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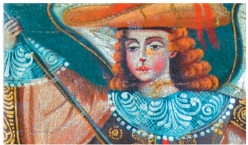
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CHAPTER 1

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Watch the **Video** *Critical Visions, Chapter 1*

People in Motion

The Atlantic World to 1590

To the people who had lived in the Americas for millennia, the idea that theirs was a “New World” would have seemed strange. Scientists continue to debate when the first people arrived in the Americas from Asia, but estimates range from between 40,000 and 14,000 years ago. In the millennia that followed, the peoples of the Americas fanned out and established a range of societies.

Yet to the Europeans who arrived in the Americas toward the end of the fifteenth century, America was indeed a “brave new world,” as William Shakespeare wrote, inhabited by exotic plants, animals, and peoples. In images and words Europeans portrayed this extraordinary land in the most fantastic terms. Some accounts spoke of America as an Eden-like earthly paradise inhabited by good-natured, but primitive, peoples. Others emphasized themes like those featured in this engraving, *Amerigo Vespucci Awakens a Sleeping America*. Vespucci, an Italian-Spanish navigator from whose first name the New World came to be called the Americas, gazes upon a naked native woman rising from her hammock. Her nudity symbolizes the wild sexuality Europeans believed characterized the native inhabitants of the Americas. The cannibals behind her, devouring human flesh, represent savagery, a second prominent element of the European vision of the New World. Neither vision of the Americas was accurate, but both would greatly complicate Europeans’ understanding of the American civilizations they encountered, leading to a legacy of violence, exploitation, and conquest.

The European arrival in the Americas was part of a process of exploration and colonization pursued primarily by Portugal, Spain, France, and England. This impulse was driven both by a hunger for riches as well as by profound changes in European society, religion, economics, and politics brought on by the Renaissance and Reformation. Africa was eventually drawn into this vast trading network encompassing the entire Atlantic world. Colonization almost always involved the severe exploitation of native peoples, including dispossession of land and coerced labor. Eventually Europeans turned to the international slave trade and the labor of enslaved Africans to draw the wealth from the mines and fields of the New World.

“Your Magnificence must know that herein they are so inhuman that they outdo every custom (even) of beasts; for they eat all their enemies whom they kill or capture . . . and are libidinous beyond measure.”

AMERIGO VESPUCCI, 1497



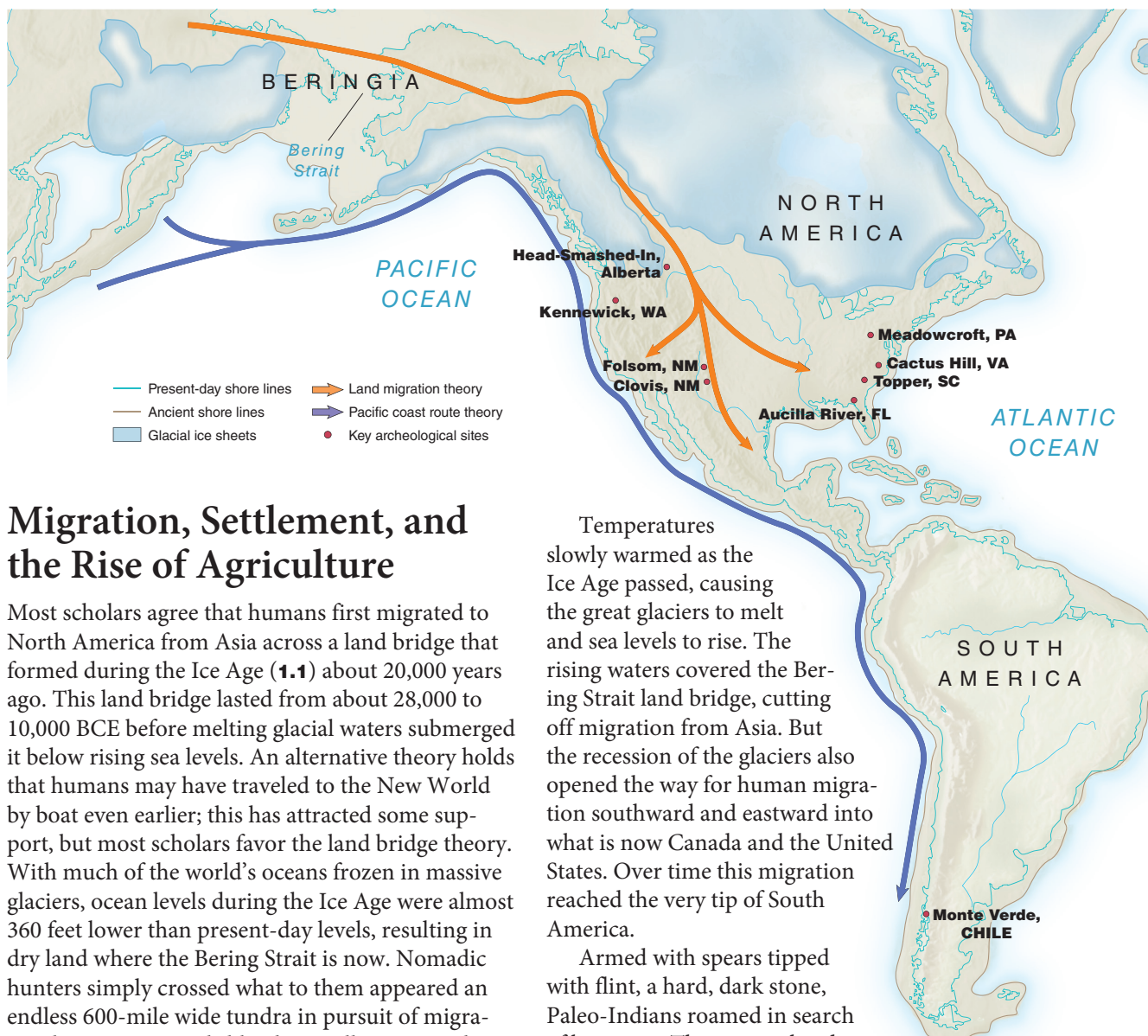
The First Americans



In one sense America was the New World—or at least a newer one in terms of human habitation. The oldest traces of human life have been found in Africa, where the earliest human fossil remains unearthed date to somewhere between 190,000 and 160,000 years ago. In contrast the oldest human fossils found in North America are roughly 14,000 years old, far more recent than those found in Europe, Asia, or Australia. The ancient inhabitants of America, **Paleo-Indians**, were an Ice Age people who survived largely by hunting big game and to a lesser extent by fishing and collecting edible plants. Within a few thousand years of their arrival in America from Asia, they had fanned out across the Americas.

1.1 Migration from Asia to America

Most scholars believe the first inhabitants of America migrated from Asia across the Bering Strait by way of the land bridge that once connected Asia and North America.



Migration, Settlement, and the Rise of Agriculture

Most scholars agree that humans first migrated to North America from Asia across a land bridge that formed during the Ice Age (1.1) about 20,000 years ago. This land bridge lasted from about 28,000 to 10,000 BCE before melting glacial waters submerged it below rising sea levels. An alternative theory holds that humans may have traveled to the New World by boat even earlier; this has attracted some support, but most scholars favor the land bridge theory. With much of the world's oceans frozen in massive glaciers, ocean levels during the Ice Age were almost 360 feet lower than present-day levels, resulting in dry land where the Bering Strait is now. Nomadic hunters simply crossed what to them appeared an endless 600-mile wide tundra in pursuit of migratory big game animals like the woolly mammoths—huge, long-tusked members of the elephant family that provided furs for warm clothing and ample stocks of meat.

Temperatures slowly warmed as the Ice Age passed, causing the great glaciers to melt and sea levels to rise. The rising waters covered the Bering Strait land bridge, cutting off migration from Asia. But the recession of the glaciers also opened the way for human migration southward and eastward into what is now Canada and the United States. Over time this migration reached the very tip of South America.

Armed with spears tipped with flint, a hard, dark stone, Paleo-Indians roamed in search of big game. These spear heads, called Clovis points, named after the New Mexico town in which scientists first discovered them, were one of the Stone Age tools used by the ancient

What theories have been proposed to account for the migration of Paleo-Indians to North America?

inhabitants of America. Clovis point arrowheads like those shown in (1.2) were lashed to poles to make simple spears. Paleo-Indians also used other simple stone tools such as stone axes and scrapers for hunting and preparing meat, a variety of bone tools such as antler harpoons for fishing, and bone needles for sewing hides. These ancient peoples generally hunted in small bands of perhaps 20 to 30 people in cooperative kin groups. Hunting parties pursued a wide range of prey, including primitive horses and the oversized ancestors of many modern species, such as beaver, bison, caribou, and forerunners of the camel. Hunting, gathering, and other activities among Stone Age peoples were probably divided along gender lines. Men hunted and fished, while women reared children, gathered nuts and berries, and made clothing.

Many of the mammals that Paleo-Indians hunted, including horses and camels, eventually became extinct (the Spanish reintroduced modern horses from Europe thousands of years later). Three competing scientific theories attempt to explain the mass extinctions of large mammals in the Americas. Some scientists believe overhunting led to the demise of the large mammals. Others argue that dramatic climate change—the rising temperatures that accompanied the passing of the Ice Age—killed off animals that were unable to adapt to the new warmer environments. The most recent explanation focuses on diseases that may have been brought to the New World by humans and the animals that accompanied them, most notably dogs and possibly rats. Whatever the cause of the mass extinctions, the decline in large game eventually led Paleo-Indians to search for new food sources and develop new modes of providing food and other necessities.

Approximately 9,000 years ago, a period known as the **Archaic Era** began. Lasting approximately 6,000 years, it ushered in significant social changes that began with increased efforts by native peoples to shape the environment to enhance food production. At first these efforts were primitive. Archaic Era Indians, for example,

burned forest underbrush to provide better habitats for smaller mammals such as deer, which they hunted. They also relied increasingly on gathering nuts and berries and, in some cases, on harvesting shellfish from lakes, streams, or coastal waters. The gendered division of labor found in Stone Age societies persisted into the Archaic Era: women cared for children and did much of the gathering and preparing of food while men hunted and fished.

Some Archaic Era Indians even took the first steps toward agriculture. At first they encouraged the growth of edible plants, such as sunflowers and wild onions, by simply weeding out inedible plants around them. Over time

Archaic Era Indians learned how to collect and plant seeds and developed basic ideas about irrigation. These primitive cultivation techniques led to increased food supplies and diminished reliance on hunting.

By about 5000 BCE fixed agricultural settlements appeared in what is now Mexico. There native people learned how to grow maize (corn), squash, and beans, leading to the development of food surpluses and consequently large increases in population. Planting,

tending, and defending crops necessitated the creation of larger permanent settlements, leading to urbanization, the creation of towns and cities. Increased food surpluses allowed the ancient peoples of the Americas to devote more resources to a variety of cultural, artistic, and engineering projects. The combination of agriculture, urbanism, and increasing social complexity set the foundation for the emergence of the first great civilizations of the southern region of North America, an area stretching from modern Mexico to Nicaragua known as Mesoamerica.

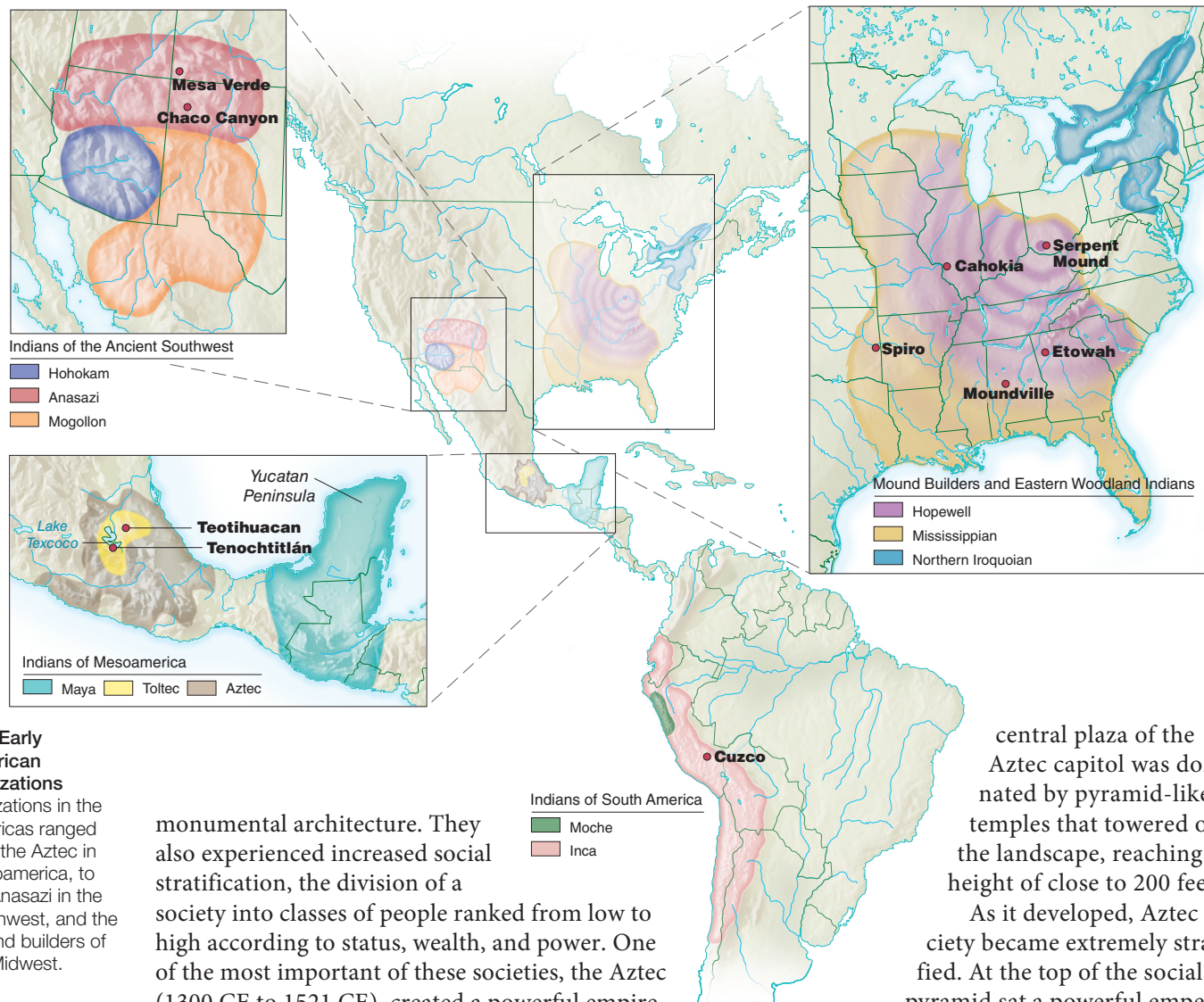
The most advanced societies in Mesoamerica included the Olmecs (1150 BCE to about 800 BCE), Maya (peaked in 300 BCE–900 CE), and Toltecs (900 CE–1200 CE). These complex societies developed written languages, systems of mathematics, sophisticated irrigation techniques, and



1.2 Clovis Point

The range of tools available to Paleo-Indians was limited, but included stone tools, such as arrowheads, axes, scrapers, bone needles, and harpoons. Clovis point arrowheads were attached to spears for hunting.

What impact did agriculture have on the evolution of the societies of the Americas?



1.3 Early American Civilizations

Civilizations in the Americas ranged from the Aztec in Mesoamerica, to the Anasazi in the Southwest, and the Mound builders of the Midwest.

monumental architecture. They also experienced increased social stratification, the division of a society into classes of people ranked from low to high according to status, wealth, and power. One of the most important of these societies, the Aztec (1300 CE to 1521 CE), created a powerful empire in what is now Mexico (1.3).

The Aztec

The rise of the immensely powerful Aztec Confederacy transformed Mesoamerica. By the time the Spanish arrived in the early sixteenth century, the Aztecs controlled a vast empire of between 10 and 20 million people. The **Aztec Empire's** capital, the great city of Tenochtitlán, was built on an island in Lake Texcoco in 1325 on the site of today's Mexico City. Causeways connected the city to the mainland. An elaborate system of dams controlled the water level of the lake, while aqueducts carried fresh water to the city. A sophisticated system of floating gardens produced food to feed the large urban population, which swelled to almost 300,000 over the next two centuries. The

central plaza of the Aztec capitol was dominated by pyramid-like temples that towered over the landscape, reaching a height of close to 200 feet.

As it developed, Aztec society became extremely stratified. At the top of the social pyramid sat a powerful emperor.

Below the emperor were a class of nobles, a priestly class, a warrior class, and an administrative class that collected taxes and tributes. The foundation of this vast pyramid comprised merchants, artisans, and farmers. At the very bottom were slaves. Some were Aztec-born and became slaves temporarily as punishment for crime. Prisoners of war also added to the slave population, and human chattel was provided as part of tax debts owed to the Aztec Empire by its many conquered peoples.

Gender roles were sharply defined among the Aztec. Women helped men tend the fields but were primarily responsible for child rearing, cooking, weaving cloth, and shopping in the markets. Although the priests were invariably men, Aztec religion accorded women an important role in the family, including making religious offerings to the gods.

What role did commerce play in Aztec culture?

[View the Closer Look Images as History: Blood of the Gods](#)

Trade and commerce were crucial to the Aztec economy. In the smaller towns daily markets provided a wide array of goods, but these markets were miniscule compared to the great open-air market in Tenochtitlán. Countless foods, textiles, ceramics, and other goods were available for trade, illustrating the richness and complexity of the Aztec economy.

The Aztecs were a war-like society. Conquered peoples were forced to pay tribute in the form of textiles, agricultural products, precious stones, and ceramics, and even provide slaves for human sacrifices. For the Aztecs human sacrifice was a central religious ritual necessary to appease the gods, especially the gods of rain and war.

“Begin with the dealers in gold, silver, precious stones, feathers, mantles, and embroidered goods But why waste so many words in recounting what they sell in their great market? If I describe everything in detail I shall never be finished.”

**BERNAL DIAZ DEL CASTILLO,
Spanish historian of the conquest of Mexico, 1568**

years ago, Cahokia’s population ranged between 20,000 and 40,000. The city was protected by a huge wooden palisade and featured at its center a massive terraced earthwork mound that covered 16 acres and rose over 100 feet above the ground. Capping this mound was a wooden temple that would have been among the tallest human-made

structures in the Americas, exceeded only by the pyramids of Mesoamerica. Other Mississippian communities developed in present-day Alabama, Georgia, and Oklahoma.

In the American Southwest, the Anasazi peoples created another complex civilization marked by a so-

Mound Builders and Pueblo Dwellers

Urban settlements also appeared in other regions of North America (1.3). One group, the mound-building societies, created monumental earthen burial mounds as part of their religious practices. Some 2,000 years ago, the Adena of what is now southern Ohio built The Great Serpent Mound. Still visible, it resembles a giant snake. Excavations of this and other mounds have unearthed a host of artifacts used for religious purposes and personal adornment. We can also conclude that these inland people acquired the conch shells and shark teeth found at their sites from other cultures, as part of a trade network that extended to the Atlantic coast.

The most complex mound-building society, the Mississippian, developed in the Mississippi Valley (1.3). The central city of this civilization, Cahokia, arose in what is now southern Illinois near St. Louis. Cahokia developed a stratified society with a chief at the top, followed by an elite class and a lower class that provided labor for agriculture and building projects. At its height about 700–1,000

years ago, Cahokia’s population ranged between 20,000 and 40,000. The city was protected by a huge wooden palisade and featured at its center a massive terraced earthwork mound that covered 16 acres and rose over 100 feet above the ground. Capping this mound was a wooden temple that would have been among the tallest human-made structures in the Americas, exceeded only by the pyramids of Mesoamerica. Other Mississippian communities developed in present-day Alabama, Georgia, and Oklahoma. In the American Southwest, the Anasazi peoples created another complex civilization marked by a sophisticated urban culture that included a series of towns inter-connected by roads (1.3). To survive in the arid climate of the Southwest, the Anasazi developed impressive engineering skills to build their cities and construct complex irrigation systems to supply water for drinking and agriculture. Using adobe (clay) bricks, they built large dwellings later known by their Spanish name, *pueblos*. At Chaco Canyon in what is now northwest New Mexico, the Anasazi built Pueblo Bonito. This dwelling contained hundreds of rooms including dozens of kivas, or circular rooms intended for religious ceremonies. Until the development of modern apartment buildings in the late nineteenth century, this was the largest human dwelling in history.

The Anasazi also developed skills in making pottery and textiles, some of which they used in a vast trade network that stretched hundreds of miles to the south. The most valuable commodity they traded was turquoise, a bright blue-green stone used to make jewelry. In exchange for it, the Anasazi acquired prized luxuries such as sea shells from as far away as the Gulf of California to the west and carved images and feathers from Mesoamerica.



1.4 John White's Painting of Secoton

John White's painting of the Eastern Woodlands Indian village of Secoton includes images of wigwags, the Algonquian word for "dwelling place." (Europeans sometimes described these dwellings as longhouses.)

Eastern Woodlands Indian Societies

A different type of society developed in a region encompassing what is now the Eastern United States and Canada. In contrast to the native societies of the Southwest and Mesoamerica, Eastern Woodlands societies were neither highly urban nor stratified. Organized into tribes, these Eastern

Woodlands Indian peoples lived as hunters and gatherers as well as agriculturalists. Most spoke a dialect of one of two major Indian languages, Iroquois and Algonquian.

Instead of living in urban settlements, Eastern Woodland Indians moved with the seasons to take advantage of different food sources, tracking animals in forest regions or fishing in lakes, streams, and rivers. Consequently as this painting, one of the earliest European views of an actual Indian village (1.4), shows, their villages were composed of wood and bark structures that were easily disassembled and reassembled to make seasonal movement possible. Dwelling in small villages rather than settled urban areas, Eastern Woodlands Indians avoided many of the sanitation problems and diseases that periodically afflicted ancient cities such as Tenochtitlán and Cahokia.

The complex religious life of Eastern Woodlands Indians embraced the concept of a supreme being, the great Manitou, but also included animism, or the belief that everything in nature possessed a spirit that had to be respected. Rather than seeking to own land and subdue the world around them in the manner of European societies, Eastern Woodlands Indians sought to inhabit the land and to live in dynamic relationship with it. These beliefs, however, did not keep them from actively altering or managing their environments to their advantage. Indians adopted strategies such as controlled burning of brush, a technique that encouraged the growth of habitats for the deer they

hunted. This type of strategy contrasted with European agriculture, which used clear cutting to make land available for farming.

The tribal societies of the Eastern seaboard had a relatively egalitarian political and social structure. Apart from the chief and a religious figure known as a shaman, most members of a tribe enjoyed a rough equality. While many indigenous societies in the Americas, particularly the more hierarchical ones of Mesoamerica, were patrilineal, with inheritance and decision making residing in the male

How did Eastern Woodlands Indian and Mesoamerican societies differ?

 **View the Map** Native American Peoples to 1450

line, some Eastern Woodlands societies were matrilineal, tracing descent and determining inheritance from ancestors on the female side. In some tribes women enjoyed significant roles in tribal governance. When captives were taken in war, for example, women often decided whether to adopt or execute them. Nonetheless Woodland Indians divided labor along gender lines, with women consigned to the fields, planting beans, corn, and squash, while men tracked and hunted animals for food, hides, and pelts.

**“They are not delighted in
baubles, but in useful things....
I have observed that they will
not be troubled with
superfluous commodities.”**

**THOMAS MORTON,
English lawyer, 1637**

Eastern Woodland Indians were more communal than individualistic in outlook. Although trade was important and individuals might own some goods, accumulating material wealth was not an important goal, as it was in the more stratified Mesoamerican societies. Individual tribes controlled territory, but the notion of owning land as private property was alien to most of these tribal societies.

Warfare among many Eastern Woodlands tribes was intermittent but common. They often fought over control of tribal territory or hunting rights. Warfare typically consisted of skirmishes between rival war parties, a style of combat that usually kept casualties low. Casualties suffered in war, however, might trigger further military actions, or “mourning wars,” intended to replenish the population reduced by fighting. In such a war some prisoners taken captive might be tortured and killed, while others deemed suitable were adopted by the tribe.

The persistent warfare among tribes led to the creation of the powerful Iroquois League of Five Nations, an organization that sought to reduce conflict among its members: the Seneca, Mohawk, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Oneida nations. Women played a significant role in the governance of the league. Female elders from each of the individual

nations selected the men who formed the league’s Great Council, a body that met to discuss matters of common concern, especially war and peace.

American Societies on the Eve of European Contact

American Indian societies were socially and culturally diverse, ranging from the highly stratified and urban Aztec in Mesoamerica to the relatively egalitarian hunter-farmer Iroquois in the Northeast. The peoples of the Americas spoke a host of different languages, developed distinctive religious traditions, and created different political models to govern themselves.

These societies shared many characteristics among themselves and with peoples in other parts of the world. Like their Asian and European contemporaries, the societies of the Americas were pre-modern, with limited scientific knowledge and widespread belief in magic. Most people worked the land, struggling to provide the basics needed to support life. Except for the privileged few, life was hard, sometimes brutal, and short.

In the Andes Mountains of South America, alpaca and llamas were domesticated, providing wool or food and, in the case of the llama, serving as a pack animal. But in contrast to Africa, Asia, or Europe, in North America and Mesoamerica there were no large domesticated animals, such as horses (extinct after the Paleo-Indian period), cattle, or camels. Without such animals the people of these regions lacked the mobility and power that horses afforded Europeans, Africans, and Asians and that camels provided for North Africans and Asians.

American societies on the eve of contact with Europeans were distinctive in another way. While African and Asian societies had developed considerable trade with Europe, the peoples of the Americas had remained largely cut off from contact with other parts of the world for thousands of years. This isolation had prevented their exposure to a host of diseases. By the time of the first contact between Europe and America in the late 1400s, many of the inhabitants of Asia, Africa, and Europe, long exposed to a common pool of diseases because of their extensive trade contacts, had developed immunity to many virulent pathogens. In their relative isolation, however, the indigenous societies of the Americas were highly susceptible to the microbial invaders introduced by Europeans.



Read the Document Iroquois Creation Story

What were some of the distinctive characteristics shared by all of the societies of the Americas?

European Civilization in Turmoil



As the Aztec Empire was reaching the height of its power at the close of the fifteenth century, European society was in the midst of a profound transformation. This period of cultural, intellectual, scientific, and commercial flourishing is known as the Renaissance. The revival of interest in ancient Greek and Latin not only led to renewed interest in the civilizations of Greece and Rome but also caused Renaissance thinkers to re-examine the early history of the church and its teachings. Reformers drawing on these traditions and reacting to the corruption of the Roman Catholic Church challenged the authority of the church. The rise of a new strain of Christian thought, Protestantism, led to creation of a host of new Christian sects. Amid this tumult powerful monarchs across Europe forged new nation-states out of the relatively weak decentralized governments of Europe. Modern nations such as England, France, and Spain were born in this era. State building required money, and the monarchs of these nations were eager to increase their wealth and power, a desire that ultimately led to the colonization and exploration of Africa and the Americas.

The Allure of the East and the Challenge of Islam

The leading European powers' decision to explore, conquer, and exploit lands in the Atlantic world was facilitated by a host of economic, technological, and cultural changes. Contact with Asia led to major changes in taste and patterns of consumption during the early modern period, from the fifteenth through the seventeenth centuries. Europeans looked beyond their borders, particularly to China and the Far East, for spices to enrich their bland foods and for luxury goods, especially exotic textiles such as silk and cotton, to enliven their fashions. These commodities, not native to Europe, had to be obtained from Asia.

The overland trade routes to the East were controlled by Muslims, adherents of Islam, a monotheistic faith shaped by the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad. Since its emergence in the seventh century Middle East, Muslim influence spread, stretching from Europe to parts of Africa and Asia. Europeans resented the economic power of Muslim rulers who controlled the lucrative trade routes to the East.

European antagonism toward the Muslim world also sprang from an intense religious animosity. For almost 300 years, Christian Europe had waged a holy war against Islam, launching Crusades to regain control of Jerusalem, a city sacred to Jews, Christians, and Muslims. Islam's influence in Europe was

most pronounced in the Ottoman Empire, whose power eventually spread across the Eastern Mediterranean and Balkans.

Trade, Commerce, and Urbanization

Among the important changes in Europe during this period was the dramatic growth of the economy. The Black Death (1347–1352 CE), a pandemic that spread to Europe between 1347 and 1352, wiped out about half of Europe's population. In the centuries following the Black Death, Europe's population began to expand again, eventually becoming larger than it had been before the epidemic. The economies of Europe also recovered. By 1400, the Italian city-states, especially Venice, dominated trade and finance, particularly trade with the East. In part, Venice's dominance resulted from its proximity to the lucrative eastern trade routes. Italy also dominated textile production, and Florence became Europe's leading producer of woolen cloth. Slowly the economic center of Europe shifted west and north. By about 1500, the city of Antwerp in what is today Belgium had become the leading commercial center of Europe but was eventually surpassed by the Dutch port of Amsterdam.

As trade and commerce expanded, innovative financial practices and services facilitated continued economic growth. New accounting methods helped

What trade goods from Asia were most sought after by Europeans?

merchants keep track of inventories and profits and losses. Marine insurance reduced the risks of maritime trade. A more elaborate banking system also helped finance trade. The growth of deposit banking, a system in which merchants could deposit funds with bankers and then draw on written checks instead of presenting gold or silver coins for payment of goods, greatly bolstered trade and commerce. All these developments made economic ventures more secure and encouraged investment, some of which was directed toward overseas trade and exploration. Together the new commercial and financial practices were key elements in the growth of capitalism. Simply put, **capitalism** is an economic system in which a market economy, geared toward the maximization of profit, determines the prices of goods and services. This new, profit-driven capitalist ethos slowly transformed European life beginning in the fifteenth century.

Capitalism also transformed rural Europe. European culture had always viewed nature as something to be tamed and exploited (see *Competing Visions: European and Huron Views of Nature*, page 12.) Rather than simply produce food for themselves, the new capitalist ethos led some farmers to seek the maximum yield from their land and plant crops that would fetch a higher price at market. In other cases landowners evicted farmers from their lands, so that they could graze sheep on the land and produce wool that would be turned into cloth. This latter change in agriculture forced many to leave the countryside and seek employment in towns and cities.

Migration from the countryside and commercial development led to greater urbanization in Europe. In the two centuries after the Black Death, the population of London increased from 50,000 to more than 200,000. Outside of London, England's changes were less dramatic, but no less significant. Populations mushroomed in ports such as Bristol, regional market towns such as Cambridge, and the new textile centers such as Norwich.

Technological improvements and new inventions also spurred economic growth. The printing press transformed the way knowledge was produced and disseminated. While a scribe hand-copying a book onto parchment might turn out two or three books a year, the typical print run of a book produced on paper by a printing press was between 100 and 1,000. Printed books not only made it easier to preserve knowledge but also encouraged advances in science and in geographic exploration by making it easier to collect, organize, and analyze information. Printed texts and engraved images also whet the appetites of Europeans for exploration by making accounts of exotic places such as India and China more accessible. Marco Polo's (1254?–1324) influential text about his adventures in China, *The Travels of Marco Polo*, circulated widely in manuscript form for more than a century before a printed edition appeared in 1477.

Printing created an entire new industry for the production, dissemination, and sale of books. The new technology also transformed visual culture, making it possible to create cheap images. The new technique of engraving (1.5) was a multistep process. On the right a skilled craftsman gouges out an image on a copper plate. In the center the plates are inked and then wiped clean. On the left the final stages in the engraving process are demonstrated, including the giant press used to create the final image.

1.5 Copper Engraving

The many steps used to make an engraving, from the artist's hand to the final drying of the printed page, are illustrated in this early image.



Competing Visions

EUROPEAN AND HURON VIEWS OF NATURE

European capitalism was built on deeply rooted beliefs, including the notion of private property and the belief that nature existed as a resource for humans to tame and exploit. European and Eastern Woodlands Indian cultures had starkly different attitudes toward the natural world. Following a mandate laid down in the biblical Book of Genesis, Europeans believed that they had a God-given right to rule over nature. The Huron, an Eastern Woodlands Indian tribe from Canada, approached nature in a radically different way that reflected their animist belief that all living things had spiritual power. What ecological consequences flowed from the Huron view of nature? How might this view have shaped the European impression of Indians? What ecological consequences follow from the Western view?

In Genesis God gave humans complete control over nature. According to this view humanity was not simply enjoined to “subdue nature” but to make sure that the “fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth.”

And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

King James Bible, Genesis 1:28 (1611)

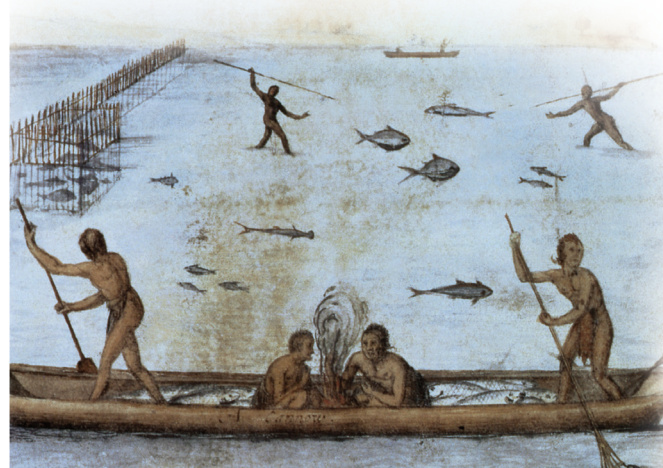


Lucas Cranach, *Adam and Eve*

One of the best sources for understanding Indian views of nature can be found in the writings of Jesuit missionaries, a Catholic order active in the French colonization of Canada. In this selection a Jesuit recounts his exchange with a Huron Indian about the proper treatment of animal bones, which Hurons believed had to be treated with respect to avoid angering the animal spirits that might take offense and make hunting more difficult.

It is remarkable how they gather and collect these bones, and preserve them with so much care, that you would say their game would be lost if they violated their superstitions. As I was laughing at them, and telling them that Beavers do not know what is done with their bones, they answered me, “Thou dost not know how to take Beavers, and thou wishest to talk about it.” Before the Beaver was entirely dead, they told me, its soul comes to make the round of the Cabin of him who has killed it, and looks very carefully to see what is done with its bones; if they are given to the dogs, the other Beavers would be apprised of it and therefore they would make themselves hard to capture. (*Paul le Jeune, 1633*)

The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents: Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France 1610–1791 (1896–1901) 6: 211.



John White, *Indians Fishing*

How does this painting of Adam and Eve reflect European views of nature?

 **View the Closer Look** *Competing Visions: European and Huron Views of Nature*

Renaissance and Reformation

A revival of interest in the cultures of Greek and Roman antiquity, arising first in Italy, spread across Europe at the end of the fifteenth century. This rebirth of classical learning, the Renaissance, transformed the way Europeans thought about art, architecture, science, and political philosophy. The most significant change was the shift from theology, the primary scholarly subject in the Middle Ages, to the study of the liberal arts, including poetry, history, and philosophy. Much like the ancient Greeks, Renaissance scholars emphasized the human capacity for self-improvement and exalted the beauty of the human body in painting and sculpture. For these scholars, known as **humanists**, humans were the masters of their world and obligated to study it. These Renaissance values, in particular the spirit of exploration, would soon inspire explorers to seek out new lands and trade routes.

In contrast to medieval Europe, with its cloistered monasteries where monks prayed and copied texts for their own libraries, the Renaissance placed a high value on public art, architecture, and philosophical thought aimed at civilizing humanity. Civic humanism, the new philosophy of the Renaissance, encouraged artists and philosophers to participate in public life, especially in cities, which replaced monasteries as the ideal place to encourage learning and glorify God.

The study of ancient languages fostered a new interest in the early church and inspired some religious figures to call for reforms in the Roman Catholic Church. One church practice that drew intense criticism was the sale of indulgences. In essence money donated to the Church could buy forgiveness for sin in this life and after death. In 1517 a young German monk named Martin Luther attacked the sale of indulgences and other key elements of Catholic doctrine and practice. Luther eventually developed a new theological alternative to Catholicism. Rejecting the Catholic Church's focus on good works as the key to achieving salvation, Luther argued that only faith could bring salvation. Luther also argued that ordinary people did not need to depend on the clergy to gain access to God's word; they could and should read the Bible themselves. Luther translated the Bible from Greek and Latin to German, and the newly invented printing press made it widely accessible. Anyone who could read could now receive the word of God in his or her own home. Luther championed the idea of the priesthood of all true believers—the notion that everyone could

experience salvation directly. Priests would continue to preach the word of God and perform rituals such as baptizing infants and marriage ceremonies, but Luther would dispense with the Catholic ritual of going to a priest for confession, penance, and absolution for sins. Luther also rejected monasticism. The place for the committed Christian was in this world, not cloistered away in a monastery.

Luther also urged Christian monarchs to take up the cause of religious reform and reject the authority of the Pope. His attack on the political power of the Roman Catholic Church appealed to some European rulers eager to strengthen their power. Luther was summarily excommunicated by the Church, but his calls for reform had wide appeal, especially in what is now Germany and Scandinavia. His supporters, known as Protestants, began a movement for religious reform known as the **Reformation**.

Protestantism found an especially receptive home in Geneva, a French-speaking city in Switzerland. Here the French reformer John Calvin (1509–1564) articulated a new variant of Protestantism with a different theological emphasis from Luther's version. Calvin's theology stressed the doctrine of pre-destination, the notion that God had destined people to salvation or damnation prior to their birth no matter how righteously or wickedly they lived. He also maintained that the true church was not embodied in any official organization, including the Roman Catholic Church, but rather in a group of the "elect," or those chosen by God for salvation. According to this ideal the elect could continue to act as a reformed church even if they had no physical place of worship or formal ministry to serve their spiritual needs. With the Bible and personal faith, argued Calvin, Protestants could constitute a true church wherever they lived, including, eventually, a wilderness like America.

Calvinists in Switzerland and elsewhere took their critique of Catholic worship a step further than Lutherans, becoming iconoclasts, or image breakers. They took the biblical injunction in Exodus to avoid "graven," or carved images literally: decrying them as sacrilegious and a form of idolatry, Calvinists smashed the stained glass windows and religious carvings that adorned churches. One Catholic nun described a Protestant rampage in Geneva in these terms: "Like enraged wolves, they destroyed those fine images with great axes, and hammers, especially going after the blessed crucifix, and the image of Our Lady [Mary]." This contemporary image of one such rampage shows Protestants pulling down sculptures and smashing stained glass

What were the essential teachings of Calvinism?



1.6 Protestants Stripping a Church of Images

This image depicts Calvinist iconoclasm, the destruction of “graven” images such as religious statues and stained glass windows.

windows (1.6). Once purged of all such Catholic images, religious worship, Calvinists believed, could focus on the words of the Bible alone. In 1560 English Calvinists published the Geneva Bible, a text that would become the most important text for English-speaking Protestants.

New Monarchs and the Rise of the Nation-State

By 1500, the kingdoms of France, England, Portugal, and Spain had evolved into sovereign nation-states. Powerful monarchs consolidated their power, eliminated rivals to their thrones, created administrative bureaucracies to rule, and built larger, more effective armies. Paying for these required huge sums of money, and if they could not raise what they needed at home, some monarchs began to look

abroad. Territorial expansion and exploration of new regions, they reasoned, would increase both trade and revenues.

In England Henry VII (r. 1485–1509) established the House of Tudor as the ruling family of England. His son, Henry VIII (r. 1509–1547), expanded the power of the monarchy. His most important act as king of England was his break with Rome when the Pope refused to dissolve his marriage to the Spanish princess Catherine of Aragon. After failing to obtain a divorce, Henry declared himself head of his own independent English church. He rejected the authority of the Roman Catholic Church, confiscated the monastic lands, and sold them for a handsome profit or gave them to favored supporters. The intensity of Henry’s anti-Catholic feeling (and his particular hostility to the Pope) is evident in this portrait painted by an unknown artist in 1570 (1.7). Henry VIII lies in bed, pointing to his

Why did Calvinists wish to remove all icons from their churches?

son and successor Edward VI (r. 1547–1553). The Pope collapses in the foreground and two monks flee the scene, while a monastery is sacked in the background.

Perhaps the most ambitious of the new monarchies was Spain's, created by the marriage of Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile in 1469. When they became joint rulers of Spain, Ferdinand and Isabella followed a strategy common to all the new monarchs: they reduced the power of the nobility and strengthened their own control over the military. They also boosted crown revenue by raising taxes and making tax collection more efficient.

As part of their effort to transform Spain into a world power, Ferdinand and Isabella sought to strengthen the power of the Roman Catholic Church and ally its interests with the state. In 1478 the Spanish monarchy sought the Pope's approval to create the **Spanish Inquisition**, a religious tribunal charged

with finding and punishing heresy, or unorthodox beliefs among Christians, and for eliminating non-Christians, most notably Muslims and Jews, from Spain. Thousands of suspected heretics were arrested, tortured, and imprisoned. Hundreds were executed. Eventually in 1492 the government ordered all Jews, except those who converted to Christianity, expelled from Spain. That same year Ferdinand and Isabella achieved another goal in their effort to strengthen Church and state by conquering Granada, the last remaining Islamic state in Spain.

The conquest of the last Muslim kingdom in Spain, in 1492 was the final phase of this *reconquista* ("re-conquest"). Spain's holy war united state and Church in a single purpose. This partnership between a militant clergy and an equally aggressive military would serve Spain well when its attention moved beyond Europe to the wider Atlantic world.

1.7 Henry VIII and Edward the VI

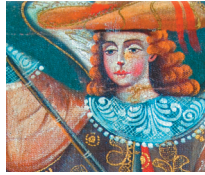
In this unfinished painting England's Henry VIII passes on his authority to his son Edward VI, including his role as head of the new Church of England. In the upper right English Protestant iconoclasts attack a monastery. At the bottom of the image the Pope collapses and monks flee from the "worde of the Lorde."



 [View the Map](#) Western Europe During the Renaissance and Reformation

How was the English Reformation different than the Continental Reformation?

Columbus and the Columbian Exchange



In 1492, Queen Isabella agreed to outfit a small expedition to find a quicker route to Asia. The expedition's leader, an Italian sailor named Christopher Columbus, was an experienced mariner who had worked in the Portuguese seagoing trade to Africa and the Atlantic islands. Familiar with Marco Polo's written accounts of China, Columbus believed he could find a faster and more direct route to Asia than traveling around the tip of Africa by simply crossing the Atlantic. He first asked the King of Portugal to fund the voyage, but the king's advisors warned Columbus that he had greatly underestimated the circumference of the Earth and would certainly perish long before he reached Asia. Undeterred Columbus turned to Queen Isabella, who consented to fund his expedition.

Columbus Encounters the "Indians"

After sailing for 33 days, Columbus reached the Caribbean islands, most likely the Bahamas. Mistakenly convinced that he had arrived in India, he called the native peoples "Indians." Columbus claimed all the lands he visited for Spain. Concluding that the native people were savages, he believed that they were "fit to be ordered about, and made to work, plant, and do everything else that may be needed, and build towns and be taught our customs." Returning to Spain with captive Indians, exotic plants, and gold, Columbus was greeted as a hero and secured funding for additional voyages of exploration.

Columbus was not the first European to cross the Atlantic, nor was he the first to create a small European outpost in America. The Vikings had sailed from Iceland almost 400 years earlier, establishing small fishing outposts in what is now Newfoundland, Canada. Nevertheless Columbus's voyage to the Americas brought the two worlds together in ways that Viking ventures had not. Europe's printing presses would make

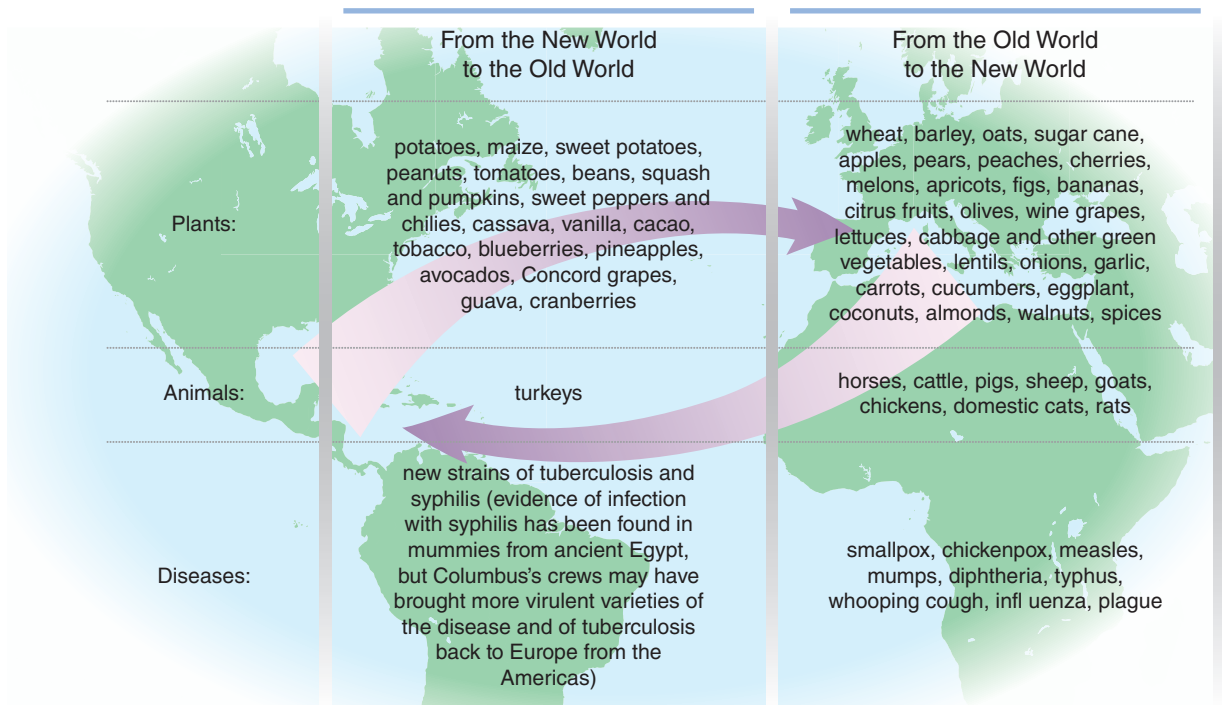
accounts of his voyage widely available, providing a model for later explorers, conquerors, and settlers. Columbus's voyage also began one of the most complex ecological changes in modern history. The worlds on both sides of the Atlantic were suddenly reconnected, a development that would have far-reaching biological consequences for Europe, Africa, and America.

Modern scholars have described the biological encounter between the two sides of the Atlantic as the **Columbian Exchange (1.8)**, a name that acknowledges the crucial role that Columbus played in instigating this transformation. This exchange involved a range of foods, plants, animals, and diseases. Moving from the Americas to Europe by way of Columbus and the Europeans who followed him were a host of foods now closely identified with European cuisine. Before Columbus Italian cuisine had no tomatoes, Irish and German food no potatoes, and Switzerland no chocolate. Moving in the other direction were animals, including the horse, long extinct in the Americas but reintroduced by the Spanish, sheep, cattle, and swine.

"As soon as I arrived in the Indies, in the first island which I found, I took by force some of them, in order that they might learn and give me information."

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS, 1493

What was the Columbian Exchange?



1.8 Columbian Exchange

This table shows the most important crops and animals involved in the Columbian Exchange. A host of pathogens, mostly of Old World origin, were also part of the Columbian Exchange.

Diseases also crossed the Atlantic. Europeans may have brought back a plague in the form of a more deadly strain of the sexually transmitted disease syphilis that sailors picked up on the Caribbean islands. Far more devastating were the diseases like smallpox brought to the New World. These diseases killed huge numbers of Indian men, women, and children.

European Technology in the Era of the Columbian Exchange

Columbus and the Europeans who led the exploration of the Atlantic world benefited from technological changes developed in Europe in the fifteenth century. Improvements in map making and the introduction of navigational devices that allowed mariners to calculate latitude more accurately aided exploration. Europeans borrowed technology from the Islamic world and Asia to improve their ships. The Portuguese also made important strides in ship-building with the caravel, a vessel whose lateen (triangular) sails were better suited to catching wind than were those of traditional European ships.

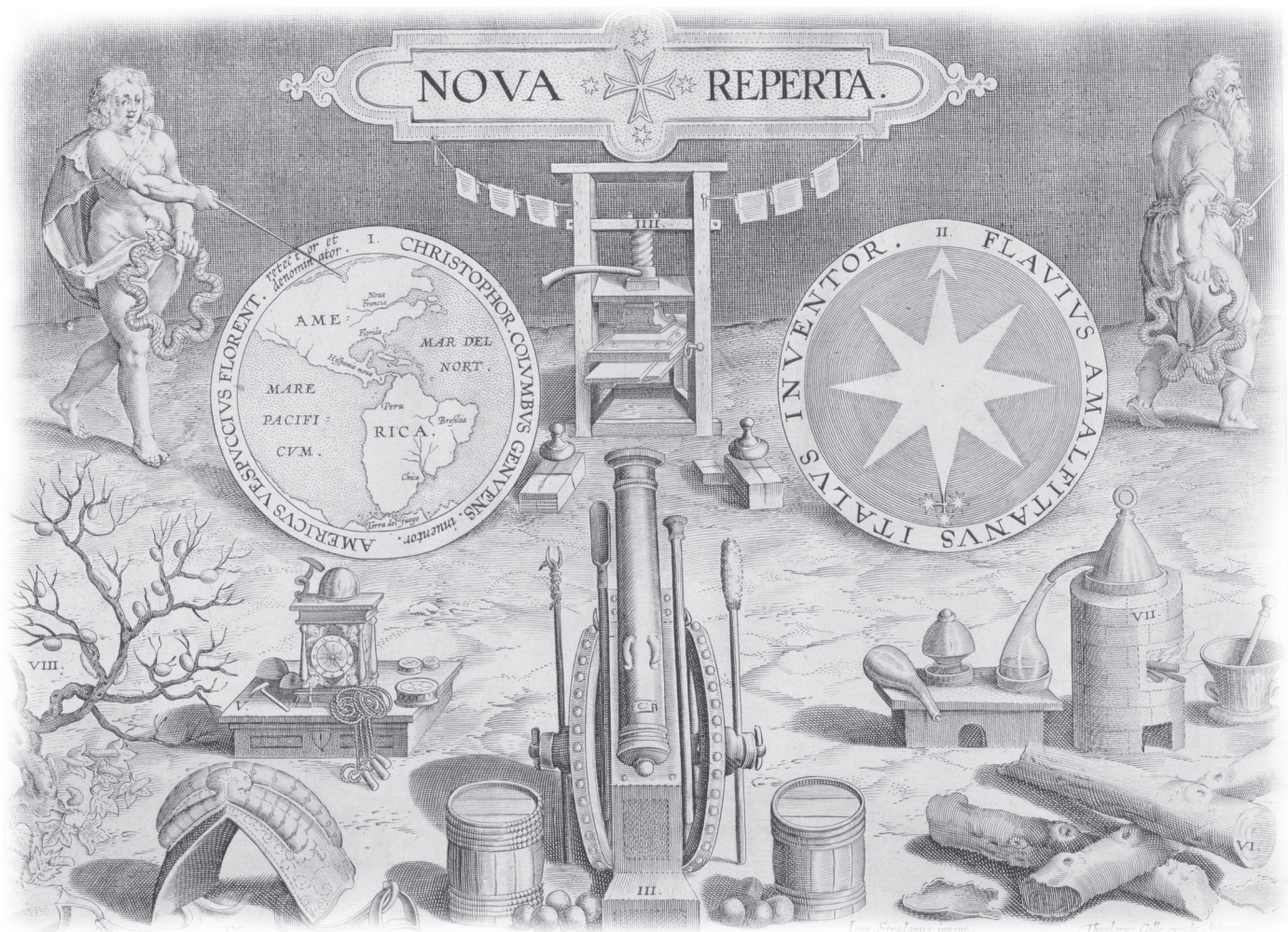
Europeans enjoyed a clear technological and military advantage over the peoples of America, a disparity that would profoundly affect European interactions with the Aztec, and later with Eastern Woodlands Indian peoples. Foremost among these advantages were the metallurgical techniques that allowed Europeans to forge iron weapons that were stronger than those of the Aztec and other Indians. Domesticated horses allowed Europeans to support their armies with swift-moving cavalry. Through trade with China, Europeans had learned about gunpowder and developed powerful cannons and firearms such as the arquebus, a forerunner of the musket and rifle. Among the inventions depicted in this engraving, “Nova Reperta,” (“New Discoveries”) (1584), by artist Johannes Stradanus, are the compass, the mechanical clock, cannons and gunpowder, and a saddle with stirrups (1.9).

The Conquest of the Aztec and Inca Empires

Columbus’s successful voyage in 1492 was followed by waves of Spanish explorers and conquerors (*conquistadores* in Spanish), who soon seized control of the islands of the Caribbean. The harsh labor

Watch the Video What is Columbus’s Legacy?

What role did disease play in the Columbian Exchange?



1.9 Nova Reperta

In this drawing, the artist links new scientific and technological discoveries with the exploration of the “New World.” A printing press stands between a map of the Americas and a compass. The image is anchored by a cannon and casks of gunpowder, symbolic of European military technology.

regime and the deadly diseases the Spanish brought nearly wiped out these indigenous populations. On the island of Hispaniola (present-day Haiti and the Dominican Republic), 95 percent of the native peoples died within 25 years. Faced with the loss of this indigenous labor force, the Spanish turned to the African slave trade to supply the labor they demanded for the production of lucrative cash crops such as sugar.

Spanish *conquistadores*, lured by rumors of a fabulous empire possessing great wealth, eventually turned their attention to the mainland of what is now Mexico. In 1519, eager to acquire this wealth for himself and Spain, Hernán Cortés, a brash and ambitious protégé of the Spanish governor of Hispaniola, embarked on an expedition to find the famed capital

of the Aztec Empire and conquer it. Landing on Mexico’s southeast coast with over 500 men and 16 horses, he burned his ships, depriving his men of any opportunity to retreat. He forced his men to push forward to conquer or die in the attempt.

Although vastly outnumbered by the Aztecs, Cortés and his men had military advantages. First they possessed horses, firearms, and steel weapons. Second they quickly gained allies among the peoples conquered by the Aztecs. After years of subjugation in which they were forced to provide the Aztecs with victims for human sacrifice, these exploited peoples now willingly sided with the Spanish. Finally the Spanish unknowingly carried with them a host of diseases, in particular the deadly smallpox virus that infected and killed vast numbers of Aztecs. By 1521,

What technological advances facilitated European expansionism?

 [View the Map](#) Native American Population Loss, 1500–1700

just two years after his arrival, Cortés had subdued the once mighty Aztec Empire. A decade later other Spanish conquistadors led by Francisco Pizarro toppled the similarly powerful Inca Empire which stretched from present-day Ecuador to what is now Chile.

To many people of the Americas, who had never seen anything like firearms before, the Spanish *did* seem to have god-like power. European firearms left an indelible impression on South American cultures. Created centuries after European contact, this Peruvian painting (1.10) shows an angel carrying an arquebus, the type of firearm used by the Spanish during their conquest of Central and South America.

The Spanish took advantage of the existing systems of tribute and taxation created by the Aztec to extract the maximum amount of wealth from the region. Spanish America yielded a glittering array of valuable items from gold to pearls. The Spanish also began exporting prized dyes such as the brilliant red cochineal and indigo. The latter blue dye became closely associated with a type of cloth associated with the Italian city of Genoa. The French name for this cloth “bleu de Gênes” is the origin of the modern word blue jeans.

Among the agricultural products exported, cacao, the key ingredient in chocolate, helped spur a Spanish obsession with drinking chocolate. In contrast to the Aztecs, the Spanish preferred to drink their chocolate with an added sweetener, such as honey and eventually sugar.

In the 1540s, the discovery of silver in what is now Peru generated what became the most profitable American commodity for export. Silver would become the cornerstone of Spain’s new-found wealth. Silver was a mixed blessing for the Spanish economy. The influx of large amounts of silver into the Spanish economy helped some become rich, but others suffered as prices were inflated as more and more of the precious metal was introduced into the economy.



1.10 Heavenly Militia

This South American painting done hundreds of years after the conquest shows an angel with an arquebus, a precursor of the modern rifle. The image shows the awesome power that Spanish weaponry had on the consciousness of the conquered peoples of Central and South America.

“Cacao by itself, largely being eaten raw, causes all this harm of which we spoke, but that toasted and incorporated with warm spices, as it is mixed in chocolate, it has great benefits for everything.”

JUAN DE CÁRDENAS, *Marvelous Problems and Secrets of the Indies*, 1591

What role did disease play in the Spanish conquest of the Aztecs?

West African Worlds



Africa, the world's second largest continent in terms of land mass, is home to some of the most ancient civilizations in the world. The range of societies in Africa in the sixteenth century rivaled those of the Americas in social complexity and cultural and religious diversity. Africa featured class-stratified urban civilizations alongside more simple egalitarian societies. Monotheistic faiths, including Christianity and Islam, flourished in parts of Africa, as did religions closer in principle to the animist beliefs of Eastern Woodlands Indians.

The North African states on the Mediterranean had been trading with Europe since the founding of the great ancient port of Carthage (814 BCE) near modern Tunis. Africans possessed many commodities sought by Europeans, including salt, gold, ivory, and exotic woods. But the development of a direct sea route from Europe to West Africa in the fifteenth century greatly increased trade and contact between Europeans and Africans. The most profound consequence of the sea routes to West Africa was the development of the international slave trade, a process that changed virtually every society in the Atlantic world.

West African Societies, Islam, and Trade

The civilizations of Africa south of the Sahara Desert, including those with Atlantic ports, were socially and culturally diverse. The powerful Songhai Empire (1370–1591) extended from the Atlantic inward to the Sudan. Primarily agricultural, the empire included urban centers and a highly organized military and administrative bureaucracy. In the great city of Timbuktu, an Islamic university rivaled many European centers of learning.

Other peoples, such as the Igbos of West Africa, lived in smaller, autonomous villages. These simpler, more egalitarian societies were organized mainly around kinship, more like America's Eastern Woodlands Indians than the empires of Mesoamerica or the rising nation-states of Europe. Local rulers consulted with a council of elders before making decisions affecting the community. Societies such as the Igbos were matrilineal, whereas other African societies traced descent and organized inheritance through the paternal line.

Before the seventh century most societies of West Africa practiced animist religions. These polytheistic faiths considered aspects of nature, such as the sun, wind, and animals, to be gods and spirits. Ancestor worship also played a prominent role in many West African religious traditions. But beginning in the mid-seventh century, the faith of Islam,

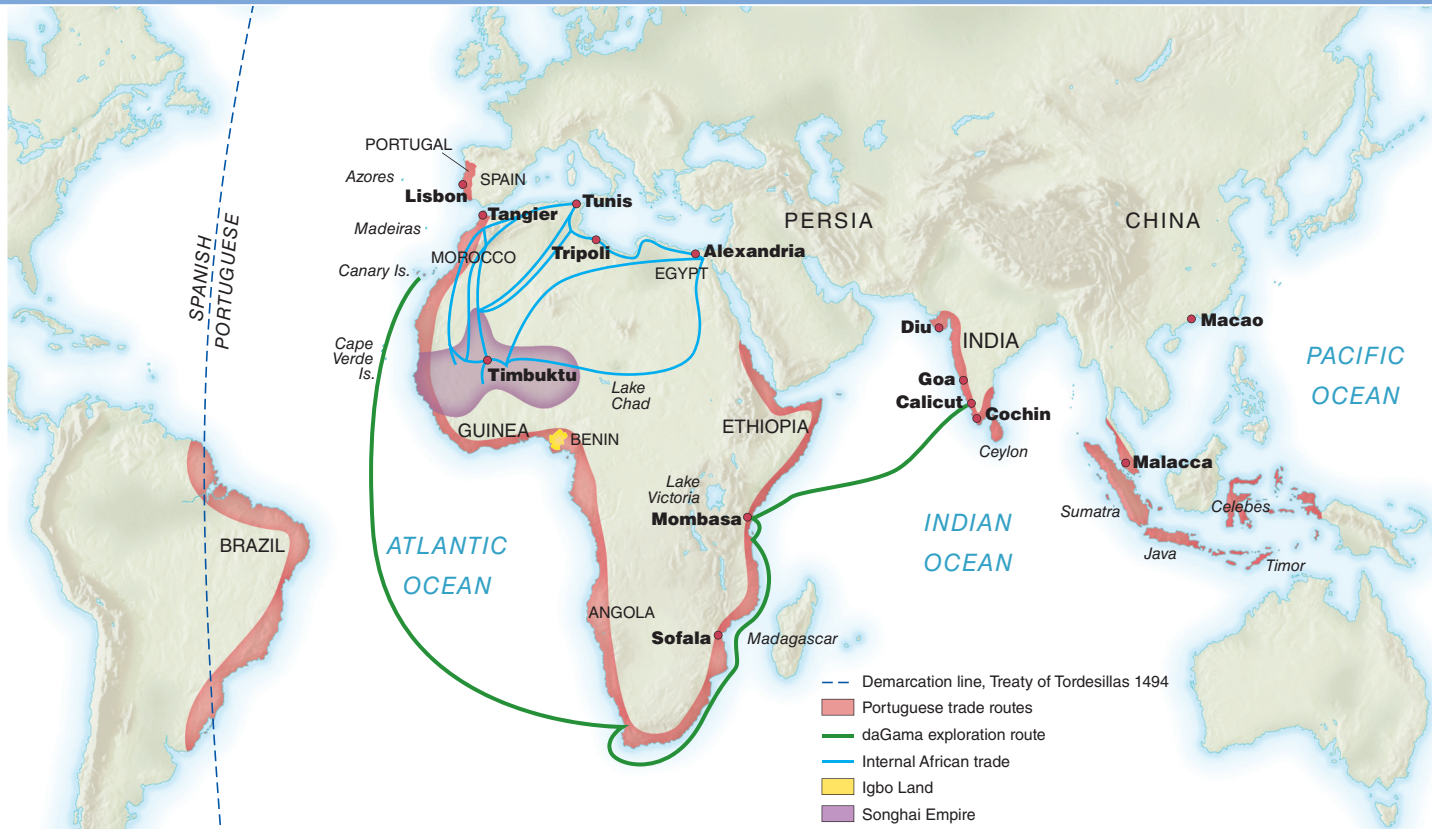
first established in Arabia by Muhammad in 622 CE, began spreading via trade routes through northern, western, and eastern Africa. Islam eventually became the dominant religion in these areas, especially in trading centers.

Trade played a key role in the economic life of both North and West Africa. Trade goods included salt, ivory, and precious metals. While salt was an essential ingredient for cooking and preserving food, the other items were sought by artists and artisans who fashioned them into luxury goods such as jewelry. An extensive network of caravan routes linked West Africa to the North African ports of Tangier, Tunis, Tripoli, and Alexandria. But Portuguese exploration of the African coast in the late 1400s soon led to the development of direct trade between Europeans and Africans (1.11).

The Portuguese-African Connection

Portugal took the lead in exploring an Atlantic route to Asia, which provided Europe with spices and exotic fabrics such as silk and cotton. Prince Henry the Navigator (1394–1460), a member of the Portuguese royal family, used his wealth and power to encourage exploration of the West African coast. Even after his death Portugal continued to explore the West African coast, leading to Vasco da Gama's voyage (1497–1499) around the Horn of Africa and arrival on the southwest

What were the major religious traditions of Africa?



1.11 Internal African Trade Routes and Portuguese Trade with Africa

West African kingdoms were linked by several different inland trade routes to North Africa and the Mediterranean. The Portuguese traded with the Atlantic islands and the west coast of Africa.

coast of India (1.11). Portuguese traders then established a lucrative trade with India and began to explore trading possibilities with Africa, seeking such prized goods as ivory and gold. After 1470, Portuguese trade with West Africa increased, and within a decade the Portuguese had established forts along the African coasts to facilitate further trading opportunities.

At approximately the same time that the Portuguese were exploring the African coast, they were embarking on an ambitious but ruthless plan of conquest and colonization in the Atlantic island groups of the Madeiras, Azores, and Cape Verde, (1.11). These Atlantic outposts were converted into sugar-producing plantation economies. The Portuguese also vied with the Spanish for pre-eminence in the Canary Islands. The Pope eventually brokered a treaty between these two Iberian powers, giving control to the Spanish. The biggest losers were the indigenous populations of the Canary Islands, the Guanche—a North African people who had settled the islands thousands of years earlier. The semitropical climate of the Canaries was ideal for sugar cultivation. The Pope blessed the Guanche enslavement,

which was entirely justified because the Guanche were, in his words, “infidels and savages.” The model developed in the Canaries foreshadowed European interactions with the peoples of the Americas.

With no previous exposure to the diseases carried by Europeans, thousands of Guanche people became ill and died. Unable to rely on an indigenous source of labor, Europeans eventually turned to Africa for slaves to provide the back-breaking labor they demanded for cultivating, harvesting, and processing sugar.

African Slavery

Slavery was widely practiced in Africa long before the arrival of the Portuguese. Rival tribes usually took slaves as spoils of war; but some prisoners attained privileged positions as petty officials, military leaders, and, in rare cases, political advisors to rulers. In Africa slavery was not always a permanent or hereditary condition, and slaves were sometimes absorbed into the societies that held them.

What arguments were used to justify the enslavement of the Guanche?

“[T]hey 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 . . . and as soon as they are taken . . . they are immediately ironed and branded with fire.”

NZINGA MBEMBA (King Afonso of the Kongo, Central Africa), 1526

Initially controlled by Muslim traders, the slave trade after 1600 came increasingly under European domination. The ever-rising demand for labor in the Americas, fueled by extraordinary profits from slave-based sugar

plantations, prompted rival European powers to compete with one another for a share of this lucrative trade. As the value of slaves increased, Africans began raiding neighboring territories with the express purpose of obtaining slaves.

European involvement in the African slave trade transformed this centuries-old institution into one of the most exploitative labor systems in world history. Europeans developed a racist conception of slavery that declared people of dark skin to

be inferior beings for whom slavery was a natural and proper condition. As a consequence Europeans treated slaves as property with few legal rights or protections. Masters were free to extract the maximum amount of labor from them with minimal regard for their humanity. Slaves taken by Europeans to the Americas were often worked literally to death in the sugar fields. Those who survived found that slavery in the New World was a permanent and hereditary condition. They and their descendants faced a lifetime of slavery with no hope of ever obtaining freedom.

Some West African nations managed to fend off the ravages of the slave trade. Benin, a well-organized nation-state ruled by a powerful monarch, traded slaves captured during war to the Portuguese in the fifteenth century but gradually withdrew from the slave trade (see *Choices and Consequences: Benin, Portugal, and the International Slave Trade*, page 23). Benin continued to trade with the Portuguese on its own terms.

Among the goods sought by the Portuguese were a type of pepper and ivory; the Benin sought bronze from the Portuguese. Among the most visually impressive uses of this bronze were the finely crafted panels created for the walls of the royal palace. In the

panel pictured here (1.12), a Portuguese soldier with a pike is surrounded by five “manilas,” the bronze bars that were among the most important trade goods brought by the Portuguese.



1.12 Benin Bronze Panel

The artists of Benin were widely admired for their finely crafted bronze plaques and sculptures which decorated the walls of the royal palace. The panel depicts a Portuguese soldier and the bronze bars used as a common trade item.

What roles did slaves play in African societies?

 [View the Map](#) Benin Empire

Choices and Consequences

BENIN, PORTUGAL, AND THE INTERNATIONAL SLAVE TRADE

The Portuguese took advantage of ethnic and tribal rivalries and the traditional African practice of taking captured opponents as slaves. Africans were eager to trade with the Portuguese who offered highly prized goods such as bronze, cloth, horses, and in limited cases, firearms. The Kingdom of Benin, one of the more powerful West-African kingdoms initially participated in this trade, but by 1516 the Oba (King) faced a momentous decision about whether to continue the slave trade.

Choices

1 Cut off all trade with the Portuguese

2 Continue to trade with the Portuguese, and participate fully in the expanding international slave trade

3 Continue to trade with the Portuguese, but end their involvement in the international slave trade

Continuing Controversies

What does the kingdom of Benin's experiences with the slave trade reveal about the nature of African slavery?

Few scholars believe Benin's actions were motivated by humanitarian concerns about the evils of slavery, which the African kingdom continued to tolerate. Scholars disagree over Benin's motivation for ending its involvement in the slave trade. Some argue that Benin's economy required a large supply of labor, which meant it could ill afford to export slaves. Others argue that Benin's rulers wisely calculated that continued expansion and warfare would only weaken their power and lead to political instability.

Decision

Benin's king continued to trade with the Portuguese but restricted the trade in male slaves, the most sought after slaves for heavy agricultural labor. Benin allowed women to be traded (eventually prohibiting this trade too) and continued to tolerate slavery within its own kingdom.

Consequences

Benin's decision allowed it to prosper and preserve its political autonomy far longer than many neighboring states. Benin obtained the benefits of trade by selling cloth instead of slaves. By refusing to become a major supplier of slaves, Benin avoided the costly and potentially destabilizing warfare needed to obtain large numbers of slaves.



City of Benin

What theories account for Benin's ability to resist involvement in the international slave trade?

European Colonization of the Atlantic World



By the early sixteenth century, Portugal, Spain, and France had established permanent outposts in the Atlantic world, with England soon to follow. Each of these nations concentrated on a particular region of the Atlantic world (1.13). Portugal focused primarily on West Africa and Brazil, where trade in slaves and production of sugar generated enormous profits. Spain's massive empire in the Atlantic extended from the tip of South America to southwestern North America. The Spanish Empire's chief export was silver.

Meanwhile France directed its attention northward toward Canada, where the fur trade produced a lucrative commodity for export, and south to the Caribbean islands where plantations could produce sugar and tobacco. Finally England, a relative latecomer to colonization, established its first outposts on the east coast of North America, in present-day North Carolina and Virginia.



1.13 Major European Explorations of the Atlantic

The European nations that explored the Atlantic took different arcs. The Portuguese turned toward Africa, the Spanish explored Central and South America, and the English and French focused on the North Atlantic.

The Black Legend and the Creation of New Spain

The Spanish had used images of Aztec human sacrifice to justify their conquest and Spain's rivals, particularly Protestant nations such as England, used the power of images for their own political advantage. Tales of Spanish brutality during the conquest of the Americas gave rise to the "Black Legend." This indictment of Spanish cruelty toward the native peoples of the Americas first appeared in the writings of the Spanish bishop, Bartolomé de Las Casas, in the 1550s. The new medium of print allowed copies of his scathing critique of Spanish colonialism to be distributed throughout Europe; it was soon translated into French, Dutch, and English. Some of these translations contained gruesome wood-cut images such as those that appeared in the English edition, *The Tears of the Indians* (1656). The four scenes depicted on the front cover of the book, the "massacre and slaughter" of the Indian inhabitants of the

What was the Black Legend?

 [View the Image](#) Torturing Native Amerindians

Americas, are described in Las Casas's narrative. The title page shows scenes of torture and punishment, including being hacked to death and burnt alive (1.14).

Within two decades the Spanish had conquered much of Central and South America. Inspired by tales of fabulously wealthy civilizations to the north, they launched expeditions to explore the vast continent of North America. Hernando de Soto's expedition to Florida explored much of the southeastern United States in 1539. Another expedition in 1540, under the command of Francisco Vasquez de Coronado, traversed a huge swath of western America from what is now Kansas to Colorado. Subsequent settlements in Florida and the Southwest greatly extended the Spanish Empire. Within 60 years of conquering the Aztecs and Incas, Spain's North American colonial empire extended from Santa Fe (present-day New Mexico) in the west, to St. Augustine (present-day Florida) in the east, and then all the way south to what are now Chile and Argentina—an area larger than ancient Rome's vast empire. The Spanish crown had taken an active role in colonizing these regions, and the government it created to rule its American empire reflected the investment of time, money, and resources. The empire was divided into a series of administrative units and was staffed by a large number of bureaucrats and administrative officials. Of crucial importance was Spain's board of trade, headquartered in the Spanish port of Seville. It granted licenses for trade with Spain's colonies, enforced commercial laws, and collected customs taxes and any revenues due the crown.

Along with the colonial government, the Roman Catholic Church exercised enormous power and influence in Spanish America. Spain granted the Church sizeable amounts of land and money, and priests and church officials enjoyed a privileged status. They also bore responsibilities such as establishing churches, schools, and hospitals, converting native people to the faith, and enforcing religious conformity through the Inquisition.

The Spanish established a network of interconnected urban centers to aid them in the administration of the peoples and territories they conquered. In part this policy reflected the relatively high degree of urbanization the Spanish found among the civilizations of Mesoamerica and South America. However, this model of organization also reflected Spanish values and interests, allowing them to project the power of the church and state in highly visible ways. By 1600, there were 225 towns in Spanish America, all laid out according to Renaissance models of urban



1.14 Illustration from Bartolomé de Las Casas, *The Tears of the Indians*

This illustration from *The Tears of the Indians*, the English translation of Las Casas's work, portrays Spanish cruelty toward Indians. The spread of these images gave credence to the "Black Legend" of Spanish conquest and violence.

planning in a grid-like pattern. The grand central plazas in the larger towns and cities afforded both a place for commerce and a symbolic space for monumental civic and church architecture. This painting of the central plaza in Mexico City (1.15) captures the use of urban planning and monumental architecture to reinforce the power of the state and the church. The cathedral and the viceroy's (local governor) and archbishop's palaces tower over the central square, vivid reminders of the dominance of church and state.

What does the architecture of the central Plaza of Mexico City tell us about Spain's approach to colonization?



1.15 Central Square of Mexico City

Spanish urban planners sought to project imperial power onto the colonial landscape. In this painting of the town square in Mexico City, the buildings most closely identified with church and state, the cathedral and the headquarters of the government, tower over the central plaza.

Much of the economy of New Spain was based on a highly exploitive system of labor. Ensuring an adequate labor supply for the arduous mining and agricultural work became a top economic priority of Spanish colonial officials. Rather than enslave the inhabitants of Central and South America as they had done to the native peoples in the Caribbean islands, the Spanish developed a system of forced labor, the *encomienda*, that was only marginally less exploitive than slavery itself. The crown declared Indians “vassals” who owed their labor to noblemen who in turn were required to provide for the Indians’ spiritual welfare. The system provided labor and in theory demonstrated the Spanish commitment to saving the souls of the Indians by converting them. In reality it led to

the brutal exploitation of Indians. Criticism of the system by religious reformers such as Las Casas, combined with high mortality among the indigenous population, which easily succumbed to diseases brought by the Spanish, eventually led to the use of other types of labor, including conscript (enrolled by compulsion) labor, wage labor, and slavery.

Fishing and Furs: France’s North Atlantic Empire

In 1493, the Pope had settled a colonial dispute between Spain and Portugal by dividing the Atlantic world between them, a decision later ratified by a treaty between both countries in 1494. France

What types of labor systems were employed in the Spanish colonies?

 [View the Map](#) Spanish America to 1610

rejected the authority of the treaty and sent fleets to take advantage of the abundant cod fisheries in the waters off what is now Newfoundland. In 1524 France dispatched Giovanni da Verrazano, an Italian mariner working for the king of France, to find the so-called Northwest Passage that would allow ships to sail through the waterways of the Americas to Asia. Although Verrazano failed to find such a route (it did not exist), his mapping of the North American coast aroused the interest of the French monarch, who decided to commit additional resources for further exploration of North America. In the 1530s French explorer Jacques Cartier made a more extensive and detailed investigation of the North Atlantic, eventually traveling up the St. Lawrence River, where he encountered a group of Micmac Indians (an Algonquian-speaking Eastern Woodlands Indian nation). Their offer of furs in exchange for European goods such as

knives, kettles, and beads led the French to recognize the potential of furs as a lucrative commodity. Furs could be sold to Europeans who valued their warmth and treated them as a high-status luxury item.

In 1604, the French established Port Royal in Nova Scotia and four years later founded the city of Quebec, now the capital of the province of Quebec, on the banks of the St. Lawrence River. Located on a high ridge at a strategic bend in the river, Quebec was well placed to allow the French to trade with the local Indians, who were skilled fur trappers. The beaver pelts traded to the French fetched a good price in the European markets.

The French encounter with Native Americans differed from that of the Spanish and Portuguese in three significant ways. First, the relatively small size of the settlement in New France and the dependence of the French on Indians to provide furs necessitated maintaining good relations with local tribes. Second, the predominantly male French population intermarried with local Indians. Eventually the French government even encouraged intermarriage, believing it would lead to

the gradual assimilation of the Indian population into the French culture of New France.

Third, the French like the Spanish were committed to converting the Indians to their Catholic faith, but rather than trying to impose Catholicism by force, French Jesuit missionaries lived among Indians and learned their languages and customs. The French Jesuits were just as eager as the Spanish to convert the Indians, but they recognized the need to understand the culture of those they wished to convert. The French also took advantage of religious art and images to help convert the Indians. This early account of life in New France includes an image that shows how religious painting was used to introduce Indians to Christian ideas (1.16).

1.16 Two Europeans Show a Religious Painting to A Group of Native Americans

This image from an early French traveler account of New France underscores the way in which images were used to help Indians understand Christianity.



What were the most important differences between New France and New Spain?

English Expansion: Ireland and Virginia

Although England took advantage of the rich opportunities for fishing provided by the Atlantic Ocean, its exploration of the Americas was a relatively low priority for most of the sixteenth century. Three factors explain this lack of interest. First England faced less economic pressure to find export markets because its primary export—wool—was in high demand on the European continent. Second England faced a crisis of leadership after the death of Henry VIII in 1547. He was succeeded by his sickly ten-year-old son, Edward VI, who died in 1553 only six years into his reign. Next came Henry's daughter Mary I, who tried to reestablish Catholicism, a campaign that included the intense persecution of Protestants. Her reign was also short; she died in 1558. Finally England was bogged down in a colonial venture closer to home, the subjugation of Ireland. Spain easily conquered the last Moors in Spain before moving on to Atlantic exploration in 1492. Irish resistance to English colonization, by contrast, tied up English resources for decades.

Yet even as the English struggled to colonize Ireland, these experiences provided a distinctive model for future colonial policy in the New World. While the Spanish set out to conquer and convert the inhabitants of the Americas, absorbing them into Spanish society as a subordinate class at the bottom of the social order, the English took a different approach. Rather than attempt to incorporate the Irish, the English expelled them from their land. They then repopulated the land with colonists from England and Scotland, creating **plantations**, or fortified outposts dedicated to producing agricultural products for export. Originally the term plantation simply meant any English settlement in a foreign land, but it later became synonymous with a distinctive slave-based labor system used in much of the Atlantic world.

One source of this policy of exclusion can be traced to the intense religious animosity between Protestants and Catholics. The English not only detested the Catholic faith of the Irish but they also feared the Irish would support efforts to reimpose Catholicism on England and would assist Catholic nations like France and Spain if they went to war with England. Expelling the Irish and transplanting loyal Protestant farmers from England and Scotland, therefore, promised to boost the English economy

and secure control of a potentially troublesome neighboring island. This colonial model developed in parts of Ireland—expulsion and plantation—would shape subsequent English experiments in colonization.

Economic pressures eventually impelled England to follow its European rivals and engage in the exploration and colonization of the Atlantic. The profitable wool trade with the continent began to decline in the 1550s, prompting English merchants to seek new commercial opportunities. These merchants founded scores of new companies devoted to overseas trade with Europe, Africa, and the Mediterranean.

In 1558 England's entry into exploration and colonization was also helped when another of Henry VIII's daughters, Elizabeth I succeeded "Bloody Mary," as Protestants called her, and quickly established herself as a strong leader determined to project English power overseas. She eagerly pursued an aggressive policy of expansion, challenging Spain's dominance in the Atlantic. A committed Protestant, Elizabeth viewed Spanish power as a threat to her realm. Her religious convictions and foreign policy objectives eventually brought England into direct conflict with Spain.

England's support for Spain's enemies on the continent, including the Protestant Dutch, the raids of English pirates, and English anti-Catholicism, finally drove King Philip II of Spain to take decisive action. In 1588, Spain launched a mighty Armada, or fleet of warships, to invade England and destroy Europe's most powerful Protestant monarchy. The Spanish considered their ships invincible, but the Armada was routed by the smaller, faster ships of the English navy. (Weather conditions at sea favored the English and hampered the Spanish fleet.) The defeat of the Armada shifted the balance of power in the Atlantic, as England eventually emerged as the major force in the Atlantic world. To commemorate the stunning victory, Queen Elizabeth commissioned a portrait that symbolized England's rise to power in the Atlantic world. In the painting Elizabeth's hand rests prominently on a globe and the crown, a symbol of the monarchy, sits perched above the globe (1.17). In the background the artist includes two scenes depicting the defeat of the Armada, a further reminder of England's power and naval supremacy.

Among the most ardent supporters of expanding England's role in the Atlantic world were former **privateers**. These were Englishmen who engaged in

What lessons did the English learn from their experiences in Ireland?

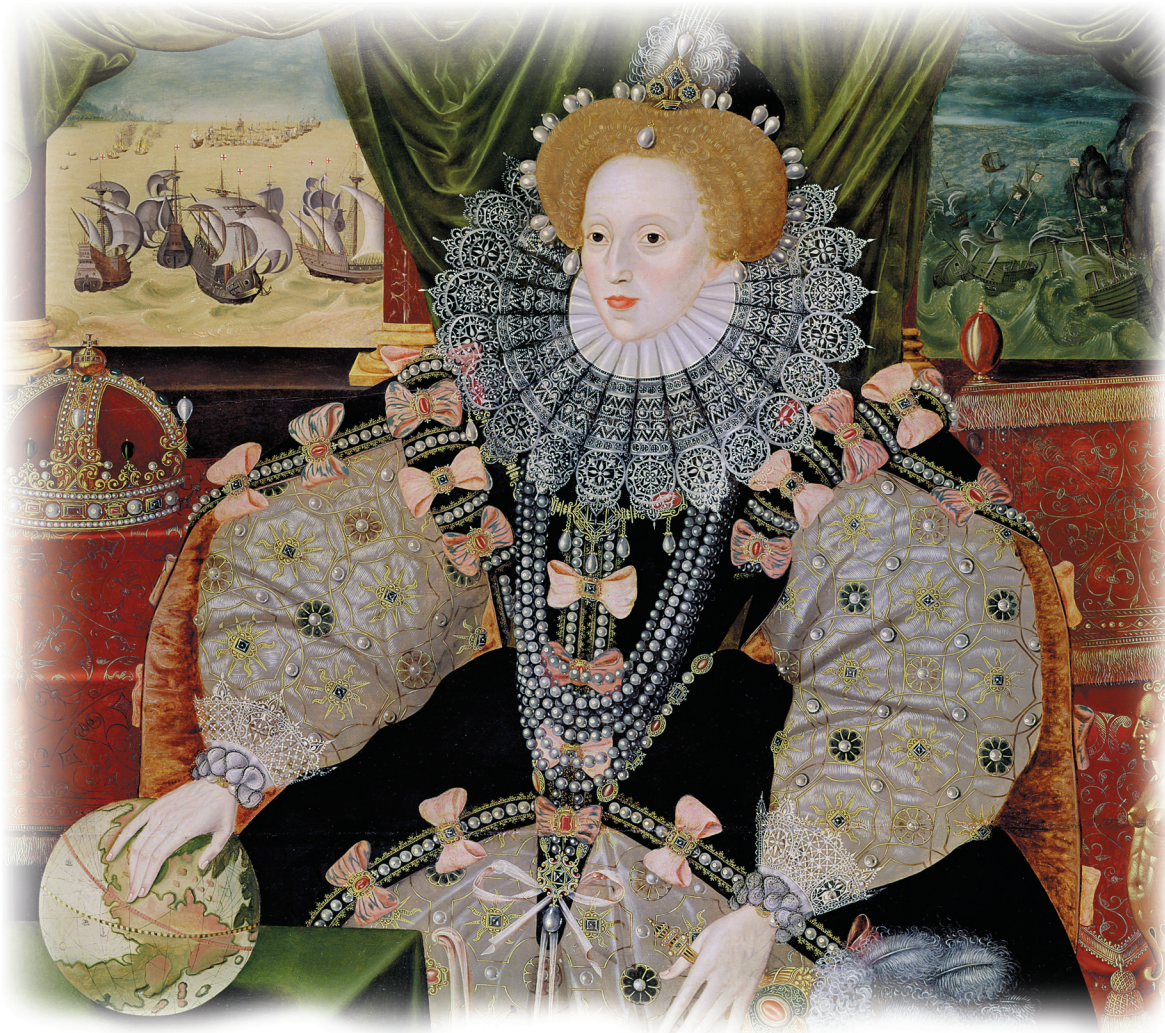


Read the Document Thomas Hariot, A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia (1590)

state-sanctioned piracy in the Atlantic against Spanish treasure fleets returning from South America. A number of them had grown rich and influential from their successes. John Hawkins, for example, earned himself a fortune and a knighthood for his daring seizures of Spanish ships. One of the most dashing of these buccaneers, Sir Walter Raleigh, had participated in the English conquest of Ireland and became a favorite of Queen Elizabeth. Raleigh sought support for a more ambitious plan of colonization in the lands north of Spanish America and south of French Canada. Queen Elizabeth bestowed her blessing on the enterprise, but not money. As a result Raleigh and the colonial ventures that followed had to turn to private capital to finance his plan.

In contrast to France and Spain's state-financed model of exploration and colonization, England adopted a more capitalist model, with private investors forming companies and issuing stock to finance exploration and settlement. Having raised the funds

to outfit two ships, Raleigh's expedition arrived in the outer banks regions of what is now North Carolina in July 1585. Naming the new settlement Virginia, in honor of Elizabeth, known widely as the "Virgin Queen" because she never married, England had finally established its first colony in the New World. Unfortunately for Raleigh and the original colonists, the first colony at Roanoke (an Algonquian Indian name for shell money) ended in disaster. To begin with, although the location near the treacherous region of Cape Hatteras protected the settlement from possible Spanish raids, it also deterred passing ships from stopping, which made reprovisioning the colony difficult. Then conflict with local Indians erupted when the colonists accused them of stealing a silver cup. All the while relief for the colonists was delayed by the outbreak of war with Spain. The English required every available ship to repulse the Spanish Armada. When a ship finally arrived three years later, the new settlers found the colony deserted. All



1.17 Elizabeth's Armada Portrait

In this portrait commemorating England's victory over the Spanish Armada, Queen Elizabeth's hand rests on the globe, reaching out to cover much of what is now North America. In the upper left the Spanish fleet sets out toward England, while in the upper right the defeated Spanish Armada flounders.

What is the symbolic importance of the position of Queen Elizabeth's hand in the Armada portrait?



1.18 John White's Painting

White's depiction of an Indian religious ritual, involving an elaborate dance is one of the first visual representations of Indian religious practices.

the residents had disappeared, leaving behind only one clue: the word "CROATOAN" carved into a door-post. The fate of Roanoke remains a mystery, but scholars suspect that the term *croatoan* was a vague reference to an Indian village some 50 miles south of the settlement that may have been the colonists' destination before they disappeared.

Although the first English attempt to create a fixed settlement was a dismal failure, the information gained by the colonists about the Algonquian tribes who inhabited North Carolina proved invaluable. The governor of the colony, John White, was an accomplished artist who captured scenes from Indian life in vivid paintings (1.18). In his visual representation of the village of Secoton, John White included a scene of Indians engaged in a religious ritual. White includes a brief description in the painting, noting that it was "A Ceremony in their prayers with strange iesturs and songs dancing about posts carved on the topps lyke mens faces."

A number of his images were popularized by the Flemish engraver Theodore de Bry, who in some cases made subtle but important alterations to make them more appealing to European tastes. In the case of the village of Secoton, these changes were fairly minor. In other cases, de Bry altered the images in significant ways. Representing America posed a number of challenges for de Bry, for a more detailed discussion of these issues, see *Images as History: Marketing the New World: Theodore de Bry's Engravings of the Americas*.

"In respect to us they are a people poore, and for want of skill and juegement in the knowledge and use of our things, doe esteeme our trifles before things of greater value: Notwithstanding, in their proper maner (considering the want of such meanes as we have), they seeme to be very ingenious. For although they have no suche tooles, nor any such crafts, Sciences and Artes as wee, yet in those things they doe, they shew excellence of wit. . . . [and] in short time bee brought to civilitie, and the imbracing of true Religion"

THOMAS HARIOT, *A Briefe and True Report of the Newfound Land of Virginia*, 1588

How did the English model of financing colonial projects differ from the Spanish model?

View the Closer Look *An Early European Image of Native Americans*

Images as History

MARKETING THE NEW WORLD: THEODORE DE BRY'S ENGRAVINGS OF THE AMERICAS

Theodore de Bry, an engraver and printer from the city of Antwerp in what is today Belgium, published a multi-volume series, entitled *America* (1590–1634) that provided many Europeans with their first glimpse of the exotic New World. The first volume of this series was published in English, French, German, and Latin. Subsequent volumes were published only in German and Latin. Although a Calvinist, de Bry cut out material that he believed would offend Catholics to make the Latin edition truly universal and appealing to both Catholics and Protestants. In particular, he eliminated portrayals of Catholic explorers as brutally exploitive of the indigenous populations of the

Americas. Given the expense of producing copper plate engravings, de Bry concluded it was simply too costly to create separate images for the Latin and German editions of his later volumes in the series. Instead he tried to make the images appealing to Catholics and Protestants by exaggerating the “otherness” of the indigenous populations. The most striking example of this strategy occurred in an engraving in which de Bry conjured up an exotic pagan ritual in which half-naked Indians parade before a grotesque five-headed, two-tailed deer god, an image that would have struck his audience as the epitome of an unholy and demonic religious practice.

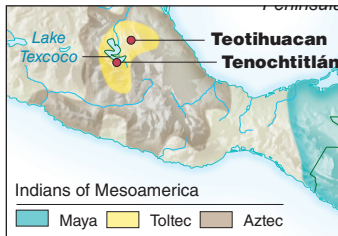
A monstrous pagan sculpture dominates the image, a visible reminder that the inhabitants of the New World were un-Christian savages.

The natives' lack of clothing demonstrates that they are primitive peoples, who lack the most basic attributes of a civilized society.

The Latin text underscores the barbarism of the New World. The author describes the pagan idol as “a horrible effigy made in the form of a misshapen evil-demon.”

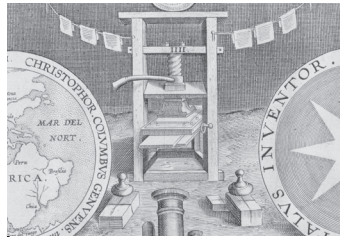


How did de Bry represent the religious beliefs of the Americas?



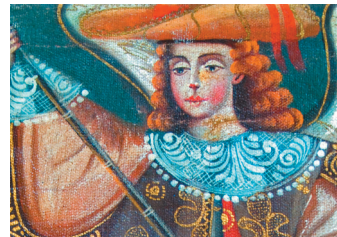
1325

Founding of Tenochtitlán
Aztec Empire becomes dominant power in Mesoamerica



1440

Gutenberg invents printing press
Print revolution transforms the way knowledge is organized and spread



1519–1521

Hernán Cortés conquers Aztecs
Founding of Spanish empire in what is now Mexico



1534

Henry VIII breaks with Rome
Henry becomes the leader of a new English Church

CHAPTER REVIEW

Review Questions

1. What were the chief advantages of fixed agriculture, and how did it contribute to the rise of more complex civilizations?
2. How did new technology affect European overseas expansion in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries?
3. What were the most important ideas associated with the Renaissance?
4. What role did food and animals play in the Columbian Exchange?
5. Compare the impact of Spanish, French, and English approaches to colonization on the indigenous populations of the Americas.

Key Terms

Paleo-Indians The name given by scientists to the first inhabitants of the Americas, an Ice Age people who survived largely by hunting big game, and to a lesser extent by fishing and collecting edible plants. 4

Archaic Era Period beginning approximately 9,000 years ago lasting an estimated 6,000 years. It was marked by more intensive efforts by ancient societies to shape the environment to enhance food production. 5

Aztec Led by the Mexica tribe, the Aztec created a powerful empire whose capital, the great city of Tenochtitlán, was built on an island in Lake Texcoco in 1325 CE. 6

Capitalism An economic system in which the market economy determines the prices of goods and services. 11

Humanists Individuals who advocated a revival of ancient learning, particularly ancient Greek and Roman thought, and encouraged greater attention to secular topics including a new emphasis on the study of humanity. 13

Reformation The movement for religious reform started by Martin Luther. 13

Spanish Inquisition A tribunal devoted to finding and punishing heresy and rooting out Spain's Jews and Muslims. 15

Columbian Exchange The term used by modern scholars to describe the biological encounter between the two sides of the Atlantic, including the movement of plants, animals, and diseases. 16

Plantation An English settlement or fortified outpost in a foreign land dedicated to producing agricultural products for export. (Later the term would become synonymous with a distinctive slave-based labor system used in much of the Atlantic world.) 28

Privateer A form of state-sponsored piracy, usually directed against Spanish treasure fleets returning from the Americas. 28



1560

Publication of the Geneva Bible

English Protestant exiles living in Switzerland publish the Geneva Bible, which becomes the central text for English Calvinists.



1585

English establish colony of Roanoke on North Carolina's Outer Banks

England's first permanent settlement in America fails, and no trace is found of the settlers when new supplies are brought to the colony



1588

English defeat Spanish Armada

England defeats Spain, challenging Spanish dominance of the Atlantic world



1608

Quebec founded

France's major settlement in North America established

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Questions for Analysis

1. What role did human sacrifice play in Mesoamerican societies and how did Europeans view these practices?

 **View the Closer Look** *Images as History: Blood of the Gods*, p. 6

2. How did European views of nature differ from those of Eastern Woodland Indians?

 **View the Closer Look** *Competing Visions: European and Huron Views of Nature*, p. 12

3. What was Columbus's legacy?

 **Watch the Video** *What is Columbus's Legacy?*, p. 17

4. What was the Black Legend?

 **View the Image** *Torturing Native Amerindians*, p. 24

5. What do early European artistic representations of the Americas tell us about Europeans in the period after Columbus?

 **View the Closer Look** *An Early European Image of Native Americans*, p. 30

Other Resources from This Chapter

Read the Document

- Iroquois Creation Story, p. 9
- Thomas Hariot, A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia (1590), p. 28

 **View the Image** *Pueblo Indian Ruins*, p. 7

 **View the Map**

- Native American Peoples to 1450, p. 8
- Spread of Printing, p. 11
- Western Europe During the Renaissance and Reformation, p. 15
- Native American Population Loss, 1500–1700, p. 18
- Benin Empire, p. 22
- Spanish America to 1610, p. 26