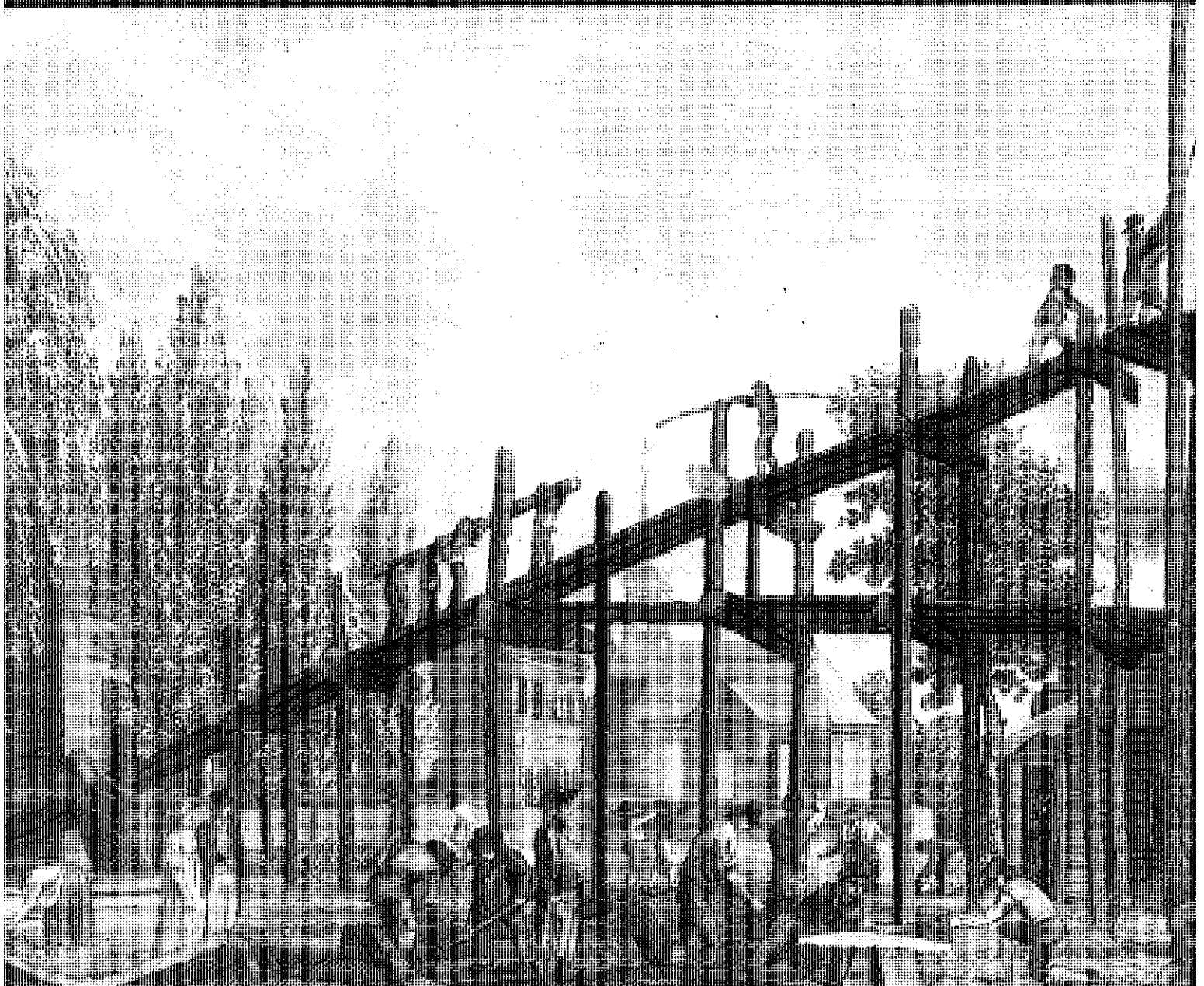
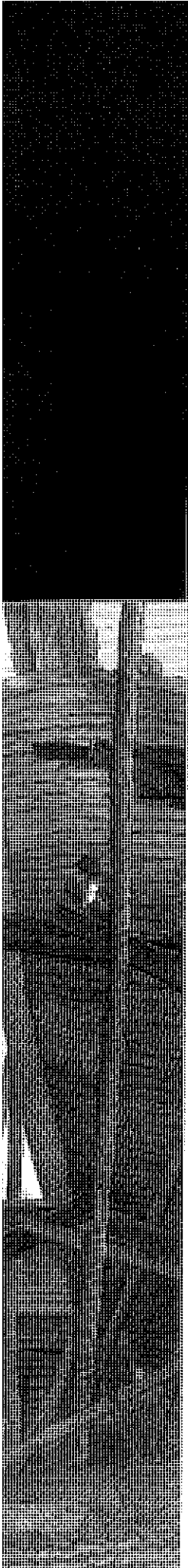


Part One

Colonization and Revolution

1492-1815





THE END OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY marked the beginning of modern America, as explorers from Europe encountered the inhabitants of the Americas and Africa. Spurred by crises in their own societies, European rulers, adventurers, and merchants commenced a frenetic search for new sources of wealth, and Christian rulers sent missionaries to convert the native peoples their countrymen encountered. They created a vast new system of expropriation and trade across the Atlantic, linking together and dramatically transforming Africa, the Americas, and Europe itself. The quest for riches and the accompanying search for souls to convert to Christianity prompted both creativity and destruction.

The settlement and growth of European societies in the Americas was part of a broader process of empire building. The colonies made possible a massive accumulation of wealth for the elites of Europe and for some of the colonists themselves. It underlay in both North America and Europe the development of capitalism — a new economic system based on private ownership and free trade that redefined social classes and fostered distinctive political ideologies and societal values. Many of the peoples who were caught up in the overseas expansion of European empires, however, saw their own worlds crumble as a result of disease, death, and intrusion. Colonists violently seized land from the native inhabitants of the Americas and forcibly enslaved millions of Africans to provide labor for their New World settlements. Even the white people who crewed trading vessels and slave ships or labored in the fields and towns of the New World faced hardship, danger, and premature death.

Spain, France, Holland, and England all staked claims in North America as they sought to expand their Atlantic-based empires, establishing trading ports, missions, plantations, and settlements in varying stages of permanence. From the mid-seventeenth century onward, however, England's Chesapeake Bay and New England colonies attracted the most settlers, achieved the fastest population growth, and destroyed or disrupted native American groups that stood in the way of their expanding settlements. The English also settled in the Carolinas, captured land claimed by the Dutch, and continued their expansion into the Mid-Atlantic region, from New York to Pennsylvania. During the eighteenth century, the success of their colonies helped Britain achieve a dominant position over France and Spain in North America.

Colonies developed according to the varied objectives of their investors and settlers. The South proved attractive to those who sought profit from the land itself; its favorable soils and climate fostered the emergence of plantation agriculture sustained by the labor first of indentured servants and then of African slaves. Indentured servants, slaves, and wage workers toiled in the North as well, but the aims of northern colonists — many seeking religious ideals and independent land ownership unattainable in Britain — led to the creation of smaller-scale farming and craft economies based primarily on family labor. Distinct labor systems — free and unfree — increasingly defined the ways of life of the two regions.

All the American colonies, however, faced political, economic, religious, and racial conflicts. Colonists' expansion meant increasing conflict with native groups whose land they sought, periodically inciting full-scale wars. Slaveholders struggled with enslaved Africans, who proved unwilling laborers. Colonists also struggled with each other over who would own the land, who would govern society, and how to conduct religious life. For the many less wealthy European settlers in America, their own aspirations for economic independence and liberty from oppression led them to clash with wealthier colonists who sought to exploit or control them. Just as slaves tried to resist their enslavement, ordinary colonists adopted methods of protest and political organization to assert what they saw as their natural rights. British settlers and their descendants especially, influenced by the radical ideologies of the English Civil War in the mid-seventeenth century, claimed political rights as "freeborn Englishmen" and nurtured a belief in social equality.

By the 1760s, internal conflicts had merged with the larger issue of the colonies' continuing relationship with their "mother country." Colonial activists took steps to secure their rights as subjects of the British empire. When their protests led to war with Britain in the 1770s, they found themselves pursuing complete independence from British rule. A broad coalition of Americans — rich, middling, and poor; northern and southern; men and women — supported independence and finally secured it in 1783, achieving the first successful New World colonial revolution.

People of the newly independent United States sought to establish a system of government based on republican principles, avoiding the formal social inequalities and hierarchies of European societies. However, particularly when determining what shape their national government would take, Americans disagreed as to who was best fitted to govern in a postrevolutionary society. Advocates of both elite and popular rule disputed this issue well into the nineteenth century. What was made clear, however, was that political rights would extend only to certain Americans. Women, slaves, and even many free men of color found themselves partly or wholly excluded from the benefits of citizenship in the new republic.

Throughout the colonial and revolutionary periods, then, tension existed in America between those with full access to economic and political rights and those who had those rights denied them. This tension and the aspirations of laboring Americans shaped America's early history and defined its emergence as an independent nation. Famous political leaders did not always control events. They were constantly challenged, and events themselves profoundly influenced, by the aspirations and experiences of the ordinary men and women of all cultures who built America.

1

A Meeting of Three Worlds *Europe, Africa, and American Colonization* 1492-1680



Peoples of the New World

Centralized Empires in Central and South America

Dispersed Societies to the North

Eastern Woodland Indians

America's Peoples at Contact

The Background to Overseas Expansion: Europe and Africa

Politics, Religion, and Commerce in Western Europe

Society and Trade in West Africa

The Invasion of the Americas Begins: Portugal, Spain, and the Need for Labor

Overseas Expansion and Conquest

The Need for Labor

Africa and the American Slave Trade

Captivity and the Middle Passage

Early Colonization Efforts in North America

Exploration

The French and Dutch

The English Colonial Experience

The Roots of English Migration to America

Colonizing the Chesapeake

Colonizing New England

The English Revolution and Its Effects on the Colonies

Native Americans: Decline, Resistance, Exchange

Adaptation and Negotiation

Resistance and Warfare

Coexistence on the Middle Ground

Conclusion: The Remaking of Three Worlds

America

The natural bounty of the New World was put on display in this seventeenth-century Flemish painting. On the left of the central panel, America is represented by Indians who lounge alongside the favored object of European desire: a collection of gold weights. Jan van Kessel the Elder, *America*, oil on copper, 19 1/8 x 26 5/8 inches, 1664–66—Alte Pinakothek, Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Munich.

IN 1492, THE GENOESE-BORN sea captain Christopher Columbus and his Spanish crewmen landed on a small island in the Bahamas after a two-month Atlantic voyage and met the inhabitants, who called the island Guanahani. The encounter was friendly, but Columbus had plans for these people. Leaving a Spanish encampment on a large nearby island he had renamed "Hispaniola," he captured six native men and brought them back with him to Spain. Columbus's appropriation of these men and of the territories he encountered indicated the European intention to gain wealth and power from overseas exploration.

Columbus had sailed in the service of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain, searching for a western route to the Indies, the Asian source of spices and other valuable goods. Thinking that he had reached the Indies, Columbus and Europeans after him called the native inhabitants "Indians." Columbus made three subsequent voyages and apparently believed to his death, in 1506, that he had reached Asia. But other explorers had already questioned this belief. One of them, Amerigo Vespucci, calculated that these lands were part of a continent unknown to Europeans. In 1507, in Vespucci's honor, a German mapmaker named this continent "America."

Columbus and his crew were not, in fact, the first Europeans in America. In the eleventh century, Scandinavians had reached Labrador and Newfoundland, where they built a short-lived settlement. But other Europeans

had no knowledge of that venture; to them, Columbus's 1492 voyage marked the "discovery" of a "New World" that they would compete avidly with natives and with each other to possess. Seeking wealth or land, they commenced a process of conquest and settlement that would alter or destroy the lives of the peoples who already lived there. To Native Americans, it marked the beginning of a long invasion that would see them colonized, conquered, and in many places almost wiped out.

Tragedy tinged even the first contacts. Columbus took his six captives to the royal court at Barcelona, where they excited much curiosity, were baptized into the Catholic Church, and were given Spanish names. But they did not live long in Spain. Some were taken back to the Caribbean; one man became a page at court but soon died. Columbus, meanwhile, returned to Hispaniola to find his crewmen vanished. Intentionally or accidentally, disease, malnutrition, violence, murder, and destruction would in places reach catastrophic proportions.

Europe's encounter with the Americas would transform both continents and soon would involve Africa, too. Traders, warriors, missionaries, and adventurers would forge commercial, political, and religious changes on all three continents, bringing new wealth to some people and exposing others to great brutality and misery. Even in Europe, the chief beneficiary of contact with the New World, conquest and colonization would contribute to inequality and social conflict.

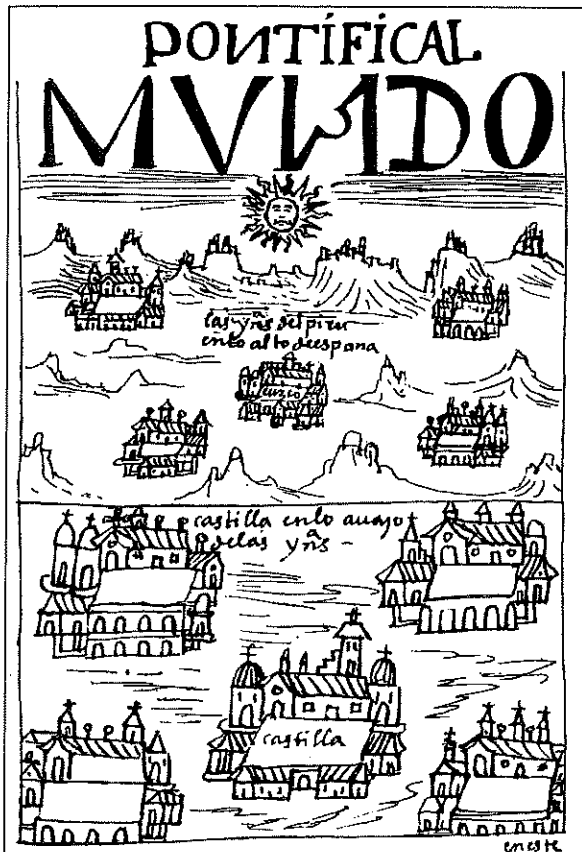
Europeans dreamed of finding wealth in the New World but knew that to do so, they would need much labor. Columbus predicted that the natives he encountered "should be good and intelligent servants." The history of the Americas would be shaped by the efforts of conquerors and settlers to use first Native American and then European and African labor to exploit the continent's riches. In the process, most of these laborers had to endure poverty and untimely death, but they were the people who built America.

Peoples of the New World

None of those involved in the encounter between Europe, the Americas, and Africa were a single people. Most varied of all were the inhabitants of the Americas. Evidence about their origins is thin and uneven, and archaeologists continue to debate it hotly. Until recently, it was conventional to trace the earliest Americans to a period approximately 13,000 years ago, late in the last Ice Age, when groups from Siberia migrated across the dry land that linked Asia with Alaska before rising sea levels separated the continents. Recent findings suggest that people may also have reached the Americas by sea from Southeast Asia via Polynesia as much as 20,000 or more years ago and that several different migrations populated the continents before about 4000 B.C.E. At any event, migrants and their descendants spread across

The New Chronicle and Good Government

This drawing by an Andean nobleman, Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala, depicts the Incan view of the world. The kingdom of Peru, the capital city of Cuzco in its center, is situated at the top of the world, overshadowing Spain below. Guamán Poma's 1200-page *Nueva corónica y buen gobierno*, illustrated with 400 quill drawings, was written between 1587 and 1615. It comprises a unique Andean interpretation of Peruvian history from the Creation through the Spanish conquest. Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala, *El primer nueva corónica y buen gobierno* (1936)—American Social History Project.



North and South America and to the Caribbean islands, building a vast array of cultures and languages. By 1492, there may have been as many as 50 or 100 million people in the Americas, perhaps one-seventh of the world's population. But their isolation from the rest of the world—particularly their lack of immunity to European diseases—left them vulnerable as Europeans started coming to the Americas in the late fifteenth century.

Centralized Empires in Central and South America Some Central and South American societies had developed strong states. That of the Incas, centered in present-day Peru and Bolivia, had expanded in the fifteenth century into an empire stretching far along the Andes Mountains and South America's western coast. Common peoples' obligatory labor supported a royal family surrounded by aristocrats. Women wove cloth that was prized in commerce and religious ritual. Men grew crops and built extensive road and canal systems that united the empire and irrigated arid land.

The Aztecs of Mexico, too, forged a loosely confederated empire during the fifteenth century, conquering the descendants of earlier Olmec, Mayan, and Toltec empires and exacting tribute payments from outlying tribes. Fifteen to twenty million strong, the Aztecs boasted impressive achievements in irrigation, metallurgy, and city-building. Tenochtitlán, the capital, had over a quarter of a million inhabitants. Aztec society was based on clans that organized farming, much of it on communal lands. Its

upper ranks, headed by a figure the Spanish would call an "emperor," included priests, generals, and wealthy merchants. But most Aztec people were craft workers, farmers, laborers, soldiers, or slaves.

Dispersed Societies to the North America north of Mexico was more sparsely populated. Archaeologists disagree as to how many people inhabited its vast land area. Estimates vary from one million to eighteen million, but most suggest that there were around five million in 1500. These groups, smaller than those farther south, spoke some 375 different languages, many of which also had mutually unintelligible dialects. Native American societies had long been based on hunting, fishing, and gathering wild plant foods. Starting around 3000 B.C.E. in the Southwest and spreading northward and eastward over nearly three thousand years, the cultivation of maize (corn) and other crops had also evolved. In most cases, women performed the main tasks of raising and preparing food. The Hohokam culture (300 B.C.E. to 800 C.E.) of present-day Arizona and the later pueblo peoples of the

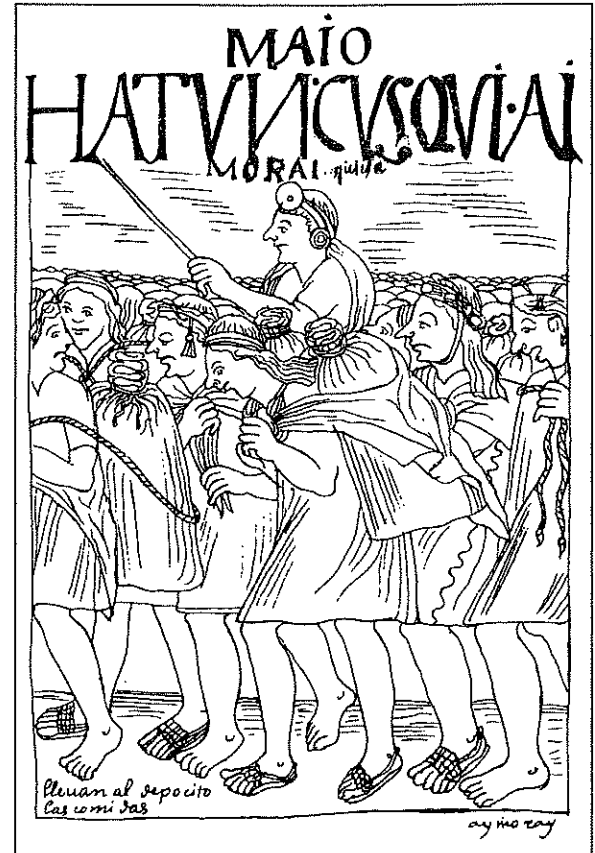
highlands north of Mexico built irrigation systems not unlike those that the Incas and Aztecs would subsequently construct.

Farming meant more dependable food supplies and population growth. Groups that cultivated crops became more stable and often more powerful than neighbors who still relied on hunting and gathering. Pueblo societies of the Southwest were among the most complex. By the twelfth century, the inhabitants of Chaco Canyon had twelve towns and over two hundred villages, each built of contiguous rooms, that altogether housed 15,000 people. Corn-cultivating societies in the Mississippi Valley built urban centers and became socially stratified. The largest town, at Cahokia, near present-day St. Louis, covered around 6 square miles and housed at least 10,000 people before it went into decline in the thirteenth century.

Some groups, such as the Jumanos of the Southwest and the Ottawas of the Great Lakes region, were known as traders. On the plains and prairies of the West, groups hunted buffalo; some, like the Pawnees, exchanged meat for grain with corn-growing societies nearby. Eastward to the Atlantic coast, where most of the early encounters with Europeans took place, people combined horticulture, hunting, and trade.

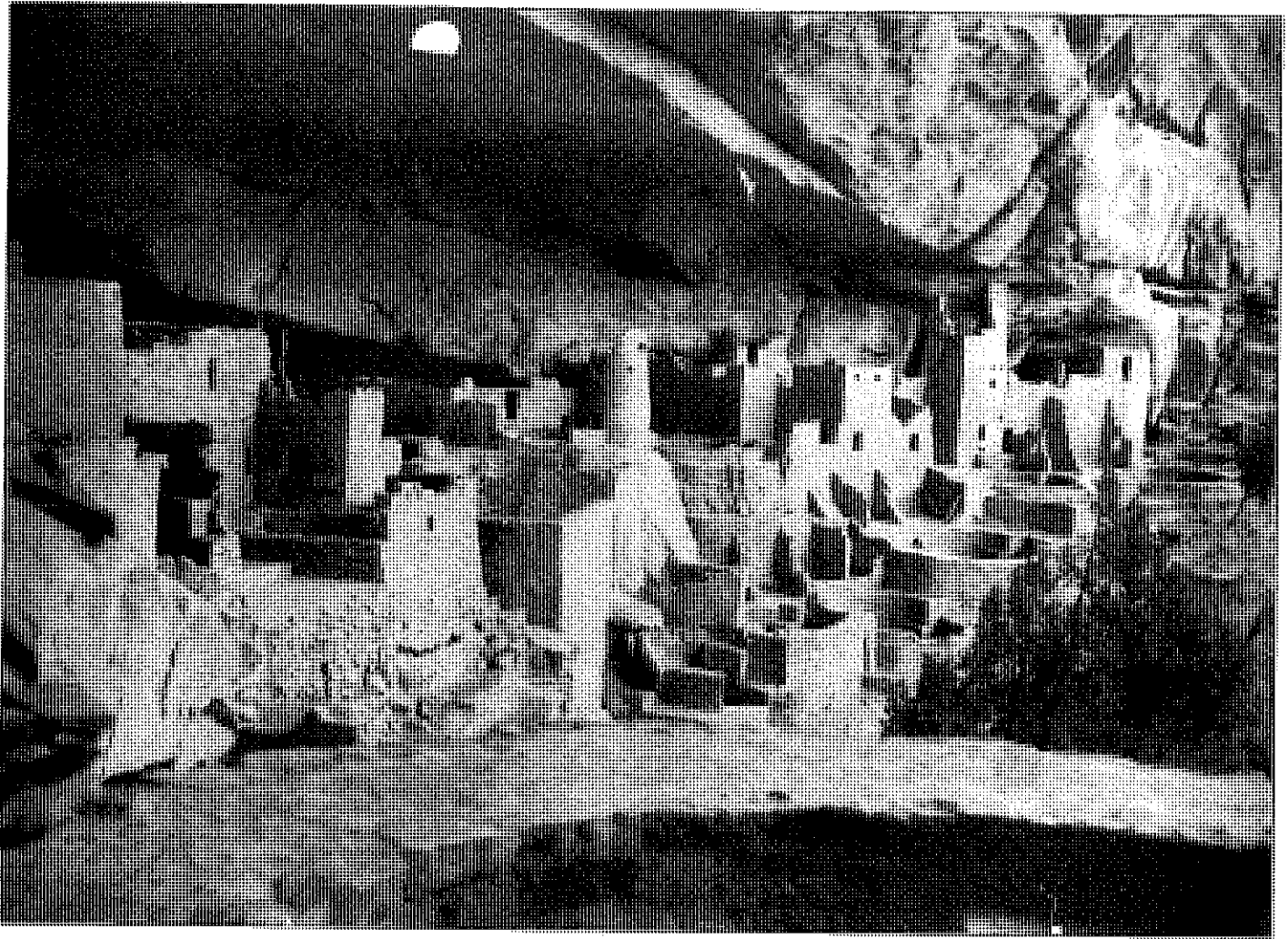
Eastern Woodland Indians Most Eastern woodland peoples lived in family-based societies with little organized hierarchy. Except in the far Northeast, where the climate and poor soil prevented farming, they relied on cultivated crops—typically corn, beans, and squashes—for half or more of their food. Women worked the fields, located close to villages so that they could coordinate crop raising with other tasks. Villages, each with up to a few hundred inhabitants, contained easily moved shelters and could relocate according to seasonal and ecological changes. Strong kinship ties bound individuals to one another. Land and water were the common property of each village, and all inhabitants shared in the yield of hunt and harvest. “Every proprietor knows his own,” an English observer noted, “yet all things . . . are used in common amongst them.”

The absence of accumulated personal property ensured a roughly equal distribution of wealth. The Iroquois, wrote a French missionary, had no poorhouses “because there are neither mendicants nor paupers. . . . A whole village must be without corn before any individual can be obliged to endure privation.” Sharing goods reinforced individuals’ sense of group belonging,



Gathering the Harvest

A drawing from Guamán Poma's *Nueva corónica* depicts Incas gathering the annual May harvest before the Spanish conquest. Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala, *El primer nueva corónica y buen gobierno* (1936)—American Social History Project.

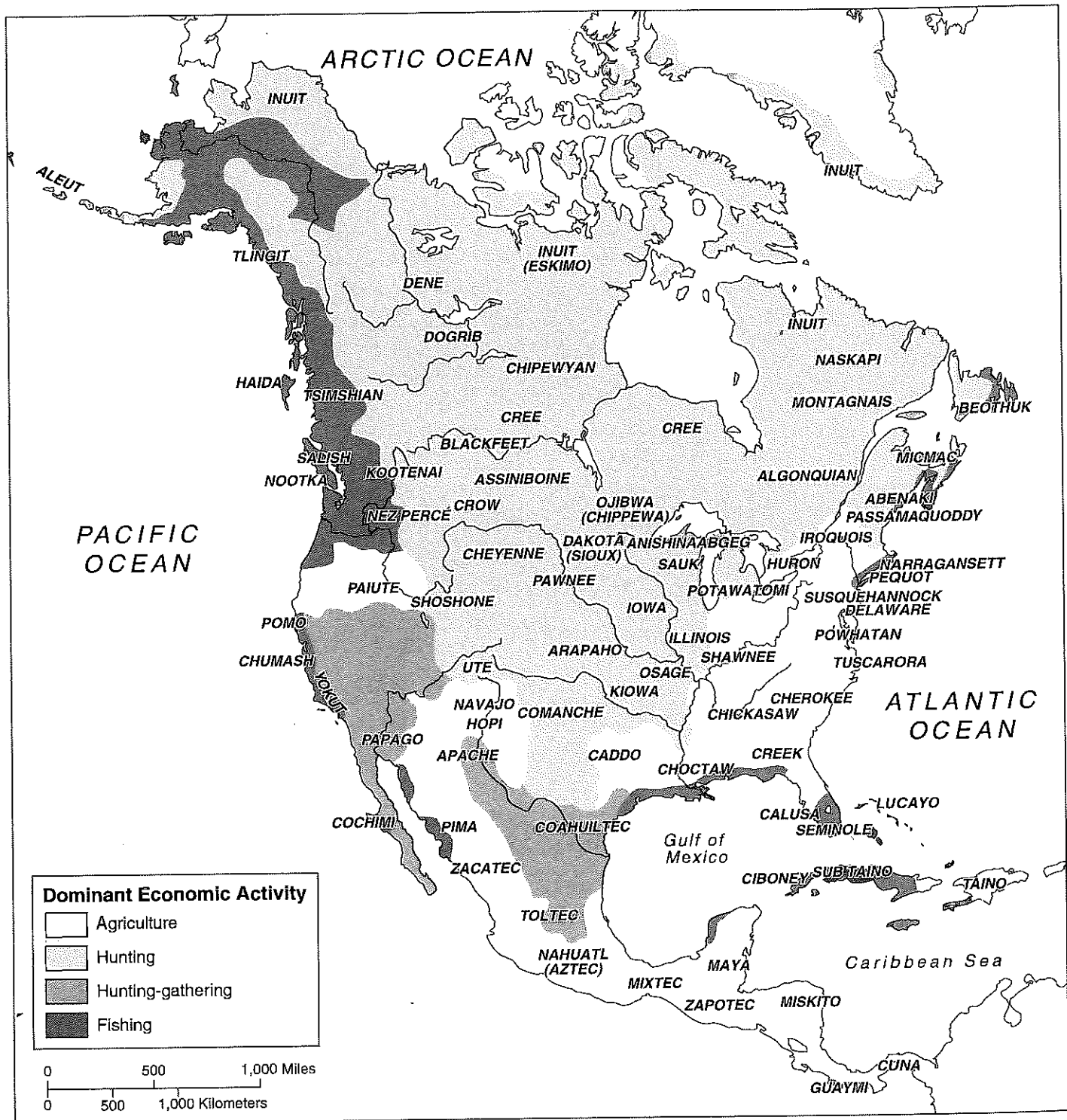


Ancient Cliff Dwellers

The Ancestral Pueblo people occupied the Four Corners area (where the present-day states of Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, and Utah meet) from approximately 1 to 1300 C.E. They developed extensive irrigation works and apartment complexes in the arid Southwest. The remains of one of their settlements, in southwestern Colorado's Mesa Verde National Park, features an amazing array of architectural styles. First, pit houses were dug into the hilltop mesas; as the population increased, two- and three-story houses followed. Around 1200, for reasons not entirely known, "cliff houses"—large, multistory apartment complexes fashioned of sandstone blocks—were built in alcoves on the canyon walls. More than six hundred cliff houses exist in Mesa Verde today. Residents left the settlements during an extended drought in the late thirteenth century. Horace Swartley Poley, 1901—Denver Public Library.

and there were strong sanctions against unacceptable behavior, from public disapproval or ridicule to expulsion and exile.

Many groups were matrilineal; identity and status descended from mothers to children. Eastern woodland groups tended also to be matrilineal—after marriage, men moved into their wives' households. Leadership in these groups was not restricted to men. Some women enjoyed a degree of personal independence and power. Prominent Iroquois women controlled



MAP 1.1 Locations of Selected Native American Groups, c. 1500

This map shows just some among the great number and variety of Indian societies in North America at the time of European contact, including several of the East Coast groups that would come into conflict with the first English colonists in the seventeenth century.

their own homes and fields, could divorce at will, and had the right to choose leaders from among their menfolk. They supervised their appointees and could remove them for misdeeds or incompetence.

America's Peoples at Contact Native American societies were not static but had faced long periods of change and conflict (Map 1.1). Between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries, large settlements such as Chaco Canyon and Cahokia declined, and their populations dispersed to villages. Wars erupted over access to land and resources. Five groups in the Northeast (the Mohawk, Oneida, Cayuga, Onondaga, and Seneca) formed the Iroquois Confederacy in the fifteenth century, apparently to reduce such conflicts between them. The Confederacy, though, aggravated tensions with other groups. Martial prowess became so prized that Iroquois leadership commonly passed to those who were reputed to be the best warriors.

Two common factors influenced the terms on which indigenous societies would face contact with Europeans. The fact that no society north of Mexico had an overarching state like those of the Aztecs and Incas had advantages and disadvantages. When the Spanish invaded Central and South America after 1518, they had quickly toppled the Aztec and Inca empires. Few North American groups faced such rapid collapse. However, their dispersion and disunity made cohesive response or resistance to invasion difficult to attain.

A second factor was the process that scholars now call the Columbian Exchange. European contact with Africa and the Americas initiated an exchange of flora, fauna, and microorganisms between ecosystems that had hitherto been isolated from one another. New World crop seeds were carried to Europe, along with diseases such as syphilis, which spread there rapidly after arriving in the 1520s. But the effect of European organisms on America was more dramatic. Newly introduced grasses drove out existing species, and domesticated livestock flourished on a continent where they had been unknown. Most damaging was the fact that new human diseases had disastrous effects on populations that lacked immunity to them. In some areas, typhus, influenza, measles, and smallpox wiped out 90 percent of native peoples by 1600. Such devastation—by reducing native populations and undermining their societies—would help conquerors and settlers shape their colonies to serve their own purposes.

The Background to Overseas Expansion: Europe and Africa

Led by Hernán Cortés, a Spanish expedition set out in 1518 to conquer Mexico. Successive waves of conquistadors followed. One wrote that he did so “for King, God, and Gold,” summing up the motivations that drove Europeans to explore and seize overseas territory. Changes in Europe over the

centuries before 1500 had initiated political consolidation, religious division, and commercial development. These in turn fostered overseas trade and conquest, which led first to closer links between Europe and West Africa and then to the colonization of Atlantic islands. As Europe's interest in the Americas deepened, it drew Africa more tightly into the process.

Politics, Religion, and Commerce in Western Europe Early in the fourteenth century, European population growth peaked. Wars and changes in climate hampered food production just as growing populations were stretching resources to their limits. The consequent famine was followed in the 1340s by plague—the Black Death—that ravaged many parts of the continent. Between 1300 and 1400, Europe lost two-fifths or more of its people.

Aristocratic landlords held most of the land in Europe, and they controlled the labor of peasant serfs who were legally bound to the land. Population loss weakened these feudal ties between landlords and serfs and challenged or toppled monarchical dynasties. As population and wealth grew again in the fifteenth century, however, some monarchs created new military and administrative structures that asserted their power over unruly nobles. The uniting of the crowns of Aragon and Castile in 1469 created a strong Spanish monarchy, while the ascent of the Tudor dynasty in England in 1485 ended the long baronial feuding known as the Wars of the Roses and began a consolidation of royal administration. Such “new monarchies” formed nation-states that would soon compete for wealth and territory overseas.

As monarchies consolidated, Roman Christendom began to fragment. Discontent with the wealth and corruption of the papacy and clergy fostered religious dissent in some regions and efforts at church renewal and reform elsewhere. Spain produced a revitalized Catholicism symbolized by the piety of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, but in Germany and other parts of northern Europe from 1517 on, Martin Luther and other reformers sparked a revolt, known as the Protestant Reformation, that led many churches to break with Rome. In Sweden and many German principalities, the Reformation secured the adherence of rulers who saw religion as a vehicle for state power. The English king Henry VIII, too, severed ties with Rome in 1534, in a clash with the papacy over his wish for a divorce, and declared himself head of a separate Church of England. From midcentury onward, as Catholic reform turned into an effort to regain lost ground, wars between Protestants and Catholics wracked France, Germany, and the Netherlands.

This turmoil added a religious dimension to overseas exploration and colonization. Especially in Catholic Europe, the pursuit of territory was



The Beak Doctor

An illustration from a seventeenth-century medical history shows the recommended outfit to be worn by doctors during the “plague years.” The long-nosed mask filled with perfumes and disinfectants, along with the gogglelike lenses covering the eyes, was supposed to protect doctors from the deadly airborne “miasmas” that were believed to spread the Black Death. Thomas Bartholin, *Historiarum anatomicarum medicarum rariorum* (1661)—Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

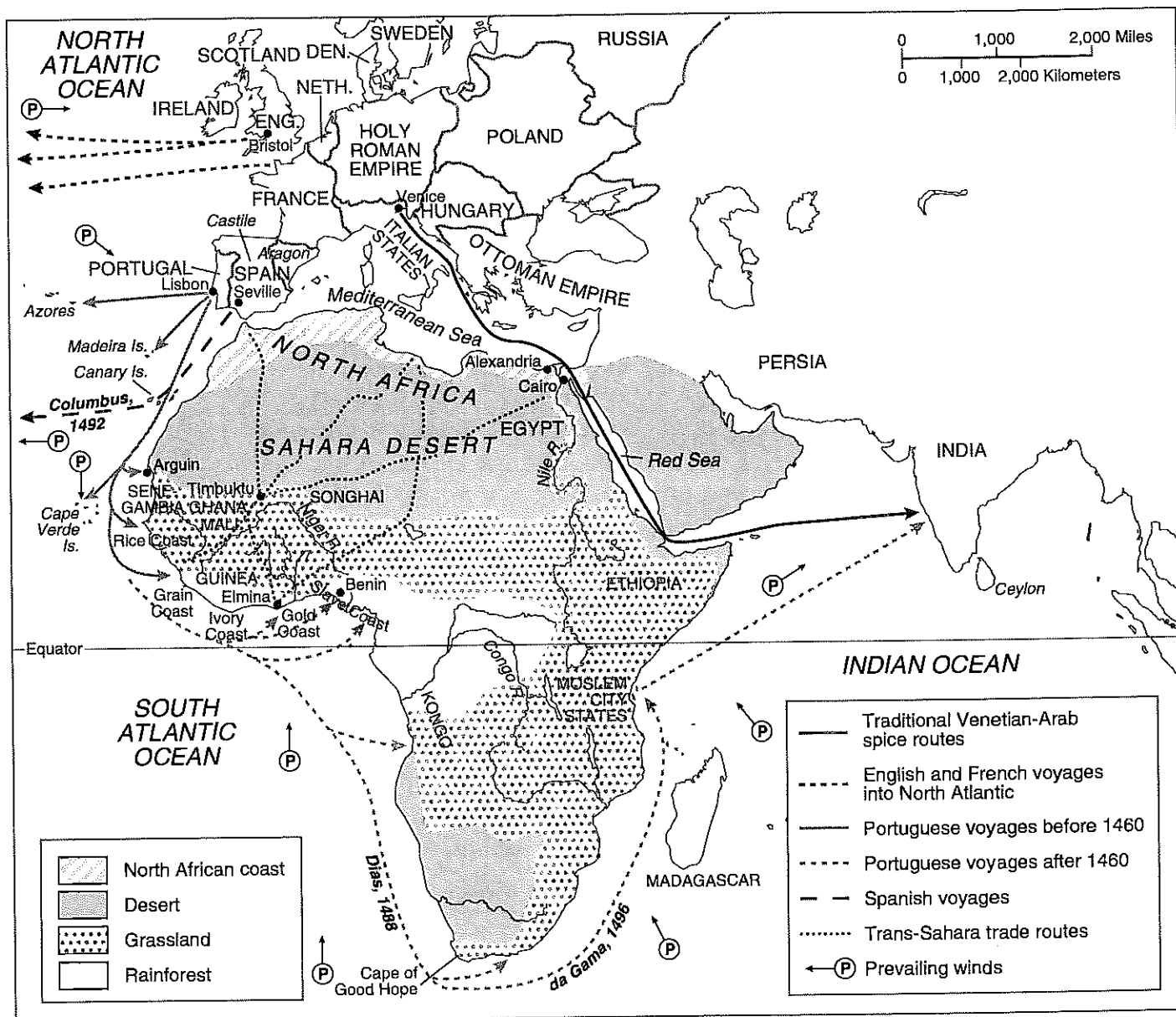
clothed in the imperative to convert “heathen” indigenous peoples to Catholicism. Spain revitalized religious orders such as the Franciscans and Dominicans, making them spearheads of the Faith in the New World. Struggles against Protestantism spurred a redoubling of efforts to save souls overseas as priests belonging to new orders, such as the Society of Jesus (Jesuits), also became missionaries.

Political and religious impulses for expansion were underpinned by developments in trade and shipping that marked Europe’s recovery from the crisis of the Black Death. Banking spread to northern Europe from its origins in Italy, strengthening a commercial revival that accompanied the growth of urban populations from 1400 onward. Merchants accumulated capital to invest in the rich trade in luxury goods from Asia. But the expansion of the Islamic Ottoman empire and the dominance of the Asian trade by states such as Venice hampered their efforts. Accordingly, they sought alternative routes to the sources of this trade and of the gold and silver that could purchase the goods. Monarchs wanting to pay for their new governments and armies were also eager for new sources of wealth.

Society and Trade in West Africa The search for wealth first drew Europeans into increasing contact with trading societies in Africa. Africa’s total population may have exceeded eighty million, four-fifths of it located south of the Sahara. From the Islamic traders of the Indian Ocean port of Mombasa to the farmers of the fertile forest regions of what is now Nigeria to the food-collecting San and cattle-keeping Khoi-Khoi of the south, the continent contained a wide diversity of cultures and economies. In complexity and prosperity, many African societies compared with those of Europe and Central America (Map 1.2).

West Africa, which would have the most importance for New World developments, had roughly eleven million inhabitants in 1500. Towns such as Timbuktu, Gao, and Benin were significant trading centers, home to merchants, craft workers, scholars, and priests and to handicrafts, the arts, education, and legal systems. Most West Africans, however, were rural dwellers, belonging to groups organized around kinship networks. Families raised livestock and cultivated crops with iron tools of a type made in the region for more than a thousand years.

Kin groups owned land communally, and households often cooperated to produce food. Women dominated food production and were active in the marketplaces, where they sold surplus produce. Polygyny, whereby one man had several wives, was common, especially among the wealthy. Family and clan leaders exercised authority in the collective leadership of villages and larger political confederations. Religious beliefs varied from place to place, but most West Africans believed that they were part of a spiritual world

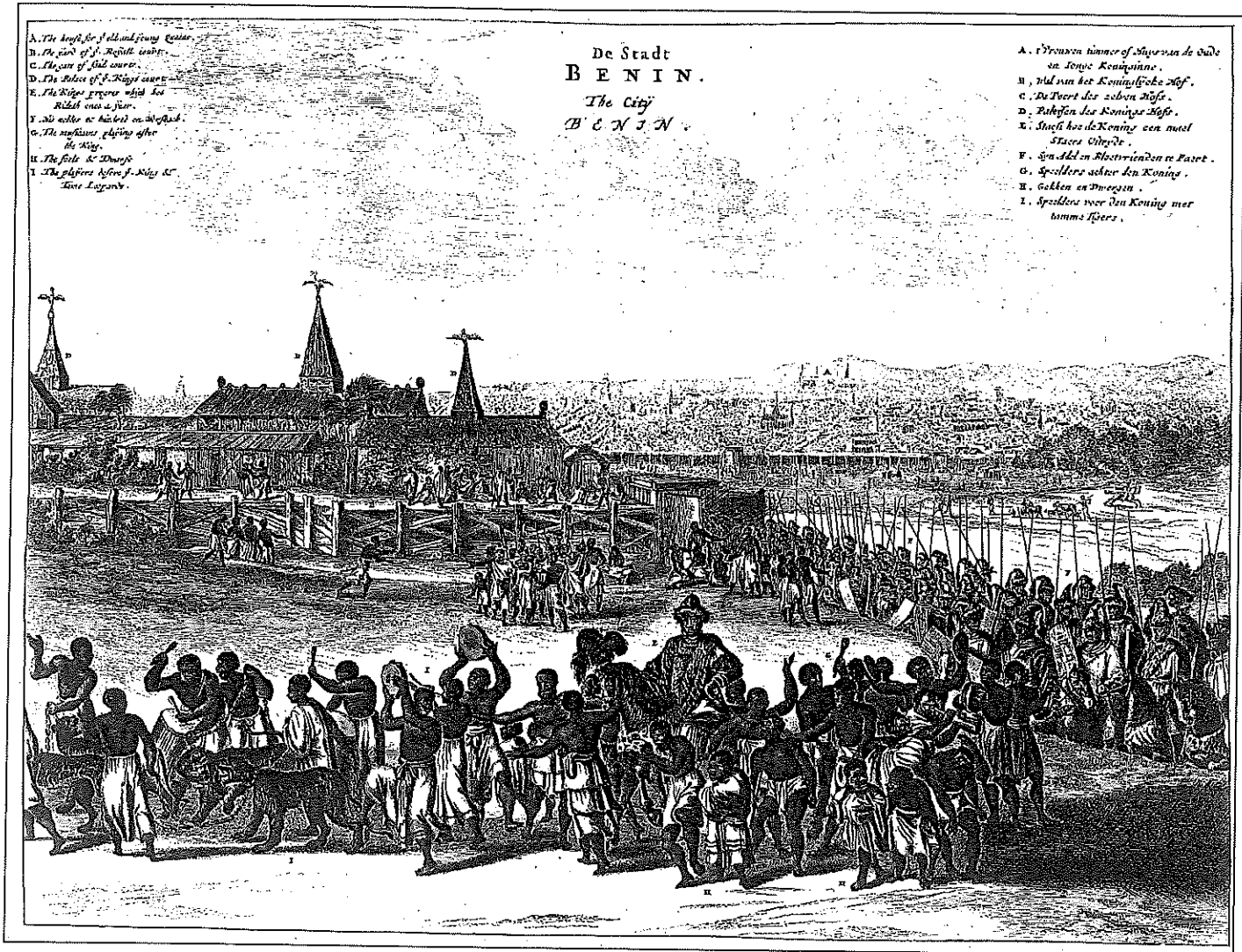


shaped by the cycles of nature, the legacy of ancestors, and an all-knowing Creator. In the towns and grasslands south of the Sahara, there was growing adherence to Islam.

The labor of slaves often supplemented that of family members. Slavery was an ancient system, with roots in ancient Greece and Rome, in Africa and Byzantium, under Islam and under Christianity. It had largely died out in Western Europe but was common in West Africa, where slaves were attached to kinship or family groups and worked in the fields or at household tasks. Some slaves had been captured in warfare, some were debtors, others were criminals. Many slaves had some rights, and slave status rarely passed from parent to child. Some slaves could work for their freedom; some married into the families that held them; some even owned property. But slavery had

MAP 1.2 Europe and Africa, c. 1492

Trade centers in West Africa had long-standing links with the Mediterranean coast, the Middle East, and the lands along the Indian Ocean. Portuguese explorers established direct European links with West Africa, building trading forts like that at Elmina that would subsequently become important centers of the transatlantic slave trade.



Benin

An engraving from a seventeenth-century Dutch survey of Africa features the royal court of Benin in the foreground, while the expansive city stretches into the distance. Olfert Dapper, *Naukeurige Beschrijvinge der Afrikaensche Gewesten van Egyptien, Barbaryen, Libyen . . .* (1676)—Rare Books and Manuscript Division, New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

harsher aspects too. Some societies put slaves to sacrificial death, and there was a growing slave trade with trans-Saharan and Indian Ocean markets, where women and children, especially, were in demand for their labor or for sexual purposes.

Most West African societies were stateless, but warfare and slavery had led villages and kin groups to increase reliance on kingdoms, whose rulers offered protection and fostered commerce in return for tribute and taxes. The Mali empire, centered in the Niger River valley, was one of the world's largest empires in the early fifteenth century but then was eclipsed first by the Songhai empire and later by smaller but powerful kingdoms—Benin, Dahomey, and Kongo—that rose to prominence after 1600.

Such states encouraged West Africa's important trading networks. Merchants exercised significant economic and political power. Commercial towns exported gold, ivory, cotton goods, leather, spices, and slaves to

“Our Land Is Uncommonly Rich and Fruitful . . .”: Olaudah Equiano Describes Benin

According to his autobiography, The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, Olaudah Equiano was kidnapped at age eleven from his home in the Benin Empire on the Guinea coast in southern Nigeria, sold into slavery, and brought to the New World. During his decade as a slave, Equiano served an English naval officer and worked in the shipping business of a Montserrat merchant, finally purchasing his freedom with money earned by trading on his own. Published in London in 1789, his autobiography includes this description of the West African world of his childhood. Although some scholars question whether Equiano was in fact born in Africa, most still consider his account a rare source of information about Africa in this period, one that is probably based on a mixture of his own and others' experiences.

The Kingdom of Benin . . . is divided into many provinces or districts, in one of the most remote and fertile of which I was born, in the year 1745, situated in a charming, fruitful vale named Essaka. The distance of this province from the capital of Benin and the seacoast must be very considerable; for I had never heard of white men or Europeans, nor of the sea; and our subjection to the king of Benin was little more than nominal. . . .

We are almost a nation of dancers, musicians, and poets. Thus every great event, such as a triumphant return from battle, or other cause of public rejoicing, is celebrated in public dances, which are accompanied with songs and music suited to the occasion. The assembly is separated into four divisions [or age grades]. . . . Each represents some interesting scene of real life, such as a great achievement, domestic employment, a pathetic story, or some rural sport. . . . This gives our dances a spirit and a variety which I have scarcely seen elsewhere. We have many musical instruments, particularly drums of different kinds, a piece of music which resembles a guitar, and another much like a stickado [xylophone].

Our manner of living is entirely plain; for as yet the natives are unacquainted with those refinements in cookery which debauch the taste: bullocks, goats, and poultry supply the greatest part of their food. These constitute likewise the principal wealth of the country, and the chief articles of its commerce. The flesh is usually stewed in a pan. To make it savory we sometimes use also pepper and other spices; and we have salt made of wood ashes. Our vegetables are mostly plantains [bananas], yams, beans, and Indian corn. The head of the family usually eats alone; his wives and slaves have also their separate tables. . . .

Our land is uncommonly rich and fruitful, and produces all kinds of vegetables in great abundance. We have plenty of Indian corn, and vast quantities of cotton and tobacco. . . . All our industry is exerted to improve those blessings of nature. Agriculture is our chief employment; and every one, even the children and women, are engaged in it. Thus we are all habituated to labor from our earliest years. Every one contributes something to the common stock; and, as we are unacquainted with idleness, we have no beggars. The benefits of such a mode of living are obvious.

Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano* (1789).

markets in North Africa, the Middle East, and Europe. A European visitor to Benin city found a rich array of goods in its markets:

Pepper and elephant teeth, oil of palm, cloth made of cotton wool very curiously woven, and cloth made of the bark of palm trees . . . iron works of sundry sorts, Manillos or bracelets of copper, glass beads and coral. . . They have good store of soap . . . also many pretty fine mats and baskets that they make, and spoons of elephant's teeth very curiously wrought with divers proportions of fowls and beasts made upon them.

Looking for the goods that West Africa's trading networks had to offer, Portuguese sea captains ventured down its coast. In 1470, they reached the Gold Coast (now mostly in Ghana), later establishing a trading post at Elmina and fortifying it against European rivals. Before 1492, trade with the Gold Coast provided two-thirds of Europe's gold supply. By 1600, Portugal

West Africa

This 1606 Venetian map emphasizes the coastal trading centers of Western Africa, incorrectly portraying the interior as largely uninhabited. Giovanni Battista Ramusio, *Della navigationi et viaggi raccolte* . . . (1606)—Rare Books and Manuscript Division, New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.



was shipping out 170,000 gold coins each year, obtained in payment for wheat, cloth, and metal goods.

West African societies' strength and commercial sophistication enabled them to trade with Europeans while confining these outsiders largely to river and coastal centers. The disease-riddled environment also proved harsh for Europeans, who succumbed at alarming rates to malaria and other fatal tropical afflictions. Consequently, Europeans made little effort to establish extensive colonial settlements in West Africa. But they did use African commerce and slavery as instruments in their encounters with the newly found Americas.

The Invasion of the Americas Begins: Portugal, Spain, and the Need for Labor

The immediate cause of Europeans' interest in the Americas lay in developments in Spain and Portugal. Since early in the fifteenth century, Portuguese fishing and trading vessels had probed the Atlantic. In time, they established the island colonies of Madeira, the Cape Verde Islands, and the island of São Tomé off the African coast. Navigational experience and trade with West Africa after 1470 led to a concerted effort to reach the East Indies. In 1487, a voyage led by Bartholomeu Dias rounded southern Africa; ten years later, Vasco da Gama and his crew sailed all the way to India.

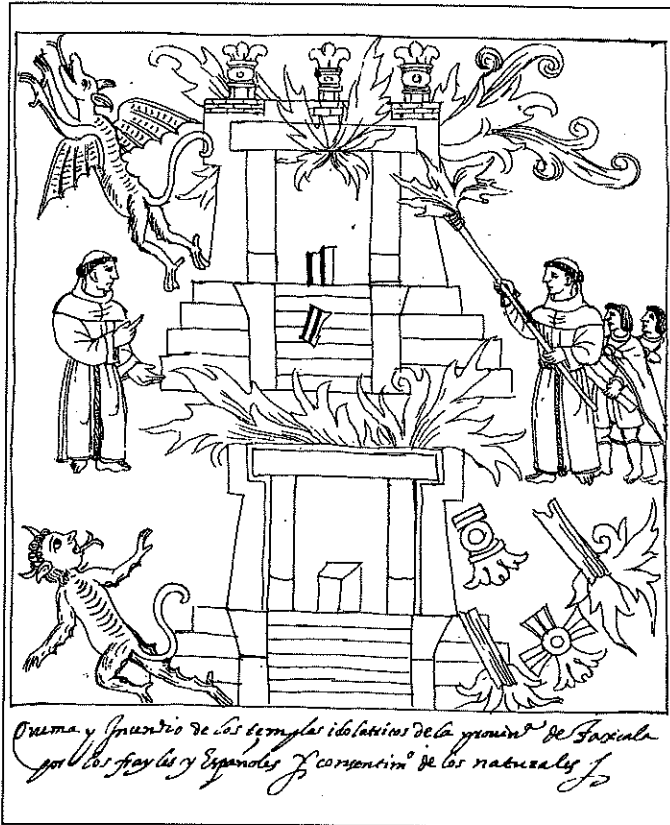
The Spanish empire grew out of conquest at home. On and off since the twelfth century, Spain's Catholic rulers and nobles had attempted to drive out or convert Islamic settlers in the south of Spain. This *reconquista*, renewed around 1450, culminated in the Spanish monarchy's defeat of the kingdom of Granada in 1492 and the expulsion or forced conversion of its Muslim and Jewish population. From the 1470s to 1496, Spanish troops also fought to create a colony in the Canary Islands, exploiting indigenous labor and annihilating the inhabitants in the process.

Both Spain and Portugal commenced practices that they would carry to the New World. As early as 1444, Portuguese traders were purchasing slaves in West Africa for transport to Portugal as lifelong domestic servants. After they established settlements on Madeira and other islands off the African coast, the Portuguese took slaves there, too, and as settlers developed plantations for growing sugarcane, they purchased African slaves to work them, building a prototype for forced labor in the growing Atlantic economy.

Columbus Discovers . . . ?

A plate from a 1493 edition of Columbus's letters depicts an explorer landing somewhere—but not in America. The galley ship in the foreground, which could never have endured an ocean voyage, bears no resemblance to Columbus's vessels. The illustration probably derived from an older publication about Mediterranean exploration. Christopher Columbus, *Letter to Sanchez* (1493)—Rare Books and Manuscript Division, New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.





Implanting a New Faith

A sixteenth-century Spanish drawing approvingly documents the destruction of Aztec temples in Tlaxcala, Mexico.
Glasgow University Library.

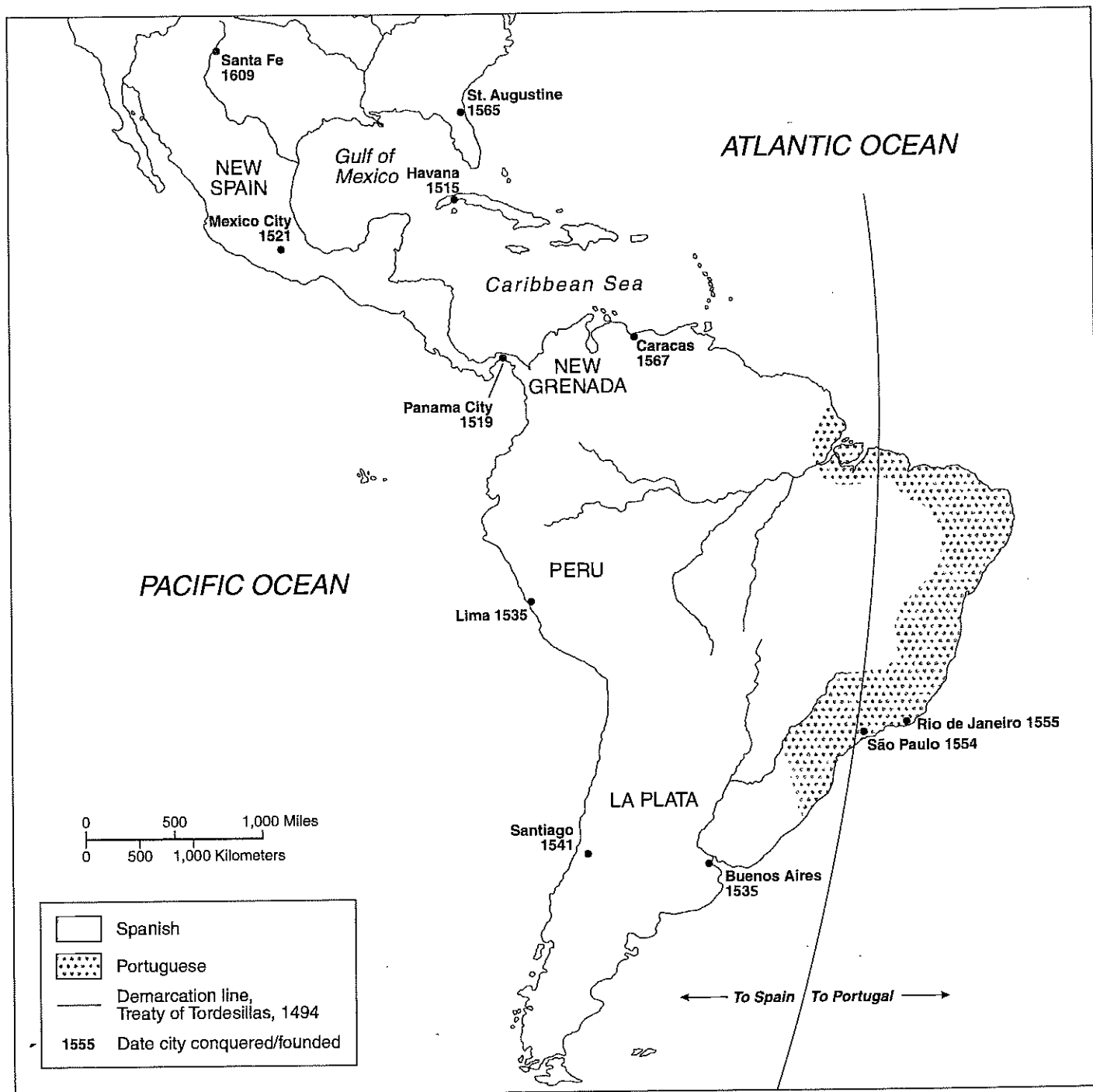
Overseas Expansion and Conquest King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella authorized Columbus's voyage just after the fall of Granada. Their aim was to extend westward the militancy that Spain had successfully employed at home. Landing on Guanahani, Columbus at once claimed the island as a Spanish possession and gave it a Spanish name (San Salvador), an act he and other Spaniards would repeat whenever they came across new territory.

Columbus's voyage spurred exploration and its associated mission of Christian conversion. In 1493, Pope Alexander VI granted Spain the right to spread the gospels in the Americas. The next year, Spain and Portugal signed the treaty of Tordesillas, in which they divided the entire world between them, an act of arrogance that was soon marred for Spain when Brazil was discovered in the Portuguese zone. Portugal laid claim to Brazil in 1500 and over the next half-century prepared to extend its Atlantic island plantation labor system to South America (Map 1.3).

Spain, meanwhile, extended its exploration of the Caribbean. In 1502, Spanish families were settled on Hispaniola, and soon they were colonizing Cuba, Puerto Rico, Jamaica, and other islands. After 1508, there were ventures onto the Central American mainland, and in 1513, Vasco Núñez de Balboa crossed the Isthmus of Panama, became the first European to see the Pacific Ocean, and confirmed that the Americas were a separate continent. The Aztec emperor learned promptly of this Spanish activity but punished priest-diviners who foretold an invasion of Mexico. Within a few years, however, Hernán Cortés and his troops marched on Tenochtitlán and captured it.

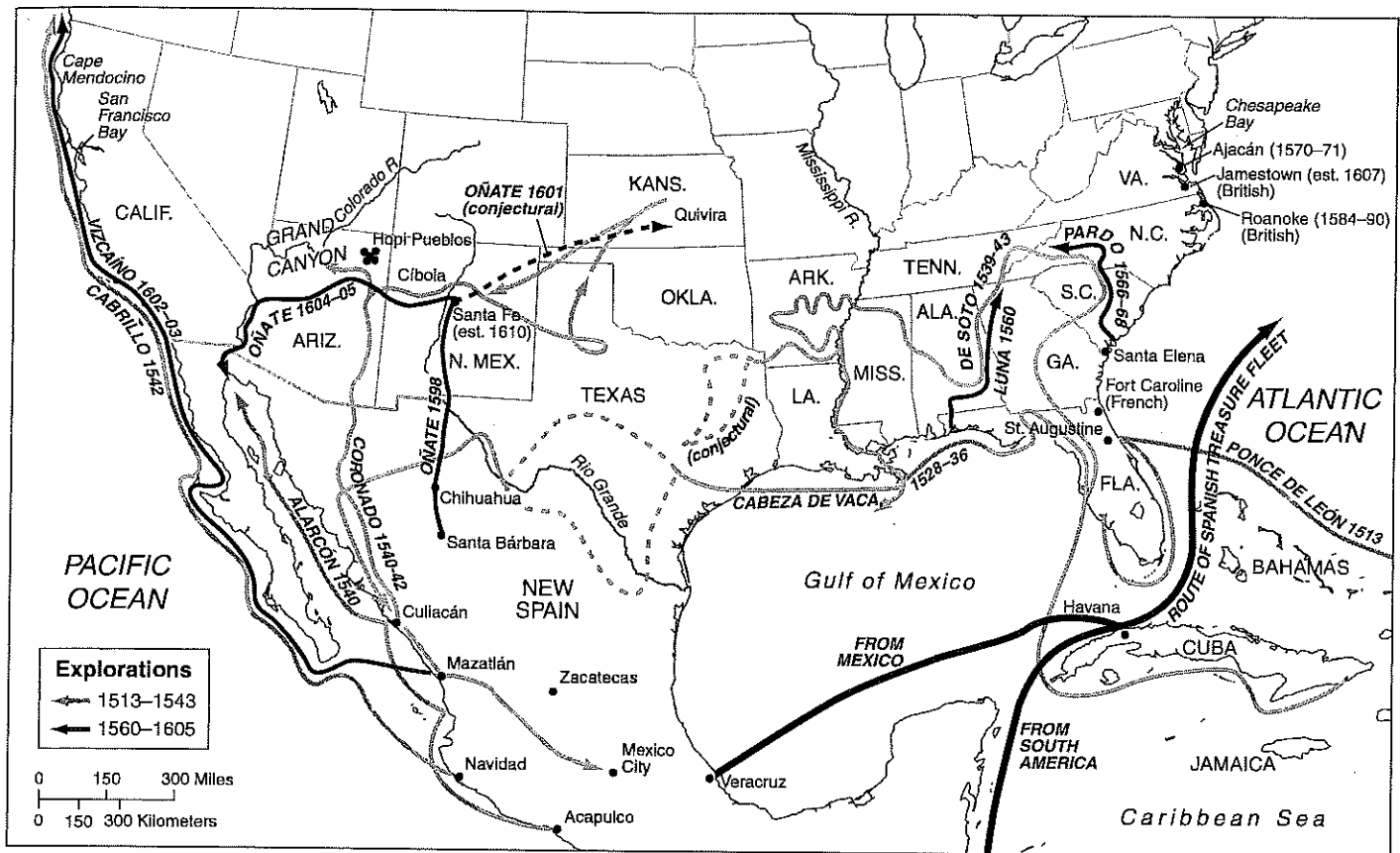
Spanish slaughtering and looting provoked a revolt, and the Aztecs drove Cortés and his men back. But they recaptured Tenochtitlán in 1521, assisted by fire and disease, which killed or dispersed much of the population. The capital's fall started the collapse of the Aztec empire itself, a process that was hastened by revolts among tribes the Aztecs had subdued. The conquerors soon established Spanish rule, put ordinary men and women to forced labor, hunted down nobles and priests, and set about destroying the knowledge and learning that had sustained what the Spaniards considered a "heathen" civilization.

Moving beyond the valley of Mexico, the invaders conquered the Maya of the Yucatan and pressed into South America. From 1524 onward, Francisco Pizarro led explorations of the Pacific coast, and in 1532–1533, his



MAP 1.3 Spanish and Portuguese Possessions in the Americas, to c. 1610

This map conveys the rapidity and scale of Spanish colonization in South and Central America and the Caribbean, and smaller incursions into North America. Spain and Portugal's 1494 treaty attempting to divide the globe between them gave the latter Brazil, which the Portuguese turned into an important plantation slave society in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.



MAP 1.4 Spanish Exploration in North America, 1513-1610

The gold-seeking expeditions of Hernando de Soto, Francisco Vázquez de Coronado, and others before the mid-sixteenth century laid the foundation of settlements in Florida and New Mexico.

forces invaded the Incas' heartland in the Peruvian Andes (Map 1.4). The capture of the Incan capital, Cuzco, provoked a political collapse, and despite rebellions against the invaders, the Incan empire folded as rapidly as that of the Aztecs.

If conquistadors fought for "King" and "God," they also envied Portuguese access to African gold and wanted their own. Rumors abounded of fabulous wealth in the Americas. "Those lands do not produce bread or wine," claimed a Spanish writer, "but they do produce large quantities of gold, in which lordship consists." The Spanish first looted the treasures from Aztec and Inca temples and palaces but soon exhausted these riches and began searching for new sources. In 1545, they discovered huge silver ore deposits at Potosí in the Bolivian Andes; they found smaller ore fields in northern Mexico and elsewhere. The Spanish forced many thousands of indigenous people to work in these mines to send a flow of precious metals into Spanish coffers. Between 1500 and 1650, more than 180 tons of gold and 16,000 tons of silver extracted by Spain from the Americas significantly augmented the supply of capital available in Europe.

The search for gold also took the Spanish northward from Mexico. Two military expeditions around 1540 failed to find any riches, but soldiers brutally attacked the Indians who resisted them. Francisco Vázquez de

Coronado explored from New Mexico as far as Kansas and the Arkansas River. Hernando de Soto pushed into Florida, the Southeast, and the lower Mississippi valley, fighting one pitched battle in which thousands of native and Spanish combatants died. These incursions and the diseases they introduced weakened the Indian groups the Spaniards encountered. In what is now central Arkansas, Coronado found thriving towns that had disappeared by the time French explorers reached the region in the 1670s.

Spain then ignored the North until others took an interest in it. In 1562, some French Protestants settled on the Florida coast, but they had withdrawn again by the time the Spanish, fearing attacks on their treasure fleets, sent a force to remove them. In 1565, Spain founded the town of St. Augustine, now the oldest continually occupied European settlement in the United States. Subsequently, they explored as far as Chesapeake Bay, and in northern Florida, Spanish soldiers and priests established nearly forty mission stations. By 1600, the Spaniards were making similar efforts farther westward, pushing into what they named New Mexico, building forts and missions to subdue and convert the indigenous pueblos and, in 1608, founding the town of Santa Fe.

The Need for Labor New territory could enhance a nation's power and prestige. Conquered peoples could be converted to Christianity. New land could provide wealth from mining, farming, or trade for governments, investors, and settlers. The Spanish crown, keen to use colonization as a means of rewarding, and thus controlling, Spain's lesser nobility, placed the conduct of overseas conquest under central control, creating the Council of the Indies in 1524 to administer the whole Spanish empire from the port city of Seville. But success depended on obtaining and directing the labor of millions of people.

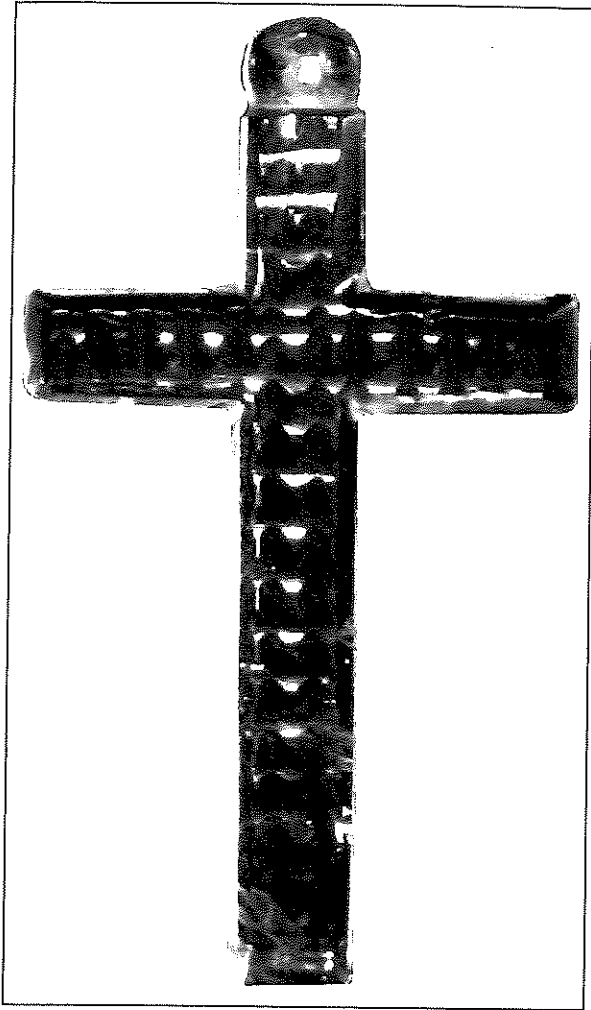
Conquistadors and noble settlers did not intend to do any work themselves, nor could they attract sufficient emigrants from Spain or Portugal to work for them in the Americas. From Columbus onward, they hoped that labor would be provided by native peoples who could be forced to work for their new masters. Whether the Europeans were priests seeking souls to convert, planters seeking crops to export, or officials seeking taxes to collect, forced labor helped to give them what they wanted.

Adapting practices both from southern Spain and the Canary Islands and from Aztec society, the Spanish crown granted conquistadors in Mexico and Peru rights to share in the forced labor of native settlements. Cortés



"Yes, We Eat It"

This drawing from Guamán Poma's *Nueva corónica* depicts a meeting between an Incan king and one of the Spaniards left behind by Pizarro after his first voyage to Peru. Curious about the Spanish obsession with gold, the Incan used sign language to ask his visitor whether the Spaniards ate the metal. "Yes," the Spaniard answered, misunderstanding, "we eat it." According to Guamán Poma, to satisfy this strange diet, the Incans began to offer gold to the Spaniards. Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala, *El primer nueva corónica y buen gobierno* (1936)—American Social History Project.



Bearing the Cross

After Franciscan friars arrived in Florida in 1573, they established a string of missions that extended 250 miles westward beyond coastal St. Augustine. Among them was the mission town of San Luis de Talimali in the heartland of the Apalachee people. This community of 1,400 residents was the largest of the mission towns, situated within the bounds of present-day Tallahassee. Archaeologists recently found a carved quartz crystal cross at the mission church, which is believed to have been produced by Native Americans for their burial rites. Mission San Luis, Florida Division of Historical Resources.

alone had 23,000 workers under this *encomienda* system by the mid-1520s, and in parts of Spanish America, it was used until the late seventeenth century to provide labor for missions, mines, and large farms. In Florida and New Mexico, missionaries resettled natives into peasant communities, forcing them to work erecting buildings and growing crops. The missions in Florida, with just seventy priests among them, claimed to have over 25,000 Christianized natives working for them by the mid-seventeenth century. Colonial governors exploited native labor to obtain private income. Church and government disputed over the right to put native inhabitants to work. In the Southwest, pueblo peoples came into the missions in part to evade harassment by marauding Spanish soldiers.

But native labor frequently did not fulfill colonists' hopes, even though distance from colonial authority often enabled them to treat indigenous populations mercilessly with little fear of restraint. Disease and the harsh demands of forced labor killed large numbers of natives in Spanish America throughout the sixteenth century. The Timucuas of Florida were about 350,000 strong in 1500, but a century later, only 7,000 remained; four out of every five New Mexican pueblos or villages were abandoned as populations declined. The *encomienda* provoked Indian resistance, and from the 1570s on, the Spanish partly replaced it

with a less harsh system, known as the *repartimiento*, that obliged natives to provide involuntary but compensated labor on public works.

Some Spaniards criticized forced labor. In 1511, the Dominican priest Antonio Montesinos challenged the exploitation of natives, asking conquistadors "with what right and with what justice do you keep these poor Indians in such cruel and horrible servitude?" He influenced another priest, Bartolomé de Las Casas, who for half a century denounced the slaughter and ill treatment of New World peoples and the common Spanish assumption that natives were "slaves by nature."

Yet Las Casas knew that the work in the colonies had to be done and that Europeans could not be found to do it. For him and for many other Spanish and Portuguese, the solution was to import slaves from Africa instead. As they opened up Brazil in the sixteenth century, the Portuguese adapted the sugar plantation system they had established in Madeira and the Cape Verde Islands. Finding the indigenous people of Brazil difficult to control, the Portuguese drove them deep into the tropical forests and brought laborers from Africa and the islands to work for them. The Spanish had also begun substituting Africans for Native American labor. So

began a transatlantic trade in slaves that would last for almost four centuries.

Africa and the American Slave Trade For Europeans, slaves purchased in West Africa were an ideal solution to their New World labor problems. In 1510, the Spanish crown legalized the sale of Africans in the Americas, and eight years later, a Spanish ship carried the first full cargo of Africans across the Atlantic. By the 1540s, slaves were distributed around all the Spanish and Portuguese colonies. Cortés himself had 68 African slaves in 1547 in addition to 169 Mexican slaves. A century later, there were 30,000 African slaves working in the valleys around Lima in Peru and more in the mines of Mexico. But slaves would be used most in the plantation economies of Brazil and the Caribbean. By 1600, the Spanish and Portuguese had forcibly removed over 250,000 Africans to the Americas, and the numbers grew rapidly as French, English, and Dutch merchants also entered the slave trade (Map 1.5).

Slave trading would prove extremely lucrative, becoming part of a larger commerce—referred to as the *triangular trade*—that took European goods to Africa, slaves to America, and New World produce back to Europe. But the Europeans who were involved did not share the rich pickings equally. Many rulers, merchants, and shipowners made money, but most

MAP 1.5 Atlantic Trade Patterns, in the Early 1700s

This map shows the principal routes in use by the eighteenth century by which slaves, colonial products, and manufactured goods traveled through the Atlantic trade system. At this stage, the British North American colonies focused primarily on oceanic trade rather than seeking trading opportunities inland.

