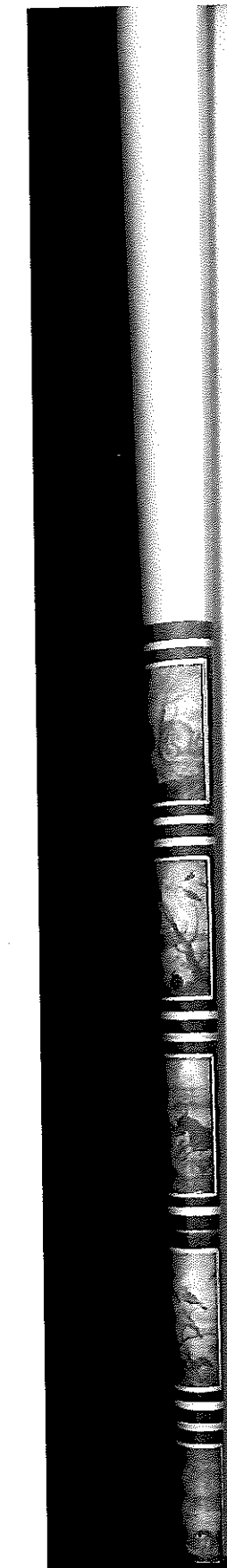


America
The natural bounty of the New World was put on display in this seventeenth-century Flemish painting. On the left of the central panel, America is represented by Indians who lounge alongside the favored object of European desire: a collection of gold weights. Jan van Kessel the Elder, *America*, oil on copper, 19 1/8 × 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 Guanahaní. 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

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.

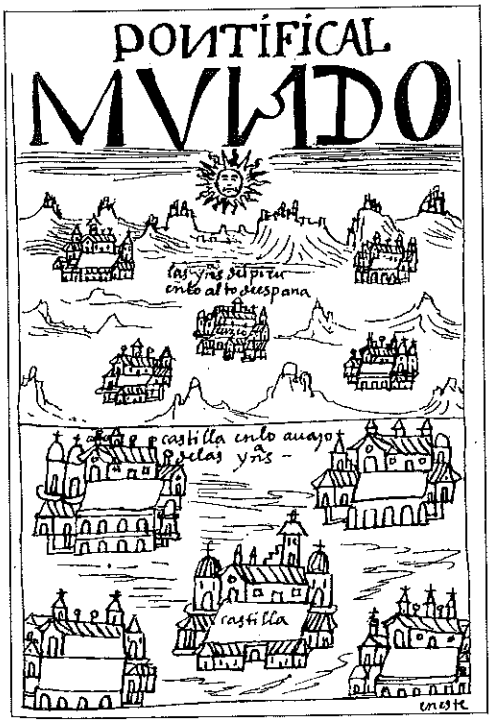
Centralized Empires in Central and South America Some Central and South American societies had developed strong states. That of the Incas, centered in present-day Peru and Bolivia, had expanded in the fifteenth century into an empire stretching far along the Andes Mountains and South America's western 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.

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.

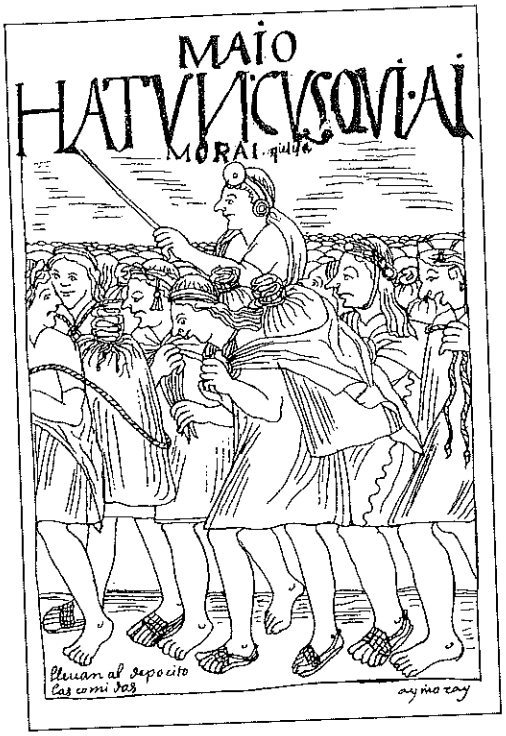


Dispersed Societies to the North America north of Mexico was more sparsely populated. Archaeologists disagree as to how many people inhabited its vast land area. Estimates vary from one million to eighteen million, but most suggest that there were around five million in 1500. These groups, smaller than 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.

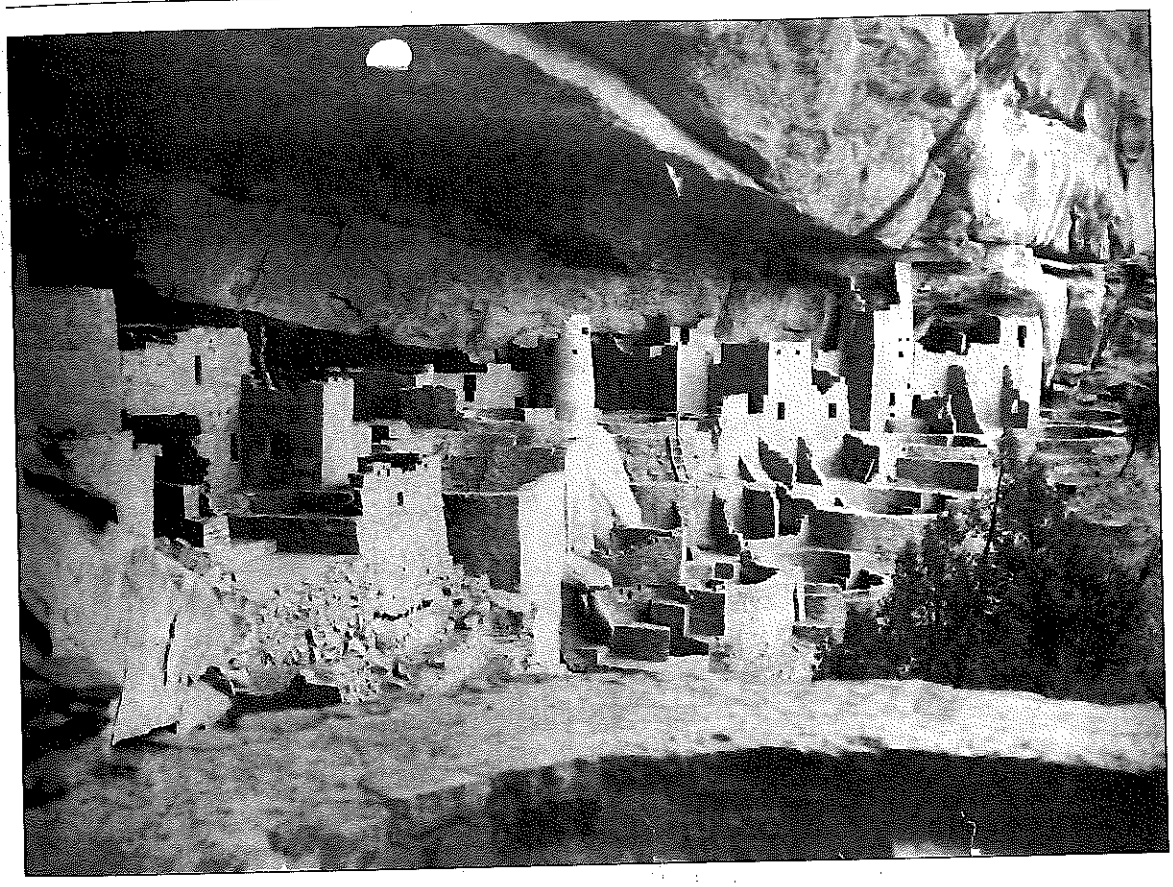
Some groups, such as the Jumanos of the Southwest and the Ottawas of the Great Lakes region, were known as traders. On the plains and prairies of the West, groups hunted buffalo; some, like the Pawnees, exchanged meat for grain with corn-growing societies nearby. Eastward to the Atlantic coast, where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



Gathering the Harvest
A drawing from Guamán Poma's *Nueva corónica* depicts Incans 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.

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,



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 matrilocal—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.

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.

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

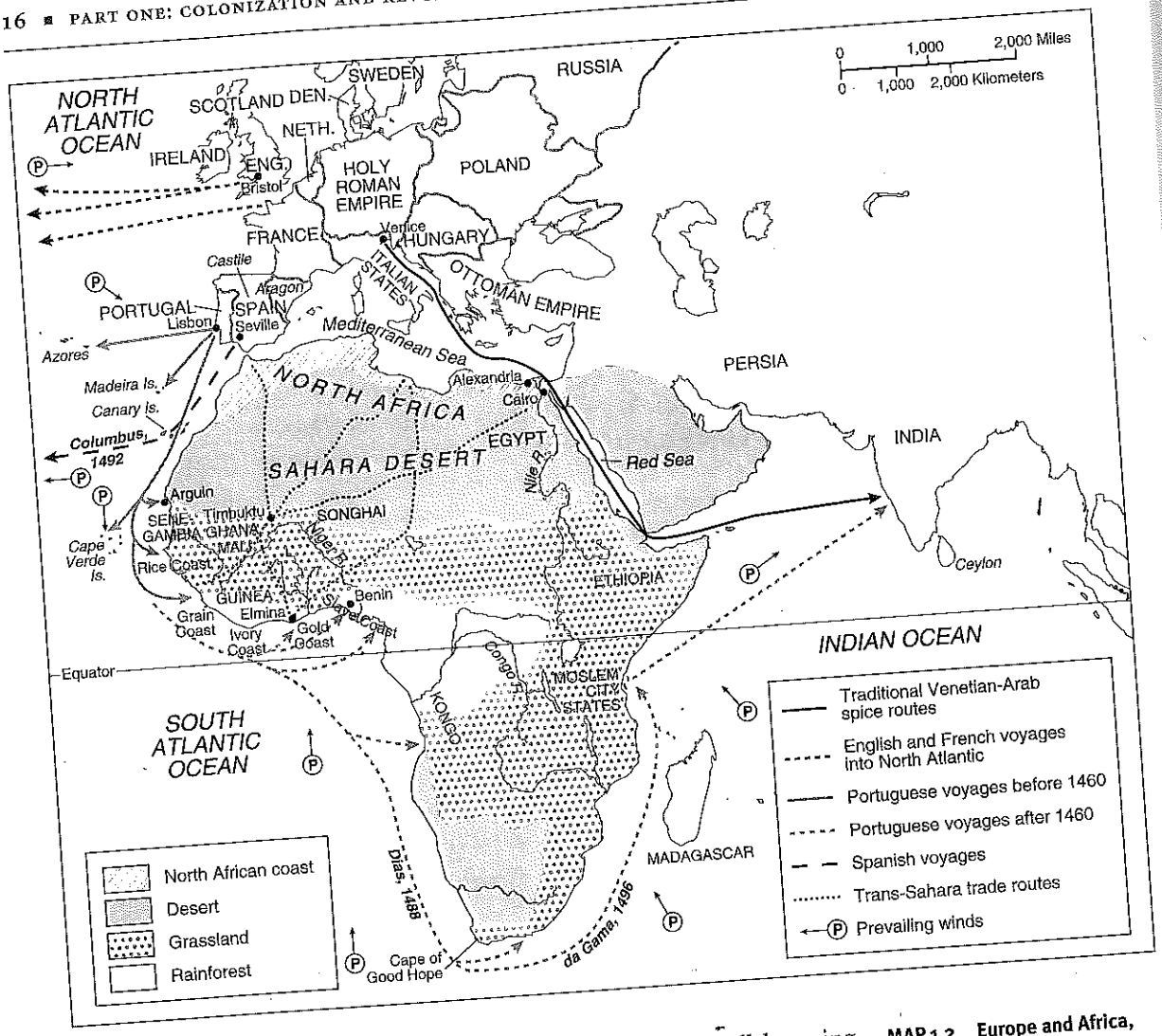
clothed in the imperative to convert "heathen" indigenous peoples to Catholicism. Spain revitalized religious orders such as the Franciscans and Dominicans, making them spearheads of the Faith in the New World. Struggles against Protestantism spurred a redoubling of efforts to save souls overseas as 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.

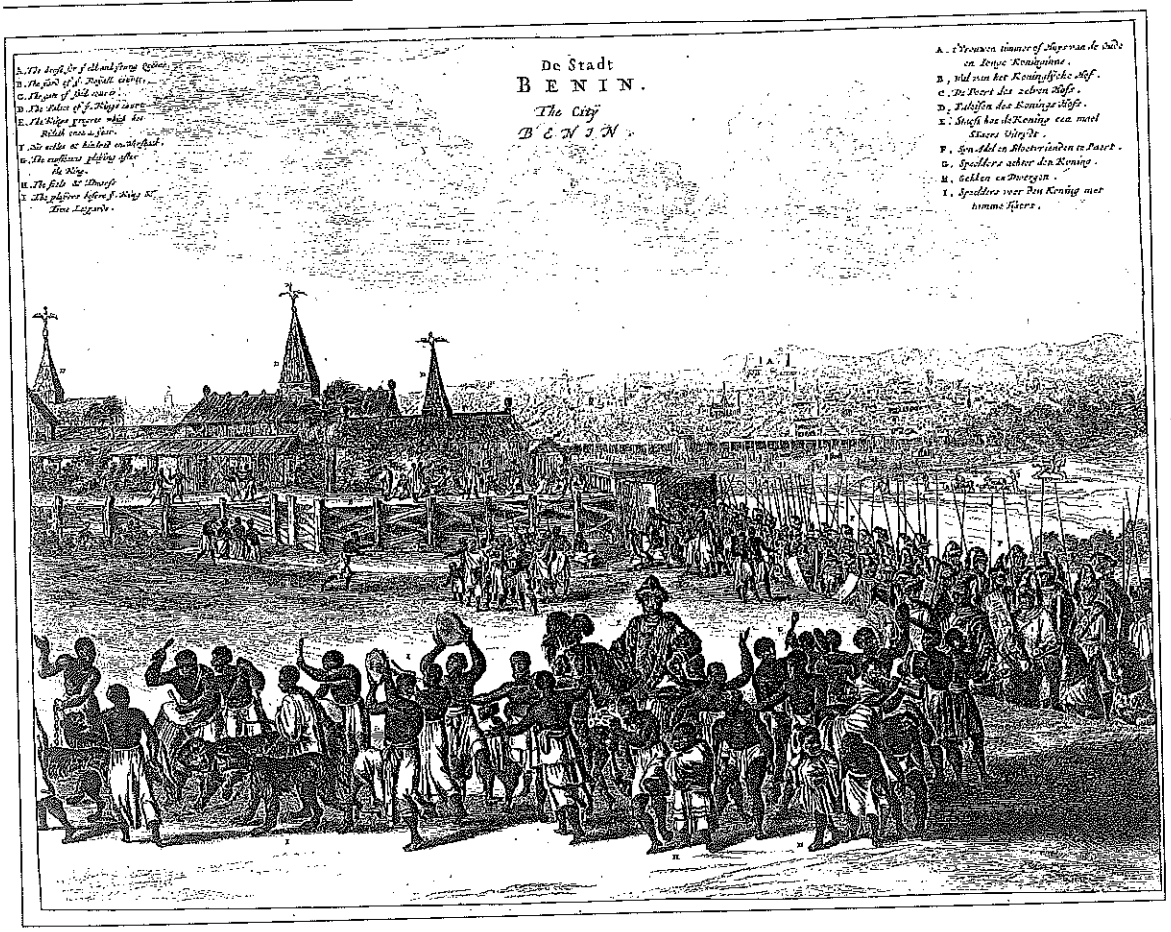
Kin groups owned land communally, and households often cooperated to produce food. Women dominated food production and were active in the marketplaces, where they sold surplus produce. Polygyny, whereby one man had several wives, was common, especially among the wealthy. Family and clan leaders exercised 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



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.

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



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. . . .

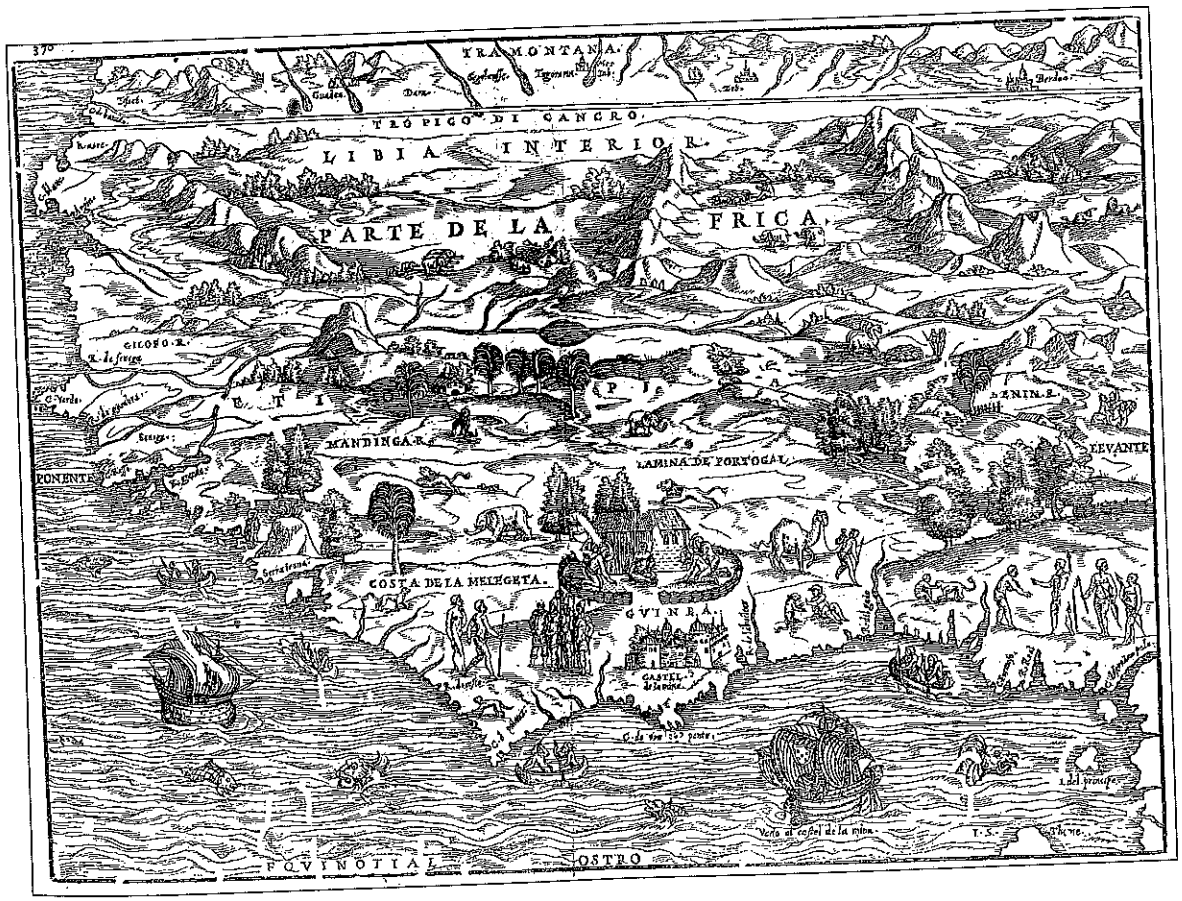
Our land is uncommonly rich and fruitful, and produces all kinds of vegetables in great abundance. We have plenty of Indian corn, and vast quantities of cotton and tobacco. . . . All our industry is exerted to improve those blessings of nature. Agriculture is our chief employment; and every one, even 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.

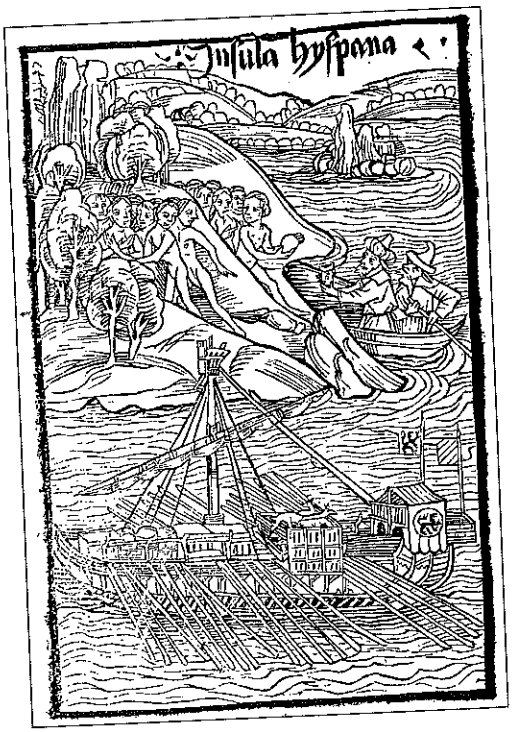
West African societies' strength and commercial sophistication enabled them to trade with Europeans while confining these outsiders largely to river and coastal centers. The disease-riddled environment also proved harsh for Europeans, who succumbed at alarming rates to malaria and other fatal tropical 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.

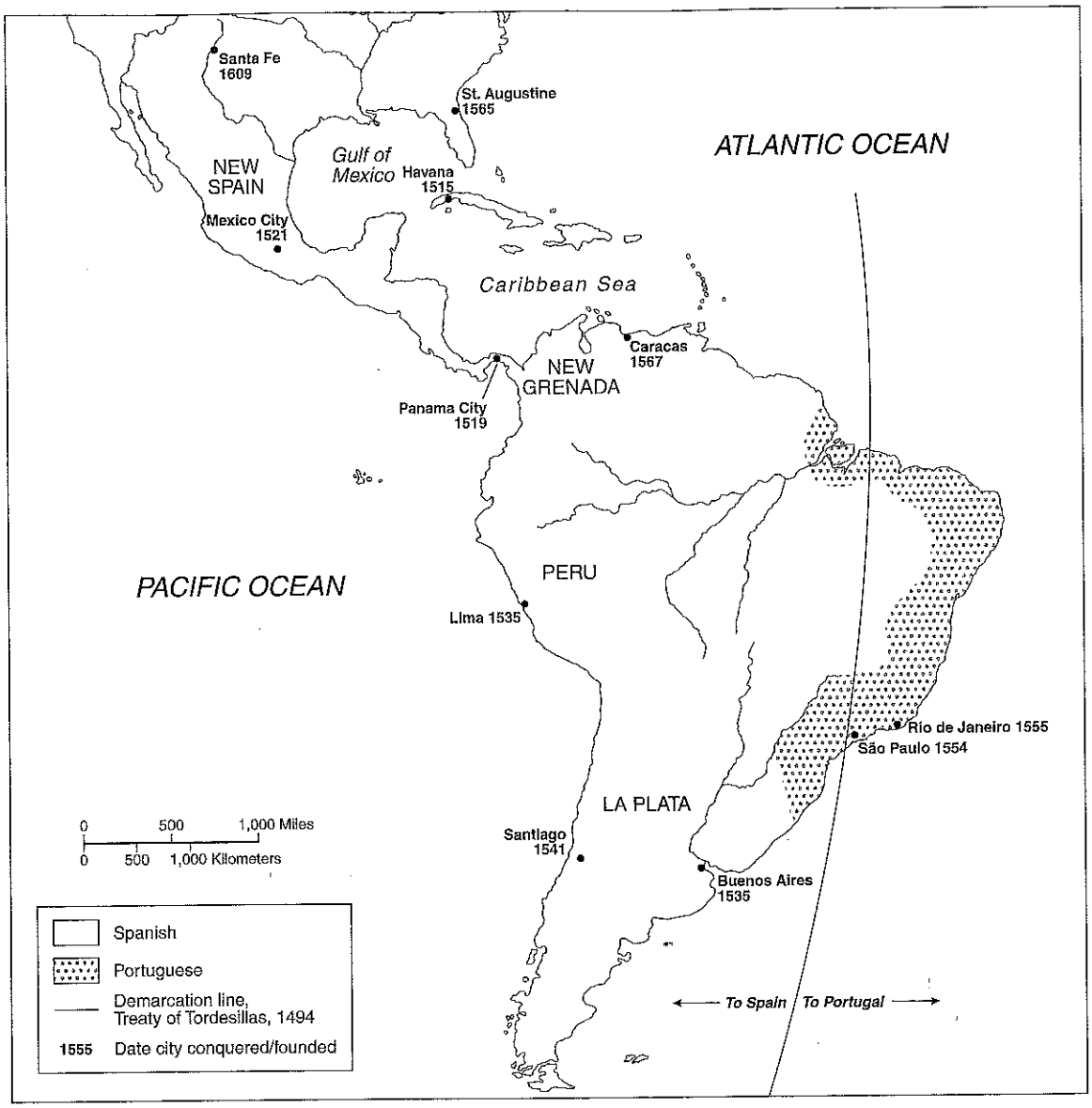
Overseas Expansion and Conquest King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella authorized Columbus's voyage just after the fall of Granada. Their aim was to extend westward the militancy that Spain had successfully employed at home. Landing on Guanahaní, Columbus at once claimed the island as a Spanish possession 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.

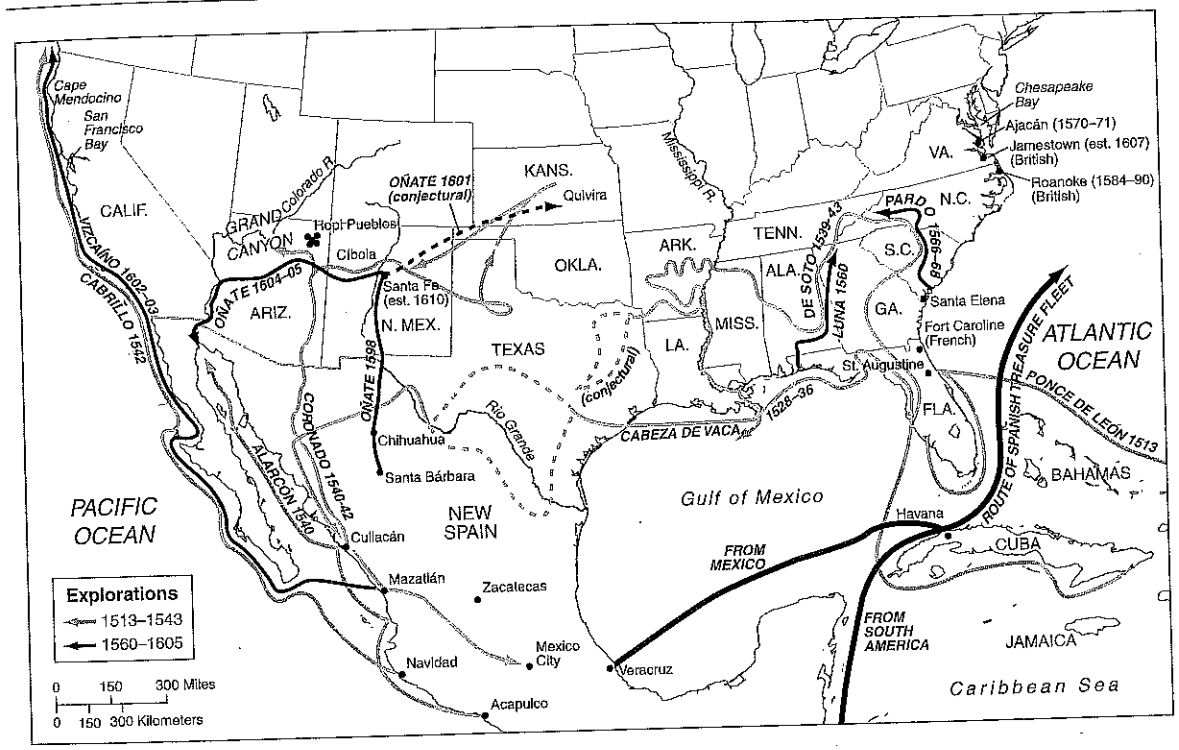
Spanish slaughtering and looting provoked a revolt, and the Aztecs drove Cortés and his men back. But they recaptured Tenochtitlán in 1521, assisted by fire and disease, which killed or dispersed much of the population. The capital's fall started the collapse of the Aztec empire itself, a process that 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.

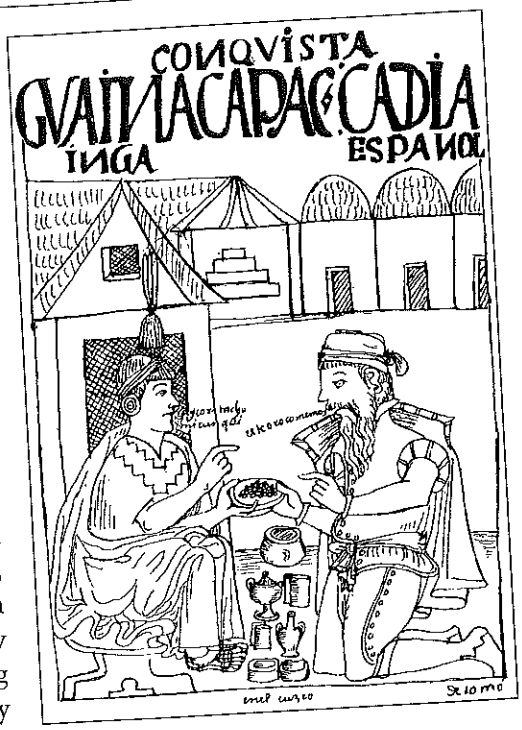
forces invaded the Incas' heartland in the Peruvian Andes (Map 1.4). The capture of the Incan capital, Cuzco, provoked a political collapse, and despite rebellions against the invaders, the Incan empire folded as rapidly as that of the Aztecs.

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 Vásquez 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.

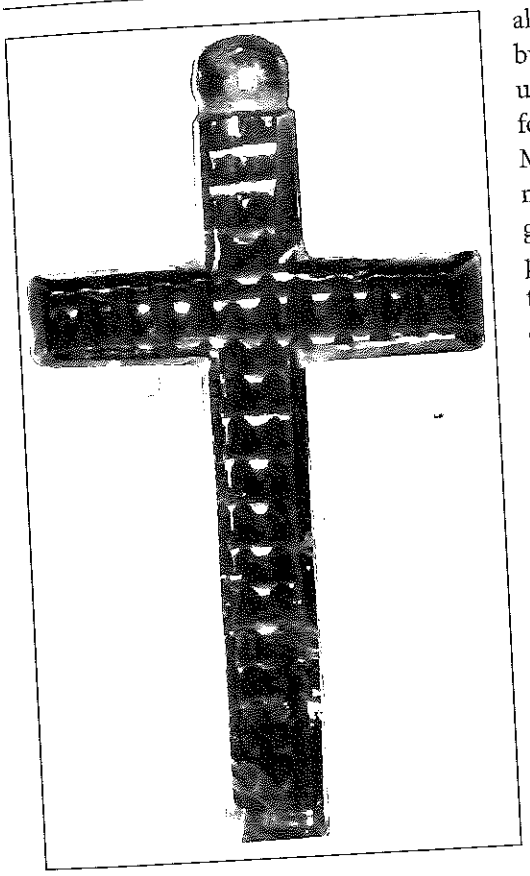


"Yes, We Eat It"
This drawing from Guamán Poma's *Nueva corónica* depicts a meeting between an Incan king and one of the Spaniards left behind by Pizarro after his first voyage to Peru. Curious about the Spanish obsession with gold, the Incan used sign language to ask his visitor whether the Spaniards 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.

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



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 Timucuans 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.

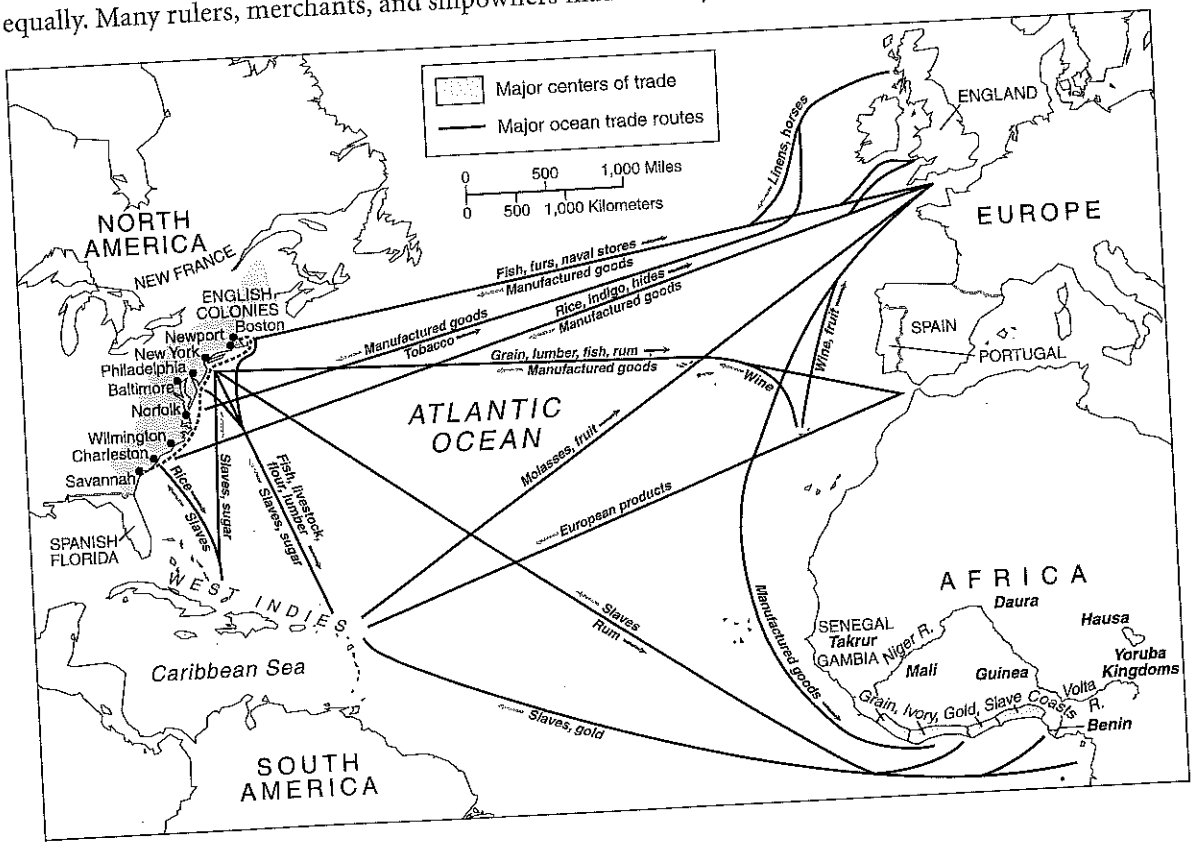
Some Spaniards criticized forced labor. In 1511, the Dominican priest Antonio Montesinos challenged the exploitation of natives, asking conquistadors "with what right and with what justice do you keep these poor Indians in such cruel and horrible servitude?" He influenced another priest, Bartolomé de 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.

The Spanish Treatment of Fugitive Black Slaves

This is an engraving from the Frankfurt edition of Girolamo Benzoni's widely read sixteenth-century history of America, *Historia del mondo nuovo*. The Milanese author denounced Spanish treatment of Indians and, more unusually, of African slaves in the New World. Theodor de Bry, ed., *America pars quinta Nobilis & admiratione plena Hieronymi Benzoni . . .* (1595)—British Library.

minor officials and ships' crews endured poor pay and harsh conditions. Of Dutch West India Company employees in the slave trade, for instance, only one in twenty made a fortune, and another two made more modest profits; the rest made little or nothing.

Some West African rulers, such as the *obas* (kings) of Benin after 1550, used their power to curb the American slave trade. Resistance to the trade fostered revolts, such as the one headed by Muslim inhabitants on the Senegal River around 1670. But many rulers willingly took part. From Senegal to Angola, they organized the capture of people, usually from the interior and from ethnic groups other than their own, for delivery to European traders on the coast. They purchased European guns to help fight wars and augment the number of their captives. The Ashanti and the king of Dahomey increased their power and wealth as a result. Some African merchants also did well: Abee Coffu Jantie Seniees, the leading trader of Cape Coast, and

"... Our Country Is Being Completely Depopulated": King Nzinga Mbemba on the Slave Trade

In a 1526 letter from King Nzinga Mbemba of the Congo (baptized King Afonso I) to King João III of Portugal, the African ruler condemns the impact of the slave trade on his own people, an impact that would only intensify in the next century. The slave trade had a profound effect not only on the people who were enslaved, but also on the African societies from which they came. While many African societies engaged in slavery and slave trading, it was frequently quite different in nature from the sort of slavery that Europeans instituted in the New World.

Sir, your highness should know how our Kingdom is being lost in so many ways. . . . We cannot reckon how great the damage is, since [your Portuguese] merchants are taking every day our natives, sons of the land and the sons of our noblemen and vassals and our relatives. . . . So great, Sir, is the corruption and licentiousness that our country is being completely depopulated, and Your Highness should not agree with this or accept it as in your service. . . . That is why we beg of Your Highness to help and assist us in this matter, commanding your factors [representatives] that they should not send here either merchants or wares, because it is our will that in these Kingdoms there should not be any trade of slaves nor outlet for them. . . .

Moreover, Sir, in our Kingdoms there is another great inconvenience which is of little service to God, and this is that many of our people [are] keenly desirous . . . of the wares and things of your Kingdoms, which are brought here by your people. In order to satisfy their voracious appetite, [they] seize many of our people, freed and exempt men, and very often it happens that they kidnap even noblemen and the sons of noblemen, and our relatives, and take them to be sold to the white men who are in our Kingdoms. . . .

Basil Davidson, *The African Past: Chronicles from Antiquity to Modern Times* (1964).

John Kabes, the main middleman between the Ashanti and the port of Komenda, made fortunes selling slaves in the seventeenth century.

European nations competed fiercely for a share in the slave trade, but strong local rulers prevented any of them from monopolizing it. At Ouidah in the kingdom of Dahomey, the king's powerful viceroy kept the port open to all Europeans equally, setting rules by which they could do business. The Dahomean state relied on the slave trade, both for the exercise of policy and as a source of revenue.

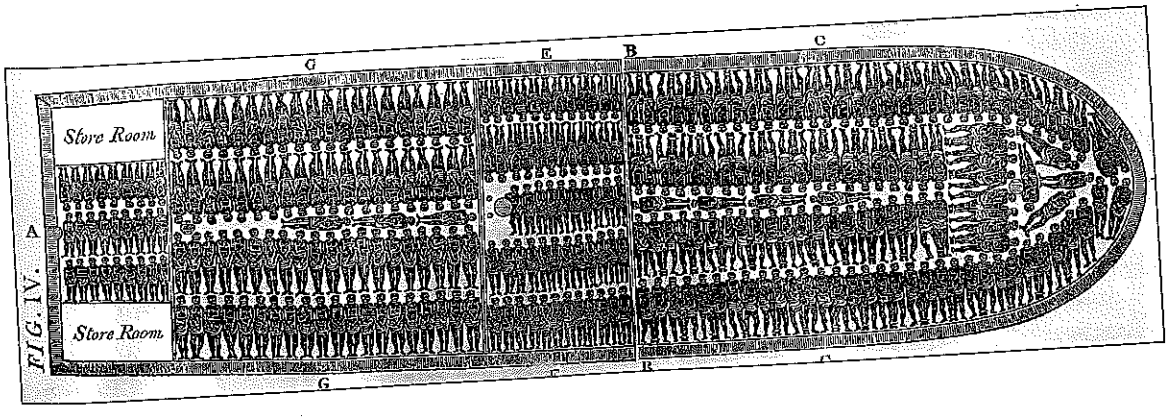
However, in the long run, the slave trade debilitated West Africa. Up to twelve million people were sold to Europeans and shipped to the Americas between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries. European goods

imported to pay for slaves drove local artisans out of business, and people fled coastal regions to avoid slave hunters, ruining Africa's trading economies. Slave traders primarily sought young, healthy men who could be sold in the Americas as field hands, so in time, women came to outnumber men in West Africa, altering family and marriage patterns and causing populations to fall. Meanwhile, local demand for labor from women slaves increased, so the Atlantic slave trade strengthened African, as well as American, slavery.

Captivity and the Middle Passage Local traders seized most slaves inland and marched them, enchained, for as long as a year to the coastal forts. Hunger, sickness, or exhaustion killed many on the way. Survivors reaching the coast were locked up to await shipment in prisons known as barracoons, slaveholds, or trunks. At the English fort of Cape Coast, these were underground caves, able to hold a thousand or more people each. A French trader, Jean Barbot, described the slave pens at Ouidah in the 1680s:

> [T]he slaves . . . are put into a booth or prison, built for that purpose near the beach, all of them together; and when the Europeans are to receive them, they are brought out into a large plain, where the ships' surgeons examine every one of them, to the smallest member, men and women being all stark naked. Such as are allowed [judged] good and sound are set on one side . . . [each] is marked on the breast with a red-hot iron, imprinting the mark of the French, English, or Dutch companies so that each nation may distinguish their own property, and so as to prevent their being changed by the sellers for others that are worse.

Branded by their new owners, captives were chained below decks in ships designed to carry the largest number of people in the smallest



Strange Cargo
A diagram from an 1808 abolitionist report on the African slave trade shows the interior of a "slaver," with human beings packed below deck and no room left to move. Conditions on earlier slave ships were even more foul and cramped. Thomas Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the African Slave-Trade by the British Parliament* (1808)—American Social History Project.

"A Most Horrible Scene": Ottobah Cugoano Describes Being Taken Captive by Slave Traders

When Ottobah Cugoano was about thirteen years old, he, along with a group of his friends, was captured by slave traders and transported to the coast of Africa. This excerpt from his "Narrative of the Enslavement of Ottobah Cugoano, a Native of Africa," published in 1787, recounts the brutal days of his transport and experiences on a slave vessel off the coast of West Africa. He was subsequently transferred to another ship for the Middle Passage journey to the Caribbean island of Grenada. Set free by his owner in 1772, Cugoano became an abolitionist and a leader of London's African community.

Next day we travelled on, and in the evening came to a town, where I saw several white people, which made me afraid that they would eat me, according to our notion, as children, in the inland parts of the country. This made me rest very uneasy all the night, and next morning I had some victuals brought, desiring me to eat and make haste, as my guide and kidnapper told me that he had to go to the castle with some company that were going there, as he had told me before, to get some goods. After I was ordered out, the horrors I soon saw and felt, cannot be well described; I saw many of my miserable countrymen chained two and two, some handcuffed, and some with their hands tied behind. We were conducted along by a guard, and when we arrived at the castle, I asked my guide what I was brought there for, he told me to learn the ways of the browfow, that is, the white-faced people. I saw him take a gun, a piece of cloth, and some lead for me, and then he told me that he must now leave me there, and went off. This made me cry bitterly, but I was soon conducted to a prison, for three days, where I heard the groans and cries of many, and saw some of my fellow-captives. But when a vessel arrived to conduct us away to the ship, it was a most horrible scene; there was nothing to be heard but the rattling of chains, smacking of whips, and the groans and cries of our fellow-men. Some would not stir from the ground, when they were lashed and beat in the most horrible manner. I have forgot the name of this infernal fort; but we were taken in the ship that came for us, to another that was ready to sail from Cape Coast. When we were put into the ship, we saw several black merchants coming on board, but we were all drove into our holes, and not suffered to speak to any of them. In this situation we continued several days in sight of our native land; but I could find no good person to give any information of my situation to Accasa at Agimaque [Cugoano's home city]. And when we found ourselves at last taken away, death was more preferable than life; and a plan was concerted amongst us, that we might burn and blow up the ship, and to perish all together in the flames: but we were betrayed by one of our own countrywomen, who slept with some of the headmen of the ship, for it was common for the dirty filthy sailors to take the African women and lie upon their bodies; but the men were chained and pent up in holes. It was the women and boys which were to burn the ship, with the approbation and groans of

the rest; though that was prevented, the discovery was likewise a cruel bloody scene.

"Narrative of the Enslavement of Ottobah Cugoano, a Native of Africa; published by himself, in the Year 1787," in *The Negro's Memorial, or, Abolitionist's Catechism*, 1825, 123–124.

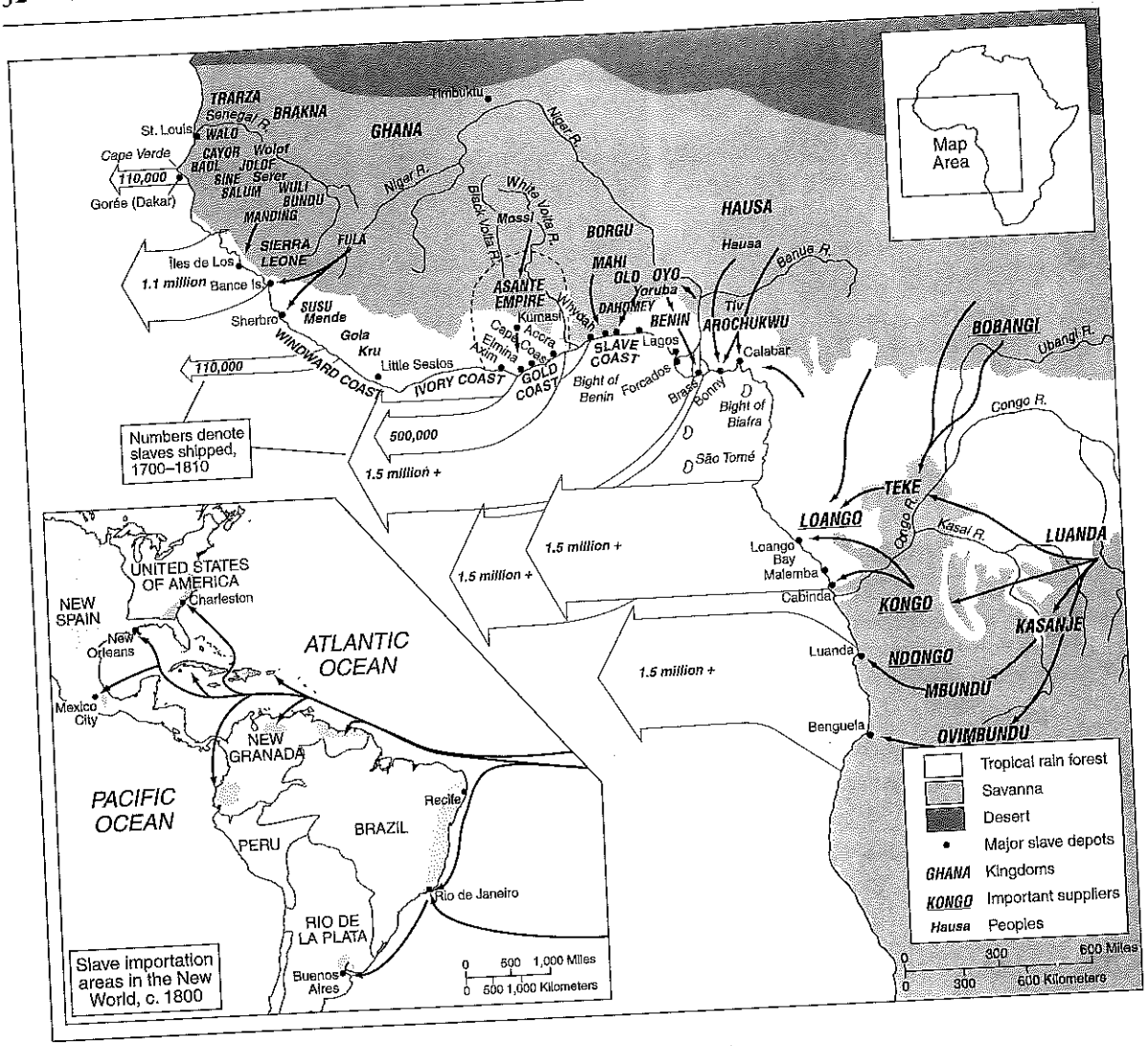
possible space for the transatlantic voyages that became known as the Middle Passage. A German ship's surgeon noted that "some of these poor people obeyed . . . without . . . any resistance," but "others . . . filled the air with heartrending cries which . . . cut me to the quick." Barbot recalled one man, a *marabou*, or Muslim teacher, who spoke not one word on the two-month Atlantic crossing, "so deep was his sorrow." (Barbot sold him in the Caribbean.)

Shipboard conditions were ghastly. Men, women, and children were crammed together in their own excrement; it was said that a slave ship could be smelled downwind long before it came into sight. Traders accepted that perhaps one in six slaves would die from disease, malnutrition, or suicide during the voyage. Occasionally, they died in shipboard revolts that the European crews brutally suppressed. Sailors lived barely more comfortably than the slaves they carried, and their death rates from disease could be even higher.

Slaves began their journey to the Americas not as "Africans," but as members of many different societies and ethnic groups, speaking an array of languages and holding to a variety of customs and beliefs (Map 1.6). Even in the 1540s, Cortés's slaves came from many places, from Gambia to Mozambique. Shippers often mixed captives from different places to reduce the risk of mutiny. Still, many slaves shared common skills and common assumptions about religion, kinship, and social life. Many had some connections with the trading cultures of the African seaboard, and some had knowledge of trading languages. Aboard ship, the things they had in common enabled them to begin to cooperate, despite the differences among them. Forced across the ocean, they became "African" and started a long, painful transition to a distinctly African American culture that would help to shape the New World.

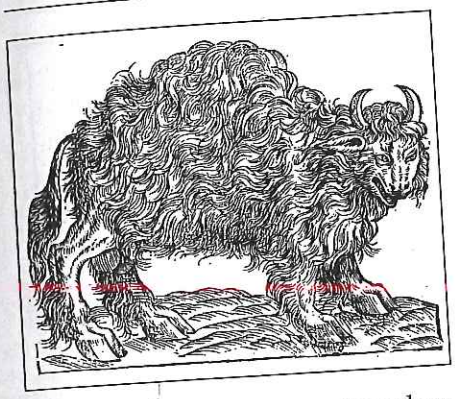
Early Colonization Efforts in North America

Spain's colonization of Central and South America extended to the Americas the process of formal conquest that had occurred in Spain itself in previous centuries. In contrast, northwestern Europeans' ventures in America



MAP 1.6 Slave Exports from West Africa to the Americas in the Eighteenth Century
Over six and a half million people were forcibly removed from Africa as slaves between 1700 and 1810, the majority of them shipped to work on plantations in the Caribbean and Brazil. This map identifies the regions from which they came, the main West African kingdoms and slaving ports, and some of the ethnic groups that lost a large number of people to slavery.

grew out of fishing and commerce and initially made a more tentative impact on the continent. There were no powerful empires to be conquered, as Spain had overrun the Aztecs or the Incas. French, Dutch, and English explorers and traders pursued varied ambitions. During the seventeenth



A New World Beast
Illustrations that appeared in sixteenth-century accounts of European exploration of the Americas often showed exotic wildlife that owed as much to imagination as to observation. This woodcut, from a book by a French Franciscan friar whose two-month visit to Brazil in 1555 was spent largely in a sickbed, probably represents a North American bison. André Thevet, *Les singularitez de la France Antarctique, autrement nommé Amérique* (1557)—Rare Books and Manuscript Division, New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

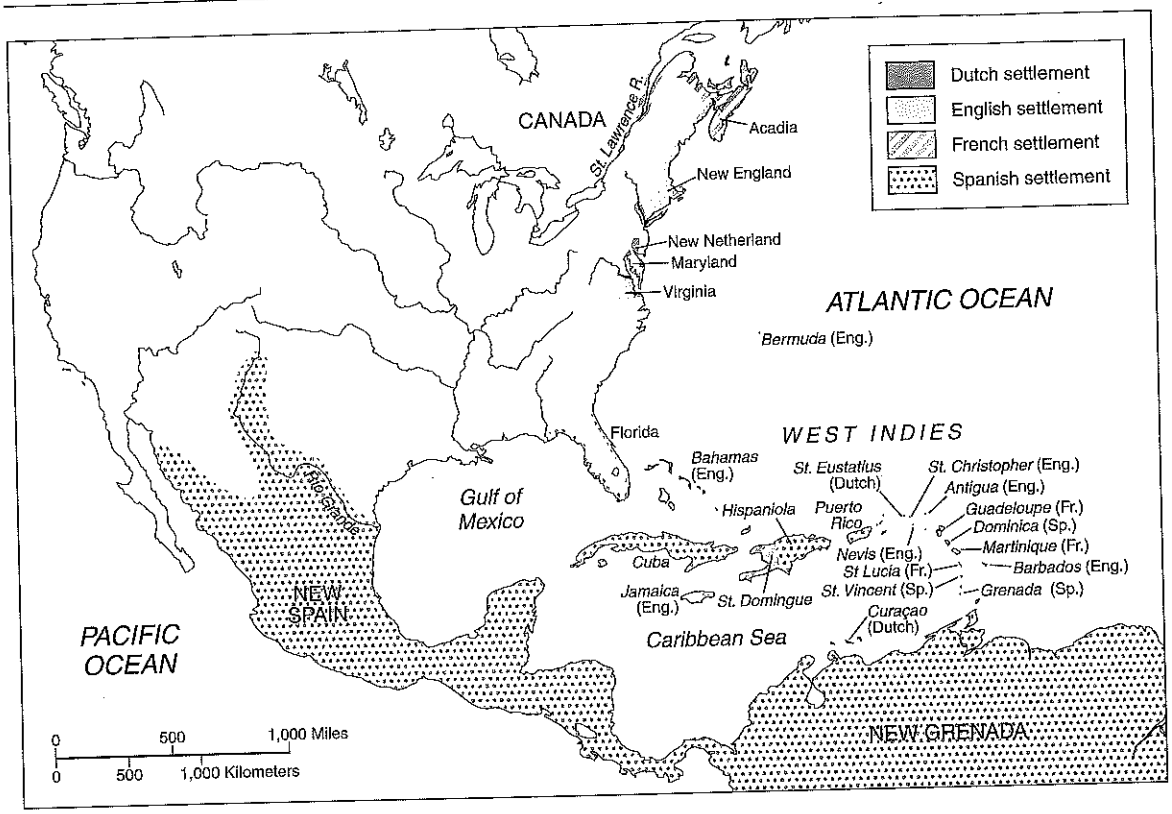
century, however, they established settlements that transformed this part of the continent as surely as the Spanish did farther south.

Exploration Early European contact with North America came with voyages of exploration. A French-sponsored venture under Giovanni da Verrazano in 1524 sailed the East Coast from the Carolinas to Maine (where, Verrazano wrote, some Abenakis "made all the signs of scorn and shame . . . such as showing their buttocks and laughing"). A decade later, the Frenchman Jacques Cartier explored the St. Lawrence River. French and Dutch ventures looked for furs and other trade goods. The English began their contact as state-licensed pirates, attacking Spanish shipping in the hope of seizing some of the New World's wealth for themselves.

The first settlements arose from fishing. From the French and English coasts, men braved the Atlantic to catch cod in the rich fishing grounds off Newfoundland. They established semipermanent camps ashore for shelter and for processing their catches. By 1620, these camps dotted the coastline from Newfoundland southwestward to what would become New England.

Meanwhile, English adventurers sought more permanent North American settlements. In 1583, Sir Humphrey Gilbert, who had already helped to found colonies in Ireland, claimed Newfoundland for England before his ship sank, with all hands, on its way home. The next year, Sir Walter Raleigh planned a base from which to conduct raids on Spanish treasure fleets and sent a small force of soldiers to Roanoke Island on North Carolina's Outer Banks. In 1587, over 100 people arrived to start a colony at Roanoke, but war with Spain delayed a ship that was to bring supplies to the colony. By the time it arrived, in 1590, the settlers had disappeared without a trace.

Warfare continued to hinder ventures to North America until, after a peace settlement in 1604, the French, Dutch, and English resumed efforts to create permanent colonies. The English established a precarious settlement at Jamestown, Virginia, in 1607. The following year, the French founded Quebec, which would become the center of their colony of New France; and in 1614, the Dutch established Fort Orange (later Albany) on the Hudson River. In 1620, English religious dissenters known as the Pilgrims arrived, in the *Mayflower*, at what became Plymouth, Massachusetts. Ten years later, the first fleet of English Puritans, who were also seeking to establish a religious colony, sailed into Massachusetts Bay. By this time, several thousand English settlers were living on the shores of Chesapeake Bay in Virginia. By 1640, tens of thousands more had come to both Massachusetts and the



MAP 1.7 North and Central American Colonies, c. 1660
This map illustrates the land claimed by the major European colonizing powers in the seventeenth century. Though tiny in size, the Caribbean colonies, with their rich sugar plantations, would remain highly important—especially to Britain and France—throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Chesapeake. The English, French, and Dutch competed to secure their claims to parts of North America (Map 1.7).

The French and Dutch In some respects, French and Dutch colonization efforts differed. France aimed to dominate a vast sweep of territory from the St. Lawrence River valley through the Great Lakes region and down the Mississippi River. The French state backed merchants and missionaries who penetrated far into the backcountry, establishing close relationships with Native Americans and converting many to Catholicism. Dutch interest, primarily commercial and organized by the Dutch West India Company, focused on the Mid-Atlantic region, especially the Hudson River valley. Dutch merchants and settlers stayed closer to the coast. They brought their Protestant churches with them; but with a lesser commitment to missions,

Dutch religious beliefs had a smaller impact on Indian life than did those of the French.

In other ways, however, French and Dutch efforts were comparable. Both established agricultural settlements, but though the French government and the Dutch West India Company tried hard to recruit colonists, social conditions in France and Holland did not induce large numbers of people to want to become farmers in America. Half of the Dutch population were town dwellers, many of whom shared in Holland's considerable commercial prosperity. France was poorer, and mainly rural, but had low rates of internal migration and hence relatively few potential overseas emigrants. There were only 3,000 French people in New France by the early 1660s.

More important to both countries was the fur trade. Dutch traders stayed close to their posts at Fort Orange and Nieuw Amsterdam (later New York City), but they obtained large quantities of furs in trade with the Iroquois and other native groups. French fur traders and scouts (known as *coureurs de bois*, or "forest runners") traveled far into the interior. The fur trade overwhelmingly employed men, many of whom intermarried with Indians, creating a substantial mixed-race (*métis*) population.

French and Dutch colonization efforts significantly influenced North American development. Dutch families, legal structures, place names, and expressions helped to shape early New York. The French presence in the Great Lakes region and the Mississippi Valley is still marked by hundreds of place names, while the descendants of French settlers retain their distinct identity in Quebec and other parts of Canada. But the most lasting North American colonies would be English.

Though the English took part in fishing and the fur trade, they became more concerned than the French or the Dutch with establishing settlements that occupied and cultivated the land. After the English captured New Netherland and renamed it New York in 1664, during one of several wars against Holland's commercial empire, the Dutch relinquished their colony to secure more valuable territories elsewhere. Similarly, when British forces seized New France a century later, in the French and Indian War (see

New Amsterdam
This satirical English print shows the 1647 arrival of Dutch troops, led by Governor Peter Stuyvesant (left), in New Amsterdam. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

Chapter 4), the French chose to give it up in return for keeping wealthier Caribbean sugar islands.

The English Colonial Experience

The English colonies that came to occupy North America's eastern seaboard were more than just land claims or commercial outposts. They became permanent homes for streams of migrants from the British Isles and elsewhere. Between 1620 and 1640 alone, almost 40,000 men and women left England to live in North America. Some English colonists, including the merchants who organized and financed expeditions, sought to make their fortunes. But a majority probably had more modest hopes: to achieve economic independence or religious or political freedoms that were denied them at home. All were influenced by changes that had been taking place in England over the previous two centuries. The conditions that impelled them to leave for the New World shaped the character of English colonies and the variations among them.

The Roots of English Migration to America In England, as elsewhere in Europe, the Black Death caused a catastrophic population decline in the fourteenth century. The resultant shortage of labor led, in time, to the collapse of English serfdom. Feudal landlords could no longer compel labor services from peasants, who resisted or fled to the comparative freedom of the towns. Lacking labor, landlords divided their fields, rented out plots to peasants, and began to live on the rents. Hired laborers benefited from rising wages. Though still dogged by poverty and disease, people working on the land were supported by a web of customary rights, including access to common land, where they might graze livestock, grow vegetables, or cut timber. Markets were also regulated, so profiteering was restricted and the price of bread controlled during times of shortage.

But changing circumstances once more undermined peasants' security. Population growth resumed in the fifteenth century. By 1500, landlords were demanding higher rents, usually in cash, and evicting tenants who could not pay. When Henry VIII broke with the Roman Church in the 1530s, he confiscated vast amounts of church land and granted it to his supporters among the aristocracy and gentry. Henry, and later his daughter Elizabeth I, also enhanced the lawmaking powers of Parliament, in which many nobles and gentry sat. Large landowners found their wealth and status increasing.

They also had opportunities to squeeze higher earnings from their lands. As the textile industry expanded, wool growing became more profitable, so many landlords evicted tenants to make room for sheep or—by a practice called *enclosure*—fenced off common land on which tenants had

"They Live Like Beasts, Voide of Lawe and All Good Order." England's subjugation of Ireland during the reign of Elizabeth I served as a rehearsal for the colonization of Virginia in the seventeenth century. As in the later New World colony, the crown licensed private individuals and companies to undertake conquest and settlement for their own profit. Protestant colonists expropriated Irish Catholic lands and rationalized their violence against the Irish by branding them as savage pagans. In this sixteenth-century woodcut, English soldiers returned to their camp carrying a grisly trophy of conquest. John Derricke, *The Image of Irelande* (1581)— Folger Shakespeare Library.

relied for part of their livelihoods. Smallholders in Kent petitioned that "they were greatly relieved by [their] common and would be utterly undone if it should be unjustly taken from them." Some tenants moved to woodland or upland areas where they could eke out a living. Thousands more became hired farmhands or weavers, left the land for the towns, or went to work as miners, sailors, or soldiers. Many single women were obliged to spin wool into yarn in isolated drudgery. By 1600, 40 percent of English people were working for wages.

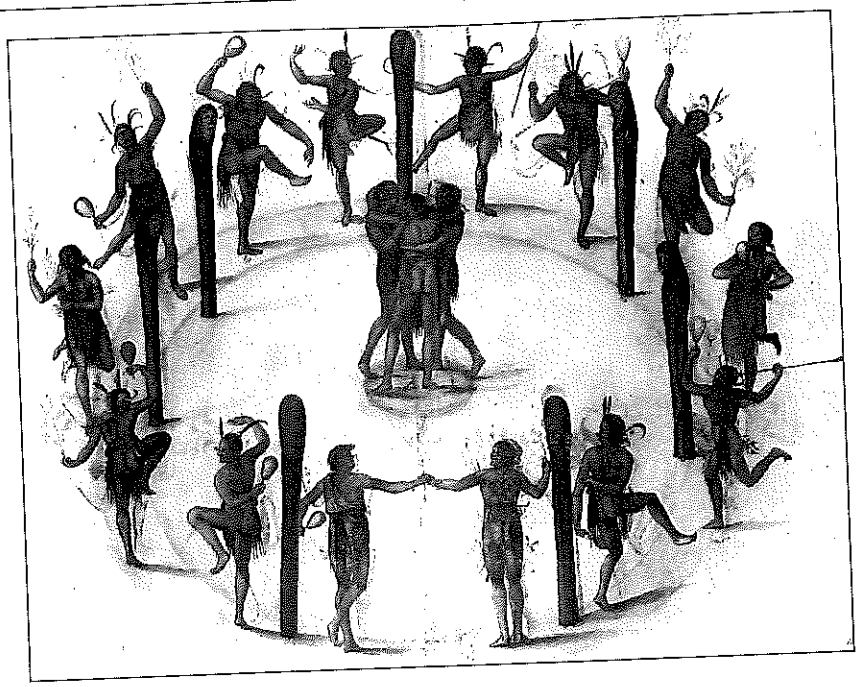
Between 1520 and 1580 alone, England's population grew from 2.5 million to 3.5 million, helping to keep wages low. Yet prices for food, rent, and fuel rose fivefold between 1530 and 1640, an inflation helped by the influx of Spanish American gold and silver. War in the 1590s disrupted the cloth trade, throwing many people out of work in textile districts, and poor harvests in the 1590s and 1620s caused hunger and even famine in a few places. Men and women tramped the countryside or flocked to towns, seeking work. London's population quadrupled between 1500 and 1600, reaching at least 200,000. A clergyman wrote in 1622 that the city was crowded with "people who rose early, worked all day and went late to bed, yet were scarce able to put bread in their mouths . . . [or] clothes on their backs." In the view of England's governing classes, poverty threatened to bring social disorder. Laws prohibited vagrancy or punished "idleness" with imprisonment or public whipping, effectively compelling the poor to work for low pay and long hours in harsh conditions.

Widespread poverty contrasted with the prosperity, not just of landowners but also of urban merchants who had grown rich from textile manufacture or trade and were willing to invest in new ventures. In return for supporting the monarchy, groups of merchants were granted special privileges, including monopolies on trade with particular parts of the world. Beneficiaries included the founders of the Muscovy Company (1553), the Spanish Company (1577), the Senegal Adventurers (1588), the East India Company (1600), the Virginia Company (1607), and the Massachusetts Bay Company (1629). These companies organized exploration and trade, and some began also to sponsor attempts at overseas settlement.

From the 1560s onward, the government had promoted English and Scottish "plantations" in parts of Ireland, displacing Catholic peasants from fertile land to make way for Protestant settlers. Some commentators came to see overseas colonization as a solution to English poverty. The poet John Donne suggested that it would "sweep your streets, and wash your doors, from idle persons, and the children of idle persons, and employ them," while Sir Francis Bacon saw it as a cure for "rebellions of the belly" brought on by the reorganization of agriculture.

By the early seventeenth century, the elements of English overseas colonization were in place: merchants, shipowners, and landholders ready to seek out new sources of profit; a crown that was prepared to grant special rights to promote English and Protestant expansion; and a sizable population of mobile poor, who might provide the labor for schemes of settlement. Poor people migrating to towns in search of work encountered promoters who offered passage to the New World in exchange for a few years' labor. Many men and some women opted to travel to North America as "indentured servants" (bound to labor by contracts called indentures). They took with them a legacy of hardship and injustice, a suspicion of landlords, hope for some land of their own, and a determination to defend popular rights.

Colonizing the Chesapeake The first English settlement at Jamestown, Virginia, established in 1607 by the Virginia Company of London, mimicked the fantasies of easy wealth that had first driven the Spanish to the Americas. Virginia, its promoters hoped, would furnish precious metals or valuable plants. Explorers' accounts misled settlers into expecting a paradise where they could gather food without effort, would need little clothing or shelter, and could make docile native people work for them. The 104 men and boys who founded Jamestown had no idea how to build a permanent farming settlement. About one in five were "gentlemen," who considered manual labor to be beneath them. Most of the rest were unskilled laborers, military recruits, and servants. The few craftsmen included clockmakers, jewelers, and gentlemen's perfumers.



A Festive Dance

John White drew this "green corn" celebration in the Indian village of Secoton sometime around 1585. The Indians in his drawings appear exotic yet also reassuringly familiar. Their poses, resembling figures in classical antiquity, and their discreetly draped clothes may have been intended to calm English fears of Indian violence and immorality. White, who was appointed governor of the unsuccessful Virginia colony of Roanoke in 1587, underplayed or omitted many aspects of Indian life that would disturb English sensibilities and deter potential colonists. John White, watercolor over black lead, touched with white, c. 1585, 10 3/4 × 14 1/8 inches—British Museum.

Instead of the paradise they had expected, they found a harsh, disease-ridden place. One of its leaders, John Smith, remarked that early Jamestown was "a miserie, a ruine, a death, a hell." Supplies dwindled and fields remained uncultivated while starving gentlemen passed the time playing bowls. Far from being willing to work for them, watching Indians waited for the English intruders to die. Most did. The thirty-five who survived until spring 1608 were about to abandon the colony when new settlers and supplies arrived.

For the next decade, Virginia Company officers sought to impose order. They introduced harsh military discipline, divided servants into work gangs, and viciously punished infractions of the rules. Punishments varied according to rank. For lesser crimes, the wealthy paid fines while the poor were whipped, branded, or had body parts cut off. Serious offenses were punished by death, and servants were often mutilated before and after execution. Men worked in the fields; the handful of women, such as Ann Leyden and June Wright, stitched shirts and performed other household tasks. When their work was judged inadequate, an eyewitness recorded, the women were "whipped, and Ann Leyden being then with child, the same night thereof miscarried." Settlers could not return to England without permission, and their often pitiful letters home were censored. Coercive methods maintained the colony in a bleak, precarious existence, setting precedents for the later introduction of slavery.

"What Can You Get by War . . . ?": Powhatan Addresses Captain John Smith

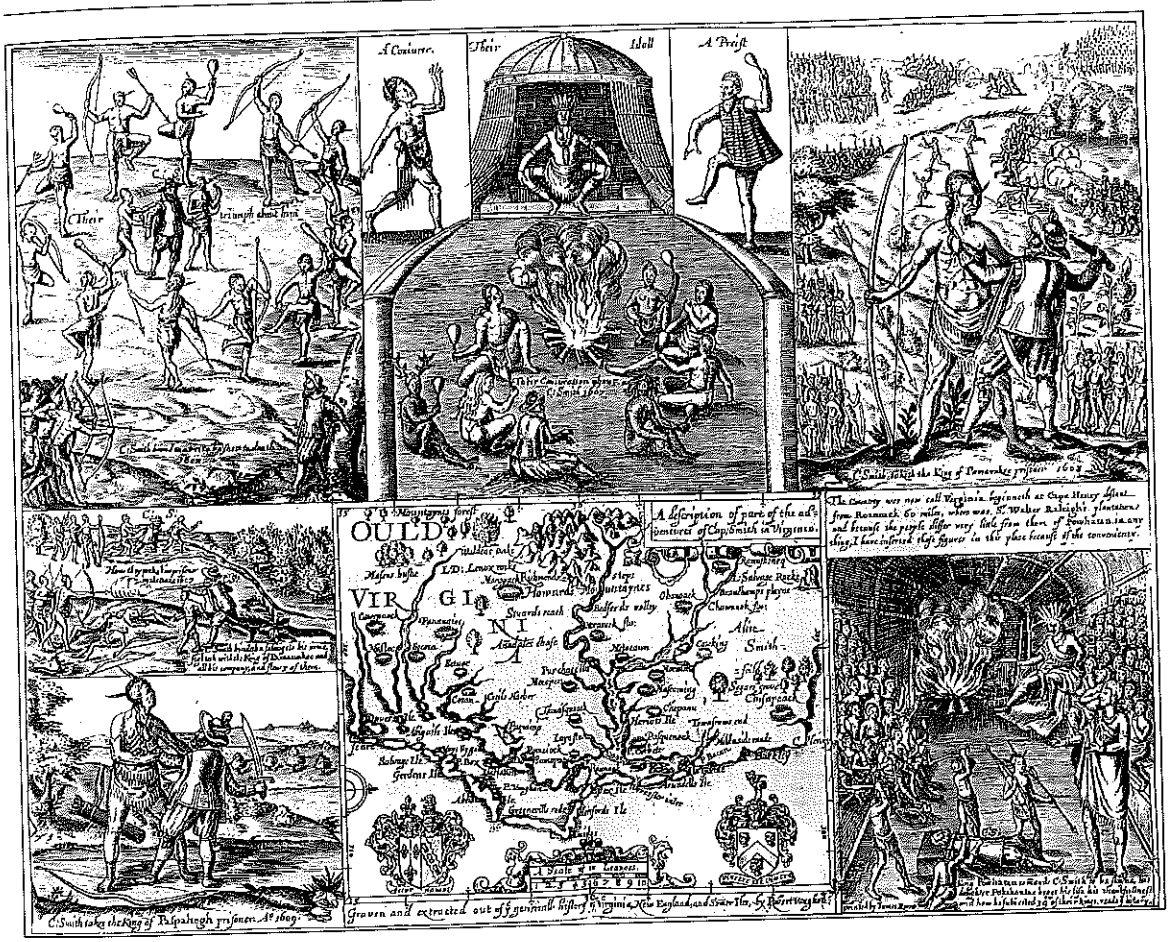
In 1612 (only five years after the colony's founding) Powhatan, a leader of the Algonquian-speaking people in colonial Virginia, addressed Captain John Smith, governor of the Virginia colony. Powhatan's remarks (in this version written down by two of Smith's associates), reflected eloquently on the rapidly deteriorating relations between the first colonists and the Indians on whom the English were so dependent in the colony's early years.

Captain Smith, you may understand that I . . . know the difference of peace and war better than any in my Country. But now I am old, and ere long must die. My brethren, namely Opichapam, Opechankanough, and Kekataugh, my two sisters, and their two daughters, are distinctly each other's successors. I wish their experiences no less than mine, and your love of them, no less than mine to you: but this bruit [noise] from Nansamund, that you are come to destroy my Country, so much affrighteth all my people, as they dare not visit you. What will it avail you to take [by force] that you may quietly have with love, or to destroy them that provide you food? What can you get by war, when we can hide our provisions and fly to the woods, whereby you must famish, by wronging us your friends? And why are you thus jealous of our loves, seeing us unarmed . . . and are willing still to feed you with that [which] you cannot get but by our labors? Think you I am so simple not to know it is better to eat good meat, lie well, and sleep quietly with my women and children, laugh, and be merry with you, have copper, hatchets, or what I want being your friend; than be forced to fly . . . , and thus with miserable fear end my miserable life, leaving my pleasures to such youths as you? . . . Let this therefore assume you of our loves, and every year our friendly trade shall furnish you with corn; and now also if you would come in friendly manner to see us, and not thus with your guns and swords, as [if] to invade your foes.

Lyon Gardiner Tyler, ed., *Narratives of Early Virginia, 1606–1625* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907), 163–66.

Soon, however, the Virginia Company found that it could use its servants to make money. In 1611, the company began to grow tobacco, which had become popular in England for its supposed medicinal properties. Demand soared. Within a few years, the company, and those who acquired land from it, turned wholeheartedly to tobacco cultivation. Virginia's fertile soil and long growing season were suited to tobacco. Tidal rivers made the interior accessible to the vessels that would carry the crop across the Atlantic. The colony boomed. Tobacco exports rose from 2,000 pounds in 1615 to 1.5 million pounds just fifteen years later.

To entice more people to go to Virginia and grow tobacco, the Virginia Company offered land in return for labor or other services. Skilled artisans would receive "a house and four acres as long as they plied their trades." A



John Smith and the Indians

Smith, one of the first governing councillors of the Virginia colony, took a less benevolent view of the Indians than did John White. This engraving from his *Generall Historie of Virginia*, published in 1624, shows the Chesapeake tribes as threatening giants. Smith recommended repression: "bring them to be tractable, civil, and industrious . . . that the fruit of their labor might make us some recompense." (Robert Vaughan) John Smith, *The Generall Historie of Virginia* (1624)—Call Number STC 22790. By permission of the Houghton Library, Harvard University.

man willing to cultivate new land could receive fifty acres for himself and another fifty for every person he brought to the colony. Indentured servants were promised land at the end of their terms of service. For a settlement whose population was overwhelmingly male, young, and single, the company shipped in women to sell as wives to men who could pay 120 pounds of tobacco for them.

The company also took steps to foster support from landowning settlers. It softened martial law. In 1619, it set up the House of Burgesses, an assembly to which all adult freemen could elect representatives to share

Pocahontas
This is a portrait of the daughter of Chief Powhatan, at the age of twenty-one, soon after her arrival in London. The caption gives her name as "Matoaks als [alias] Rebecka"—Matoaka was her given Algonquian name (Pocahontas was a nickname), and she adopted the name Rebecka after her conversion to Christianity. According to John Smith, Pocahontas saved him from execution when he was captured by the Algonquians in 1607. She subsequently married an English gentleman and became the first Indian of "royal blood" to be brought to England for the edification and entertainment of the nobility—and the first to succumb to England's inhospitable climate, probably dying of tuberculosis. Anonymous (after an engraving by Simon van de Passe), after 1616, oil on canvas, 30 1/4 × 25 1/4 inches—National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution.

government with company officers. Between 1619 and 1625, nearly 5,000 new settlers arrived. But such numbers outgrew the Virginia Company's military organization, and in 1624, King James I dissolved the company, making Virginia a royal colony under his direct supervision.

Early Virginia was an armed camp where individualism, competition, and fear prevailed. Men scrambling for wealth had little time for public spirit or civic cooperation. Rather than building towns or villages, tobacco planters scattered along the navigable rivers. The most successful owned hundreds of acres, but most lived like their servants in crude shacks, miles from neighbors. Planters abused servants with "intolerable oppression and hard usage." Death rates stayed high. Over 7,000 people migrated to Virginia between 1607 and 1625, but the colony's population was only 1,200 when the Virginia Company was abolished.

As well as hunger and disease, settlers faced the risk of massacre by Indians. The first colonists had provoked the local Algonquian speakers by stealing food from them, and within two years, the natives' leader, Powhatan, declared war, noting that the English "comming hither is not for trade, but to invade my people, and possesse my country." In the diplomacy

that patched up this dispute in 1614, Powhatan permitted his daughter Pocahontas to marry the Englishman John Rolfe, though she fell ill and died while visiting England in 1617. Meanwhile, the Virginia colony continued to grow, and so did its demand for land. Conflicts twice more erupted into war, as Powhatan's brother and successor Opechancanough led campaigns against the settlers. During the first, in 1622, his men killed 347 colonists, prompting the English to promise not to encroach on tribal land. But by 1644, with the Virginia colony's population at 8,000, settlers' encroachments again caused hostilities. More than 500 colonists died in the struggle before Opechancanough was captured and killed in 1646 and the Powhatans signed a treaty acknowledging English authority.

By this time, the colony of Maryland had been founded adjacent to Virginia in the upper part of Chesapeake Bay, under a royal charter granted in the early 1630s to the Earl of Baltimore. Baltimore, a Catholic convert, sought a refuge for fellow Catholics facing persecution in England. His family planned to establish feudal manors, with land leased to tenant farmers. But the promise of land and of profits from tobacco cultivation attracted migrants, both Protestant and Catholic. To obtain support, the proprietors had to modify their plans, offering land to own as well as rent, and permitting the formation of a representative assembly of freemen. Migration to both Chesapeake colonies continued to grow. By 1660, about 50,000 people had crossed the Atlantic to settle there.

Mr. Richard Mather
This 1670 portrait of the Puritan leader was the first woodcut printed in the colonies. Mather, a minister who arrived in the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1635, was father to Increase Mather and grandfather to Cotton Mather, both influential Massachusetts clergymen.
John Foster, woodcut, 6⅛ x 4⅞ inches, 1670 — American Antiquarian Society.

Colonizing New England The Virginia Company had hoped to attract members of the English gentry to America and recruited servants from among the poor, single, and young. But many among the "middling sort," too, were discontented in England. The Protestant reformers known as Puritans, especially, distrusted the policies of the Stuart kings James I and Charles I and faced a measure of persecution.

Puritans included gentry, village craftsmen and small landowners, and urban merchants and artisans. Their difficulties arose from theological disputes thrown up by the Reformation. They followed John Calvin's doctrine that one's fate after death was predestined by God, rejecting the "Arminian" doctrine (named for a Dutch theologian, Jacobus Arminius) that human actions could influence whether one was saved or damned. Although most Puritans worshiped in the Church of England, they objected to its ornateness, its ritual, and the authority of Arminian bishops.

They emphasized the authority of God's Word in the Bible and feared that the Stuarts were leading a return to Catholicism.

Puritans loathed England's disorder, its extremes of wealth and poverty, and what they saw as its sinfulness. Regarding churches as communities of the godly, they assembled for preaching, not ritual, and sought to choose their own ministers. Some who advocated separation from the English church had already faced persecution. These included the Pilgrims, who had spent ten years in voluntary exile in Holland before sailing to New England in 1620. After 1625, Archbishop of Canterbury William Laud pressed for conformity in the Church, and other Puritans began to look for a place where they could avoid England's evils and build their own godly society for the world to see.

Civil War
The frontispiece illustration from a 1645 book by the English religious poet Francis Quarles portrays King Charles defending the tree of Religion from Cromwell's Puritan followers. Francis Quarles, *The Shepherd's Oracles* (1645)—Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

When investors formed the Massachusetts Bay Company in 1629, a group of Puritans led by John Winthrop turned it into a vehicle for their plans. The company's charter granted it political and economic rights in New England and, unusually, failed to require that company meetings be held in England. Taking advantage of this technicality, Winthrop and his recruits sailed in 1630 to found a colony in Massachusetts armed with the right to govern their own affairs. The charter would remain the colony's legal basis until 1684.

Once arrived in Massachusetts, Winthrop and his followers abandoned the plan to make profits, closed membership in the Massachusetts Bay Company to investors, and reserved it instead for male members of an organized Puritan church. The political leadership of Massachusetts comprised Winthrop, the colony's governor, and the General Court, its governing body. A tax protest in 1632 obliged Winthrop to make the General Court a representative body. Over the next decade, more than 20,000 English migrants, mainly Puritan families with their children and servants, arrived to establish new farms and communities on New England's rocky soil, aiming to build for themselves a way of life that England denied them.

"Their Extraordinary Great Labour": Roger Williams on Indian Women

In comparison to the frequent disapproval by Europeans of the work and leadership roles of Indian women, the separatist minister Roger Williams was a more sympathetic observer. Williams helped to found the colony of Rhode Island after he was expelled from neighboring Massachusetts Bay for questioning its leaders' authority. Critical of English claims to natives' land, Williams set about studying the nearby Narragansett Indians, and he compiled a handbook of their vocabulary and phrases which he published in London in 1643. This Key into the Language of North America *also contains vivid observations of Indian life.*

. . . from their extraordinary great labour (even above the labour of men) as in the Field, they sustaine the labour of it, in carrying of mighty Burthens, in digging clammes and getting other Shelfish from the Sea, in beating all their corne in Morters: &c. Most of them count it a shame for a Woman in Travell [labor and childbirth] to make complaint, and many of them are scarcely heard to groane. I have often knowne in one Quarter of an houre a Woman merry in the House, and delivered and merry againe: and within two dayes abroad, and after foure or five dayes at worke, &c . . .

The Women set or plant, weede, and hill, and gather and barne all the corne, and Fruites of the field: Yet sometimes the man himselfe (either out ouf love to his Wife, or care for his Children, or being an old man) will help the Woman which (by the custome of the Countrey) they are not bound to.

When a field is to be broken up, they have a very loving sociable speedy way to dispatch it: All the neighbours men and Women forty, fifty, a hundred &c, joyne, and come in to help freely.

With friendly joyning they breake up their fields, build their Forts, hunt the Woods, stop and kill fish in the Rivers, it being true with them as in all the World in the Affaires of Earth or Heaven: By concord little things grow great, but discord the greatest come to nothing.

Colin G. Calloway, ed., *The World Turned Upside Down: Indian Voices from Early America* (1995).

Winthrop and his followers began by establishing Boston and a ring of towns around it. They incorporated ramshackle camps previously set up on the coast by English fishing crews, forming towns such as Salem, Marblehead, and Gloucester. They also made connections with the Pilgrims' Plymouth Colony, which would remain separate from Massachusetts Bay until 1691.

By the mid-1630s, political disputes and growing numbers led the Puritan colonists to expand their settlements to the south and west. When the government expelled him in 1635 for questioning its authority, the minister Roger Williams led followers into nearby Rhode Island to found a colony

that would become a haven for exiles from Puritan orthodoxy. Migrants from Plymouth and Massachusetts established the separate colonies of Connecticut and New Haven. Outbreaks of smallpox in 1633 had devastated native populations in these areas. "It pleased God to visite these Indians with a great sickness," wrote Plymouth governor William Bradford; so many died that "many of them did rott above ground for want of buriall."

More than profits, the Puritans were pursuing religious and community ideals. They were attached to owning their own property, but they set up community institutions to regulate one another. For most of these hard-working men and women, the ideal society revolved around cooperation rather than individualism. When two Puritan noblemen inquired in 1635 about migrating to Massachusetts, they were told that they would be welcome but would receive no special privileges. Neither came. Establishing their towns and farms in a land that they saw as a "wilderness," New Englanders created one of the important templates for early American society in the northern colonies.

The English Revolution and Its Effects on the Colonies In England, meanwhile, economic dislocation, religious conflict, and political instability were deepening and, by 1642, had brought on a civil war, a period of upheaval called the English Revolution that was to have important ramifications both in England and in the colonies. Since 1629, Charles I had ruled without calling Parliament into session, asserting a monarch's "divine right" to govern and levy taxes. Puritans were among many in England who opposed such arbitrary rule and insisted that Parliament be consulted. Forced to recall Parliament in 1640 to raise taxes in order to quell a rebellion in Scotland, Charles found Parliament resistant and within two years had provoked open warfare by attempting to suppress it. After two periods of bitter fighting, the king was arrested and, in early 1649, executed. England became a republic, led by the Puritan Oliver Cromwell until his death in 1658.

The Civil War brought social upheaval and an upsurge of religious and political debate in England. As it began, Puritans stopped leaving for Massachusetts, and some returned home from the colony, since England itself might now become (as one minister put it) "a land of saints and a pattern of holiness to all the world." Radicals questioned almost every facet of established society. Poor and middling men and women, calling themselves Levellers, Diggers, Seekers, or Ranters, attacked the Church's right to levy tithes (a one-tenth share of crops or income) and questioned enclosures, wage labor, and even property itself. They asked why more people should not have the vote and whether heaven and hell were inventions of the rich to keep the poor in subjection. A growing sect known as Quakers, who stressed the authority of the divine "inner light" in all believers, condemned religious,

civil, and social hierarchy. Quaker women as well as men preached and prophesied.

Faced with what they saw as expressions of anarchy, England's propertied classes brushed aside many of these radical voices and, after Cromwell's death, closed ranks to arrange for the restoration of the monarchy under Charles II in 1660. But the English Revolution left a rich legacy of ideas for those who, in the future, would criticize monarchy or rule by the rich. Even as they put a king back on the throne, English elites recognized that rulers had obligations to their people and that a people could justifiably depose a monarch who failed to honor these. English people who shared such attitudes, including many Quakers, were among those who took passage to America later in the seventeenth century.

The Revolution also accelerated England's commercial development and social polarization. It limited the monarch's taxing power and abolished many aspects of feudal land ownership, but it confirmed the property rights of landowners and cleared the way for further enclosure and agricultural improvement, strengthening ties between agriculture, commerce, and moneyed interests.

Both Cromwell and the restored monarchy pursued vigorous policies to regulate trade, promote colonies, and fight wars with commercial rivals, particularly the Dutch. Guided by economic doctrines loosely known as "mercantilism," which held that overall wealth was roughly fixed and that states could enrich themselves only by diverting flows of income from rival nations, English governments passed trade laws, including the Navigation Acts, aimed at ensuring a net inflow of wealth into the country. Overseas colonies would be an important source of commodities and raw materials for England's development. Later policies would also seek to expand colonial markets for English goods, again with the aim of assuring profits for the mother country.

Native Americans: Decline, Resistance, Exchange

English attitudes to American colonization had been shaped by their earlier conquest and settlement of parts of Ireland. "Planters" in Ireland disdained the Gaelic Irish peasants whose land they occupied, considering them to be "savages." Some early settlers in America compared the native peoples they encountered favorably with the hated Irish, but often the settlers' view of the Irish prepared them to have similar contempt for Native Americans.

Many Virginians and New Englanders perceived Native Americans as inferior because they spoke in strange tongues, cultivated with hoes rather than plows, and had no concept of property accumulation. William Simmonds wrote of Virginia in 1612 that "we found only an idle, improvident, scattered people, ignorant of the knowledge of gold, or silver, or any

"The Iroquois Were Much Astonished That Two Men Should Have Been Killed So Quickly": Samuel de Champlain Introduces Firearms to Native Warfare

Samuel de Champlain was a trader, soldier, explorer, diplomat, and author. He set up a small trading post at Quebec, the capital of the colony of New France, in 1608. In June 1609, Champlain and nine French soldiers joined a war party of Montagnais, Algonquian, and Hurons to fight their enemies, the Iroquois. While in this instance only the white soldiers wielded firearms, Native Americans also traded with the French for their own guns, adding a deadly new dimension to native conflicts.

. . . As soon as we landed, our Indians began to run some two hundred yards towards their enemies, who stood firm and had not yet noticed my white companions who went off into the woods with some Indians. Our Indians began to call to me with loud cries; and to make way for me they divided into two groups, and put me ahead some twenty yards, and I marched on until I was within some thirty yards of the enemy, who as soon as they caught sight of me halted and gazed at me and I at them. When I saw them make a move to draw their bows upon us, I took aim with my arquebus and shot straight at one of the three chiefs, and with this shot two fell to the ground and one of their companions was wounded who died thereof a little later. I had put four bullets into my arquebus. As soon as our people saw this shot so favourable for them, they began to shout so loudly that one could not have heard it thunder, and meanwhile the arrows flew thick on both sides. The Iroquois were much astonished that two men should have been killed so quickly, although they were provided with shields made of cotton thread woven together and wood, which were proof against their arrows. This frightened them greatly. As I was reloading my arquebus, one of my companions fired a shot from within the woods, which astonished them again so much that, seeing their chiefs dead, they lost courage and took to flight, abandoning the field and their fort, and fleeing into the depth of the forest, whither I pursued them and laid low still more of them. Our Indians also killed several and took ten or twelve prisoners. The remainder fled with the wounded. Of our Indians fifteen or sixteen were wounded with arrows, but these were quickly healed.

After we had gained the victory, our Indians wasted time in taking a large quantity of Indian corn and meal belonging to the enemy, as well as their shields, which they had left behind, the better to run. Having feasted, danced, and sung, we three hours later set off for home with the prisoners. The place where this attack took place is in 43° and some minutes of latitude, and was named Lake Champlain.

Samuel de Champlain, *The Works of Samuel de Champlain* (Toronto, 1925), Vol. 2, 89–101. For Champlain's publications and maps, see: http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/treasures/trr009.html and http://www.sunysb.edu/libmap/img2cap.htm.

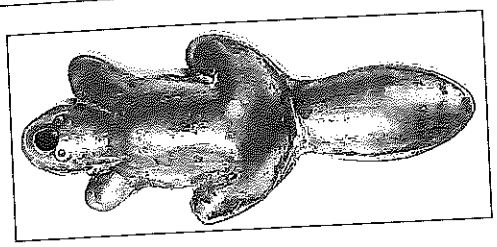
commodities; and carelesse of anything but from hand to mouth." To the English, such attitudes justified misunderstandings over theft, the seizure of native land, and the subjugation or expulsion of native peoples they found in their way. These attitudes also influenced reactions to the destruction of Indians by disease. Local inhabitants, wrote one of the first Massachusetts settlers in 1630, "above twelve years since were swept away by a great & grievous Plague . . . so that there are verie few left." Like many Puritans, he saw the epidemic as part of God's design to clear the land for His chosen people.

Yet Indians were not simply victims of disease and conquest. What happened to Native Americans depended not only on what settlers demanded of them, but also on their own actions and the character of their own societies. Even on North America's eastern seaboard, where native cultures would be largely eradicated by the nineteenth century, over two hundred years of conflict and negotiation followed European contact.

Adaptation and Negotiation Indians first tried to incorporate settlers into their own systems of authority. At Jamestown in 1607 and 1608, Powhatan treated Virginia leaders just like the other local chiefs who owed allegiance to him, and his offer of Pocahontas in marriage to John Rolfe in 1614 was part of an effort to control the English. Opechancanough's challenges to the growing Virginia settlements aimed to set bounds on the colony's expansion and on unreasonable English behavior. A Wicomesse leader told Maryland's governor in 1633 that "since . . . you are heere strangers and come into our Countrey, you should rather confine yourselves to the Customes of our Countrey, than impose yours upon us."

To some groups, neighboring tribes posed more problems than Europeans, and they saw settlers as allies in their rivalries. Apaches attacking pueblo Indians in the Southwest made them more vulnerable to Spanish domination. Algonquian speakers in the St. Lawrence valley, under pressure from hostile Iroquois, turned to the French for help and built an alliance that enabled the Algonquians to hold the Iroquois back and reach a settlement with them in the 1690s. English settlers found themselves used for similar ends.

Yet the growth of European settlements did oblige native cultures to adapt. From bands based on kinship they formed more structured "tribes." The fur trade brought irreversible changes. The Micmacs of Nova Scotia found themselves trapped by it. Dependent entirely on hunting and fishing, the Micmacs had ensured their survival by avoiding overhunting. But when European traders offered guns, cloth, ironware, and alcohol, the Micmacs increased their hunting to obtain the pelts to trade for these goods. Soon their beaver were gone, the traders and their goods moved on, and the Micmacs were unable to support themselves.



Worth Its Weight in Copper? This small copper beaver was equal in value to one beaver pelt in the Hudson Bay fur trade. George Gustav Heye Center of the National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution, photo number 240737.000. Photo by NMAI Photo Services Staff.

As hunters depleted beaver populations in coastal regions, they moved inland to search for fresh supplies, in the process colliding with other groups. Demand for pelts set tribe against tribe, and competing Europeans were usually pleased to sell arms to the rivals. Along the Hudson River, Dutch traders at first obtained furs from local Mahicans. But as their beaver dwindled, the Mahicans were pushed aside by Mohawks, who set up a regular supply of furs from the Iroquois interior.

Wars among Indians not only caused many deaths, but also reshaped tribes' territories and alliances. Greater reliance on hunting and warfare widened the gap between male and female roles, reducing the importance of agriculture, strengthening the power of men at the expense of women, and enhancing the claims of hunters and warriors to leadership.

Such changes often left Indians with stark alternatives. They could labor for their European conquerors, or they could (like some Mahicans and Susquehannocks) move inland and be assimilated into more powerful groups that might successfully resist European encroachment. Natives of Nantucket Island took the first path. Puritan traders advanced them goods, but they fell into debt, which they were obliged to work off by going to sea as crewmen on fishing vessels or whaling boats. But they found that they could never earn enough to settle their accounts and were trapped in a cycle of debt and forced labor that weakened their community. In 1600, they were about 2,500 strong; two centuries later only 22 of them remained. The Catawba of the Carolinas negotiated their survival by making themselves useful to colonists, accepting in the process significant changes to their own culture and forming alliances with the English against neighboring tribes.

Resistance and Warfare Few coastal peoples managed to resist colonial encroachment successfully. Their groups were small and fragmented. On the southern New England coast, the Pequots were at first strengthened by European contact. They traded furs from the interior to Dutch and English shippers and built up their military power. The 1630s, however, brought epidemics and then encroachment by English settlers moving west from Massachusetts Bay. To resist the English, the Pequots joined with other tribes and attacked colonists' farms and towns. But the English made their own alliances with the Pequots' rivals, including the Narragansetts. Attacking a Pequot village in 1637, English soldiers burned or hacked to death more than four hundred men, women, and children, while their Indian allies encircled the site to prevent any Pequots from escaping. When the Pequot War ended, the English executed many captured warriors, sold women and children into slavery, and dispersed the remaining Pequots to other tribes.

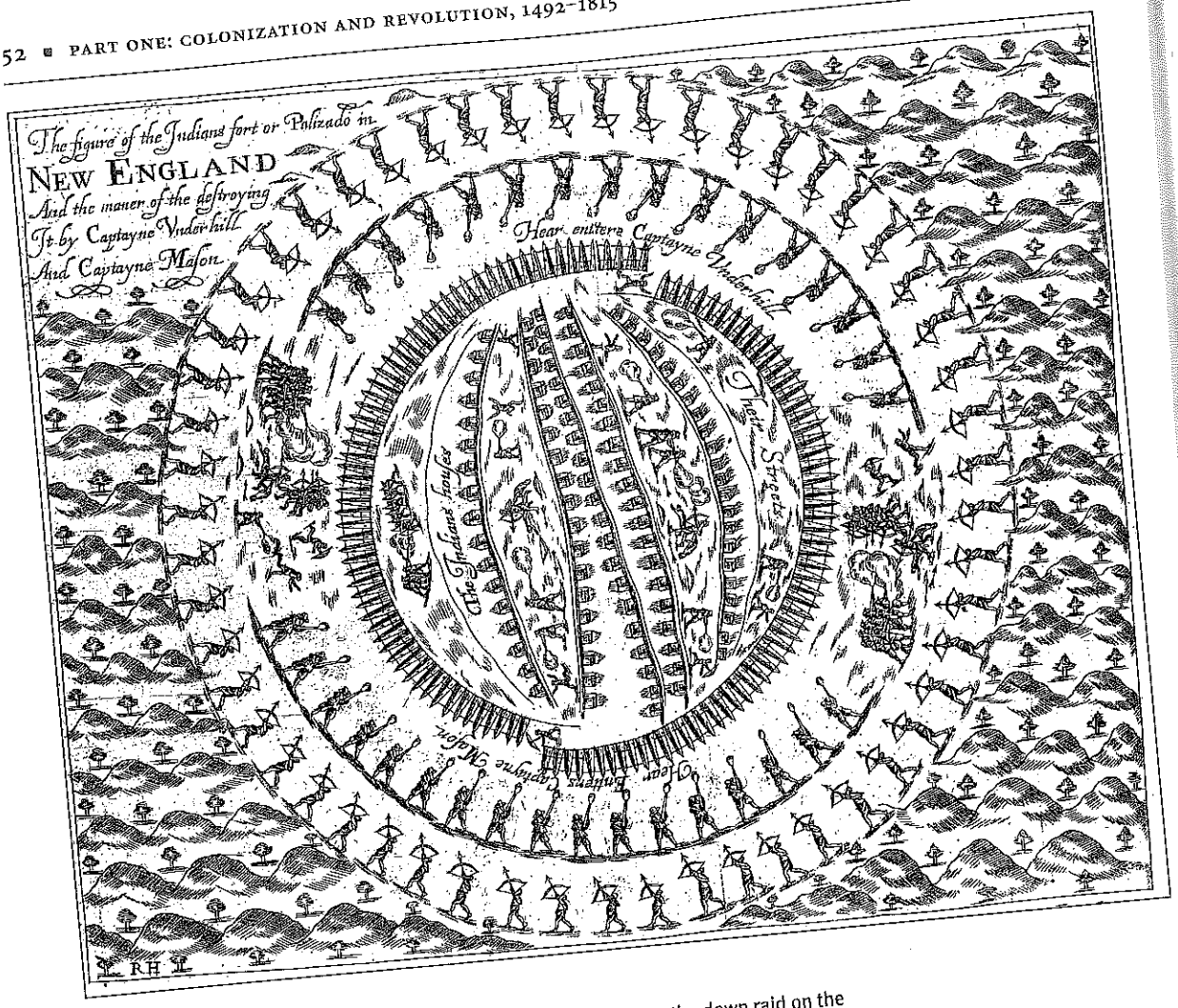
King Philip

This fanciful 1772 engraving by the Boston silversmith Paul Revere was copied from a portrait of the Mohawk chief Thayendanegea, or Joseph Brant (see page 223). Despite its inaccuracy, Revere's picture influenced print and stage portrayals of Metacom through the mid-nineteenth century. American Antiquarian Society.

The Narragansetts, who had helped the English destroy the Pequots, soon began to ponder their own prospects for survival. One leader, Miantonomi, traveled across southern New England and Long Island in the early 1640s to arrange a pact, warning of what would be lost if the English were not turned back. But the colonists, helped by Mohegan allies, silenced Miantonomi. The Mohegans captured him, delivered him to a Massachusetts court for trial on a trumped-up murder charge, and then executed him when the court convicted him and returned him to them for punishment.

Other natives sought greater association with the colonists. Puritan missionaries in Massachusetts established towns for "praying Indians," who were converted to Christianity and settled on farms. There were fourteen such towns by the early 1670s. Yet even these converts never allayed English suspicion of Indians. In time, the choice of the "praying Indians" to seek a form of assimilation with the colonists would help little to preserve their own communities.

The Wampanoag tribe, which had so far maintained cordial relations with both the Massachusetts and Plymouth colonies, came under pressure from new settlements in the 1650s and 1660s. Under their leader Metacom, whom the English called "King Philip," they sought to reverse such encroachment decisively. After repeated provocations, the Wampanoags began attacking outlying eastern Massachusetts towns in 1675, at first acting alone, then in alliance with the Nipmucks of the Connecticut Valley and with the Abenaki and others on the Maine coast. When colonial soldiers searching for Wampanoags massacred 300 people, mostly women and children, in Narragansett settlements, they pushed the Narragansetts into Metacom's alliance, too. Colonists suffered heavily in consequence. Of their ninety towns, twelve were wiped out and forty more were damaged. One-tenth of New England's adult white male population was killed or captured. It looked as if Metacom might succeed in turning back English settlement.



"We Must Burn Them"
An engraving from a contemporary account of the Pequot war shows the dawn raid on the Pequot fort at Mystic, Connecticut, on May 26, 1637. "Many were burnt in the fort, both men, women, and children. Others forced out, . . . twenty and thirty at a time, which our soldiers received and entertained with the point of the sword. Down fell men, women, and children; those that scaped us fell into the hands of the Indians that were in the rear of us." John Underhill, *Newes from America: or a New Discoverie of New England* (1638)—Rare Books and Manuscript Division, New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

Yet the colonists proved too well established to dislodge. New Englanders forged their own alliances and took harsh measures. Distrusting even the "praying Indians," the Massachusetts government forcibly interned them on an island in Boston Harbor. Mohawks allied with the colonists weakened Metacom's forces in battle, and in 1676, colonial fighters cornered Metacom in a swamp and killed him. Most native resistance then collapsed, although in Maine, the Abenaki sustained their attacks into 1677. "King

Philip's War," as the English called it, marked the defeat of armed native resistance in eastern and southern New England, though conflicts continued in the region's interior for some decades to come.

In the Spanish territories, extreme labor demands and missionary efforts provoked more successful resistance. Florida tribes rebelled against missions repeatedly from the 1590s to the 1650s. Although it was difficult to coordinate their attacks, the tribes nevertheless survived in the swamps and, after 1680, even began to drive the missions out. New Mexican pueblo Indians only partially submitted to Spanish conversion efforts and demands for forced labor. Christian "converts" covertly adhered to their native beliefs. Sporadic revolts from the 1630s onward took advantage of the Spanish remoteness from their Mexican bases and the rivalry between missions and farming estates.

In 1680, under a leader called El Popé, a concerted uprising swept the eastern pueblo villages, killing settlers and priests and driving the Spanish out of New Mexico in panic. For over a decade, the pueblos were free from intrusion, until a campaign in 1692–1693 reconquered them. Even then, the pueblos continued to resist, rebelling when participants in the revolt were executed, preventing the reimposition of the *encomienda* system, and so obliging Spanish settlers to take up ranching rather than farming. The pueblos, now weakened by population decline and by Apache and Comanche raids from the north, worked out a way of coexisting with the Spanish that largely preserved their own identity.

Coexistence on the Middle Ground Coexistence, rather than collapse or resistance, was indeed common for Indians whose lands were not directly subject to European settlement. Among the most successful at holding settlers at arm's length were the Iroquois, whose organization and coherence increased under European pressure. Until the mid-eighteenth century, much of upland eastern North America, the Great Lakes, and Mississippi Valley formed an arena of exchange and interaction between natives and Europeans that historians now term "the middle ground." After early setbacks and consolidations, some tribes stabilized control over their fields and hunting grounds and probably even achieved modest population growth. Many regarded themselves as superior to the invading Europeans, whose actions they saw as uncivilized. In these societies, too, women initially retained much of their status and authority.

The fur trade with English, French, or Dutch merchants provided Indians with metalware, guns, blankets, or rum. These exchanges could lead to dependency, and many Europeans and some native leaders saw alcohol especially as a source of exploitation. Settlers enjoyed stories of natives accepting trinkets in payment for furs or even land. But trade was often not as one-sided as it appeared. Indians sought goods that were useful to them;

"Now They Were as They Had Been in Ancient Times": The Pueblo Revolt of 1680

Captured during the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, a Keresan Pueblo man named Pedro Naranjo described the rebellion's plans and causes in this testimony, recorded by his Spanish captors. The Pueblo Revolt against Spanish rule in New Mexico was probably the most successful of all Native American efforts to turn back the European colonists of North America. As the Spanish sought to retake the territory they had lost—and punish the rebels harshly—they captured and interrogated Indian prisoners.

Finally, in the past years, at the summons of an Indian named Popé who is said to have communication with the devil, it happened that in an estufa [kiva] of the pueblo of Los Taos there appeared to the said Popé three figures of Indians who never came out of the estufa. They told him to make a cord of maguey fiber and tie some knots in it which would signify the number of days that they must wait before the rebellion. He said that the cord was passed through all the pueblos of the kingdom so that the ones which agreed to it [the rebellion] might untie one knot in sign of obedience, and by the other knots they would know the days which were lacking; and this was to be done on pain of death to those who refused to agree to it. The said cord was taken from pueblo to pueblo by the swiftest youths under the penalty of death if they revealed the secret. Everything being thus arranged, two days before the time set for its execution, because his lordship had learned of it and had imprisoned two Indian accomplices from the pueblo of Tesuque, it was carried out prematurely that night, because it seemed to them that they were now discovered; and they killed religious, Spaniards, women, and children. This being done, it was proclaimed in all the pueblos that everyone in common should obey the commands of their father whom they did not know, which would be given through El Caydi or El Popé. This was heard by Alonso Catití, who came to the pueblo of this declarant to say that everyone must unite to go to the villa to kill the governor and the Spaniards who had remained with him, and that he who did not obey would, on their return, be beheaded; and in fear of this they agreed to it. Finally, the señor governor and those who were with him escaped from the siege, and later this declarant saw that as soon as the Spaniards had left the kingdom an order came from the said Indian, Popé, in which he commanded all the Indians to break the lands and enlarge their cultivated fields, saying that now they were as they had been in ancient times, free from the labor they had performed for the religious and the Spaniards, who could not now be alive. He said that this is the legitimate cause and the reason they had for rebelling.

Albert L. Hurtado and Peter Iverson, eds., *Major Problems in American Indian History* (1994).

knives, guns, pans, and cloth made hunting or survival easier. And Europeans could seem naive. "[T]he English have no sense," laughed a member of the Montagnais tribe on the St. Lawrence River; "they give us twenty knives for this one beaver skin." Although frontier exchange could provoke antagonism and conflict, natives conducted their dealings with whites as equals or superiors and demanded a measure of deference from them. Until circumstances changed, many Indians would hold their ground.

Conclusion: The Remaking of Three Worlds

Europeans' intrusion into the Americas profoundly altered the ways of life of three previously independent worlds. New World exploration, trade, and settlement linked the peoples of Europe, Africa, and the Americas in patterns of commerce, conflict, and labor coercion.

Africa was the most evident loser. The slave trade, with its grievous drain of population and cultural dislocation, profited some powerful Africans, but few others except Europeans benefited. It impoverished much of the African continent, disrupted trade, and altered political structures. Before 1500, West African economies had living standards comparable with those of much of Europe. Slavery, external and internal, greatly weakened them, leaving Africa susceptible to colonization by European powers in the nineteenth century. The forced movement of slaves from Africa to the Americas long exceeded the scale of European transatlantic migration. Until about 1800, six out of every seven people arriving in the Americas were enslaved Africans. Most were taken to Brazil, Central America, or the West Indies. Only about 5 percent went to British North America.

On the Americas themselves, the European impact was mixed. Major Central and South American empires collapsed and were rapidly incorporated into colonial societies. As Europeans established new settlements, vast numbers of Native Americans were killed by disease or war or were driven to find new places to live. In North America, most eastern seaboard groups declined or retreated in the face of invasion, disease, and dispossession. Those in the interior and in the Spanish borderlands had some success in resisting deeper invasion and in adapting their cultures to the new situation. But even peoples who had little direct contact with Europeans felt their influence.

Not surprisingly, Europeans were the main beneficiaries of colonization. To notables who received land grants, absentee planters who controlled crop production, and merchants in the Atlantic trade, it brought new wealth, though this also sustained social divisions in European societies. Colonial goods changed European tastes. Sugar from the Caribbean and Brazil brought confections to Europeans of middling rank that had previously been enjoyed only by the very wealthy. Virginia tobacco swept Holland and England early in the seventeenth century, and its popularity continued

to mount. The period of early colonial settlement initiated a lasting dependence on overseas commodities that would affect all levels of European society in the centuries to come.

Profits from colonial trade helped to transform European economies. By 1600, two hundred ships each year were arriving in Spain, laden with treasure from the Spanish empire. This increasingly found its way to the trading cities of northern Europe, inflating prices but boosting commerce and urban growth and helping to finance further overseas expansion. Spain, France, and Britain all saw North America as an arena for territorial acquisition and rivalry; throughout the eighteenth century, they would fight wars to gain greater control of the continent.

White settlers in Spanish, French, and English America, meanwhile, built an array of new societies. All started to see their interests as different from those of the countries they had come from. In Spanish colonies, where high officials rotated through offices in order to make careers back home, distinctions emerged between Spanish-born *peninsulares* and American-born *criollos* (creoles). Settlers and Native Americans intermarried at a high rate. Mixed-race mestizos outnumbered the Spanish in Mexico after 1650 and among the "Spanish" who migrated northward into New Mexico.

In the English colonies, the distinction between English- and American-born settlers was never as formal as that in the Spanish empire. English–Native American intermarriage was also much rarer. Still, population growth and migration increased the proportion of American-born "English" people with no direct ties to England. In the context of colonial rivalry and wars from the mid-eighteenth century on, these American-born colonists would radically alter their relationships both with England and with Native Americans.

The settlers of North America continued, above all, to need labor. The differences in the ways they procured it would have profound implications for the future. This was particularly true of the different labor patterns that developed in the northern and southern colonies of British North America.

The Years in Review

c. 13,000 B.C.E.

- Asian peoples, who are later called Indians, migrate to North America.

3000 B.C.E.

- Settled agriculture begins among Indians of the Southwest.

1000 C.E.

- Norsemen led by Leif Ericsson "discover" the Western Hemisphere. They call it "Vinland" ("Wineland") because of the grapes growing there.