural textile manufacture, and what tasks did these workers perform? How does this division of labor resemble or differ from the household in which you grew up?

4 **The linen industry in Ireland.** Many steps went into making textiles. Here the women are beating away the woody part of the flax plant so that the man can comb out the soft part. The combed fibers will then be spun into thread and woven into cloth by this family enterprise.

(From *The Linen Manufactory of Ireland*, 1791, by William Hincks [1752–1797]/Private Collection/The Stapleton Collection/Bridgeman Images)



5 **Samuel Crompton's memories of childhood labor.** In his memoir, Samuel Crompton recalled his childhood labor in the cotton industry of the mid-eighteenth century. When he grew up, he invented the spinning mule, which greatly improved the efficiency of the process (see Chapter 20).

I recollect that soon after I was able to walk I was employed in the cotton manufacture. My mother used to bat the cotton wool on a wire riddle. It was then put into a deep brown mug with a strong ley of soap suds. My mother then tucked up my petticoats about my waist, and put me into the tub to tread upon the cotton at the bottom. When a second riddleful was batted I was lifted out, it was placed in the mug, and I again trod it down. This process was continued until the mug became so full that I could no longer safely stand in it, when a chair was placed beside it, and I held on by the back. When the mug was quite full the soapsuds were poured off, and each separate dollop [i.e., lump] of wool well squeezed to free it from moisture. They were then placed on the bread-rack under the beams of the kitchen-loft to dry. My mother and my grand-mother carded the cotton wool by hand, taking one of the dollops at a time, on the simple hand cards. When carded they were put aside in separate parcels ready for spinning.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Using the sources above, along with what you have learned in class and in this chapter, write an essay assessing the impact of the putting-out industry on rural families and their way of life. Make sure to consider the experiences of all members of the household.

Sources: (1) Daniel Defoe, *A Plan of the English Commerce: Being a compleat prospect of the trade of this nation, as well the home trade as the foreign* (London, 1728), pp. 90–91; (2) Paul Mantoux and Marjorie Vernon, eds., *The Industrial Revolution in the Eighteenth Century: An Outline of the Beginnings of the Modern Factory System in England* (1928; Abingdon, UK: Taylor and Francis, 2006), pp. 75–76; (3, 5) Ivy Pinchbeck, *Women Workers and the Industrial Revolution, 1750–1850* (1930; Abingdon, UK: Frank Cass, 1977), p. 114.

family life, others insist that poor families made decisions based on their own self-interests. With more finished goods becoming available at lower prices, households sought cash income to participate in an emerging consumer economy.

The role of women and girls in this new economy is particularly controversial. When women entered the labor market, they almost always worked at menial, tedious jobs for very low wages. Yet when women earned their own wages, they also seem to have exercised more independence in marriage choices and household decision making. Most of their scant earnings went for household necessities, items of food and clothing they could no longer produce now that they worked full-time, but sometimes a few shillings were left for a ribbon or a new pair of stockings. Women's use of their surplus income thus helped spur the rapid growth of the textile industries in which they labored so hard.

These new sources and patterns of labor established important foundations for the Industrial Revolution of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (see Chapter 20). They created households in which all members worked for wages rather than in a family business and in which consumption relied on market-produced rather than homemade goods. It was not until the mid-nineteenth century, with rising industrial wages, that a new model emerged in which the male "breadwinner" was expected to earn enough to support the whole family and women and children were relegated back to the domestic sphere. With women estimated to compose more than 40 percent of the global workforce, today's world is experiencing a second industrious revolution in a similar climate of stagnant wages and increased demand for consumer goods.⁷

What important changes occurred in economic thought and practice in the eighteenth century?

Late-seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe also experienced revolutionary developments in finance and economic thought. Up to the mid-eighteenth century, governments heavily controlled the circulation of grain and the price of bread, fearing the social turmoil and political instability that would arise from food shortages. In urban areas, the **guild system** dominated production of artisanal goods, providing their masters with economic privileges as well as a proud social identity.

In the second half of the eighteenth century, political economy emerged as a new mode of thought influenced by the Enlightenment. Economic thinkers, like Adam Smith, attacked government regulations as a hindrance to innovation and competition, developing a doctrine known as economic liberalism (see "Adam Smith and Economic Liberalism" later in the chapter).

Economic Regulation and the Guilds

Given the precariousness of survival for most people, European governments believed that it was essential to regulate economic production and exchange. They feared that shortages of bread could lead to social turmoil and political upheaval, as they did many

times in the hard conditions of the seventeenth century (see "Economic Crisis and Popular Revolts" in Chapter 15). Moreover, mercantilist doctrine dictated that maintaining a trade surplus was crucial to obtain the funds necessary to build a strong state. Thus rulers believed they must impose strict production standards on industry and control access to trade to ensure that craftsmen and manufacturers produced goods of high quality, especially for export markets.

Based on these ideas, the guild system, which had originated during the economic boom of the Middle Ages, reached its peak in most of Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. During this period, the number of urban guilds increased dramatically in cities and towns across Europe. Authorities granted each guild a detailed set of privileges, including exclusive rights to produce and sell certain goods, access to restricted markets in raw materials, and the rights to train apprentices, hire workers, and open shops. Guilds also served social and religious functions, providing a locus of sociability and group identity to the middling classes of European cities.

To ensure there was enough work to go around, guilds restricted their membership to men who were Christians, had several years of work experience, paid membership fees, and successfully completed a masterpiece. Masters' sons enjoyed automatic access to their fathers' guilds, while outsiders—including Jews and Protestants in Catholic countries—were barred from

■ **guild system** The organization of artisanal production into trade-based associations, or guilds, each of which received a monopoly over its trade and the right to train apprentices and hire workers.

entering. Most urban men and women worked in non-guild trades as domestic servants, manual laborers, and vendors of food, used clothing, and other goods.

While most were hostile to women, a small number of guilds did accept women. Most involved needlework and textile production, occupations that were considered appropriate for women. In 1675 seamstresses gained a new all-female guild in Paris, and soon seamstresses joined tailors' guilds in parts of France, England, and the Dutch Republic. By the mid-eighteenth century male masters began to hire more female workers, often in defiance of their own guild statutes.

The Financial Revolution

Changes in overseas trade and rural industry, combined with the militaristic ambitions of European rulers, helped bring about crucial changes in economic life. In the early seventeenth century, Dutch prosperity in agriculture and overseas trade encouraged the development of new financial innovations, including short-term bonds for public credit and a maritime insurance industry. The Bank of Amsterdam (founded in 1609) issued paper money and traded bills of exchange, which facilitated merchant ventures at home and abroad. Dutch financial methods came to England when William of Orange and his wife Mary Stuart took control of the English throne in the Glorious Revolution (see “The Restoration of the English Monarchy” in Chapter 15). The Bank of England was founded in 1694 as a government-chartered joint stock company, and William used the bank as a source of credit to pursue war against the French. In subsequent decades, hundreds of new private banks were created in London and across the country to provide credit to private individuals. These innovations laid the foundations of modern banking and finance systems, a development described by historians as a “financial revolution.”

Another element of this revolution was the emergence of financial speculation, enabled by the creation of stock exchanges in Amsterdam, London, and other European capitals. Speculative bubbles occurred in the Netherlands as early as the 1630s based on trading in tulip bulbs. In 1720, both England and France experienced catastrophic financial crises caused by the collapse of shares in colonial trading companies. The shock of this experience dissuaded the French from creating a national bank until the reign of Napoleon (see Chapter 20).

Adam Smith and Economic Liberalism

At the same time that cottage industry began to infringe on the livelihoods of urban artisans and new financial institutions encouraged the circulation of credit,



Receipt from the Painters' Guild The Guild of Saint Luke (after the patron saint of artists) was the most common name for a guild of painters and other artists in early modern Europe. This receipt to a glazier named James Cip, signed by guild officers in 1729, displays the arms of the guild and common painters' tools, including a model human head. The bull was the symbol of Saint Luke, which meant that he was often the patron saint of butchers' guilds as well. (Receipt from the Guild of Saint Luke in Amsterdam to the glazier James Cip, 1729/Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands/Bridgeman Images)

philosophers and administrators began to develop new ways of thinking about economic production and exchange. The notion of the “economy” as a discrete entity, subject to natural laws that could be discovered by rational thought, constituted an important element of Enlightenment thought. The first university positions devoted to “political economy,” as the formal study of production and exchange came to be called, were established in the 1760s. In France, the Physiocrats, a distinctive group of economic thinkers, established the first large-scale explanation of the economy, what we now call a “macro-economic” model, based on land as the sole source of economic value.

Many economic thinkers in this period came to believe that the economy could best function when unimpeded by government laws. They attacked tariffs and other forms of government regulation and ridiculed guilds as outmoded and exclusionary institutions that obstructed technical innovation and progress. One of the best-known critics of government regulation of trade and industry was Adam Smith (1723–1790), a leading figure of the Scottish Enlightenment (see “Enlightenment Movements Across Europe” in Chapter 16). Smith developed the general idea of freedom of enterprise and established the basis for modern economics in his

groundbreaking work *Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776). Smith criticized guilds for their stifling restrictions, a critique he extended to all state monopolies and privileged companies. Far preferable, in his view, was free competition, which would protect consumers from price gouging and give all citizens an equal right to do what they did best. Smith advocated a more highly developed “division of labor” that entailed separating craft production into individual tasks to increase workers’ speed and efficiency.

In keeping with his fear of political oppression and with the “system of natural liberty” that he championed, Smith argued that government should limit itself to “only three duties”: it should provide a defense against foreign invasion, maintain civil order with courts and police protection, and sponsor certain indispensable public works and institutions that could never adequately profit private investors. He believed that the pursuit of self-interest in a competitive market would be sufficient to improve the living conditions of citizens, a view that quickly emerged as the classic argument for **economic liberalism**.

However, Smith did not advocate unbridled capitalism. Unlike many disgruntled merchant capitalists, he applauded the modest rise in real wages of British workers in the eighteenth century, stating: “No society can surely be flourishing and happy, of which the far greater part of the members are poor and miserable.” Smith also acknowledged that employers were

“always and everywhere in a sort of tacit, but constant and uniform combination, not to raise the wages of labor above their actual rate” and sometimes entered “into particular combinations to sink the wages even below this rate.” While he celebrated the rise in productivity allowed by the division of labor, he also acknowledged its demoralizing effects on workers and called for government intervention to raise workers’ living standards.⁸

Many educated people in France, including Physiocrats and some government officials, shared Smith’s ideas. In 1774, the reform-minded economics minister Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot issued a law in the name of Louis XV, ordering the grain trade to be freed from state regulation. Two years later, another edict abolished all French guilds. Vocal popular protest against these measures led to Turgot’s disgrace shortly afterward and the cancellation of his reforms (see “Viewpoints: Opposing Views on Guilds and Economic Regulation,” page 511). But the legislators of the French Revolution (see “The Thermidorian Reaction and the Directory” in Chapter 19) returned to a liberal economic agenda in 1789. The National Assembly definitively abolished guilds in 1791. Other European countries followed suit more slowly, with guilds surviving in central Europe and Italy into the second half of the nineteenth century. By the middle of the nineteenth century economic liberalism was championed by most European governments and elites.

What role did colonial markets play in Europe’s development?

In addition to agricultural improvement, population pressure, and a growing cottage industry, the expansion of Europe in the eighteenth century was characterized by the increase of world trade. Adam Smith declared that “the discovery of America and that of a passage to the East Indies by the Cape of Good Hope, are the two greatest and most important events recorded in the history of mankind.”⁹ In the eighteenth century Spain and Portugal revitalized their empires and began drawing more wealth from renewed colonial development. Yet once again the countries of northwestern Europe—the Dutch Republic, France, and above all Great Britain—benefited most.

The Atlantic economy that these countries developed from 1650 to 1790 would prove crucial in the

building of a global economy. Great Britain, which was formed in 1707 by the union of England and Scotland into a single kingdom, gradually became the leading maritime power. Thus the British played the critical role in building a fairly unified Atlantic economy that provided remarkable opportunities for them and their colonists. They also competed ruthlessly with France and the Netherlands for trade and territory in the Americas and Asia.

Mercantilism and Colonial Competition

Britain’s commercial leadership had its origins in mercantilist doctrine. Eventually eliciting criticism from Enlightenment thinker Adam Smith and other proponents of free trade in the late eighteenth century, European mercantilism was a system of economic regulations aimed at increasing the power of the state. As practiced by a leading figure such as Colbert under

■ economic liberalism A belief in free trade and competition based on Adam Smith’s argument that the invisible hand of free competition would benefit all individuals, rich and poor.

■ Navigation Acts A series of English laws that controlled the import of goods to Britain and British colonies.

VIEWPOINTS

Opposing Views on Guilds and Economic Regulation



Influenced by Enlightenment ideas about individual liberty, some mid-eighteenth-century thinkers argued that all people should be free to practice whatever economic activity they wanted, how they wanted, subject only to the law of supply and demand. When a proponent of these views became controller general of France, he prevailed on the king to issue a series of edicts dismantling economic regulations and abolishing the guilds. Against Turgot, the magistrates of the Parlement of Paris asserted that guilds were necessary to impose high quality standards and protect consumers from fraud.

Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot, Royal Edict Abolishing the French Guilds (February 1776)

God, by giving to men needs and making them dependent upon the resource of labor, has made the right of labor the property of all men, and that property is primary, the most sacred and the most imprescriptible of all.

We regard it as one of the first obligations of our justice . . . to emancipate our subjects from all the restraints which have been laid upon that inalienable right of humanity. Wherefore we will to abolish the arbitrary institutions which do not permit the indigent to live by their labor; which exclude the sex whose weakness implies greatest needs and fewest resources, and which seem, by condemning it to inevitable misery, to encourage seduction and debauchery; which stifle emulation and industry and make useless the talents of those whom circumstances exclude from admission to the guilds; which deprive the State and art of all the advantages which foreigners might furnish; which retard the progress of the arts by the difficulties which inventors find multiplied by the guilds . . . ; which, by means of the inordinate expenses artisans are compelled to incur in order to acquire the liberty of labor, by the exactions of all kinds they must meet, by the multiplied penalties for so-called infractions, . . . by the endless litigations which arise between the different guilds . . . , surcharge industry with an enormous tax, grievous to the subjects and with no corresponding advantage to the State; which, in short, by the facility they afford to members of the guilds to combine among themselves and to compel the poorer members of the unions to submit to the rule of the wealthy, become an instrument of monopoly and give rise to schemes whose

effect is to increase beyond all natural proportion the price of commodities which are indispensable to the subsistence of the people.

Parlement of Paris, Argument Against the Edict Suppressing the Guilds (March 1776)

The law has wished to prevent fraud of all kinds and to remedy all abuses; the law watches equally over the interest of the buyer and the seller; it maintains mutual confidence between the two. . . . The guilds can be considered so many small republics occupied solely with the general interest of all the members that compose them; and if it is true that the general interest results from the union of the interests of each particular individual, it is equally true that each member, in working for his own personal advantage, works necessarily, even without wishing to, for the true advantage of the whole community. To unloose the springs that move this multitude of different bodies, to annihilate the guilds, to abolish the regulations . . . is to destroy all the various means which commerce itself must desire for its own preservation. Every manufacturer, every skilled artisan, every worker will see himself as an isolated being dependent on himself alone and free to indulge all the flights of an often disordered imagination. All subordination will be destroyed . . . thirst for gain will dominate all the workshops; and since honesty is not always the surest way to fortune, the entire public, . . . will be the constant dupes of artful methods secretly prepared to blind and seduce them.

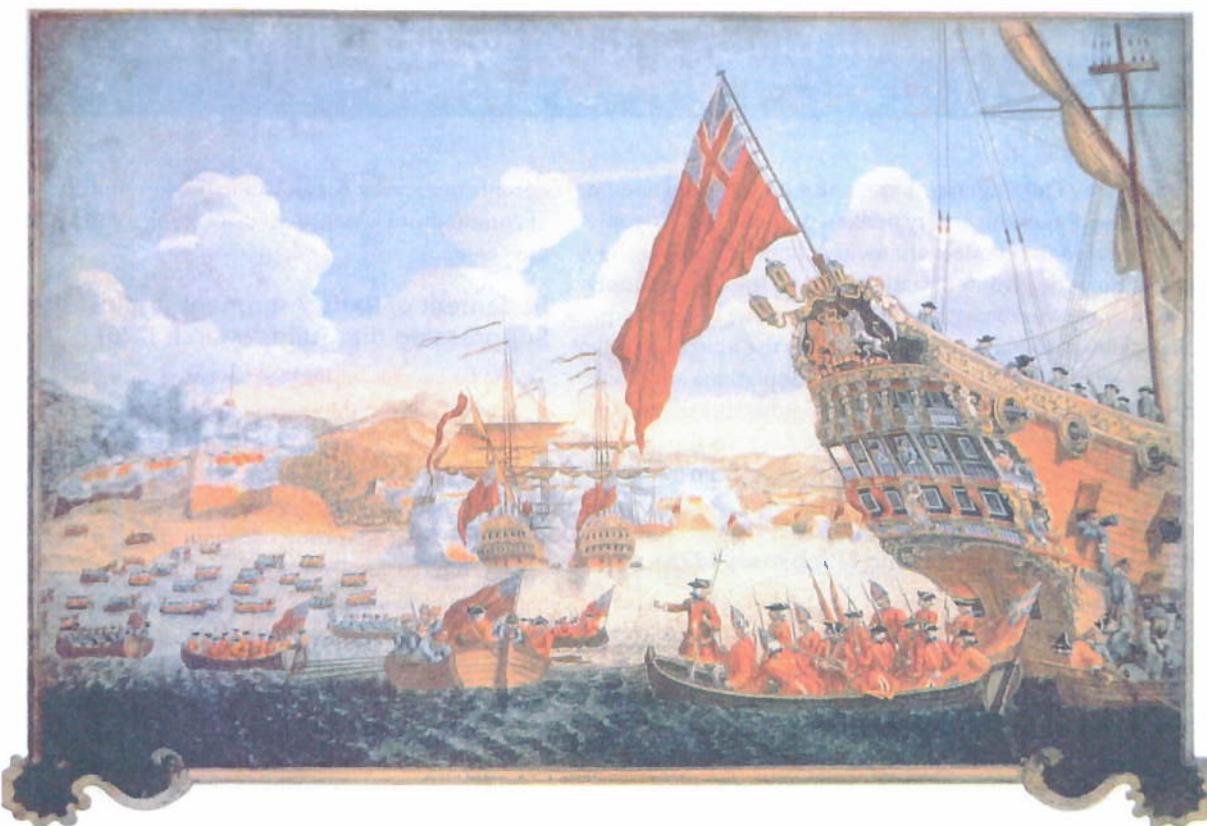
QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. On what grounds does Turgot criticize the guilds? Why would considering labor as a form of property support these criticisms?
2. Why did the magistrates of the Parlement think guilds were a necessary social institution?
3. Based on these passages, what was the most important value that each side defended?

Sources: Robert Perry Shepherd, *Turgot and the Six Edicts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1903), pp. 121–122; Keith Michael Baker, ed., *University of Chicago Readings in Western Civilization*, vol. 7: *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*. Copyright © 1987 University of Chicago Press. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

Louis XIV, mercantilism aimed particularly at creating a favorable balance of foreign trade in order to increase a country's stock of gold. A country's gold holdings served as an all-important treasure chest that could be opened periodically to pay for war in a violent age.

The desire to increase both military power and private wealth led England's rulers to impose the mercantile system of the **Navigation Acts**. Oliver Cromwell established the first of these laws in 1651, and the restored monarchy of Charles II extended



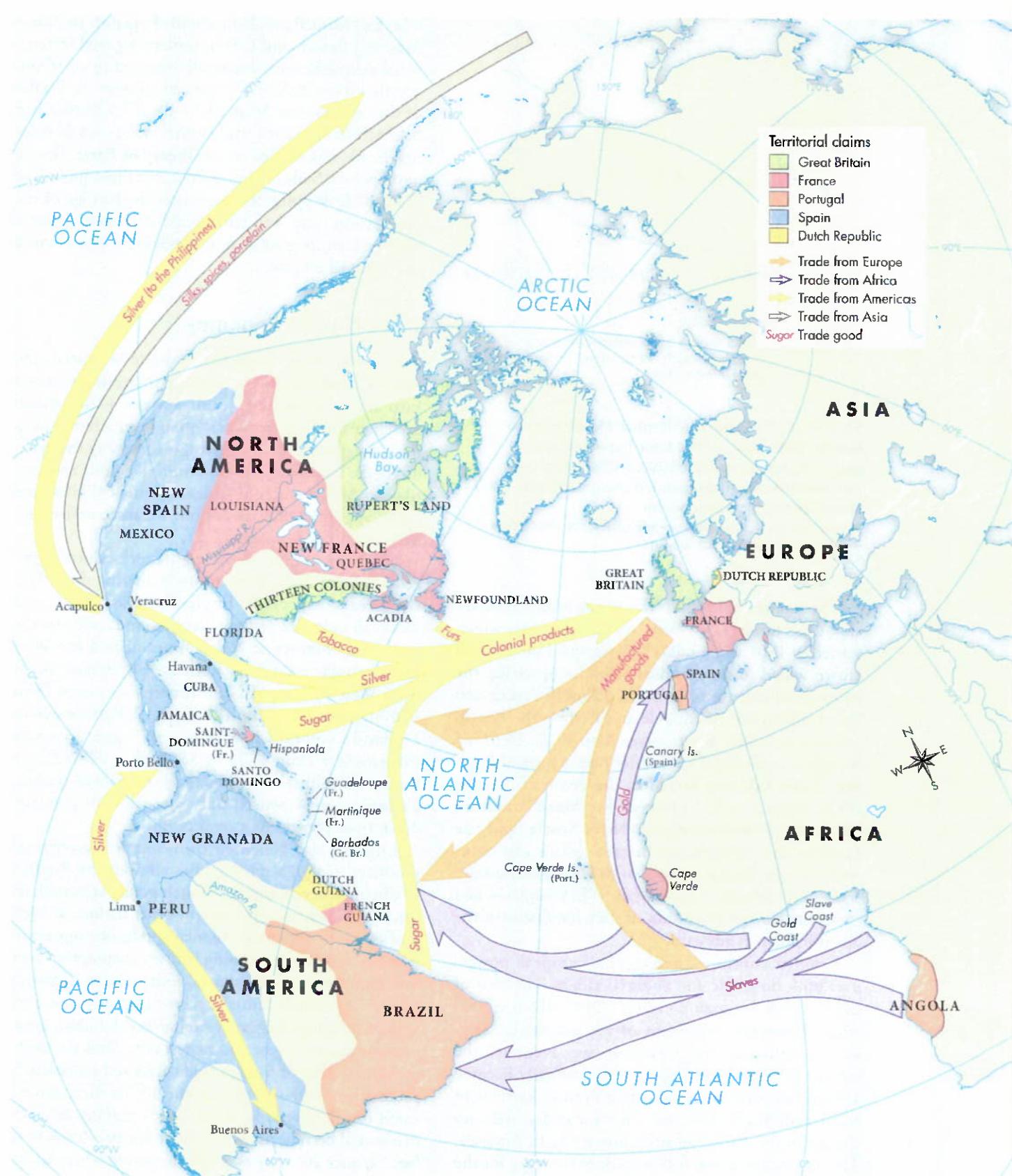
Siege of the French Fortress of Louisbourg in 1745 In the eighteenth century, European wars were increasingly waged in overseas theaters. The so-called War of the Austrian Succession (1740–1748) saw hostilities between France and England in North America, including a British assault on the French fort of Louisbourg (Cape Breton Island) in 1745. French-English rivalry in North America culminated in the Seven Years' War (1756–1763), which led to the loss of most French territory, with the exception of France's Caribbean holdings. (Private Collection/Peter Newark American Pictures/Bridgeman Images)

them in 1660 and 1663. The acts required that most goods imported from Europe into England and Scotland (Great Britain after 1707) be carried on British-owned ships with British crews or on ships of the country producing the articles. Moreover, these laws gave British merchants and shipowners a virtual monopoly on trade with British colonies. The colonists were required to ship their products on British (or American) ships and to buy almost all European goods from Britain. It was believed that these economic regulations would eliminate foreign competition, thereby helping British merchants and workers as well as colonial plantation owners and farmers. It was hoped, too, that the emerging British Empire would develop a shipping industry with a large number of experienced seamen who could serve during wartime in the Royal Navy.

The Navigation Acts were a form of economic warfare. Their initial target was the Dutch, who were far ahead of the English in shipping and foreign trade in the mid-seventeenth century (see “The

Dutch Republic in the Seventeenth Century” in Chapter 15). In conjunction with three Anglo-Dutch wars between 1652 and 1674, the Navigation Acts seriously damaged Dutch shipping and commerce. The British seized the thriving Dutch colony of New Amsterdam in 1664 and renamed it New York. By the late seventeenth century the Dutch Republic was falling behind England in shipping, trade, and colonies.

Thereafter France stood clearly as England’s most serious rival in the competition for overseas empire. Rich in natural resources, with a population three or four times that of England, and allied with Spain, continental Europe’s leading military power was already building a powerful fleet and a worldwide system of rigidly monopolized colonial trade. Thus from 1701 to 1763 Britain and France were locked in a series of wars to decide, in part, which nation would become the leading maritime power and claim the profits of Europe’s overseas expansion (Map 17.2).



MAP 17.2 The Atlantic Economy in 1701 The growth of trade encouraged both economic development and military conflict in the Atlantic basin. Four continents were linked together by the exchange of goods and people.

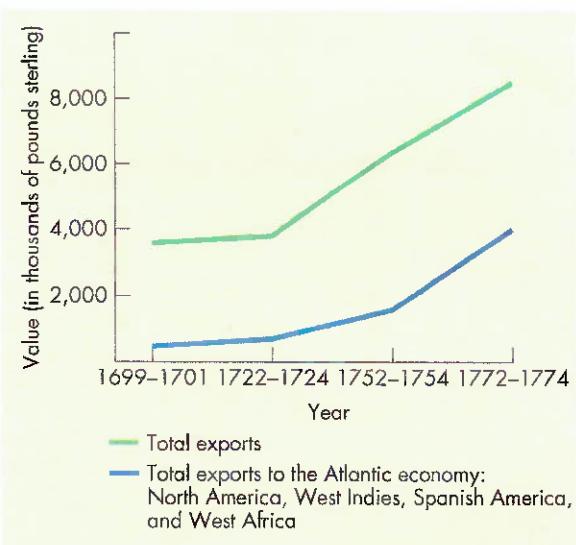


FIGURE 17.3 Exports of English Manufactured Goods, 1700–1774 While trade between England and Europe stagnated after 1700, English exports to Africa and the Americas boomed and greatly stimulated English economic development.
(Source: Data from R. Davis, "English Foreign Trade, 1700–1774," *Economic History Review*, 2d ser., 15 [1962]: 302–303.)

The first round was the War of the Spanish Succession (see "Louis XIV's Wars" in Chapter 15), which started in 1701 when Louis XIV accepted the Spanish crown willed to his grandson. Besides upsetting the continental balance of power, a union of France and Spain threatened to encircle and destroy the British colonies in North America (see Map 17.2). Defeated by a great coalition of states after twelve years of fighting, Louis XIV was forced in the Peace of Utrecht (YOO-treht) in 1713 to cede his North American holdings in Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, and the Hudson Bay territory to Britain. Spain was compelled to give Britain control of its West African slave trade—the so-called *asiento* (ah-SYEHN-toh)—and to let Britain send one ship of merchandise into the Spanish colonies annually.

Conflict continued among the European powers over both domestic and colonial affairs. The War of the Austrian Succession (1740–1748), which started when Frederick the Great of Prussia seized Silesia from Austria's Maria Theresa (see "Frederick the Great of Prussia" in Chapter 16), gradually became a world war that included Anglo-French conflicts in India and North America. The war ended with no change in the territorial situation in North America. This inconclusive standoff helped set the stage for the Seven Years' War (1756–1763; see Chapter 19). In central Europe, France aided Austria's Maria Theresa in her quest to win back Silesia from the Prussians,

who had formed an alliance with England. In North America, French and British settlers engaged in territorial skirmishes that eventually resulted in an all-out war that drew in Native American allies on both sides of the conflict (see Map 19.1). By 1763 Prussia had held off the Austrians, and British victory on all colonial fronts was ratified in the **Treaty of Paris**. British naval power, built in large part on the rapid growth of the British shipping industry after the passage of the Navigation Acts, had triumphed decisively: Britain had realized its goal of monopolizing a vast trading and colonial empire.

The Atlantic Economy

As the volume of transatlantic trade increased, the regions bordering the ocean were increasingly drawn into an integrated economic system. Commercial exchange in the Atlantic has often been referred to as the "triangle trade," designating a three-way transport of goods: European commodities, like guns and textiles, to Africa; enslaved Africans to the colonies; and colonial goods, such as cotton, tobacco, and sugar, back to Europe (see Map 17.2).

Over the course of the eighteenth century, the economies of European nations bordering the Atlantic Ocean, especially England, relied more and more on colonial exports. In England, sales to the mainland colonies of North America and the West Indian sugar islands—with an important assist from West Africa and Latin America—soared from £500,000 to £4 million (Figure 17.3). Exports to England's colonies in Ireland and India also rose substantially from 1700 to 1800. By 1800 sales to European countries—England's traditional trading partners—represented only one-third of exports, down from two-thirds a century earlier.

England also benefited from importing colonial products. Colonial monopolies allowed the English to obtain a steady supply of such goods at beneficial prices and to re-export them to other nations at high profits. Moreover, many colonial goods, like sugar and tobacco, required processing before consumption and thus contributed new manufacturing jobs in England. In the eighteenth century, stimulated by trade and empire building, England's capital city, London, grew into the West's largest and richest city. Thus the mercantilist system of foreign trade achieved remarkable success for England, and by the 1770s the country stood on the threshold of the epoch-making changes that would become known as the Industrial Revolution (see Chapter 20). This was also the period when Adam Smith and other political economists began to criticize mercantilism and argue for free trade as a means to increase prosperity for all people and nations.

Although they lost many possessions to the English in the Seven Years' War, the French still profited enormously from colonial trade. The colonies of Saint-Domingue (modern-day Haiti), Martinique, and Guadeloupe remained in French hands and provided immense fortunes in plantation agriculture and slave trading during the second half of the eighteenth century. By 1789 the population of Saint-Domingue included five hundred thousand slaves whose labor had allowed the colony to become the world's leading producer of coffee and sugar and the most profitable plantation colony in the New World.¹⁰ The wealth generated from colonial trade fostered the confidence of the merchant classes in Paris, Bordeaux, and other large cities, and merchants soon joined other elite groups clamoring for political reforms.

The third major player in the Atlantic economy, Spain, also saw its colonial fortunes improve during the eighteenth century. Not only did it gain Louisiana from France in 1763, but its influence expanded westward all the way to northern California through the efforts of Spanish missionaries and ranchers. Its mercantilist goals were boosted by a recovery in silver production, which had dropped significantly in the seventeenth century.

Silver mining also stimulated food production for the mining camps, and wealthy Spanish landowners developed a system of **debt peonage** to keep indigenous workers on their estates to grow food for this market. Under this system, which was similar to serfdom, a planter or rancher would keep workers in perpetual debt bondage by advancing them food, shelter, and a little money.

Although the "triangle trade" model highlights some of the most important flows of commerce across the Atlantic, it significantly oversimplifies the picture. For example, a brisk intercolonial trade also existed, with the Caribbean slave colonies importing food in the form of fish, flour, and livestock from the northern colonies and rice from the south, in exchange for sugar and slaves (see Map 17.2). Many colonial traders also violated imperial monopolies to trade with the most profitable partners, regardless of nationality. Moreover, the Atlantic economy was inextricably linked to trade with the Indian and Pacific Oceans (see "Trade and Empire in Asia and the Pacific" at the end of this chapter).

The Transatlantic Slave Trade

At the core of the Atlantic world were the misery and profit of the **transatlantic slave trade**. The forced migration of millions of Africans was a key element in the Atlantic system and western European economic expansion throughout the eighteenth century. The

brutal practice intensified dramatically after 1700 and especially after 1750 with the growth of trade and demand for slave-produced goods like sugar and cotton. According to the most authoritative source, European traders purchased and shipped 6.5 million enslaved Africans across the Atlantic between 1701 and 1800—more than half of the estimated total of 12.5 million Africans transported between 1450 and 1900, of whom 15 percent died in procurement and transit.¹¹

The rise of plantation agriculture was responsible for the tremendous growth of the slave trade. Among all European colonies, the plantations of Portuguese Brazil received by far the largest number of enslaved Africans over the entire period of the slave trade—45 percent of the total. Another 45 percent were divided among the many Caribbean colonies. The colonies of mainland North America took only 3 percent of slaves arriving from Africa, a little under four hundred thousand, relying mostly on natural growth of the enslaved population.

Eighteenth-century intensification of the slave trade resulted in fundamental changes in its organization. After 1700, as Britain became the undisputed leader in shipping enslaved people across the Atlantic, European governments and ship captains cut back on fighting among themselves and concentrated on commerce. They generally adopted the shore method of trading, which was less expensive than maintaining fortified trading posts. Under this system, European ships sent boats ashore to trade with African dealers or invited dealers to bring traders and the enslaved out to their ships. This method allowed ships to move easily along the coast from market to market and to depart more quickly for the Americas.

Some African merchants and rulers who controlled exports profited from the greater demand for slaves. With



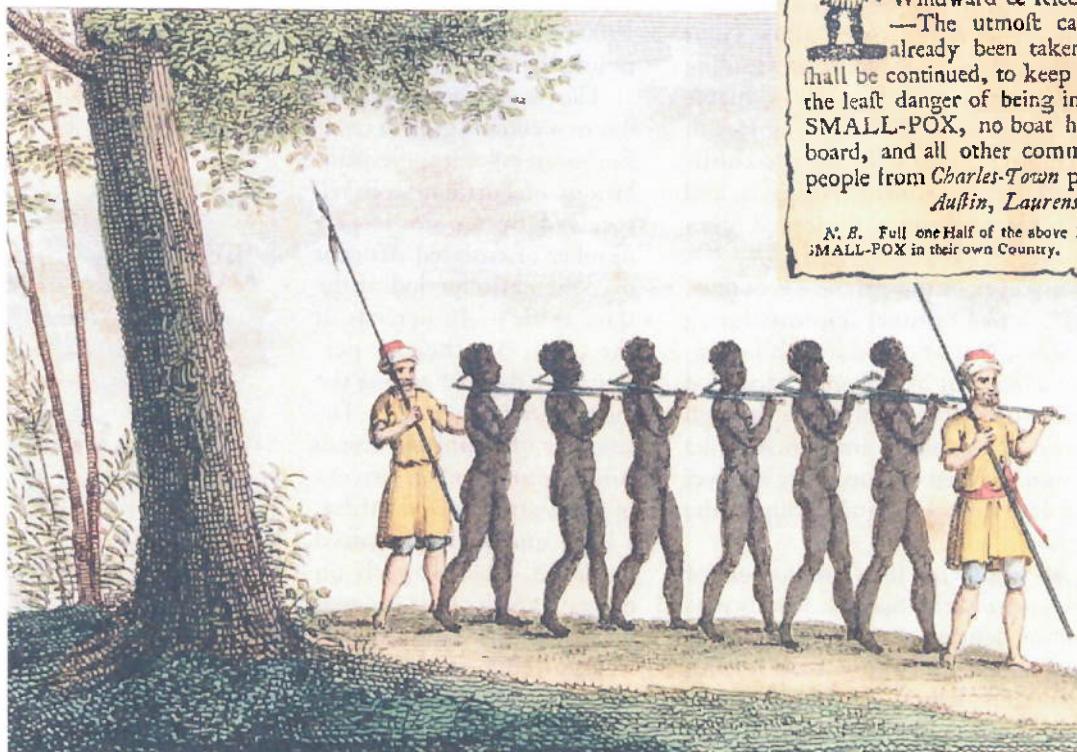
Plantation Zones, ca. 1700

■ **Treaty of Paris** The treaty that ended the Seven Years' War in Europe and the colonies in 1763, and ratified British victory on all colonial fronts.

■ **debt peonage** A form of serfdom that allowed a planter or rancher to keep his workers or slaves in perpetual debt bondage by periodically advancing food, shelter, and a little money.

■ **transatlantic slave trade** The forced migration of Africans across the Atlantic for slave labor on plantations and in other industries; the trade reached its peak in the eighteenth century and ultimately involved more than 12 million Africans.

The Transatlantic Slave Trade This engraving from 1814 shows traders leading a group of slaves to the West African coast, where they will board ships to cross the Atlantic. Many slaves died en route or arrived greatly weakened and ill. The newspaper advertisement of the sale of a ship's cargo of slaves in Charleston, South Carolina, promises "fine healthy negroes," testifying to the dangers of the crossing and to the frequency of epidemic diseases like smallpox. (engraving: Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, Paris, France/Archives Charmet/Bridgeman Images; advertisement: Sarin Images/Granger — All rights reserved)



their newfound wealth, they gained access to European and colonial goods, including firearms. But generally such economic returns did not spread very far, and the negative consequences of the expanding slave trade predominated. Wars among African states to obtain salable captives increased, and leaders used profits to purchase more arms than textiles and consumer goods. While the populations of Europe and Asia grew substantially in the eighteenth century, the population of Africa stagnated or possibly declined. As one contemporary critic observed:

I do not know if coffee and sugar are essential to the happiness of Europe, but I know that these two products have accounted for the unhappiness of two great regions of the world: America has been depopulated so as to have land on which to plant them; Africa has been depopulated so as to have the people to cultivate them.¹²

Most Europeans did not personally witness the horrors of the slave trade between Africa and the Americas,

and until the early part of the eighteenth century they considered the African slave trade a legitimate business. But as details of the plight of enslaved people became known, a campaign to abolish slavery developed in Britain. In the late 1780s the abolition campaign grew into a mass movement of public opinion, the first in British history. British women were prominent in this movement, denouncing the immorality of human bondage and stressing the cruel and sadistic treatment of enslaved women and families. These attacks put the defenders of slavery on the defensive. In 1807 Parliament abolished the British slave trade, although slavery continued in British colonies and the Americas for decades.

Identities and Communities of the Atlantic World

As contacts between the Atlantic coasts of the Americas, Africa, and Europe became more frequent, and as European settlements grew into

well-established colonies, new identities and communities emerged. The term *Creole* referred to people of Spanish ancestry born in the Americas. Wealthy Creoles and their counterparts throughout the Atlantic colonies prided themselves on following European ways of life. In addition to their lavish plantation estates, they maintained townhouses in colonial cities built on the European model, with theaters, central squares, churches, and coffeehouses. They purchased luxury goods made in Europe, and their children were often sent to be educated in the home country.

Over time, however, the colonial elite came to feel that their circumstances gave them different interests and characteristics from those of their home population. As one observer explained, “A turn of mind peculiar to the planter, occasioned by a physical difference of constitution, climate, customs, and education, tends . . . to repress the remains of his former attachment to his native soil.”¹³ Colonial elites became “Americanized” by adopting native foods, like chocolate and potatoes, and sought relief from tropical disease in native remedies. Creole traders and planters, along with their counterparts in English colonies, increasingly resented the regulations and taxes imposed by colonial bureaucrats. Such resentment would eventually lead to revolution against colonial powers (see Chapter 19).

Not all Europeans in the colonies were wealthy; indeed, many arrived as indentured servants and had to labor for several years before acquiring freedom. Numerous poor or middling whites worked as clerks, shopkeepers, craftsmen, and, in North America, farmers and laborers. With the exception of British North America, white Europeans made up a minority of the population; they were outnumbered in Spanish America by indigenous peoples and in the Caribbean and Brazil by the growing numbers of enslaved people of African descent. Since European migrants were disproportionately male, much of the population of the Atlantic world descended from unions—often forced—of European men and indigenous or African women (see “Evaluating Visual Evidence: Mixed Races,” page 518). Colonial attempts to identify and control racial categories greatly influenced developing Enlightenment thought on racial difference (see “Enlightenment Debates About Race” in Chapter 16).

Mixed-race populations sometimes rose to the colonial elite. The Spanish conquistadors often consolidated their power through marriage to the daughters of local rulers, and their descendants were among the most powerful inhabitants of Spanish America. In the Spanish and French Caribbean, as

in Brazil, many masters acknowledged and freed their mixed-race children, leading to sizable populations of free people of color. Advantaged by their fathers, some became wealthy land and slave owners in their own right. In the second half of the eighteenth century, the prosperity of some free people of color brought a backlash from the white population of Saint-Domingue in the form of new race laws prohibiting nonwhites from marrying whites and forcing them to adopt distinctive attire.

British colonies followed a distinctive pattern. There, whole families, rather than individual men, migrated, resulting in a rapid increase in the white population. This development was favored by British colonial law, which forbade marriage between English men and women and Africans or Native Americans. In the British colonies of the Caribbean and the southern mainland, masters tended to leave their mixed-race progeny in slavery rather than freeing them, maintaining a stark discrepancy between free whites and enslaved people of color.¹⁴ The identities inspired by the Atlantic world were equally complex. In some ways, the colonial encounter helped create new and more fixed forms of identity. Inhabitants of distinct regions of European nations came to see themselves as “Spanish” or “English” when they crossed the Atlantic; similarly, their colonial governments imposed the identity of “Indian” and “African” on peoples with vastly different linguistic, cultural, and political origins. The result was the creation of new Creole communities that melded cultural and social elements of various groups of origin with the new European cultures.

The status of mixed-race people, known as *mestizos* in Spanish America and *métis* in New France, was ambiguous. Spanish administrators applied purity of blood (*limpieza de sangre*) laws—originally used to exclude Jews and Muslims during the *reconquista* (Christian reconquest of Spain)—to indigenous and African peoples.¹⁵ Some mixed-race people sought to enter Creole society and obtain its many official and unofficial privileges by passing as white. Over time, where they existed in any number, mestizos and free people of color established their own communities and social hierarchies based on wealth, family connections, occupation, and skin color.

Converting indigenous people to Christianity was a key ambition for all European powers in the New World. Galvanized by the Protestant Reformation and the perceived need to protect and spread Catholicism, Catholic powers actively sponsored missionary efforts. Jesuits, Franciscans, Dominicans, and other religious orders established missions throughout Spanish, Portuguese, and French

Mixed Races

When Spanish settlers came to the Americas, they brought with them the religious and racial prejudices of the old country. One of the most important of these was the doctrine of *limpieza de sangre*, or purity of blood. It was originally adopted during the reconquista to refer to Spaniards whose ancestors had always been Christian and were therefore not tainted (in their eyes) by the blood of Jewish or Muslim converts. After the conquest, the Spanish applied this notion in the Americas; because they had never been exposed to Christianity, the Spanish reasoned, indigenous peoples could not be considered impure like Jews and Muslims. Africans, however, fell into the same heretical category as Jews and Muslims. These distinctions help explain why the Spanish decided indigenous people could not be enslaved, while Africans and those of African descent could.

Despite these obsessions with racial purity, Spanish America from its first years was characterized by a high degree of racial mixing, which began as male conquistadors formed unions with women of high-ranking indigenous families. With the arrival of some 35,000 enslaved Africans in Mexico during the sixteenth century, the mixing of peoples increased. Many of these unions were forced, with Spanish men seeking concubines among indigenous women and enslaved women of African descent. The fact that children inherited their legal status from their mothers encouraged enslaved men to seek wives among indigenous and *mestiza* women. Defying neat boundaries that were supposed to exist between racial categories, the children born of these unions were viewed with suspicion by state and religious officials, and they suffered from a range of discriminatory laws.

An elaborate terminology emerged to describe the many possible combinations of indigenous, African, and European blood, which were known collectively as *castas*. *Mestizos* referred to people of mixed Spanish and Indian descent, whereas *mulattoes* were those of Spanish and African origin. This painting belongs to a genre, known as *casta* paintings, that emerged in the late seventeenth century in Mexico depicting couples composed of individuals of different ethnic origin and the children produced of their unions. This genre reflects the ambivalent



(Museo de América, Madrid, Spain/Index/Bridgeman Images)

fascination inspired by the unprecedented mixing of peoples in Spanish America.

EVALUATE THE EVIDENCE

- What does this image suggest about the racial composition of the population of Spanish America and the interaction of people with different racial and ethnic backgrounds?
- Who do you think the audience might have been for such images, and why would viewers find them fascinating?
- What elements of this chapter might suggest that this is a romanticized or idealized depiction of relations among different racial and ethnic groups?

colonies (see “Religious Conversion” in Chapter 14). In Central and South America, large-scale conversion forged enduring Catholic cultures in Portuguese and Spanish colonies. Conversion efforts in North America were less effective because indigenous settlements were more scattered and native people were less integrated into colonial communities. On the whole, Protestants were less active as missionaries in this period, although some dissenters, like Moravians, Quakers, and Methodists, did seek converts among indigenous and enslaved people. (See “Individuals in Society: Rebecca Prottens,” page 520.)

The practice of slavery reveals important limitations on efforts to spread Christianity. Slave owners often refused to baptize their slaves, fearing that enslaved people would use their Christian status to claim additional rights. In some areas, particularly among the mostly African-born slaves of the Caribbean, elements of African religious belief and practice endured, often incorporated with Christian traditions.

Restricted from owning land and holding many occupations in Europe, Jews were eager participants in the new Atlantic economy and established a network of mercantile communities along its trade routes. As in the Old World, Jews in European colonies faced discrimination; for example, restrictions existed on the number of slaves they could own in Barbados in the early eighteenth century.¹⁶ Jews were considered to be white Europeans and thus ineligible to be slaves, but they did not enjoy equal status with Christians. The status of Jews adds one more element to the complexity of Atlantic identities.

The Atlantic Enlightenment

Enlightenment ideas thrived in the colonies, although with as much diversity and disagreement as in Europe (see Chapter 16). The colonies of British North America were deeply influenced by the Scottish Enlightenment, with its emphasis on pragmatic approaches to the problems of life. Following the Scottish model, leaders in the colonies adopted a moderate, “commonsense” version of the Enlightenment that emphasized self-improvement and ethical conduct. In most cases, this version of the Enlightenment was perfectly compatible with religion and was chiefly spread through the growing colleges and universities of the colonies, which remained church-based institutions.

Some thinkers went even further in their admiration for Enlightenment ideas. Benjamin Franklin’s writings and political career provide an outstanding

example of the combination of the pragmatism and economic interests of the Scottish Enlightenment with the constitutional theories of John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and the baron de Montesquieu. Franklin was privately a lifelong deist, meaning that he believed in God but not in organized religion. Nonetheless, he continued to attend church and respect religious proprieties, a cautious pattern followed by fellow deist Thomas Jefferson and other leading thinkers of the American Enlightenment.

Northern Enlightenment thinkers often depicted Spain and its American colonies as the epitome of the superstition and barbarity they contested. The Catholic Church strictly controlled the publication of books on the Iberian Peninsula and in Spanish America. Nonetheless, the Bourbon dynasty that took power in Spain in the early eighteenth century followed its own course of enlightened absolutism, just like its counterparts in the rest of Europe (see “What impact did new ways of thinking have on politics?” in Chapter 16). Under King Carlos III (r. 1759–1788) and his son Carlos IV (r. 1788–1808), Spanish administrators attempted to strengthen colonial rule by posting a standing army in the colonies and increasing royal monopolies and taxes to pay for it. They also ordered officials to gather more accurate information about the colonies as a basis for improving the government. Enlightened administrators debated the status of indigenous peoples and whether it would be better for these peoples (and for the prosperity of Spanish America) if they maintained their distinct legal status or were integrated into Spanish society.

Educated Creoles were well aware of the new currents of thought, and the universities, newspapers, and salons of Spanish America produced their own reform ideas. The establishment of a mining school in Mexico City in 1792, the first in the Spanish colonies, illuminates the practical achievements of reformers. As in other European colonies, one effect of Enlightenment thought was to encourage Creoles to criticize the policies of the mother country and aspire toward greater autonomy.

Trade and Empire in Asia and the Pacific

As the Atlantic economy took shape, Europeans continued to vie for dominance in the Asian trade. Between 1500 and 1600 the Portuguese had become major players in the Indian Ocean trading world, eliminating Venice as Europe’s chief supplier of spices and other Asian luxury goods. The Portuguese dominated but did not fundamentally alter the age-old pattern of

INDIVIDUALS IN SOCIETY

Rebecca Prottens

In the mid-1720s a young English-speaking girl who came to be known as Rebecca traveled by ship from Antigua to the small Danish sugar colony of St. Thomas, today part of the U.S. Virgin Islands. Eighty-five percent of St. Thomas's four thousand inhabitants were of African descent, almost all enslaved. Sugar plantations demanded backbreaking work, and slave owners used extremely brutal methods to maintain control, including amputations and beheadings for runaways.

Surviving documents refer to Rebecca as a "mulatto," indicating mixed European and African ancestry. A wealthy Dutch planter named van Beverhout purchased the girl for his household staff, sparing her a position in the grueling and deadly sugar fields. Rebecca won the family's favor, and they taught her to read, write, and speak Dutch. They also shared with her their Protestant faith and took the unusual step of freeing her.

As a free woman, she continued to work as a servant for the van Beverhouts and to study the Bible and spread its message of spiritual freedom. In 1736 she met some missionaries for the Moravian Church, a German-Protestant sect that emphasized emotion and communal worship and devoted its mission work to the enslaved peoples of the Caribbean. The missionaries were struck by Rebecca's piety and her potential to assist their work. As one wrote: "She researches diligently in the Scriptures, loves the Savior, and does much good for other Negro women because she does not simply walk alone with her good ways but instructs them in the Scriptures as well." A letter Rebecca sent to Moravian women in Germany declared: "Oh how good is the Lord. My heart melts when I think of it. His name is wonderful. Oh! Help me to praise him, who has pulled me out of the darkness. I will take up his cross with all my heart and follow the example of his poor life."^{*}

Rebecca soon took charge of the Moravians' female missionary work. Every Sunday and every evening after work, she would walk for miles to lead meetings with enslaved and free black women. The meetings consisted of reading and writing lessons, prayers, hymns, a sermon, and individual discussions in which she encouraged her new sisters in their spiritual growth.

In 1738 Rebecca married a German Moravian missionary, Matthaus Freundlich, a rare but not illegal case of mixed marriage. The same year, her husband bought a plantation, with slaves, to serve as the headquarters of their mission work. The Moravians—and presumably Rebecca herself—wished to spread Christian faith among slaves and improve their treatment, but did not oppose the institution of slavery itself.

Authorities nonetheless feared that baptized and literate slaves would agitate for freedom, and they imprisoned



A portrait of Rebecca Prottens with her second husband and their daughter, Anna-Maria. (Courtesy of Jon F. Sensbach. Used by permission of the Moravian Archives [Unity Archives, Herrnhut, Germany], GS-393)

Rebecca and Matthaus and tried to shut down the mission. Only the unexpected arrival on St. Thomas of German aristocrat and Moravian leader Count Zinzendorf saved the couple. Exhausted by their ordeal, they left for Germany in 1741 accompanied by their small daughter, but both father and daughter died soon after their arrival.

In Marienborn, a German center of the Moravian faith, Rebecca encountered other black Moravians, who lived in equality alongside their European brethren. In 1746 she married another missionary, Christian Jacob Prottens, son of a Danish sailor and, on his mother's side, grandson of a West African king. She and another female missionary from St. Thomas were ordained as deaconesses, probably making them the first women of color to be ordained in the Western Christian Church.

In 1763 Rebecca and her husband set out for her husband's birthplace, the Danish slave fort at Christiansborg (in what is now Accra, Ghana) to establish a school for mixed-race children. Her husband died in 1769, leaving Rebecca a widow once more. After declining the offer of passage back to the West Indies in 1776, she died in obscurity near Christiansborg in 1780.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. Why did Moravian missionaries assign such an important leadership role to Rebecca? What particular attributes did she offer?
2. Why did Moravians, including Rebecca, accept the institution of slavery instead of fighting to end it?
3. What does Rebecca's story teach us about the Atlantic world of the mid-eighteenth century?

*Quotations from Jon F. Sensbach, *Rebecca's Revival: Creating Black Christianity in the Atlantic World* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006), pp. 61, 63.



Colonel James Tod of the East India Company Traveling by Elephant Through Rajasthan, India

By the end of the eighteenth century agents of the British East India Company exercised growing military and political authority in India, in addition to monopolizing Britain's lucrative economic trade with the subcontinent. (Victoria & Albert Museum, London, UK/Bridgeman Images)

Indian Ocean trade, which involved merchants from many areas as more or less autonomous players. This situation changed radically with the intervention of the Dutch and then the English.

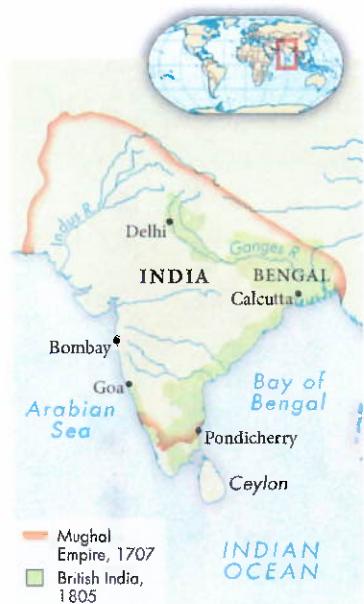
Formed in 1602, the Dutch East India Company had taken control of the Portuguese spice trade in the Indian Ocean, with the port of Batavia (Jakarta) in Java as its center of operations. Within a few decades the Dutch had expelled the Portuguese from Ceylon and other East Indian islands. Unlike the Portuguese, the Dutch transformed the Indian Ocean trading world. Whereas East Indian states and peoples maintained independence under the Portuguese, who treated them as autonomous business partners, the Dutch established outright control and reduced them to dependents.

After these successes, the Dutch hold in Asia faltered in the eighteenth century because the company failed to diversify to meet changing consumption patterns. Spices continued to compose much of its shipping, despite their declining importance in the European diet, probably due to changing fashions in food and

luxury consumption. Fierce competition from its main rival, the English East India Company (established 1600), also severely undercut Dutch trade.

Britain initially struggled for a foothold in Asia. With the Dutch monopolizing maritime trade in the Indian Ocean, the British sought to establish trading relations with rulers on the subcontinent of India, the source of lucrative trade in silks, textiles, and pepper. Throughout the seventeenth century the English East India Company relied on trade concessions from the powerful Mughal emperor, who granted only piecemeal access to the subcontinent. Finally, in 1716 the Mughals conceded empire-wide trading privileges. As Mughal power waned, British East India Company agents increasingly intervened in local affairs and made alliances or waged war against Indian princes.

Britain's great rival for influence in India was France. During the War of the Austrian Succession, British and French forces in India supported opposing rulers in local power struggles. In 1757 East India Company forces under Robert Clive



India, 1805

conquered the rich north-eastern province of Bengal at the Battle of Plassey. French-English rivalry was finally resolved by the Treaty of Paris, which granted all of France's possessions in India to the British with the exception of Pondicherry, an Indian Ocean port city. With the elimination of their rival, British ascendancy in India accelerated. In 1765 the Mughal ruler granted the East India Company *diwani*, the right to civil administration and tax collection, in Bengal and neighboring provinces. By the early nineteenth century the company had overcome vigorous Indian resistance to gain economic and political dominance of much of the subcontinent; direct administration by the British government replaced East India Company rule after a large-scale rebellion in 1857.

The late eighteenth century also witnessed the beginning of British settlement of the continent of Australia. The continent was first sighted by Europeans in the early seventeenth century, and thereafter parts of the coast were charted by European ships. Captain James Cook, who charted much of the Pacific Ocean for the first time, claimed the east coast of Australia for England in 1770, naming it New South Wales. The first colony was established there in the late 1780s, relying on the labor of convicted prisoners forcibly transported from Britain. Settlement of the western portion of the continent followed in the 1790s. The first colonies struggled for survival and, after an initial period of friendly relations, soon aroused the hostility and resistance of Aboriginal peoples. Cook himself was killed by islanders in Hawaii in 1779.

The rising economic and political power of Europeans in this period drew on the connections they established between the Asian and Atlantic trade worlds. An outstanding example is the trade in cowrie shells. These seashells, originating in the Maldives Islands in the Indian Ocean, were used as a form of currency in West

Africa. European traders obtained them in Asia and packed them alongside porcelains, spices, and silks for the journey home. The cowries were then brought from European ports to the West African coast to be traded for slaves. Indian textiles were also prized in Africa and played a similar role in exchange. Thus the trade of the Atlantic was inseparable from Asian commerce, and Europeans were increasingly found dominating commerce in both worlds.

NOTES

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