



Three Old Worlds Create a New

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1492–1600

Five years later, Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca still recalled the amazement he had encountered. “I reached four Christians on horseback who registered great surprise at seeing me so strangely dressed and in the company of Indians. They... neither spoke to me nor dared to ask anything.”

Cabeza de Vaca and three other men, one an enslaved North African named *Estevan*, had just walked across North America. They, along with about six hundred others, had left Spain in June 1527 on an ill-fated expedition. After exploring the west coast of Florida, eighty men, including Cabeza de Vaca, were shipwrecked in late 1528 on the coast of modern Texas (probably near Galveston), at a place they named *Isla de Malhado*, or Island of Misfortune. Most of the survivors—alternately abused, aided, or enslaved by different Indian nations—gradually died. Cabeza de Vaca reached the mainland, where he survived as a traveling trader, exchanging seashells for hides and flint.

In January 1533, he stumbled on the other three. The Spaniards and *Estevan* plotted to leave but were unable to until September 1534. They walked south, then turned inland and headed north, exploring the upper reaches of the Rio Grande. They continued west, almost reaching the Pacific before turning south once more, guided from village to village by Indians. Vaca described the diets, living arrangements, and customs of many of the villages they saw, thus providing modern historians and anthropologists with an invaluable record of native cultures as they met Europeans.

For thousands of years before 1492, human societies in the Americas had developed in isolation from the rest of the world. That ended in the Christian fifteenth century, as Europeans sought treasure and trade, peoples from different cultures came into regular contact for the first time and were profoundly changed. Their interactions over the next 350 years involved cruelty and kindness, greed and deception, trade and theft, sickness and enslavement. The history of the colonies that would become the United States must be seen in this broad context of European exploration and exploitation.

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LEGACY FOR A PEOPLE AND A NATION
Kennewick Man/Ancient One

SUMMARY

Link to Cabeza de Vaca's original narrative in English.

The continents that European sailors reached in the late fifteenth century had their own histories, which the intruders largely ignored. The residents of the Americas were the world's most skillful plant breeders; they developed vegetable crops more nutritious and productive than in Europe, Asia, or Africa and invented systems of writing and mathematics. As in Europe, their societies rose and fell as leaders succeeded or failed. But the arrival of Europeans immeasurably altered the Americans' struggles with one another.

After 1400, European nations tried to acquire valuable colonies and trading posts worldwide. Initially interested in Asia and Africa, Europeans eventually focused mostly on the Americas. Even as Europeans slowly achieved dominance, their fates were shaped by Americans and Africans. In the Americas of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, three old worlds came together to produce a new.

As you read this chapter, keep the following questions in mind:

- * **What were the key characteristics of the three worlds that met in the Americas?**
- * **What impact did their encounter have on each of them?**
- * **What were the crucial initial developments in that encounter?**

American Societies

What led to the development of major North American civilizations in the centuries before Europeans arrived?

Human beings originated on the continent of Africa, where human-like remains about 3 million years old have been found in what is now Ethiopia. Over many millennia, the growing population dispersed to other continents. Because the climate was far colder than it is now, much of the earth's water was concentrated in huge rivers of ice called glaciers. Sea levels were lower, and land masses covered a larger proportion of the earth's surface. Scholars long believed that the earliest inhabitants of the Americas crossed a land bridge known as Beringia (at the site of the Bering Strait) approximately 12,000–14,000 years ago. Yet new archaeological discoveries suggest that parts of the Americas may have been settled much earlier, possibly in three successive waves beginning roughly 30,000 years ago. When, about 12,500 years ago, the climate warmed and sea levels rose, Americans were separated from the connected continents of Asia, Africa, and Europe.

Paleo-Indians: The earliest peoples of the Americas.

Ancient America

The first Americans are called **Paleo-Indians**. Nomadic hunters of game and gatherers of wild plants, they spread throughout North and South America, probably as bands of extended families. By about 11,500 years ago, the Paleo-Indians were making fine stone projectile points, which they attached to wooden spears and used to kill bison (buffalo), woolly mammoths, and other large mammals. But as the Ice Age ended and the human population increased, all the large American mammals except the bison disappeared.

Chronology

12,000–10,000 B.C.E.	Paleo-Indians migrate from Asia to North America across the Beringia land bridge	1494	Treaty of Tordesillas divides land claims between Spain and Portugal in Africa, India, and South America
7000 B.C.E.	Cultivation of food crops begins in America	1496	Last Canary Island falls to Spain
ca. 2000 B.C.E.	Olmec civilization appears	1497	Cabot reaches North America
ca. 300–600 C.E.	Height of influence of Teotihuacán	1513	Ponce de León explores Florida
ca. 600–900 C.E.	Classic Mayan civilization	1518–30	Smallpox epidemic devastates Indian population of West Indies and Central and South America
1000 C.E.	Ancient Pueblos build settlements in modern states of Arizona and New Mexico	1519	Cortés invades Mexico
1001	Norse establish settlement in “Vinland”	1521	Aztec Empire falls to Spaniards
1050–1250	Height of influence of Cahokia Prevalence of Mississippian culture in modern midwestern and southeastern United States	1524	Verrazzano sails along Atlantic coast of United States
14th century	Aztec rise to power	1534–35	Cartier explores St. Lawrence River
1450s–80s	Portuguese explore and colonize islands in the Mediterranean Atlantic	1534–36	Vaca, Estevan, and two companions walk across North America
1477	Marco Polo’s <i>Travels</i> describes China	1539–42	Soto explores southeastern United States
1492	Columbus reaches Bahamas	1540–42	Coronado explores southwestern United States
		1587–90	Raleigh’s Roanoke colony vanishes
		1588	Harriot publishes <i>A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia</i>

Consequently, by approximately nine thousand years ago, the residents of what is now central Mexico began to cultivate food crops, especially maize (corn), squash, beans, avocados, and peppers. In the Andes Mountains of South America, people started to grow potatoes. As knowledge of agricultural techniques improved, vegetables proved a more reliable source of food than hunting and gathering. Most Americans started to adopt a more sedentary lifestyle that enabled them to tend fields regularly. Some established permanent settlements; others moved several times a year among fixed sites. They cleared forests through controlled burning, which created cultivable lands, by killing trees and fertilizing the soil with ashes and opened meadows to deer and other wildlife. Although they traded such items as shells, flint, salt, and copper, no society ever became dependent on another group.

† Wherever agriculture dominated, complex civilizations flourished. With steady supplies of grains and vegetables, societies could broaden their focus from subsistence to trade, accumulating wealth, producing ornamental objects, and creating elaborate rituals and ceremonies. In North America, the successful cultivation of nutritious crops seems to have led to the growth and development of all the major civilizations: first the large city-states of Mesoamerica (modern Mexico and Guatemala) and then the urban clusters known collectively as the Mississippian culture (in the present-day United States). Each reached its peak influence after achieving success in agriculture. Each later collapsed after reaching the limits of its food supply.

Mesoamerican Civilizations

Scholars know little about the first major Mesoamerican civilization, the Olmecs, who about four thousand years ago lived in cities near the Gulf of Mexico. The Mayas and Teotihuacán, which developed approximately two thousand years later, are better recorded. Teotihuacán, founded in the Valley of Mexico about 300 B.C.E. (Before the Common Era), became one of the largest urban areas in the world, housing 100,000 people in the fifth century C.E. (Common Era). Teotihuacán's commercial network extended hundreds of miles, and Pilgrims traveled long distances to visit Teotihuacán's impressive pyramids and the great temple of Quetzalcoatl—the feathered serpent, primary god of central Mexico.

On the Yucatan Peninsula, in today's eastern Mexico, the Mayas built urban centers containing tall pyramids and temples, studied astronomy, and created an elaborate writing system. Their city-states engaged in near-constant warfare with one another—combined with inadequate food supplies, this caused the collapse of the most powerful cities by 900 C.E., thus ending the era of Mayan civilization.

Pueblos and Mississippians

Ancient native societies in what is now the United States learned to grow maize, squash, and beans from Mesoamericans. The Hohokam, Mogollon, and ancient Pueblo peoples of the modern states of Arizona and New Mexico subsisted by combining hunting and gathering with agriculture in an arid region of unpredictable rainfall. Hohokam villagers constructed extensive irrigation systems, but relocated when water supplies failed. Between 900 and 1150 C.E., Chaco Canyon, at the juncture of perhaps four hundred miles of roads, served as a major trading and processing center for turquoise. Yet the aridity caused the Chacoans to migrate to other sites.

Almost simultaneously, the unrelated Mississippian culture flourished in what is now the midwestern and southeastern United States. Relying largely on maize, squash, nuts, pumpkins, and venison, the Mississippians lived in hierarchically organized settlements. Their largest urban center was the **City of the Sun** (now called Cahokia), near modern St. Louis. Located on rich farmland near the confluence of the Illinois, Missouri, and Mississippi Rivers, Cahokia, like Teotihuacán and Chaco Canyon, served as a focal point for religion and trade. At its peak (in the eleventh and twelfth centuries C.E.), the City of the Sun covered more than 5 square miles and had a population of about twenty thousand—small by Mesoamerican standards but larger than London.

The sun-worshipping Cahokians developed an accurate calendar. The city's main pyramid (one of 120 of varying sizes), today called Monks Mound, remains the largest earthwork in the Americas. Yet following 1250 C.E., the city was abandoned. Archaeologists believe that climate change and the degradation of the environment, caused by overpopulation and the destruction of nearby forests, contributed to its collapse. Afterwards, warfare increased as large-scale population movements destabilized the region.

Aztecs

Far to the South, the Aztecs (also called Mexicas) migrated into the Valley of Mexico during the twelfth century. Their chronicles record that their primary deity, Huitzilopochtli—a war god represented by an eagle—directed them to establish their capital on an island where they saw an eagle eating a serpent. That island city became Tenochtitlán, the center of a

City of the Sun (Cahokia):

Area located near modern St. Louis, Missouri, where about twenty thousand people inhabited a metropolitan area.

Visualizing the Past

City of the Sun

Today the remains of the City of the Sun (Cahokia) are preserved in a state park in southern Illinois. The mounds are now either largely gone or greatly reduced in size, but archaeologists have been able to visualize the site. Few of their finds were more important than the two shown here: the woodhenge and the Birger figurine. Archaeologists discovered the post holes where the woodhenge once stood, showing

how the sun-worshipping Cahokians monitored the sun's annual movements through shadows cast by poles they erected in a precise formation. The red clay Birger figurine, found near Cahokia, depicts a woman with a vine winding around her body sitting on a cat-faced serpent (symbol of the earth) and holding a hoe. Why would the woodhenge have been important for Cahokia's farmers? What is the significance of the squash vine and the other attributes of the Birger figurine?



An artist's conception of the construction of Cahokia's woodhenge. Monks mound is in the background.

Cahokia Mounds Historic Site



Front view of the Birger figurine.



Back view of the Birger figurine.

Courtesy of the Illinois State Archaeological Survey, University of Illinois

Courtesy of the Illinois State Archaeological Survey, University of Illinois

stratified society composed of hereditary classes of warriors, merchants, priests, common folk, and slaves.

The Aztecs conquered their neighbors, forcing them to pay tribute in textiles, gold, foodstuffs, and human sacrifices to Huitzilopochtli. They also engaged in ritual combat for further sacrificial victims to the war god. In the Aztec year Ten Rabbit (1502), at the coronation of Motecuhzoma II (the Spaniards mispronounced his name as Montezuma), thousands were sacrificed by having their hearts torn from their bodies.

North America in 1492

Over the centuries, the Americans who lived north of Mexico adapted their once similar ways of life to different climates and terrains, thus creating the diverse culture areas (ways of subsistence) that the Europeans encountered (see Map 1.1). Scholars often refer to such culture areas by language group (such as Algonquian or Iroquoian). Bands that lived in environments not suited to agriculture followed a nomadic lifestyle typified by the Paiutes and Shoshones, who inhabited the Great Basin (now Nevada and Utah). Because finding sufficient food was difficult, such hunter-gatherer bands were small, usually composed of one or more related families. The men hunted small animals, and women gathered seeds and berries.

In more favorable environments, larger groups, like the Chinooks of present-day Washington and Oregon, combined agriculture with gathering, hunting, and fishing. Residents of the interior (for example, the Arikaras of the Missouri River valley) hunted large animals while also cultivating maize, squash, and beans.

Trade routes linked distant peoples. For instance, hoe and spade blades manufactured from stone mined in modern southern Illinois have been found as far northeast as Lake Erie and as far west as the Plains. Commercial and other interactions among disparate groups speaking different languages were aided by the universal symbol of friendship—the calumet, a feathered tobacco pipe offered to strangers at initial encounters.

Gendered Division of Labor

Societies that relied on hunting large animals, such as deer and buffalo, assigned that task to men, allotting food preparation and clothing production to women.

Before acquiring horses from the Spaniards, women carried the family's belongings whenever the band relocated. This sexual division of labor was universal among hunting peoples. Agricultural societies assigned work in divergent ways. The Pueblo defined agricultural labor as men's work. In the east, peoples speaking Algonquian, Iroquoian, and Muskogean languages allocated most agricultural chores to women, although men cleared the land. In all farming societies, women gathered wild foods and prepared food for consumption or storage, whereas men hunted.

Almost universally, women cared for young children, while older youths learned adult skills from their same-sex parent. Children had a lot of freedom. Young people commonly chose their own marital partners, and in most societies couples could easily divorce. Infants and toddlers were nursed until age two or older, and taboos prevented couples from having sexual intercourse during that period.



MAP 1.1

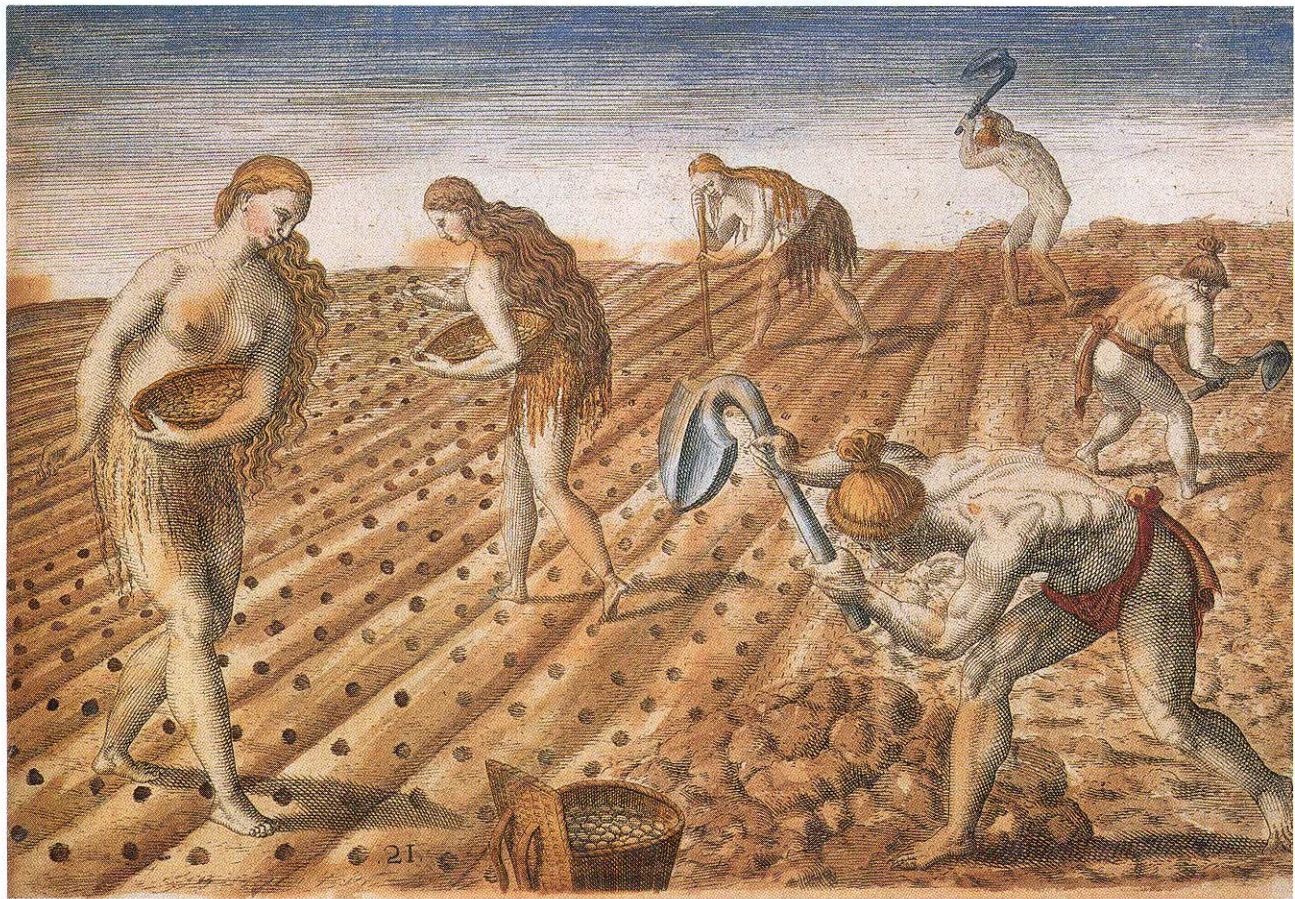
Native Cultures of North America

The Natives of the North American continent effectively used the resources of the regions in which they lived. As this map shows, coastal groups relied on fishing, residents of fertile areas engaged in agriculture, and other peoples employed hunting (often combined with gathering) as a primary mode of subsistence.

Source: Copyright © Cengage Learning

Social Organization

Southwestern and eastern agricultural peoples similarly lived in villages, sometimes with a thousand or more inhabitants. The Pueblos resided in multistory buildings constructed on terraces along the sides of cliffs or other easily defended sites. Northern Iroquois villages (in modern New York State) were composed of large, rectangular, bark-covered structures, or long houses; the name Haudenosaunee, which the Iroquois called themselves, means "People of the Long House." In the present-day southeastern United States, Muskogean and southern Algonquians lived in large thatch houses. Most of the eastern villages were surrounded by wooden palisades and ditches to fend off attackers.



Jacques Le Moyne, an artist accompanying the French settlement in Florida in the 1560s (see page 30), produced some of the first European images of North American peoples. His depiction of native agricultural practices shows the gendered division of labor: men breaking up the ground with fishbone hoes before women drop seeds into the holes. But Le Moyne's version of the scene cannot be accepted uncritically: unable to abandon a European view of proper farming methods, he erroneously drew plowed furrows in the soil.

In all the agricultural societies, each dwelling housed an extended family defined matrilineally (through a female line of descent). Mothers, their married daughters, and their daughters' husbands and children all lived together. Matrilineal descent did not imply matriarchy, or the wielding of power by women, but denoted kinship and linked extended families into clans. The nomadic bands of the Prairies and Great Plains were most often related patrilineally (through the male line).

War and Politics

Long before Europeans arrived, residents fought one another for control of the best hunting and fishing territories, the most fertile agricultural lands, or the sources of essential items, such as salt (for preserving meat) and flint (for making knives and arrowheads). Bands of Americans protected by wooden armor engaged in face-to-face combat, since the clubs and throwing spears they used were effective only in close proximity. They began to shoot arrows from behind trees only when they confronted European guns. War captives were sometimes enslaved, but slavery was never an important labor source in pre-Columbian America.

Political structures varied considerably. Among Pueblos, the village council, composed of ten to thirty men, was the highest political authority; no government structure connected the villages. The Iroquois had an elaborate hierarchy incorporating villages into nations and nations into a confederation. A council comprising representatives from each nation made crucial decisions of war and peace. Women more often assumed leadership roles among agricultural peoples than among nomadic hunters. Female sachems (rulers) led Algonquian villages in what is now Massachusetts, but women never became heads of hunting bands. Iroquois women did not become chiefs, yet older women chose village chiefs and could both start wars (by calling for the capture of prisoners to replace dead relatives) and stop them (by refusing to supply warriors with foodstuffs).

Religion

All the American peoples were polytheistic, worshipping a multitude of gods. The major deities of agricultural peoples like the Pueblos and Muskogean were associated with cultivation, and festivals centered on planting and harvest. The most important gods of hunters like those living on the Great Plains were associated with animals. Women held the most prominent positions in those agricultural societies where they were also the chief food producers; in hunting societies, men took the lead in religious and political affairs.

A variety of cultures, comprising more than 10 million people speaking over one thousand languages, inhabited America north of Mexico when Europeans arrived. The hierarchical kingdoms of Mesoamerica bore little resemblance to the nomadic hunting societies of the Great Plains or to the agriculturalists of the Northeast or Southwest. They did not consider themselves one people, nor did they consider uniting to repel the European invaders.

African Societies

Fifteenth-century Africa similarly housed a variety of cultures. In the north, along the Mediterranean Sea, lived the Berbers, who were Muslims, or followers of the Islamic religion. On the east coast of Africa, Muslim city-states engaged in extensive trade with India, the Moluccas (part of modern Indonesia), and China. Sustained contact and intermarriage among Arabs and Africans created the Swahili language and culture. Through the East African city-states passed the Spice Route, water-borne commerce between the eastern Mediterranean and East Asia; other trade traversed the Silk Road, the long land route across Central Asia.

South of the Mediterranean coast in the African interior lie the great Saharan and Libyan Deserts. The introduction of the camel in the fifth century C.E. made long-distance travel possible, and as Islam expanded after the ninth century, commerce controlled by Muslim merchants helped spread religious and cultural ideas. Below the deserts, the continent is divided between tropical rain forests (along the coasts) and grassy plains (in the interior). South of the Gulf of Guinea, the grassy landscape came to be dominated by Bantu-speaking peoples, who left their homeland in modern Nigeria about two thousand years ago.

What were the chief characteristics of West African societies in the fifteenth century?

West Africa (Guinea)

West Africa was a land of tropical forests and savanna grasslands where fishing, cattle herding, and agriculture supported the inhabitants for ten thousand years before Europeans arrived in the fifteenth century. The northern region of West Africa, or Upper Guinea, was heavily influenced by Mediterranean Islamic culture. Trade via camel caravans between Upper Guinea and the Muslim Mediterranean was sub-Saharan Africa's major connection to Europe and West Asia. Africans sold ivory, gold, and slaves to northern merchants to obtain salt, dates, silk, and cotton cloth.

Upper Guinea runs northeast-southwest from Cape Verde to Cape Palmas. The people of its northernmost region—the so-called Rice Coast (present-day Gambia, Senegal, and Guinea)—fished and cultivated rice in coastal swamplands. The Grain Coast, to the south, was thinly populated and with only one good harbor (modern Freetown, Sierra Leone), not easily accessible from the sea. Its people farmed and raised livestock.

In Lower Guinea, south and east of Cape Palmas, most Africans were farmers who practiced traditional religions, rather than Islam. Like the agricultural Americans, they believed spirits inhabited particular places, and they developed rituals to ensure good harvests. Individual villages composed of kin groups were linked into hierarchical kingdoms, creating the decentralized political and social authority that existed when Europeans arrived.

Complementary Gender Roles

As in the Americas, West African societies assigned different tasks to men and women. The sexes generally shared agricultural duties. Men also hunted, managed livestock, and fished. Women were responsible for childcare, food preparation, manufacture, and trade. They managed local and regional networks through which families, villages, and small kingdoms exchanged goods.

Lower Guinea had similar social systems organized according to what anthropologists have called the dual-sex principle. Each sex handled its own affairs: male political and religious leaders governed men; females ruled women. Many West African societies practiced polygyny (one man's having several wives, each of whom lived separately with her children). Thus, few adults lived permanently in marital households, but the dual-sex system ensured that they were monitored by their own sex.

Throughout Guinea, religious beliefs stressed complementary male and female roles. Both women and men served as heads of the cults and secret societies that directed village spiritual life. Young women were initiated into the Sandé cult, young men into Poro. Although West African women rarely held formal power over men, female religious leaders governed women within the Sandé cult, enforcing conformity to behavioral norms.

Slavery in Guinea

West African law recognized individual and communal land ownership, but men seeking wealth needed labor—wives, children, or slaves—who could work the land. West Africans enslaved for life were vital to the economy. Africans could be enslaved for committing crimes, but usually slaves were enemy captives or people who enslaved themselves or their children to pay debts. An African slave owner had a right to the products of slaves' labor, although slave status did not always descend to the next generation. Some slaves were held as chattel; others could engage in trade, retaining a portion of their profits; and still others achieved prominent political or military positions. All, however, could be traded at any time.

Agricultural peoples, West African men and women enjoyed a relatively egalitarian relationship and worked communally in family groups or with members of their sex. Carried as captives to the Americas, they became essential laborers for European colonists.

European Societies

In the fifteenth century, Europeans, too, were agricultural peoples. In the hierarchical European societies, a few families wielded autocratic power over the majority. English society was organized as a series of interlocking hierarchies; that is, each person (except those at the top or bottom) was superior to some, inferior to others. Although Europeans were not subjected to perpetual slavery, Christian doctrine permitted the enslavement of “heathens” (non-Christians). Some Europeans, too, were held as serfs, which tied them to the land or to specific owners. In short, Europe’s kingdoms resembled those of Africa or Mesoamerica but differed from the more egalitarian societies in America north of Mexico.

What were the motives behind fifteenth- and sixteenth-century European explorations?

Gender, Work, Politics, and Religion

Most Europeans, like Africans and Americans, lived in small villages. European farmers, called peasants, owned or leased separate landholdings but worked the fields communally. Because fields had to lie fallow (unplanted) every second or third year to regain fertility, a family could only ensure its food supply if all villagers shared the work and the crops. Men did the fieldwork; women helped at planting and harvesting. In some regions, men concentrated on herding livestock. Women’s duties consisted of childcare and household tasks, including preserving food, milking cows, and caring for poultry. If a husband was a city artisan or storekeeper, his wife might assist him in business. Because Europeans kept domesticated animals (pigs, goats, sheep, and cattle) for meat, hunting had little economic importance.

Men dominated European society. A few women—notably Queen Elizabeth I of England—achieved power by birthright, but most were excluded from political authority. They also held inferior social, religious, and economic positions, yet wielded power over children and servants.

Christianity was the dominant European religion. In the West, authority rested in the Catholic Church, based in Rome. Although Europeans were nominally Catholic, many adhered to local belief systems that the church deemed heretical. Still, Europe’s Christian nations from the twelfth century on publicly united to drive nonbelievers (especially Muslims) from their domains and from the holy city of Jerusalem, triggering wars known as the Crusades. Nevertheless, in the fifteenth century, Muslims dominated the commerce and geography of the Mediterranean, especially after they conquered Constantinople (capital of the Christian Byzantine empire) in 1453. Few would have predicted that Christian Europeans would ever pose a challenge.

Effects of Plague and Warfare

When the fifteenth century began, European nations were recovering from the devastating Black Death epidemic, which traders seem to have brought from China in 1346. The disease recurred with severity in the 1360s and 1370s. The best estimate is that one-third of Europeans died. A precipitous economic decline followed—as did severe social, political, and religious disruption.

As plague ravaged the population, England and France waged the Hundred Years' War (1337–1453), initiated because English monarchs claimed the French throne. The war interrupted overland trade routes connecting England and Antwerp (in modern Belgium) to Venice, a Christian trading center, and thence to India and China. Needing a new way to their northern trading partners, eastern Mediterranean merchants forged a maritime route to Antwerp. Using a triangular, or lateen, sail (rather than square rigging) improved a ship's maneuverability, enabling vessels to sail from the Mediterranean and north around the European coast.

Political and Technological Change

After the Hundred Years' War, European monarchs consolidated their political power and raised revenues by taxing an already hard-pressed peasantry. The military struggle inspired new pride in national identity over former regional and dynastic loyalties. In England, Henry VII in 1485 founded the Tudor dynasty and united a previously divided land. In France, Charles VII's successors unified the kingdom. Most successful were Ferdinand of Aragón and Isabella of Castile; in 1492, they defeated the Muslims, who had lived in Spain and Portugal for centuries, thereafter establishing a strongly Catholic Spain by expelling Jews and Muslims.

The fifteenth century also brought technological change to Europe. **Movable type** and the **printing press**, invented in Germany in the 1450s, made information more accessible, including books about fabled lands across the seas. The most important books were Ptolemy's *Geography*, a description of the known world written in ancient times, first published in 1475; and Marco Polo's *Travels*, published in 1477. The *Travels* recounted a Venetian merchant's adventures in thirteenth-century China and described that nation as bordered on the east by an ocean. That book led Europeans to believe they could reach China by sea rather than via the Silk Road or the Spice Route. If it existed, a transoceanic route would allow northern Europeans to circumvent the Muslim and Venetian merchants who controlled their access to Asian goods.

movable type: Type in which each character is cast on a separate piece of metal.

printing press: A machine that transfers lettering or images by contact with various forms of inked surface onto paper or similar material fed into it in various ways.

Motives for Exploration In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, European countries craved easy access to African and Asian goods—silk, dyes, perfumes, jewels, sugar, gold, and especially spices, which were desirable for seasoning food and as possible medicines. The allure of cinnamon or cloves stemmed from their rarity, extraordinary cost, and mysterious origins. They passed through so many hands en route to London or Seville that no European knew exactly where they came from. Acquiring products directly would improve a nation's income and its standing relative to other countries, thus providing a powerful incentive for exploration.

Spreading Christianity around the world supplemented the economic motive. Fifteenth-century Europeans saw no conflict between materialistic and spiritual goals. Explorers and colonizers—especially Roman Catholics—sought to convert “heathen” peoples and also hoped to increase their nation's wealth via direct trade with Africa, China, India, and the Moluccas.

Early European Explorations

To establish that trade, European mariners first had to explore the oceans. Seafarers needed not just maneuverable vessels and navigational aids but also knowledge of the sea, its currents, and winds. Wind would power their ships. But where would Atlantic breezes carry their square-rigged ships, which needed the wind directly behind the vessel?

What sailing innovation ultimately facilitated the widespread exploration of the Atlantic and Pacific?

Sailing the Mediterranean Atlantic

The answers would be found in the Mediterranean Atlantic, the expanse of ocean located south and west of Spain and bounded by the Azores (on the west) and the Canaries (on the south), with the Madeiras in their midst. Europeans reached all three sets of islands during the fourteenth century. Sailing to the Canaries from Europe was easy because strong Northeast trade winds blew southward along the Iberian and African coastlines. The voyage took about a week.

The Iberian sailor returning home, however, faced winds that blew directly at him. Rowing and tacking back and forth against the wind were tedious and ineffectual. Instead of waiting for the wind to change, mariners developed the new technique of sailing “around the wind”—literally sailing as directly against the wind as possible without changing course. In the Mediterranean Atlantic, a mariner would head northwest into the open ocean, until—weeks later—he reached the winds that would carry him home, the so-called Westerlies. This solution became the key to successful exploration of the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans. Faced with a contrary wind, a sailor could simply sail around it until he found a wind to carry him on his way.

Islands of the Mediterranean Atlantic

During the fifteenth century, Iberian seamen regularly visited the three island groups. The uninhabited Azores were soon settled by Portuguese migrants who raised wheat for sale in Europe and sold livestock to passing sailors. By the 1450s, Portuguese colonists who settled the uninhabited Madeiras were employing slaves (probably Jews and Muslims brought from Iberia) to grow sugar for export. By the 1470s, Madeira had developed a colonial **plantation** economy. For the first time in history, a region was settled explicitly to cultivate a valuable crop—sugar—for sale elsewhere. Because the work was so backbreaking, only a supply of enslaved laborers (who could not quit) could ensure the system’s success.

plantation: A large-scale agricultural enterprise growing commercial crops and usually employing coerced or slave labor.

The Canaries had indigenous residents—the Guanche people, who traded animal skins and dyes with Europeans. After 1402 the French, Portuguese, and Spanish sporadically attacked the islands. The Guanches resisted but were weakened by European diseases. The seven islands fell to Europeans, who carried off Guanches as slaves to the Madeiras or Iberia. Spain conquered the last island in 1496 and devoted it to sugar plantations.

Portuguese Trading Posts in Africa

Other Europeans saw the Mediterranean Atlantic islands as steppingstones to Africa. In 1415, Portugal seized control of Ceuta, a Muslim city in North Africa. Prince Henry the Navigator, son of King John I of Portugal, dispatched ships southward along the

African coast, attempting to discover an oceanic route to Asia. Not until after his death did Bartholomew Dias round the southern tip of Africa (1488) and Vasco da Gama finally reach India (1498), where at Malabar he located the richest source of peppercorns in the world.

Although West African states resisted European penetration of the interior, they let Portugal establish trading posts along their coasts. The African kingdoms charged traders rent and levied duties on imports. The Portuguese gained, too, profiting from transporting African gold, ivory, and slaves to Europe. By bargaining with African masters to purchase slaves and carrying those bondpeople to Iberia, the Portuguese introduced black slavery into Europe.

Lessons of Early Colonization

Portugal's success grew after it colonized São Tomé, located in the Gulf of Guinea, in the 1480s. With Madeira at its sugar-producing capacity, São Tomé proved an ideal new locale, and plantation agriculture there expanded rapidly. Planters imported slaves to work in the cane fields, creating the first economy based primarily on the bondage of black Africans.

By the 1490s, Europeans had learned three key colonization lessons in the Mediterranean Atlantic. First, they learned how to transplant crops and livestock to exotic locations. Second, they discovered that native peoples could be conquered (like the Guanches) or exploited (like the Africans). Third, they developed a model of plantation slavery and a system for supplying many such workers. The stage was set for a pivotal moment in world history.

Voyages of Columbus, Cabot, and Their Successors

What three themes in Columbus's log about his explorations would come to mark much of the future settlement of Europeans in the Americas?

Christopher Columbus: Italian explorer who claimed the island of San Salvador in the Bahamas for the king and queen of Spain.

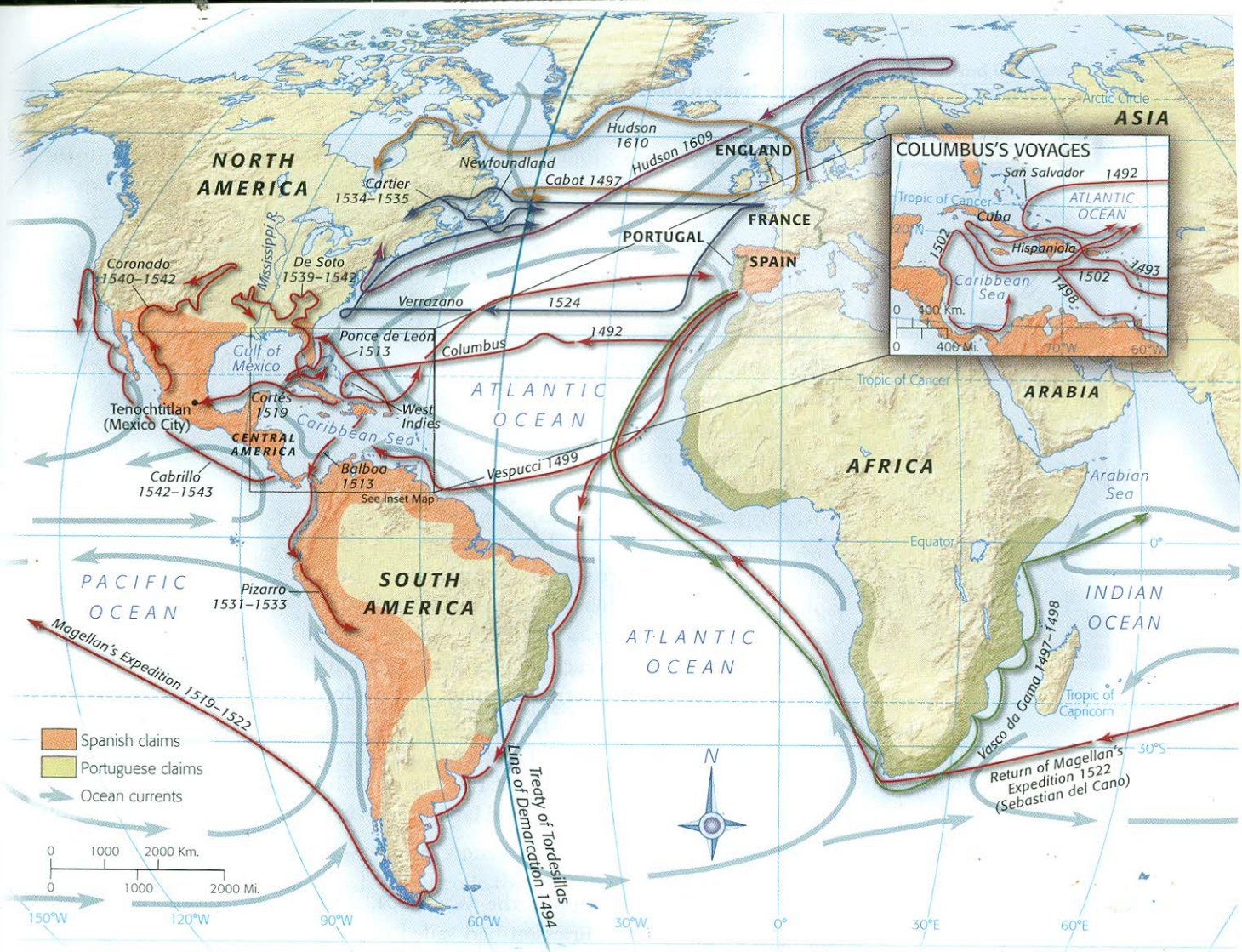
Christopher Columbus understood the lessons of the Mediterranean Atlantic. Born in 1451 in the Italian city-state of Genoa, this self-educated son of a wool merchant was by the 1490s an experienced sailor and mapmaker. Drawn to Portugal and its islands, he voyaged to the Portuguese outpost on the Gold Coast, where he became obsessed with gold and witnessed the economic potential of the slave trade.

Like all accomplished seafarers, Columbus knew the world was round. But he thought that China lay only three thousand miles from the southern European coast. Thus, he argued, it would be easier to reach Asia by sailing west. Experts scoffed, accurately predicting that the two continents lay twelve thousand miles apart. When Columbus in 1484 asked the Portuguese rulers to back his plan, they rejected what appeared to be a crazy scheme.

Columbus's Voyage

Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain, jealous of Portugal's successes in Africa, agreed to finance Columbus's risky voyage. They hoped profits would finance a new expedition to conquer Muslim-held Jerusalem. On August 3, 1492, in command of three ships—the *Pinta*, the *Niña*, and the *Santa Maria*—Columbus set sail from the Spanish port of Palos.

On October 12, the vessels found land approximately where Columbus thought Cipangu (Japan) was located (see Map 1.2). He and his men landed on an island in



MAP 1.2

European Explorations in America

In the century following Columbus's voyages, European adventurers explored the coasts and parts of the interior of North and South America.

Source: Copyright © Cengage Learning

the Bahamas, which its inhabitants called Guanahani but he renamed San Salvador. Later, he explored the islands now known as Cuba and Hispaniola, which their residents, the Taíno people, called Colba and Bohío. Because he thought he had reached the East Indies (the Spice Islands), Columbus referred to the inhabitants as "Indians." The Taínos thought the Europeans had come from the sky, and crowds gathered to meet and exchange gifts with Columbus.

Columbus's Observations

Three themes predominate Columbus's log. First, he insistently asked the Taínos where he could find gold, pearls, and spices. They replied (via signs) that such products were on other islands or on the mainland. He came to mistrust such answers, noting, "They will tell me anything I want to hear."

Link to the logbook of Columbus's first voyage.

Second, Columbus wrote about the strange and beautiful plants and animals. His interest was not only aesthetic. “There are many plants and trees here that could be worth a lot in Spain for use as dyes, spices, and medicines,” he observed and planned to carry home “a sample of everything I can” for experts to examine.

Third, Columbus described the inhabitants, seizing some to take back to Spain. The Taínos were, he said, handsome, gentle, and friendly, though they told him of the fierce Caniba (today called Caribs) who lived on other islands, raided their villages, and ate some captives (hence today’s word *cannibal*). Although Columbus distrusted the Caribs, he believed the Taínos to be likely converts to Catholicism as well as “good and skilled servants.”

Thus, the records of the first encounter between Europeans and Americans revealed significant themes for centuries to come. Europeans wanted to extract profits by exploiting American resources, including plants, animals, and peoples alike, and like Columbus others later divided the native peoples into “good” (Taínos) and “bad” (Caribs). Columbus made three more voyages to the west, exploring most of the major Caribbean islands and sailing along the coasts of Central and South America. Until the day he died in 1506 at the age of fifty-five, he believed he had reached Asia. Even before his death, others knew better. Because the Florentine Amerigo Vespucci, who explored the South American coast in 1499, was the first to publish that a new continent had been discovered, Martin Waldseemüller in 1507 labeled the land “America.” By then, Spain, Portugal, and Pope Alexander VI had signed the Treaty of Tordesillas (1494), confirming Portugal’s dominance in Africa—and later Brazil—in exchange for Spanish preeminence in the rest of the Americas.



Link to Columbus’s letter to Ferdinand and Isabella announcing his discoveries.

Norse: Also known as Vikings, they were a warrior culture from Scandinavia.

Vinland: The site of the first known attempt at European settlement in the Americas.

John Cabot: Italian explorer who established English claims to the New World

Norse and Other Northern Voyagers

About the year 1001, a **Norse** expedition under Leif Ericsson had sailed to North America across the Davis Strait, which separated their Greenland villages from Baffin Island (located northeast of Hudson Bay; see Map 1.1) by just 200 nautical miles, settling at a site they named “**Vinland**.” Attacks by residents forced them out after a few years. In the 1960s, archaeologists determined that the Norse had established an outpost at what is now L’Anse aux Meadows, Newfoundland, but Vinland itself was probably farther south.

Some historians argue that during the fifteenth century Basque whalers and fishermen (from modern northern France and Spain) located rich fishing grounds off Newfoundland but kept the information secret. Fifteenth-century seafarers voyaged regularly between the European continent, England, Ireland, and Iceland. The mariners who explored the region that would become the United States and Canada built on their knowledge.

John Cabot’s Explorations

The European generally credited with “discovering” North America is Zuan Cabboto, known today as **John Cabot**. More precisely, Cabot brought to Europe the first formal knowledge of the northern continental coastline and claimed the land for England. Like Columbus, Cabot was a master mariner from the Italian city-state of Genoa; the two men probably knew each other. Calculating that England—which traded with Asia only through intermediaries—would be eager to sponsor exploratory voyages, he gained financial backing from King Henry VII. He sailed from



John Carter Brown Library at Brown University

In 1507, German mapmaker Martin Waldseemüller was the first person to designate the newly discovered southern continent as "America." He named the continent after Amerigo Vespucci, the Italian explorer who realized he had reached a "new world" rather than islands off the coast of Asia.

Bristol in late May 1497, reaching North America a month later. After exploring the coast of modern Newfoundland, Cabot rode the Westerlies back to England, arriving in fifteen days.

The voyages of Columbus, Cabot, and their successors linked the Eastern and Western Hemispheres. The Portuguese explorer Pedro Álvares Cabral reached Brazil in 1500; John Cabot's son Sebastian arrived in North America in 1507; France financed Giovanni da Verrazzano in 1524 and Jacques Cartier in 1534; and in 1609 and 1610, Henry Hudson explored the North American coast for the Dutch West India Company (see Map 1.2). All were searching for the legendary, nonexistent "Northwest Passage" through the Americas, an easy route to the riches of Asia. But, foreshadowing the future, Verrazzano observed that "the [American] countryside is, in fact, full of promise and deserves to be developed for itself."

Spanish Exploration and Conquest

Only Spain began colonization immediately. On his second voyage in 1493, Columbus brought to Hispaniola seventeen ships loaded with twelve hundred men, seeds, plants, livestock, chickens, and dogs—along with microbes, rats, and weeds. The settlement named Isabela (in the modern Dominican Republic) and its successors became the staging area for the Spanish invasion of America.

What model of colonization did Spain establish that other nations would later attempt to follow?

Cortés and Other Explorers

At first, Spanish explorers fanned out around the Caribbean basin. In 1513, Juan Ponce de León reached Florida, and Vasco Núñez de Balboa crossed the Isthmus

conquistadors: Spanish conquerors or adventurers in the Americas.

of Panama to the Pacific Ocean, followed by Pánfilo de Narváez and others who traced the coast of the Gulf of Mexico. In the 1530s and 1540s, **conquistadors** explored other regions claimed by Spain: Francisco Vásquez de Coronado journeyed through the southwestern portion of what is now the United States while Hernán de Soto explored the Southeast. Francisco Pizarro, who ventured into western South America, acquired the world's richest silver mines by conquering the Incas. But the most important conquistador was Hernán Cortés, who in 1521 seized the Aztec Empire.

Cortés landed a force on the Mexican mainland in 1519 to search for rumored wealthy cities. Local Mayas presented him with young enslaved women. One of them, Malinche (whom the Spaniards baptized as a Christian and renamed Doña Marina), became Cortés's translator, bore Cortés a son, Martín—one of the first *mestizos*, or mixed-blood children—and eventually married one of his officers.

Capture of Tenochtitlán

Traveling toward the Aztec capital, Cortés, with Malinche's help, recruited peoples whom the Aztecs had long subjugated. The Spaniards' strange beasts (horses, livestock) and noisy weapons (guns, cannon) awed their new allies. Yet the Spaniards, too, were awed. Years later, Bernal Díaz del Castillo recalled his first sight of Tenochtitlán: "We were amazed... on account of the great towers and cues [temples] and buildings rising from the water, and all built of masonry." Spaniards also brought smallpox to Tenochtitlán. The disease peaked in 1520, fatally weakening Tenochtitlán's defenders. Largely as a consequence, Tenochtitlán surrendered in 1521, and the Spaniards built Mexico City on its site. Cortés and his men seized a treasure of gold and silver. Thus, the Spanish monarchs controlled the richest, most extensive empire Europe had known since ancient Rome.

Spanish Colonization

Spain established the model of colonization based on three major elements that other countries would later imitate. First, the Crown sought tight control over the colonies, imposing a hierarchical government that allowed little autonomy to American jurisdictions. That included carefully vetting and limiting prospective emigrants and insisting that the colonies import all manufactured goods from Spain. Roman Catholic priests attempted to ensure colonists' conformity with orthodox religious views.

Second, men constituted most of the first colonists. Although some Spanish women later immigrated to America, the men took primarily Indian—and, later, African—women as wives or concubines, a development often encouraged by colonial administrators. They thereby began the racially mixed population that characterizes much of Latin America today.

Third, the colonies' wealth was based on the exploitation of the native population and slaves from Africa. Spaniards took over the autocratic rule once assumed by native leaders, who exacted labor and tribute from their subjects. Cortés established the **encomienda system**, which granted Indian villages to conquistadors in return for services, thus legalizing slavery in all but name.

In 1542, after criticism from colonial priest Bartolomé de las Casas, the monarch formulated new laws forbidding the conquerors from enslaving Indians yet allowing them to collect money and goods from tributary villages. That, combined with the declining Indian population, led the *encomenderos* to import Africans as their controlled labor force. They employed Indians and Africans primarily in gold and silver

encomienda system: Grants by the Spanish which awarded Indian labor to wealthy colonists.

mines; on sugar plantations; and on horse, cattle, and sheep ranches. African slavery was more common on the larger Caribbean islands than on the mainland.

Many demoralized residents of Mesoamerica accepted the Christian religion brought to New Spain by Franciscan and Dominican friars—men who had joined religious orders bound by vows of poverty and celibacy. Spaniards leveled cities, constructing cathedrals and monasteries on the former sites of Aztec, Incan, and Mayan temples. Indians were exposed to European customs and religious rituals designed to assimilate Catholic and pagan beliefs. Friars juxtaposed the cult of the Virgin Mary with that of the corn goddess, and Indians melded aspects of their worldview with Christianity in a process called *syncretism*. Thousands of Indians embraced Catholicism, partly because it was the religion of their new rulers.

Gold, Silver, and Spain's Decline

The New World's gold and silver, initially a boon, ultimately brought about the decline of Spain as a major power. China gobbled up about half of the total output of New World silver mines. In the 1570s, the Spanish dispatched silver-laden galleons annually from Acapulco (on Mexico's west coast) to trade at their new settlement at Manila, in the Philippines, which netted them easy access to luxury Chinese goods, such as silk and Asian spices.

Such unprecedented wealth led to rapid inflation, which caused Spanish products to be overpriced in international markets and imported goods to become cheaper in Spain. The Spanish textile-manufacturing industry collapsed, as did many other businesses. The seemingly endless income from American colonies emboldened Spanish monarchs to spend lavishly on wars against the Dutch and the English. Late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century monarchs repudiated the state debt, wreaking havoc on the nation's finances. When the South American gold and silver mines faltered in the mid-seventeenth century, Spain's economy crumbled, ending its international importance.

The Columbian Exchange

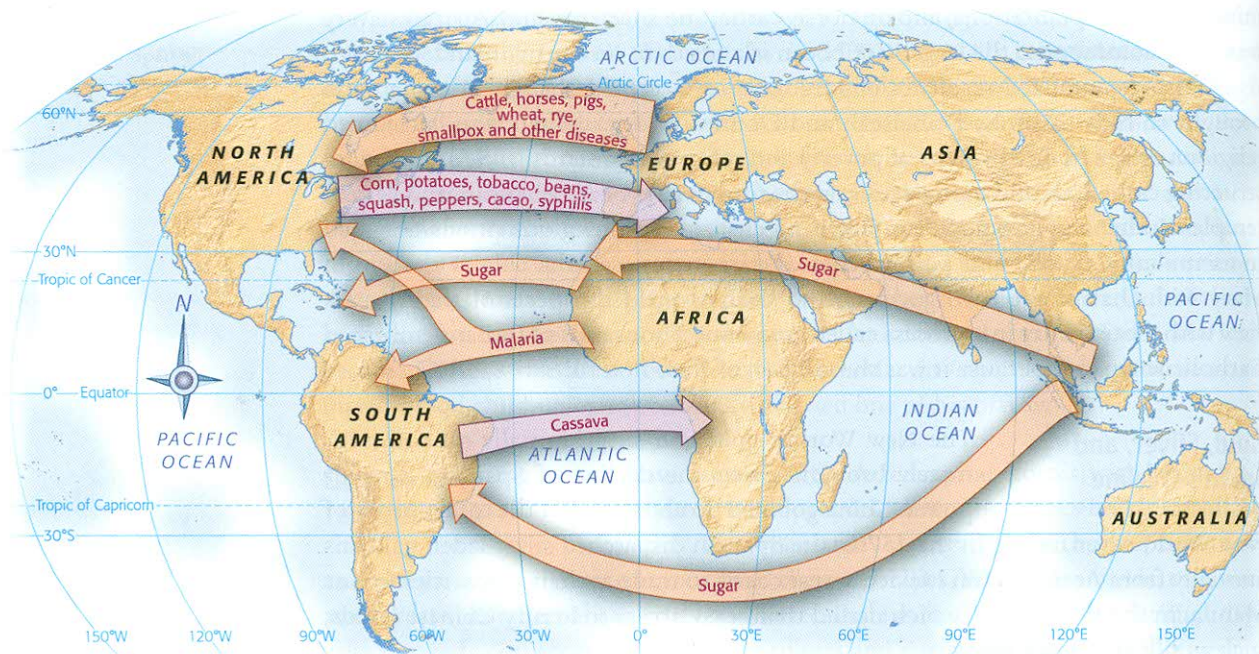
A mutual transfer of diseases, plants, and animals (called the **Columbian Exchange** by historian Alfred Crosby; see Map 1.3) resulted from the fifteenth and sixteenth century European voyages and from Spanish colonization. Many large mammals, such as cattle and horses, were native to the connected continents of Europe, Asia, and Africa, but not the Americas. The Americas' vegetable crops—particularly maize, beans, squash, cassava, and potatoes—were more nutritious and produced higher yields than those of Europe and Africa. In time, native peoples learned to raise and consume European livestock, and Europeans and Africans planted and ate American crops. (The diets of all three peoples were enriched, helping the world's population to double over the next three hundred years. About three-fifths of all crops cultivated worldwide today were first grown in the Americas.)

Smallpox and Other Diseases

Diseases carried from Europe and Africa, though, devastated the Americas. Indians fell victim to microbes that had long infested other continents, killing hundreds of thousands of Europeans but leaving survivors with some immunity. When Columbus landed on Hispaniola in 1492, approximately half a million people resided there. Fifty years later, there were fewer than two thousand native inhabitants.

What were the results of contact between native populations and European settlers and explorers?

Columbian Exchange: The widespread exchange of animals, plants, germs, and peoples between Europe, Africa, and the Americas.



MAP 1.3

Major Items in the Columbian Exchange

As European adventurers traversed the world in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, they initiated the "Columbian Exchange" of plants, animals, and diseases. These events changed the lives of the peoples of the world forever, bringing new foods and new pestilence to both sides of the Atlantic.

Source: Copyright © Cengage Learning

Although measles, typhus, influenza, malaria, and other illnesses severely afflicted the native peoples, the greatest killer was smallpox. Historians estimate that over time, alien microorganisms could have reduced the precontact American population by as much as 90 percent. The epidemics recurred at twenty- to thirty-year intervals, appearing in tandem or in quick succession. Large numbers of deaths further strained native societies, rendering them more vulnerable to droughts, crop failures, or other challenges. A great epidemic, probably viral hepatitis, swept through coastal villages north of Cape Cod from 1616 to 1618, wiping out up to 90 percent of the inhabitants. Because of this dramatic depopulation, a few years later English colonists established settlements virtually unopposed.

The Americans, though, probably gave the Europeans syphilis, a virulent venereal disease. The first recorded European case occurred in Barcelona, Spain, in 1493, after Columbus's return from the Caribbean. Although less likely than smallpox to be fatal, syphilis was debilitating. Carried by soldiers, sailors, and prostitutes, it spread through Europe and Asia, reaching China by 1505.

Sugar, Horses, and Tobacco

The exchange of three commodities significantly altered Europe and the Americas. The European demand for sugar—a luxury foodstuff—led Columbus to take Canary Island sugar canes to Hispaniola in 1493. By the 1520s, Greater Antilles plantations worked by African slaves regularly shipped sugar to Spain. Half a century later,

The exchange of three commodities significantly altered Europe and the Americas. The European demand for sugar—a luxury foodstuff—led Columbus to take Canary



Links to the World

Maize

Maize, to Mesoamericans, was a gift from Quetzalcoatl, the plumed serpent god. Cherokees told of an old woman whose blood produced the prized stalks after her grandson buried her body in a field. For the Abenakis, the crop began when a beautiful maiden ordered a youth to drag her by the hair through a burned-over field. The long hair turned into silk, the flower on corn stalks. Both tales' symbolic association of corn and women supports archaeologists' recent suggestion that—in eastern North America at least—female plant breeders were responsible for substantial improvements in the productivity of maize.

Sacred to the Indians who grew it, maize was a major dietary staple. They dried the kernels; ground into meal, maize was cooked as a mush or baked as flat cakes, the forerunners of modern tortillas. Although European invaders initially disdained maize, they soon learned it could be cultivated under many conditions—from sea level to twelve thousand feet, in abundant rainfall or in dry land. So Europeans, too, came to rely on corn, growing it in their American settlements and their homelands.

Maize cultivation spread to Asia and Africa. Today, China is second only to the United States in corn production, and corn is more widely grown in Africa than any other crop. Still, the United States produces 45 percent of the world's corn, and it is the nation's single largest crop.

More than half of American corn is consumed by livestock. Much of the rest is processed into syrup as a sweetener or into ethanol, a gasoline additive that reduces pollution and dependence on fossil fuels. Of the ten thousand products in a modern American grocery store, about one-fourth rely on corn. Today, this crop provides one-fifth of all the calories consumed by the earth's peoples. The gift of Quetzalcoatl has linked the globe.



The earliest known European drawing of maize, the American plant that was to have such an extraordinary impact on the entire world.

The Lufsther T. Mertz Library, NYBG/Art Resource, NY

Portugal's Brazil colony (founded 1532) produced sugar for the European market on a larger scale, and after 1640, sugar cultivation became the crucial component of English and French colonization in the Caribbean.

Through trade and theft, horses—which Columbus brought to America in 1493—spread among the peoples of the Great Plains by 1750. Lakotas, Comanches, and Crows, among others, used horses for transportation and hunting, calculated their wealth in number of horses owned, and waged war on horseback. After acquiring horses, their mode of subsistence shifted from hunting combined with gathering and agriculture, to almost entirely hunting buffalo.

In America, Europeans encountered tobacco, which at first they believed was medicinal. Smoking and chewing the “Indian weed” became a European fad after it was planted in Turkey in the sixteenth century. Despite the efforts of King James I of England, who in 1604 pronounced smoking “hatefull to the Nose, harmfull to the brain, [and] dangerous to the Lungs,” tobacco’s popularity climbed.

Europeans in North America

What were the reasons behind the failure of England’s, Portugal’s, and France’s initial attempts at colonization?

Europeans were initially more interested in exploiting North America’s natural resources than in establishing colonies. John Cabot reported that fish were plentiful near Newfoundland, so the French, Spanish, Basques, and Portuguese rushed to take advantage of abundant codfish. In the early 1570s, the English joined the Newfoundland fishery, selling salt cod to the Spanish in exchange for valuable Asian goods. The English became dominant in the region, which by century’s end was the focal point of valuable European commerce.

Trade Among Indians and Europeans

Fishermen quickly realized they could increase profits by exchanging cloth and metal goods, such as pots and knives, for native trappers’ beaver pelts, used to make fashionable hats in Europe. Initially, Europeans traded from ships along the coast, but later male adventurers set up outposts on the mainland.

Indians similarly desired European goods that could make their lives easier and establish their tribal superiority. Some bands concentrated completely on trapping for the European market and abandoned their traditional economies and became partially dependent on others for food. The intensive peltry trade also had serious ecological consequences. In some regions, beavers were wiped out. The disappearance of their dams led to soil erosion, which later increased when European settlers cleared forests for farmland.

Contest Between Spain and England

The English watched enviously as Spain was enriched by its American possessions. In the mid-sixteenth century, English “sea dogs” like John Hawkins and Sir Francis Drake raided Spanish treasure fleets from the Caribbean, helping to foment a war that in 1588 culminated in the defeat of the Spanish Armada off the English coast. English leaders started to consider planting colonies in the Western Hemisphere, thereby gaining better access to trade goods while preventing Spain from dominating the Americas.

Encouraging the queen and her courtiers in that aim was Richard Hakluyt, a clergyman who was fascinated by tales of exploratory voyages. He published English translations of numerous accounts of discoveries, insisting on England's preeminent claim to North America. In *Divers Voyages* (1582) and especially *Principall Navigations* (1589), he promoted the benefits of English colonization.

The first English colonial planners hoped to reproduce Spanish successes by dispatching to America men who would exploit the native peoples for their nation's benefit. A group that included Sir Walter Raleigh promoted a scheme to establish outposts for trade with the Indians and as bases for attacks on New Spain. Pleased, Queen Elizabeth I authorized Raleigh to colonize North America.

Roanoke

After two preliminary expeditions, in 1587 Raleigh sent 117 colonists to the territory he named Virginia, after Elizabeth, the "Virgin Queen." They established a settlement on Roanoke Island, in what is now North Carolina, but in 1590 a resupply ship found the colonists had vanished, leaving only the word *Croatoan* (the name of a nearby island) carved on a tree. Recent tree-ring studies have shown that the North Carolina coast experienced a severe drought between 1587 and 1589 that may have led colonists to abandon Roanoke.

Thus, England's first attempt to plant a permanent settlement on the North American coast failed, as had Portugal in Cape Breton Island (early 1520s), Spain in modern Georgia (mid-1520s), and France in South Carolina and northern Florida (1560s). All three enterprises collapsed because of the hostility of neighboring peoples and colonists' inability to be self-sustaining in foodstuffs.

Harriot's Briefe and True Report

Such failures are explained in Thomas Harriot's *A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia*, published in 1588. Harriot, a noted scientist sailing with the second voyage to Roanoke, revealed that, although the explorers depended on nearby villagers for food, they antagonized them by killing some of them for what Harriot admitted were unjustifiable reasons.

Harriot advised later colonizers to treat native peoples more humanely. But his book's description of America's economic potential illustrated why that advice would rarely be followed. Harriot stressed three points: the availability of familiar

After two preliminary expeditions, in 1587 Raleigh



A watercolor by John White, an artist with Raleigh's second preliminary expedition (and who later was governor of the ill-fated 1587 colony). He identified his subjects as the wife and daughter of the chief of Pomeioc, a village near Roanoke. Note the woman's elaborate tattoos and the fact that the daughter carries an Elizabethan doll, obviously given to her by one of the Englishmen.



Legacy for a People and a Nation

Kennewick Man/ Ancient One

On July 28, 1996, Will Thomas, a college student wading in the Columbia River near Kennewick, Washington, felt a skull underfoot. Shocked, Thomas initially believed he had found a recent murder victim. Soon the skull was determined to be about 9200 years old. During the next decade, the skeleton dubbed “Kennewick Man” (by the press) or “Ancient One” (by local Indian tribes) was featured on television news and in magazines.

The oldest nearly complete skeleton found in the United States, the remains became the subject of a major federal court case. The issue was the interpretation of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), adopted by Congress in 1990 to prevent the desecration of Indian gravesites and to provide for the return of bones and sacred objects to native peoples. It defined the term *Native American* as “of, or relating to, a tribe, people, or culture that is

indigenous to the United States.” Led by the Umatillas, area tribes prepared to reclaim and rebury the remains. But eight anthropologists filed suit in federal court, contending that bones of such antiquity were unlikely to be linked to modern tribes and requesting access to them for scientific study.

Although the U.S. government supported the tribes’ claims, in late August 2002 a federal judge ruled in favor of the anthropologists, a decision upheld on appeal two years later. He declared that the Interior Department had erred in concluding that all pre-1492 remains found in the United States should automatically be considered Native American. The Umatillas protested, contending that he clearly contradicted Congress’s intent in enacting NAGPRA. In June 2006, Umatilla leaders visited the bones at a Seattle museum to honor and pray for them.

The debate over the skeleton reveals one facet of the continuing legacy of the often-contentious relationship between the nation’s indigenous inhabitants and later immigrants.



Link to Harriot’s text,
illustrated by John White.

European commodities such as grapes, iron, copper, and fur-bearing animals; the potential profitability of exotic American products, such as maize and tobacco; and the relative ease of manipulating the native population. Harriot’s *Briefe and True Report* depicted a bountiful land full of profitable opportunities. The people there would, he thought, “in a short time be brought to civilitie” through conversion to Christianity, admiration for European superiority, or conquest—if they did not die from disease. But European dominance of North America was never fully achieved as Harriot and others intended.

Summary

Initial contact among Europeans, Africans, and Americans that ended near the close of the sixteenth century, began approximately 250 years earlier when Portuguese sailors explored the Mediterranean Atlantic and the West African coast. Those seamen established commercial ties that brought African slaves first to Iberia and then to the islands Europeans conquered and settled. The Mediterranean Atlantic and its island sugar plantations nurtured the mariners. Except for the Spanish, early explorers regarded the Americas primarily as a barrier keeping them from an oceanic route to the riches of China and the Moluccas. European fishermen were the first to realize that the northern coasts had valuable products of fish and furs.

The Aztecs experienced hunger after Cortés's invasion, and their great temples were destroyed as Spaniards used their stones (and Indian laborers) to construct cathedrals. The conquerors employed, first Americans and later enslaved Africans to till the fields, mine the precious metals, and herd the livestock that generated immense profits.

The initial impact of Europeans on the Americas proved devastating in just decades. Europeans' diseases killed millions, and their livestock, along with other imported animals and plants, irrevocably modified the American environment. Europe, too, was changed: American foodstuffs like corn and potatoes improved nutrition, and American gold and silver first enriched, then ruined, the Spanish economy.

By the end of the sixteenth century, fewer people resided in North America than had lived there before Columbus's arrival. The Indians, Africans, and Europeans there inhabited a new world that combined foods, religions, economies, ways of life, and political systems that had developed separately for millennia. Understandably, conflict permeated that process.

Chapter Review

American Societies

What led to the development of major North American civilizations in the centuries before Europeans arrived?

Agricultural success facilitated the rise of North American civilizations in the era before Europeans arrived. After the Ice Age ended and the prevalence of large mammals decreased, many native peoples in what is now central Mexico about 9000 years ago shifted from hunting to cultivating food crops for survival, including maize (corn), squash, beans, avocados, and peppers. As agricultural methods improved, vegetables became a reliable and nutritious food source, and native people established more permanent settlements. Early Americans began developing trade, accumulating wealth, creating elaborate cultural ceremonies and rituals, and building urban centers. But food supply was so keenly linked to a civilization's success that the first large city-states of Mesoamerica and Mississippian culture ultimately collapsed when food sources became scarce.

North America in 1492

What were the gender dimensions of labor in native cultures?

Like Europeans, Native American societies assigned various tasks and responsibilities to members

along gender lines. Native societies that were predominantly hunting assigned women to making food and clothing and carrying the family's possessions whenever they moved. Agricultural peoples had different patterns of the gendered division of labor; some, like the Pueblos, defined farming as men's work, while others, like the Algonquian, Iroquoian, and Muskogean, gave women most agricultural chores, and men hunted and cleared the land. Women just about everywhere raised children, gathered wild foods, and prepared all of what people ate. Agricultural families were defined matrilineally, through the female line of descent, and women assumed more leadership roles than in nomadic hunter peoples. They rarely became chiefs, but older women chose chiefs and could start or stop wars.

African Societies

What were the chief characteristics of West African societies in the fifteenth century?

People in West Africa made their living fishing, cattle herding, or farming, depending on where they lived. Those in Upper Guinea fished and grew rice; those in Lower Guinea farmed. Upper Guinea was also the region's trade link to Europe and Asia. Islamic culture influenced life in Upper Guinea, while people in the lower region practiced more traditional religions. Like other cultures around the world, West Africans designated

tasks according to gender, although their roles were seen as complementary. Both sexes farmed; men hunted and managed livestock and fished, while women cared for children, prepared the food, and managed trade networks. In Lower Guinea, male political and religious leaders ruled men, while women ruled women. Polygyny was common throughout West Africa. So was slavery. In West Africa, a person could be enslaved for committing a crime, to repay debts, or as an enemy's captive, but slave status did not automatically transfer to the next generation, and some slaves could engage in trade and keep some of the profits or rise to important military or political positions.

European Societies

What were the motives behind fifteenth- and sixteenth-century European explorations?

The driving force behind early European explorations was the quest for a transoceanic trade route—the Northwest Passage—that would provide direct access to desirable African and Asian goods such as silks, dyes, jewels, sugar, gold, and spices. If such a route existed, it would allow northern Europeans to bypass the Muslim and Venetian merchants who served as middle men for these items. Rulers also believed that the more they controlled access to these much-desired products, the better their nation's standing would be relative to other countries. Another, secondary motivation was to spread Christianity and convert those they considered to be heathen peoples.

Early European Explorations

What sailing innovation ultimately facilitated the widespread exploration of the Atlantic and Pacific?

The new technique of “sailing around the wind” made travel faster and less arduous for explorers, which ultimately made them increasingly inclined to take on such expeditions. While sailors would travel with the wind in one direction, returning home had previously meant rowing against the wind or waiting for the wind to change on their journeys home, so return trips were difficult and took weeks longer. But sailing around the wind sped up the journey; when mariners met with a difficult wind, they would now literally sail around it until they could find a wind that would easily and quickly carry them on their way. Consequently, more and more mariners set out to explore the Atlantic and Pacific.

Voyages of Columbus, Cabot, and Their Successors

What three themes in Columbus's log about his explorations would come to mark much of the future settlement of Europeans in the Americas?

First, Columbus's log notes his quest for gold and other riches and his mixed attitudes toward the native peoples he encountered. Second, he wrote that the region's resources (plants, animals, and people) could be exploited to generate profits for his host country of Spain. In particular, he described the vast potential value of the dyes, spices, and medicines that could be made from plants found in the Americas. Third, Columbus wrote that the inhabitants could be easily converted to Catholicism and remade into servants. His and other explorers' discoveries inspired further exploration by European nations, though for most, colonization would lag for generations.

Spanish Exploration and Conquest

What model of colonization did Spain establish that other nations would later attempt to follow?

Spain developed a model of colonization in the Americas based on three key concepts. First, Spain's monarchy maintained firm control over its colonies with virtually no autonomy granted to American colonies. Second, men made up the majority of early colonists, taking first Indian, and later African, women as wives or concubines. Third, the development of the colonies and the exploitation of their resources was based on exploiting native people and African slaves as labor.

The Columbian Exchange

What were the results of contact between native populations and European settlers and explorers?

Native Americans and Europeans exchanged diseases, plants, and animals when they came into contact in North and South America in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Native American vegetable crops were more nutritious than those in Europe and Africa, while Europeans brought livestock that helped enrich Indians' diets, too. The Spanish also brought horses to their American territories, which aided the shift in native society of the Great Plains from hunting combined with some farming and gathering, to almost exclusively hunting buffalo as their

main form of subsistence. Europeans brought many diseases from typhus to malaria to hepatitis, all of which devastated tribal populations, but none as much as smallpox. Europeans, meanwhile, acquired syphilis from Native Americans, which was debilitating, but not usually fatal.

Europeans in North America

What were the reasons behind the failure of England's, Portugal's, and France's initial attempts at colonization?

In a nutshell, all three failed because colonists were unable to be self-sustaining and at the same time, did little to diminish hostilities between them and native peoples. In fact, while many colonists relied on Indians for food, they also antagonized them by, as one British scientist wrote, unjustly killing some. Ironically, the solution this scientist, Thomas Harriot, proposed was on the one hand to treat native people with greater humanity, but on the

other hand, to take advantage of the fact that they are easily manipulated toward whatever ends Europeans sought.

Suggestions for Further Reading

- David Abulafia, *The Discovery of Mankind: Atlantic Encounters in the Age of Columbus* (2008)
 Alfred W. Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (1972)
 John H. Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America, 1492–1830* (2006)
 Alvin Josephy, Jr., ed., *America in 1492* (1992)
 Peter C. Mancall, *Hakluyt's Promise: An Elizabethan's Obsession for an English America* (2007)
 Charles C. Mann, *1491: New Revelations of the Americas Before Columbus* (2005)
 D. W. Meinig, *Atlantic America, 1492–1800* (1986)
 Samuel Eliot Morison, *The European Discovery of America: The Southern Voyages, A.D. 1492–1616* (1974); *The Northern Voyages, A.D. 1500–1600* (1971)
 John K. Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400–1680* (1992)



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