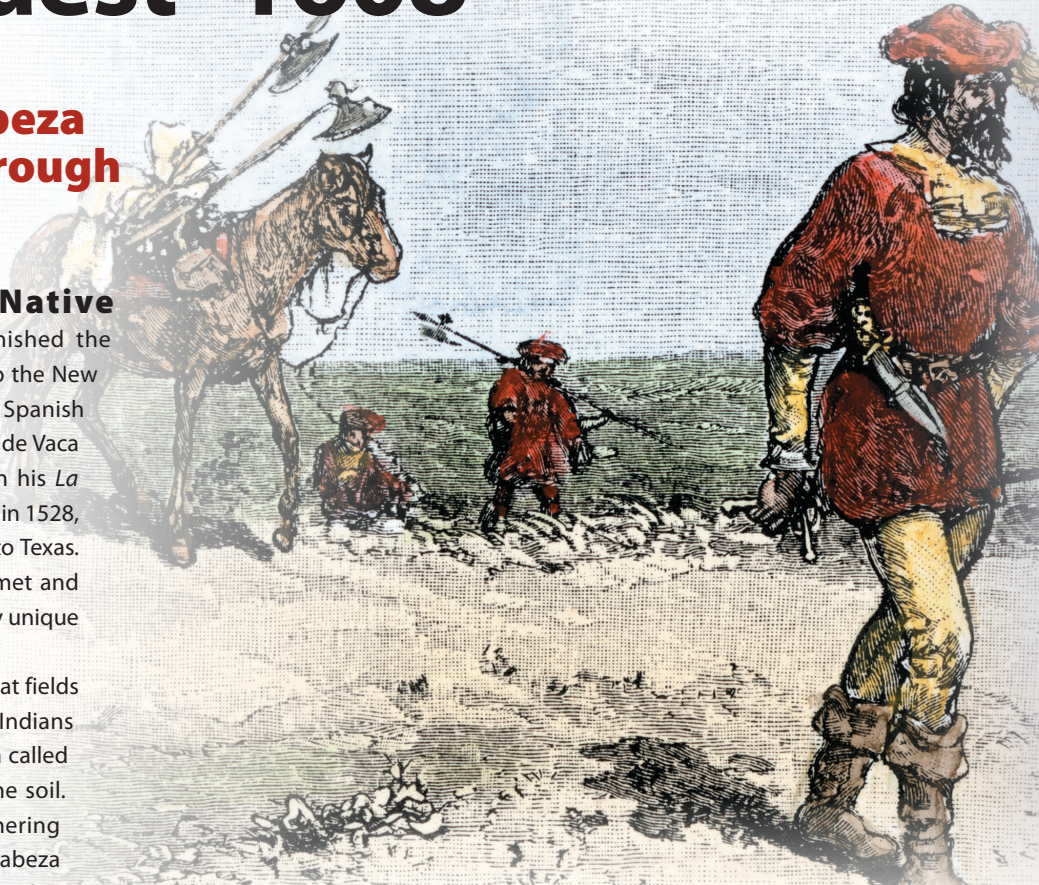


1 New World Encounters Preconquest–1608

Diverse Cultures: Cabeza de Vaca's Journey Through Native America

The diversity of Native American peoples astonished the Europeans who first voyaged to the New World. Early sixteenth-century Spanish adventurer Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca offered a sample of this striking diversity in his *La Relacion* (*The Account*). Shipwrecked in Florida in 1528, Cabeza de Vaca had made his way overland to Texas. During his eight-year trek, Cabeza de Vaca met and lived among Indians belonging to over twenty unique cultures.

The Apalachees of Florida cultivated “great fields of maize” as well as beans and squash. The Indians of southeastern Texas, whom Cabeza de Vaca called “the People of the Figs,” did not cultivate the soil. Instead, they relied upon fishing and gathering the fruit of the prickly pear cactus, which Cabeza de Vaca called “figs.” To harvest this fruit, the “fig”



CABEZA DE VACA AND HIS FELLOW SHIPWRECK SURVIVORS In 1528, a hurricane destroyed a fleet transporting over 300 Spanish soldiers from Florida to Cuba. Shipwrecked on the Florida coast, the survivors set out over land for Spain's holdings in Mexico. Eight years later, only Cabeza de Vaca and three companions survived to stumble into the Spanish outpost at Culiacán.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1.1



What explains cultural differences among Native American groups before European conquest? p. 3

1.2



How did Europeans interact with West Africans and Native Americans during the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries? p. 7

1.3



What factors explain Spain's central role in New World exploration and colonization? p. 12

1.4



How did Spanish conquest of Central and South America transform Native American cultures? p. 15

1.5



What was the character of the French empire in Canada? p. 20

1.6



Why did England not participate in the early competition for New World colonies? p. 21



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Watch the Video Series on MyHistoryLab

Learn about some key topics related to this chapter with the *MyHistoryLab Video Series: Key Topics in U.S. History*.

1

A New World: To 1607 Native Americans inhabited the western hemisphere for millennia prior to its discovery by Europeans. This video surveys the history of the Native Americans from their migrations across the Bering Straits, their adaptation to a range of environmental conditions, and the various cultures they developed, from hunter-gatherers to empires based on sophisticated methods of agriculture. The video also reveals the first hundred years of European colonization that impacted Native American cultures in a way unprecedented in human history.



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The First Americans Prior to 1492, the pre-Columbian cultures of Central America and Mexico, notably the Mayans and Aztecs, developed distinctive cultures and built great empires. This video describes their civilizations as well as other Native American societies in North America, such as the Puebloan peoples, the Plains Indians, and the Mississippian mound-building cultures.

2

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3

The Expansion of Europe What motivated the European voyages of discovery in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries? This video discusses Columbus and other explorers whose search and competition for a passage to India led them to the New World. Instead of spices, the Americas offered Indian souls for conversion to Christianity, and an unimaginable wealth of new lands and resources. Exploiting these would lead to the development of a vast trade network in African slaves.



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The Protestant Reformation The first European settlers who came to North America were typically religious refugees. This video explores the Protestant Reformation, beginning with Martin Luther, a German monk, who “protested” the Catholic Church in Germany. This resulted in many new Protestant denominations that spread through Europe and England, which ultimately became a driving force for colonization.

4

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people traveled great distances, trading with other Indians along their journey. On the plains of northern Mexico, Cabeza de Vaca encountered the “People of the Cows,” who hunted bison for food and clothing.

Other Europeans echoed Cabeza de Vaca’s observations. Throughout the Americas, they encountered rich cultural diversity. Language, physical attributes, social organization, and local foodways separated the Indians of North America into unique nations. Each of these nations, in its own way, would have to come to terms with the arrival of Europeans.

Europeans sailing in the wake of Admiral Christopher Columbus—explorers and conquerors like Cabeza de Vaca—constructed a narrative of superiority that survived long after they themselves passed from the scene. The standard narrative recounted first in Europe and then in the United States depicted heroic adventurers, missionaries, and soldiers sharing Western civilization with the peoples of the New World and opening a vast virgin land to economic development. This familiar tale celebrated material progress, the inevitable spread of European values, and the

taming of frontiers. It was a history crafted by the victors and their descendants to explain how they had come to inherit the land.

This narrative of events no longer provides an adequate explanation for European conquest and settlement. It is not so much wrong as self-serving, incomplete, even offensive. History recounted from the perspective of the victors inevitably silences the voices of the victims, the peoples who, in the victors' view, foolishly resisted economic and technological progress. Heroic tales of the advance of Western values only deflect modern attention away from the rich cultural and racial diversity that characterized North American societies for a very long time. More disturbing, traditional tales of European conquest also obscure the sufferings of the millions of Native Americans who perished and the millions of Africans sold in the New World as slaves.

By placing these complex, often unsettling, experiences within an interpretive framework of *creative adaptations*—rather than of *exploration* or *settlement*—we go a long way toward recapturing the full human dimensions of conquest and resistance. While the New World often witnessed tragic violence and systematic betrayal, it allowed ordinary people of three different races and many different ethnic identities opportunities to shape their own lives as best they could within diverse, often hostile environments.

Neither the Native Americans nor the Africans were passive victims of European exploitation. Within their own families and communities, they made choices, sometimes rebelling, sometimes accommodating, but always trying to make sense in terms of their own cultures of what was happening to them.

Native Americans Before the Conquest

1.1

What explains cultural differences among Native American groups before European conquest?

As almost any Native American could have informed the first European adventurers, the peopling of America did not begin in 1492. In fact, although the Spanish invaders who followed Columbus proclaimed the discovery of a “New World,” they really brought into contact three worlds—Europe, Africa, and the Americas—that had existed for thousands of years. Indeed, the first migrants from Asia reached the North American continent some 15,000–20,000 years ago.

Environmental conditions played a major part in this great human trek. Twenty thousand years ago, during the last Ice Age, the earth's climate was colder than it is today. Huge glaciers, often more than a mile thick, extended as far south as the present states of Illinois and Ohio and covered much of western Canada. Much of the world's moisture was transformed into ice, and the oceans dropped hundreds of feet below their current levels. The receding waters created a land bridge connecting Asia and North America, a region now submerged beneath the Bering Sea that archaeologists named **Beringia**.

Even at the height of the last Ice Age, much of the far north remained free of glaciers. Small bands of spear-throwing Paleo-Indians pursued giant mammals (megafauna)—woolly mammoths and mastodons, for example—across the vast tundra of Beringia. These hunters were the first human beings to set foot on a vast, uninhabited continent. Because these migrations took place over a long time and involved small, independent bands of highly nomadic people, the Paleo-Indians never developed a sense of common identity. Each group focused on its own immediate survival, adjusting to the opportunities presented by various microenvironments.

The tools and weapons of the Paleo-Indians differed little from those of other Stone Age peoples found in Asia, Africa, and Europe. In terms of human health, however, something occurred on the Beringian tundra that forever altered the history of Native

Beringia Land bridge formerly connecting Asia and North America that is now submerged beneath the Bering Sea.

Americans. The members of these small migrating groups stopped hosting a number of communicable diseases—smallpox and measles being the deadliest. Although Native Americans experienced illnesses such as tuberculosis, they no longer suffered the major epidemics that under normal conditions would have killed much of their population every year. The physical isolation of these bands may have protected them from the spread of contagious disease. Another theory notes that epidemics have frequently been associated with prolonged contact with domestic animals such as cattle and pigs. Since the Paleo-Indians did not domesticate animals, not even horses, they may have avoided the microbes that caused virulent European and African diseases.

Whatever the explanation for this curious epidemiological record, Native American populations lost immunities that later might have protected them from many contagious germs. Thus, when they first came into contact with Europeans and Africans, Native Americans had no defense against the great killers of the Early Modern World. And, as medical researchers have discovered, dislocations resulting from war and famine made the Indians even more vulnerable to infectious disease.

The Environmental Challenge: Food, Climate, and Culture

Some 12,000 years ago, global warming reduced the glaciers, allowing nomadic hunters to pour into the heart of North America (see Map 1.1). Within just a few thousand years, Native Americans had journeyed from Colorado to the southern tip of South America.

Blessed with a seemingly inexhaustible supply of meat, the early migrants experienced rapid population growth. As archaeologists have discovered, however, the sudden expansion of human population coincided with the loss of scores of large mammal species, many of them the spear-throwers' favorite sources of food: mammoths and mastodons, camels, and, amazingly, horses were eradicated from the land. The peoples of the Great Plains did not obtain horses until the Spanish reintroduced them in the New World in 1547. Some archaeologists have suggested that the early Paleo-Indian hunters were responsible for the mass extinction of so many animals. However, climatic warming, which transformed well-watered regions into arid territories, probably put the large mammals under severe stress. Early humans simply contributed to an ecological process over which they ultimately had little control.

The Indian peoples adjusted to the changing environment. As they dispersed across North America, they developed new food sources, at first smaller mammals and fish,



MAP 1.1 ROUTES OF THE FIRST AMERICANS The peopling of North America began about 20,000 years ago, during the last Ice Age, and continued for millennia.

nuts and berries, and then about 7,000 years ago, they discovered how to cultivate certain plants. Knowledge of maize (corn), squash, and beans spread north from central Mexico. The peoples living in the Southwest acquired cultivation skills long before the bands living along the Atlantic Coast. The shift to basic crops—a transformation that is sometimes termed the **Agricultural Revolution**—profoundly altered Native American societies.

The availability of a more reliable store of food helped liberate nomadic groups from the insecurities of hunting and gathering. During this period, Native Americans began to produce ceramics, a valuable technology for storing grain. The harvest made permanent villages possible, which often were governed by clearly defined hierarchies of elders and kings, and as the food supply increased, the population greatly expanded, especially around urban centers in the Southwest and the Mississippi Valley. Although the evidence is patchy, scholars currently estimate that approximately 4 million Native Americans lived north of Mexico when the Europeans arrived.

The vast distances and varied climates of North America gave rise to a great diversity of human cultures employing a wide variety of ingenious strategies for dealing with their unique regional environments (see Map 1.2). Some native peoples were unable to take advantage of the Agricultural Revolution. In the harsh climate of the far north, Inuit living in small autonomous kin-based bands developed watertight vessels called kayaks that allowed them to travel and hunt seals in frigid Arctic waters. Many Indian peoples, like those of the Great Plains, combined agriculture with hunting, living most of the year in permanent villages built along river valleys with the men dispersing to seasonal hunting camps at certain times. To attract game animals, especially the buffalo, Plains Indian communities burned the grasslands annually to promote the growth of fresh, green vegetation. Some Native American groups were even

Agricultural Revolution The gradual shift from hunting and gathering to cultivating basic food crops that occurred worldwide about 7,000 years ago.



Read the Document Thomas Harriot, *The Algonquian Peoples of the Atlantic Coast* (1588)



MAP 1.2 THE FIRST AMERICANS: LOCATIONS OF MAJOR INDIAN GROUPS AND CULTURE AREAS IN THE 1600s The Native American groups scattered across North America into the 1600s had strikingly diverse cultures.

Quick Check

What was life like for the first humans living in North America and what role did the Earth's climate play in shaping their experiences?

Quick Check

What most impressed Spanish explorers about Aztec culture?

more dramatic in their efforts to reshape their natural environment. In the Southwest, in what would become New Mexico, the Anasazi culture built massive pueblo villages and overcame the aridity of their desert home by developing a complex society that could sustain a huge, technologically sophisticated network of irrigation canals.

Aztec Dominance

As with the Anasazi, the stability the Agricultural Revolution brought allowed the Indians of Mexico and Central America to structure more complex societies. Like the Inca, who lived in what is now Ecuador, Peru, and northern Chile, the Mayan and Toltec peoples of Central Mexico built vast cities, formed government bureaucracies that dominated large tributary populations, and developed hieroglyphic writing and an accurate solar calendar. Their cities, which housed several hundred thousand people, impressed the Spanish conquerors. Bernal Díaz del Castillo reported, "When we saw all those [Aztec] towns and villages built in the water, and other great towns on dry land, and that straight and level causeway leading to Mexico, we were astounded. . . . Indeed, some of our soldiers asked whether it was not all a dream."

Not long before Columbus's first voyage across the Atlantic, the Aztec, an aggressive, warlike people, swept through the Valley of Mexico, conquering the great cities that their enemies had constructed. Aztec warriors ruled by force, reducing defeated rivals to tributary status. In 1519, the Aztecs' main ceremonial center, Tenochtitlán (on the site of modern Mexico City), contained as many as 250,000 people, compared with only 50,000 in Seville, the port from which the early Spanish explorers of the Americas had sailed. Elaborate human sacrifice associated with Huitzilopochtli, the Aztec sun god, horrified Europeans, who apparently did not find the savagery of their own civilization so objectionable. The Aztec ritual killings were connected to the agricultural cycle, and the Indians believed the blood of their victims possessed extraordinary fertility powers.

Eastern Woodland Cultures

In northeastern North America along the Atlantic coast, the Indians did not practice intensive agriculture. These peoples, numbering less than a million at the time of conquest, generally supplemented farming with seasonal hunting and gathering.



THE AZTECS This image from *Codex Magliabechiano* depicts Aztec priests engaged in human sacrifice.

Most belonged to what ethnographers term the **Eastern Woodland Cultures**. Small bands formed villages during the summer. The women cultivated maize and other crops, while the men hunted and fished. During the winter, difficulties associated with feeding so many people forced the communities to disperse. Each family lived off the land as best it could.

Seventeenth-century English settlers were most likely to have encountered the Algonquian-speaking peoples who occupied much of the Atlantic coast from North Carolina to Maine. Included in this large linguistic family were the Powhatan of Tidewater, Virginia, the Narragansett of Rhode Island, and the Abenaki of northern New England.

Algonquian groups exploited different resources in different regions and spoke different dialects. They did not develop strong ties of mutual identity. When their own interests were involved, they were more than willing to ally themselves with Europeans or “foreign” Indians against other Algonquian speakers. Divisions among Indian groups would facilitate European conquest. Native American peoples greatly outnumbered the first settlers, and had the Europeans not forged alliances with the Indians, they could not so easily have gained a foothold on the continent.

However divided the Indians of eastern North America may have been, they shared many cultural values and assumptions. Most Native Americans, for example, defined their place in society through kinship. Such personal bonds determined the character of economic and political relations. The farming bands living in areas eventually claimed by England were often matrilineal, which meant in effect that the women owned the fields and houses, maintained tribal customs, and had a role in tribal government. Among the native communities of Canada and the northern Great Lakes, patrilineal forms were more common. In these groups, the men owned the hunting grounds that the family needed to survive.

Eastern Woodland communities organized diplomacy, trade, and war around reciprocal relationships that impressed Europeans as being extraordinarily egalitarian, even democratic. Chains of native authority were loosely structured. Native leaders were such renowned public speakers because persuasive rhetoric was often their only effective source of power. It required considerable oratorical skills for an Indian leader to persuade independent-minded warriors to support a proposed policy.

Before the arrival of the white settlers, Indian wars were seldom very lethal. Young warriors attacked neighboring bands largely to exact revenge for an insult or the death of a relative, or to secure captives. Fatalities, when they did occur, sparked cycles of revenge. Some captives were tortured to death; others were adopted into the community to replace fallen relatives.

Eastern Woodland Cultures Term given to Indians from the Northeast region who lived on the Atlantic coast and supplemented farming with seasonal hunting and gathering.

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Quick Check

How was society structured among the Eastern Woodland Indians before the arrival of Europeans?

Conditions of Conquest

1.2

How did Europeans interact with West Africans and Native Americans during the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries?

Portuguese explorers began venturing south in the fifteenth century, searching for a sea route around the continent of Africa. They hoped establishing direct trading contacts with the civilizations of central and eastern Asia would allow Portuguese merchants to bypass middlemen in the Middle East who had long dominated the trade in luxury goods like silk and spice. Christopher Columbus shared this dream. Sailing under the patronage of Spain, Columbus famously set off toward the west in search of a new route to these eastern markets. Both the Portuguese sailing along the coast of Africa and those sailors who followed Columbus to the Americas encountered a multitude of new and ancient cultures. And all of these cultures—European, African, and Native American—entered an era of tumultuous change as a result of these encounters.

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West Africa: Ancient and Complex Societies

The first Portuguese who explored the African coast during the fifteenth century encountered many different political and religious cultures. Centuries earlier, Africans in this region had come into contact with Islam, the religion the Prophet Muhammad founded in the seventh century. Islam spread slowly from Arabia into West Africa. Not until 1030 A.D. did a kingdom in the Senegal Valley accept Islam. Many other West Africans, such as those in ancient Ghana, continued to observe traditional religions.

As Muslim traders from North Africa and the Middle East brought a new religion to West Africa, they expanded sophisticated trade networks that linked the villagers of Senegambia with urban centers in northwest Africa, Morocco, Tunisia, and Libya. Camel caravans regularly crossed the Sahara carrying goods that were exchanged for gold and slaves. Sub-Saharan Africa's well-developed links with Islam surprised a French priest who in 1686 observed African pilgrims going "to visit Mecca to visit Mahomet's tomb, although they are eleven or twelve hundred leagues distance from it."

West Africans spoke many languages and organized themselves into diverse political systems. Several populous states, sometimes termed "empires," exercised loose control over large areas. Ancient African empires such as Ghana were vulnerable to external attack and internal rebellion, and the oral and written histories of this region record the rise and fall of several large kingdoms. When European traders first arrived, the major states would have included Mali, Benin, and Kongo. Many other Africans lived in what are known as stateless societies, largely autonomous communities organized



SLAVE FACTORIES Cape Coast Castle was one of many so-called slave factories European traders built on the West African coast.



MAP 1.3 TRADE ROUTES IN AFRICA This map of African trade routes in the 1600s illustrates the existence of a complex economic system.

around lineage structures. In these respects, African and Native American cultures had much in common.

The Portuguese journeyed to Africa in search of gold and slaves. Mali and Joloff officials (see Map 1.3) were willing partners in this commerce but insisted that Europeans respect African trade regulations. They required the Europeans to pay tolls and other fees and restricted the conduct of their business to small forts or castles on the coast. Local merchants acquired slaves and gold in the interior and transported them to the coast, where they exchanged them for European manufactures. Transactions were calculated in local African currencies: A slave would be offered to a European trader for so many bars of iron or ounces of gold.

European slave traders accepted these terms, largely because they had no other choice. The African states fielded formidable armies, and outsiders soon discovered they could not impose their will on the region simply through force. Moreover, local diseases such as malaria and yellow fever proved so lethal for Europeans—six out of ten of whom would die within a single year's stay in Africa—that they were happy to avoid dangerous trips to the interior. Most slaves were men and women taken captive during wars; others were victims of judicial practices designed specifically to supply the growing American market. By 1650, most West African slaves were destined for the New World rather than the Middle East.

Even before Europeans colonized the New World, the Portuguese were purchasing almost 1,000 slaves a year on the West African coast. The slaves were frequently forced to work on the sugar plantations of Madeira (Portuguese) and the Canaries (Spanish), Atlantic islands on which Europeans experimented with forms of unfree labor that would later be more fully and ruthlessly established in the American colonies. Approximately 10.7 million Africans were taken to the New World as slaves. The figure for the eighteenth century alone is about 5.5 million, of which more than one-third came from West Central Africa. The Bight of Benin, the Bight of Biafra, and the Gold Coast supplied most of the others.

The peopling of the New World is usually seen as a story of European migrations. But in fact, during every year between 1650 and 1831, more Africans than Europeans came to the Americas. As historian Davis Eltis wrote, “In terms of immigration alone . . . America was an extension of Africa rather than Europe until late in the nineteenth century.”

Cultural Negotiations in the Americas

The arrival of large numbers of white men and women on the North American continent profoundly altered Native American cultures. Change did not occur at the same rates in all places. Indian villages on the Atlantic coast came under severe pressure almost immediately; inland groups had more time to adjust. Wherever Indians lived, however, conquest strained traditional ways of life, and as daily patterns of experience changed almost beyond recognition, native peoples had to devise new answers, responses, and ways to survive in physical and social environments that eroded tradition.

Native Americans were not passive victims of geopolitical forces beyond their control. As long as they remained healthy, they held their own in the early exchanges, and although they eagerly accepted certain trade goods, they generally resisted other aspects of European cultures. The earliest recorded contacts between Indians and explorers suggest curiosity and surprise rather than hostility.

What Indians desired most was peaceful trade. The earliest French explorers reported that natives waved from shore, urging the Europeans to exchange metal items for beaver skins. In fact, the Indians did not perceive themselves at a disadvantage in these dealings. They could readily see the technological advantage of guns over bows and arrows. Metal knives made daily tasks much easier. And to acquire such goods they gave up pelts, which to them seemed in abundant supply. “The English have no sense,” one Indian informed a French priest. “They give us twenty knives like this for one Beaver skin.” Another native announced that “the Beaver does everything perfectly well: it makes kettles, hatchets, swords, knives, bread . . . in short, it makes everything.” The man who recorded these observations reminded French readers—in case they had missed the point—that the Indian was “making sport of us Europeans.”

Trading sessions along the eastern frontier were really cultural seminars. The Europeans tried to make sense out of Indian customs, and although they may have called the natives “savages,” they quickly discovered that the Indians drove hard bargains. They demanded gifts; they set the time and place of trade.

Communicating with the Indians was always difficult for the Europeans, who did not understand the alien sounds and gestures of the Native American cultures. In the absence of meaningful conversation, Europeans often concluded that the Indians held them in high regard, perhaps seeing the newcomers as gods. Such one-sided encounters involved a lot of projection, a mental process of translating alien sounds and gestures into what Europeans wanted to hear. Sometimes the adventurers did not even try to communicate with the Indians, assuming from superficial observation—as did the sixteenth-century explorer Giovanni da Verrazzano—“that they have no religion, and that they live in absolute freedom, and that everything they do proceeds from Ignorance.”

Ethnocentric Europeans tried repeatedly to “civilize” the Indians. In practice that meant persuading natives to dress like the colonists, attend white schools, live in permanent structures, and, most important, accept Christianity. The Indians listened more or less patiently, but in the end, they usually rejected European values. One South Carolina trader explained that when Indians were asked to become more English, they said no, “for they thought it hard, that we should desire them to change their manners and customs, since they did not desire us to turn Indians.”

Some Indians were attracted to Christianity, but most paid it lip service or found it irrelevant to their needs. As one Huron told a French priest, “It would be useless for me to repent having sinned, seeing that I never have sinned.” Another Huron announced that he did not fear punishment after death since “we cannot tell whether everything that appears faulty to Men, is so in the Eyes of God.”

Among some Indian groups, gender figured significantly in a person’s willingness to convert to Christianity. Native men who traded animal skins for European goods had more frequent contact with the whites and proved more receptive to the missionaries’ arguments. But native women jealously guarded traditional culture, a system that often sanctioned polygamy—a husband having several wives—and gave women substantial authority over the distribution of food within the village.

The white settlers’ educational system proved no more successful than their religion in winning cultural converts. Young Indians deserted stuffy classrooms at the first opportunity. In 1744, Virginia offered several Iroquois boys a free education at the College of William and Mary. The Iroquois leaders rejected the invitation because they found that boys who had gone to college “were absolutely good for nothing being neither acquainted with the true methods of killing deer, catching Beaver, or surprising an enemy.”

Even matrimony seldom eroded the Indians’ attachment to their own customs. When Native Americans and whites married—unions the English found less desirable than did the French or Spanish—the European partner usually elected to live among the Indians. Impatient settlers who regarded the Indians simply as an obstruction to progress sometimes developed more coercive methods, such as enslavement, to achieve cultural conversion. Again, from the white perspective, the results were disappointing. Indian slaves ran away or died. In either case, they did not become Europeans.

Quick Check

Why did Europeans insist on trying to “civilize” the Indians?

Threats to Survival: Columbian Exchange

Over time, cooperative encounters between the Native Americans and Europeans became less frequent. The Europeans found it almost impossible to understand the Indians’ relation to the land and other natural resources. English planters cleared the forests and fenced the fields and, in the process, radically altered the ecological systems on which the Indians depended. The European system of land use inevitably reduced the supply of deer and other animals essential to traditional native cultures.

Dependency also came in more subtle forms. The Indians welcomed European commerce, but like so many consumers throughout history, they discovered that the objects they most coveted inevitably brought them into debt. To pay for the trade goods, the Indians hunted more aggressively and even further reduced the population of fur-bearing mammals.

Commerce eroded Indian independence in other ways. After several disastrous wars—the Yamasee War in South Carolina (1715), for example—the natives learned that demonstrations of force usually resulted in the suspension of normal trade, on which the Indians had grown dependent for guns and ammunition, among other things. A hardened English businessman made the point bluntly. When asked if the Catawba Indians would harm his traders, he responded that “the danger would be . . . little from them, because they are too fond of our trade to lose it for the pleasure of shedding a little English blood.”

It was disease, however, that ultimately destroyed the cultural integrity of many North American tribes. European adventurers exposed the Indians to bacteria and viruses against which they possessed no natural immunity. Smallpox, measles, and influenza decimated the Native American population. Other diseases such as alcoholism took a terrible toll.

The decimation of Native American peoples was an aspect of ecological transformation known as the **Columbian Exchange**. European conquerors exposed the Indians to new fatal diseases; the Indians adopted European plants and domestic animals and

Columbian Exchange The exchange of plants, animals, and diseases between Europe and the Americas from first contact throughout the era of exploration.

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TABLE 1.1 NEW OPPORTUNITIES, NEW THREATS: THE COLUMBIAN EXCHANGE

From the Americas to Eurasia and Africa

Maize, Potatoes, Sweet Potatoes, Tomatoes, Beans, Cinchona Tree (the source of quinine), Many Types of Beans, Pineapples, Blueberries, Papaya, Pecans, Tobacco, Cacao, Vanilla, Peanuts, Peppers, Cassava, Squash, Avocados, Sunflowers, Turkeys, and (maybe) Syphilis

From Eurasia and Africa to the Americas

Cereals (wheat, rice, barley, etc.), Sugar, Bananas, Coconuts, Orchard Trees (apples, oranges, lemons, etc.), Olives, Wine Grapes, Coffee, Lettuces, Black Pepper, Livestock (horses, sheep, swine, cattle, goats, chickens, etc.), Honey Bees, Many Epidemic Diseases (smallpox, influenza, chicken pox, etc.)

introduced the invaders to marvelous plants such as corn and potatoes that changed European history (see Table 1.1).

The Algonquian communities of New England experienced appalling death rates. One Massachusetts colonist reported in 1630 that the Indian peoples of his region “above twelve years since were swept away by a great & grievous Plague . . . so that there are verie few left to inhabite the Country.” Settlers possessed no knowledge of germ theory—it was not formulated until the mid-nineteenth century—and speculated that the Christian God had providentially cleared the wilderness of heathens.

Historical demographers now estimate that some tribes suffered a 90- to 95-percent population loss within the first century of European contact. The population of the Arawak Indians of the island of Hispaniola (modern Haiti and the Dominican Republic), for example, dropped from about 3,770,000 in 1496 to only 125 in 1570. The death of so many Indians decreased the supply of indigenous laborers, whom the Europeans needed to work the mines and grow staple crops such as sugar and tobacco. The decimation of native populations may have persuaded colonists throughout the New World to seek a substitute labor force in Africa. Indeed, the enslavement of blacks has been described as an effort by Europeans to “repopulate” the New World.

Indians who survived the epidemics often found that the fabric of traditional culture had come unraveled. The enormity of the death toll and the agony that accompanied it called traditional religious beliefs and practices into question. The survivors lost not only members of their families, but also elders who might have told them how to bury the dead properly and give spiritual comfort to the living.

Some native peoples, such as the Iroquois, who lived a long way from the coast and thus had more time to adjust to the challenge, withstood the crisis better than did those who immediately confronted the Europeans and Africans. Refugee Indians from the hardest-hit eastern communities were absorbed into healthier western groups. However horrific the crisis may have been, it demonstrated just how much the environment—a source of opportunity as well as devastation—shaped human encounters throughout the New World.

Quick Check

What effect did the introduction of Old World diseases such as smallpox have on Native American societies and cultures?

Europe on the Eve of Conquest

1.3 What factors explain Spain’s central role in New World exploration and colonization?

In the tenth century, Scandinavian seafarers known as Norsemen or Vikings established settlements in the New World, but almost 1000 years passed before they received credit for their accomplishment. In 984, a band of Vikings led by Eric the Red sailed west from Iceland to a large island in the North Atlantic. Eric, who possessed a fine sense of public relations, named the island Greenland, reasoning that others would more willingly colonize the icebound region “if the country had a good name.” A few years later, Eric’s son Leif founded a small settlement he named Vinland at a location in northern Newfoundland now called L’Anse aux Meadows. At the time, the Norse voyages went unnoticed by other Europeans. The hostility of Native



L'ANSE AUX MEADOWS Located on Newfoundland, L'Anse aux Meadows was the site of a Norse Settlement.

Americans, poor lines of communication, climatic cooling, and political upheavals in Scandinavia made it impossible to maintain these distant outposts.

At the time of his first voyage in 1492, Christopher Columbus seems to have been unaware of these earlier exploits. His expeditions had to wait for a different political climate in Europe in which a newly united Spain took the lead in New World conquest.

Spanish Expansion

By 1500, centralization of political authority and advances in geographic knowledge were making Spain a world power. In the early fifteenth century, though, Spain consisted of several autonomous kingdoms. It lacked rich natural resources and possessed few good seaports. In fact, little about this land suggested its people would take the lead in conquering and colonizing the New World.

By the end of the 1400s, however, Spain suddenly came alive with creative energy. The marriage of Spain's two principal Christian rulers, King Ferdinand of Aragon and Queen Isabella of Castile, sparked a drive for political consolidation that, because of the monarchs' fervid Catholicism, took on the characteristics of a religious crusade. Spurred by the militant faith of their monarchs, the armies of Castile and Aragon waged holy war—known as the *Reconquista*—against the kingdom of Granada, the last independent Muslim state in Spain. In 1492, Granada fell, and, for the first time in seven centuries, the entire Iberian Peninsula was under Christian rulers. Spanish authorities showed no tolerance for people who rejected the Catholic faith.

During the *Reconquista*, thousands of Jews and Moors (Spanish Muslims) were driven from the country. Indeed, Columbus undoubtedly encountered such refugees as he was preparing for his famous voyage. From this volatile social and political environment came the **conquistadores**, men eager for personal glory and material gain, uncompromising in religion, and loyal to the crown. They were prepared to employ fire and sword in any cause sanctioned by God and king, and these adventurers carried European culture to the most populous regions of the New World.

Long before Spaniards ever reached the West Indies, they conquered the indigenous peoples of the Canary Islands, a strategically located archipelago in the eastern Atlantic. The harsh labor systems the Spanish developed in the Canaries served as models of subjugation in America. An early fifteenth-century Spanish chronicle described the Canary

conquistadores Sixteenth-century Spanish adventurers, often of noble birth, who subdued the Native Americans and created the Spanish empire in the New World.

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Quick Check

Who were the *conquistadores*, and what were their motivations in the New World?

natives as “miscreants . . . [who] do not acknowledge their creator and live in part like beasts.” Many islanders died of disease; others were killed in battle or enslaved. The new Spanish landholders introduced sugar, a labor-intensive plantation crop. They forced slaves captured in Africa to provide the labor. Dreams of wealth drove this oppressive process. Through the centuries, European colonists would repeat it many times.

The Strange Career of Christopher Columbus

If it had not been for Christopher Columbus (Cristoforo Colombo), Spain might never have gained an American empire. Little is known about his early life. Born in the Italian city of Genoa in 1451 of humble parentage, Columbus soon devoured the classical learning that had so recently been rediscovered and made available in print. He mastered geography, and—perhaps while sailing the coast of West Africa—he became obsessed with the idea of voyaging west across the Atlantic Ocean to reach Cathay, as China was then known to Europeans.

In 1484, Columbus presented his plan to the king of Portugal. However, while the Portuguese were just as interested as Columbus in reaching Cathay, they elected to voyage around the continent of Africa instead of following the route Columbus suggested. They suspected that Columbus had underestimated the circumference of the earth and that he would starve before reaching Asia. The Portuguese decision eventually paid off handsomely. In 1498, one of their captains, Vasco da Gama, returned from India with a fortune in spices and other luxury goods.



Watch the Video How Should We Think of Columbus?



COLUMBUS Cristoforo Colombo, better known to Americans as Christopher Columbus, was a fifteenth-century sailor from Genoa. Dreaming of reaching the rich markets of Asia by sailing west from Europe, he instead stumbled upon the islands of the Caribbean Sea. In doing so, he ushered in a new age of sustained contact between the peoples of the Americas and the peoples of Europe, Africa, and Asia.

Undaunted by rejection, Columbus petitioned Isabella and Ferdinand for financial backing. They were initially no more interested in his grand design than the Portuguese had been. But time was on Columbus's side. Spain's aggressive new monarchs envied the success of their neighbor, Portugal. Columbus played on the rivalry between the countries, talking of wealth and empire. Indeed, for a person with little success or apparent support, he was supremely confident. One contemporary reported that when Columbus "made up his mind, he was as sure he would discover what he did discover, and find what he did find, as if he held it in a chamber under lock and key."

Columbus's stubborn lobbying for the "Enterprise of the Indies" wore down opposition in the Spanish court, and the two sovereigns provided him with a small fleet of three ships: the *Niña*, the *Pinta*, and the *Santa Maria*. The indomitable admiral set sail for Cathay in August 1492, the same year that Grenada fell.

Educated Europeans of the fifteenth century knew the world was round. No one seriously believed that Columbus and his crew would tumble off the edge of the earth. The concern was with size, not shape. Columbus estimated the distance to the mainland of Asia to be about 3000 nautical miles, a voyage his small ships would have no difficulty completing. The actual distance is 10,600 nautical miles, however, and had the New World not been in his way, he and his crew would have run out of food and water long before they reached China, as the Portuguese had predicted.

After stopping in the Canary Islands to refit the ships, Columbus continued westward in early September. When the tiny Spanish fleet sighted an island in the Bahamas after only 33 days at sea, the admiral concluded he had reached Asia. Since his mathematical calculations had obviously been correct, he assumed he would soon encounter the Chinese. It never occurred to Columbus that he had stumbled upon a New World. He assured his men, his patrons, and perhaps himself that the islands were indeed part of the fabled "Indies." Or, if not the Indies themselves, then they were surely an extension of the great Asian landmass. He searched for the splendid cities Marco Polo had described in his accounts of China in the thirteenth century, but instead of wealthy Chinese, Columbus encountered Native Americans, whom he appropriately, if mistakenly, called "Indians."

After his first voyage of discovery, Columbus returned to the New World three more times. But despite his courage and ingenuity, he could never find the treasure his financial supporters in Spain demanded. Columbus died in 1506 a frustrated but wealthy entrepreneur, unaware that he had reached a previously unknown continent separating Asia from Europe. The final disgrace came in December 1500 when an ambitious falsifier, Amerigo Vespucci, published a sensational account of his travels across the Atlantic that convinced German mapmakers he had proved America was distinct from Asia. Before the misconception could be corrected, the name *America* gained general acceptance throughout Europe.

Quick Check

What did educated Europeans believe about the shape and size of the Earth prior to 1492?

Spain in the Americas

1.4

How did Spanish conquest of Central and South America transform Native American cultures?

Only two years after Columbus's first voyage, Spain and Portugal almost went to war over the anticipated treasure of Asia. Pope Alexander VI negotiated a settlement that pleased both kingdoms. Portugal wanted to exclude the Spanish from the west coast of Africa and, what was more important, from Columbus's new route to "India." Spain insisted on maintaining complete control over lands discovered by Columbus, which were still regarded as extensions of China. The **Treaty of Tordesillas** (1494) divided the entire world along a line located 270 leagues west of the Azores. Any lands discovered west of the line belonged to Spain. At the time, no European had ever seen Brazil, which turned out to be on Portugal's side of the line. (Brazilians

Treaty of Tordesillas Spain and Portugal signed this treaty in 1494. The treaty formally recognized a bull issued by Pope Alexander VI the previous year that had divided all newly discovered lands outside of Europe between these two Catholic nations.

speak Portuguese.) The treaty failed to discourage future English, Dutch, and French adventurers from trying their luck in the New World.

The *Conquistadores*: Faith and Greed

Spain's new discoveries unleashed a horde of *conquistadores* on the Caribbean. These independent adventurers carved out small settlements on Cuba, Hispaniola, Jamaica, and Puerto Rico in the 1490s and early 1500s. They were not interested in creating a permanent society in the New World. Rather, they came for instant wealth, preferably in gold, and were not squeamish about the means they used to get it. Bernal Díaz, one of the first Spaniards to migrate to the region, explained he had traveled to America "to serve God and His Majesty, to give light to those who were in darkness, and to grow rich, as all men desire to do." In less than two decades, the Indians who had inhabited the Caribbean islands had been exterminated, victims of exploitation and disease.

For a quarter century, the *conquistadores* concentrated their energies on the major islands that Columbus had discovered. Rumors of fabulous wealth in Mexico, however, aroused the interest of many Spaniards, including Hernán Cortés, a minor government functionary in Cuba. Like so many members of his class, he dreamed of glory, military adventure, and riches that would transform him from an ambitious court clerk into an honored nobleman or *hidalgo*. On November 18, 1518, Cortés and a small army left Cuba to verify the stories of Mexico's treasure. Events soon demonstrated that Cortés was a leader of extraordinary ability.

His adversary was the legendary Aztec emperor Montezuma. The confrontation between the two powerful personalities is one of the more dramatic stories of early American history. A fear of competition from rival *conquistadores* coupled with a burning desire to conquer a new empire drove Cortés forward. Determined to push his men through any obstacle, he burned the ships that had carried them to Mexico to prevent them from retreating. Cortés led his 600 followers across rugged mountains and gathered allies from among the Tlaxcalans, a tributary people eager to free themselves from Aztec domination.

In war, Cortés possessed obvious technological superiority over the Aztecs. The sound of gunfire initially frightened the Indians. Moreover, Aztec troops had never seen horses, much less armored horses carrying sword-wielding Spaniards. But these elements would have counted for little had Cortés not also gained a psychological advantage over his opponents. At first, Montezuma thought that the Spaniards were gods, representatives of the fearful plumed serpent, Quetzalcoatl. Instead of resisting, the emperor hesitated. When Montezuma's resolve hardened, it was too late. Cortés's victory in Mexico, coupled with other conquests in South America, transformed Spain, at least temporarily, into the wealthiest state in Europe (see Map 1.4).

Quick Check

How did Cortés and his small band of Spanish soldiers manage to conquer the Aztec empire?

encomienda system An exploitative system by Spanish rulers that granted *conquistadores* control of Native American villages and their inhabitants' labor.

From Plunder to Settlement

With the conquest of Mexico, renamed New Spain, the Spanish crown confronted a difficult problem. Ambitious *conquistadores*, interested chiefly in their own wealth and glory, had to be brought under royal authority. Adventurers like Cortés were stubbornly independent, quick to take offense, and thousands of miles away from the seat of imperial government.

The crown found a partial solution in the **encomienda system**. The monarch rewarded the leaders of the conquest with Indian villages. The people who lived in the settlements provided the *encomenderos* with labor tribute in exchange for legal protection and religious guidance. The system, of course, cruelly exploited Indian laborers. One historian concluded, "The first *encomenderos*, without known exception, understood Spanish authority as provision for unlimited personal opportunism." Cortés

Explore Global Exploration on MyHistoryLab

HOW DID GLOBAL EXPLORATION CHANGE THE OLD AND NEW WORLDS?

Beginning in the 1400s, explorers left Europe and headed west in search of faster trade routes to Asia to keep up with the growing European demand for luxury goods such as silk and spices. In the process, they encountered huge civilizations in the Americas: complex societies that often had high levels of economic and social interconnectedness. Over the next two centuries, Europeans attempted to conquer these Native American societies by force, set up colonies, and establish trade ties, connecting the Old World (Europe, Asia, and Africa) with the New World (the Americas). This Age of Global Exploration had a profound impact on world history and was especially destructive to societies in the Americas, as vast numbers of people in the New World succumbed to Old World diseases.

Note: Each figure represents a million people.

*Colonial Powers: England, Spain, Portugal, France



CUSTOM OF THE INDIANS, this woodcut of Italian origin and dating from about 1500 is believed to be the first European depiction of Native Americans in the New World.

POPULATIONS OF PRECONTACT NATIVE AMERICAN AND COLONIAL POWERS (c. 1500)

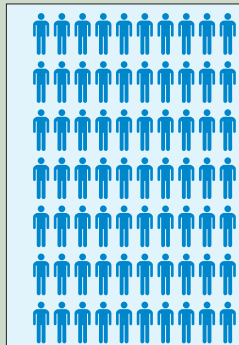
North America
(60–70 million)



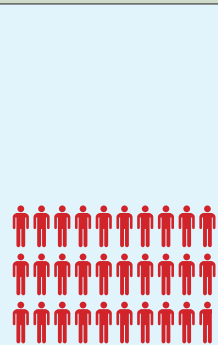
Colonial Powers*
(29.7 million)



North America
(60–70 million)



Colonial Powers
(29.7 million)



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KEY QUESTIONS

Use **MyHistoryLab Explorer** to answer these questions:



Analysis >>> *What global trade routes existed in the Old World prior to the Age of Global Exploration?*

Map the late medieval trade contacts between Europe, Asia, and North Africa.

Comparison >>> *In what ways were societies in the Americas interrelated before the arrival of the Europeans?*

Map the economic interconnectedness of the New World.

Consequence >>> *How did the new trans-Atlantic trade connect different parts of the world?*

Map the integration of the Old and New Worlds into a single trading network.

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Read the Document Jacques Cartier, *First Contact with the Indians* (1540)

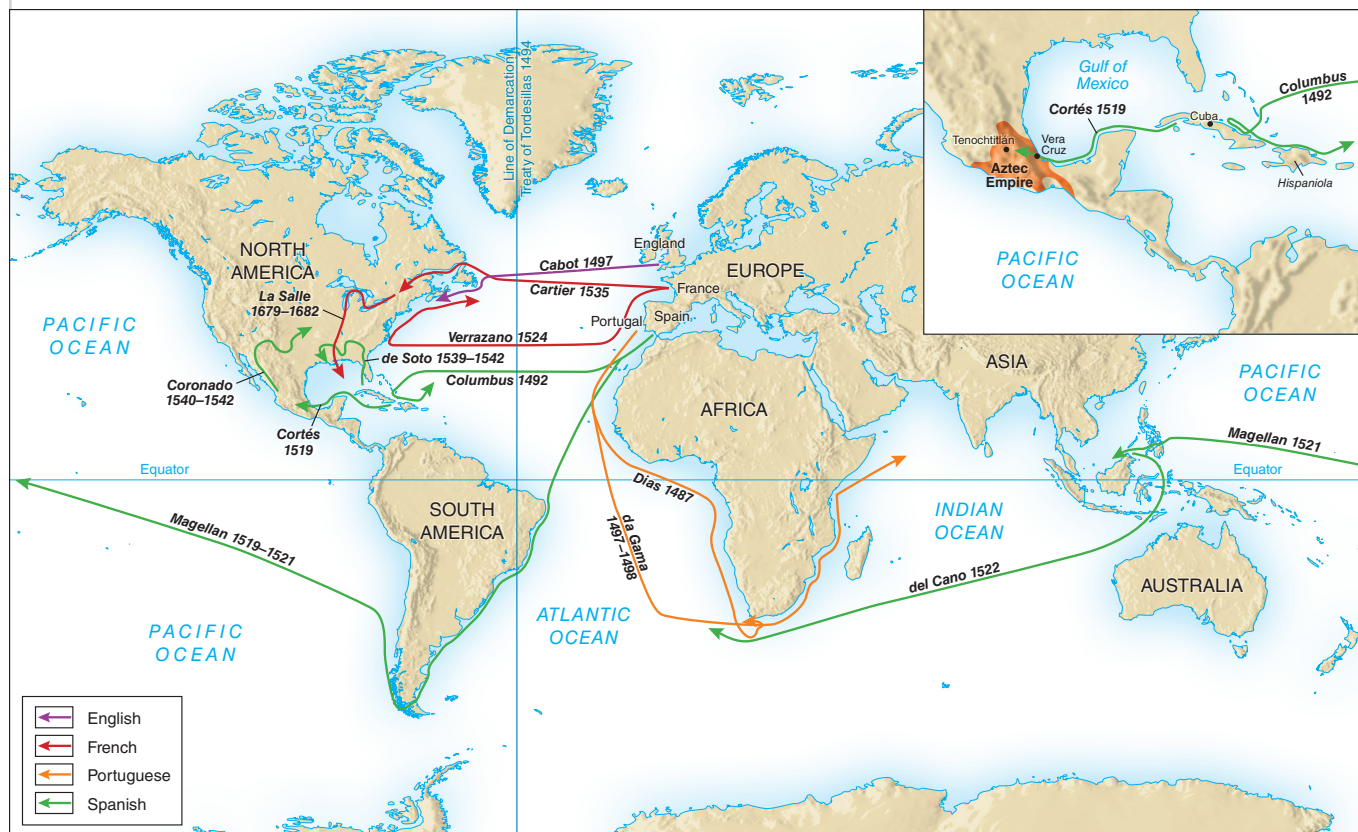
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MAP 1.4 VOYAGES OF EUROPEAN EXPLORATION New World discovery sparked intense competition among the major European states.

alone was granted the services of more than 23,000 Indian workers. The *encomienda* system made the colonizers more dependent on the king, for it was he who legitimized their title. The new economic structure helped to transform “a frontier of plunder into a frontier of settlement.”

Spain’s rulers attempted to maintain tight control over their American possessions. The volume of correspondence between the two continents, much of it concerning mundane matters, was staggering. All documents were duplicated several times by hand. Because the trip to Madrid took months, a year often passed before a simple request was answered. But somehow the cumbersome system worked. In Mexico, officials appointed in Spain established a rigid hierarchical order, directing the affairs of the countryside from urban centers.

The Spanish also brought Catholicism to the New World. The Dominicans and Franciscans, the two largest religious orders, established Indian missions throughout New Spain. Some friars tried to protect the Native Americans from the worst exploitation. One courageous Dominican, Fra Bartolomé de las Casas, published an eloquent defense of Indian rights, *Historia de las Indias*, that questioned the legitimacy of European conquest of the New World. Las Casas’s work provoked heated debate in Spain and initiated reforms designed to bring greater “love and moderation” to Spanish–Indian relations. It is impossible to ascertain how many converts the friars made. In 1531, however, a newly converted Christian Indian reported a vision of the Virgin Mary, a dark-skinned woman of obvious Indian ancestry, who became known throughout the region as the **Virgin of Guadalupe**. This figure—the result of a creative blending of Indian and European cultures—became a powerful symbol of

Virgin of Guadalupe Apparition of the Virgin Mary that has become a symbol of Mexican nationalism.



INDIAN SLAVES In 1595, Theodore de Bry depicted the harsh Spanish labor discipline on a sugar plantation on the Island of Hispaniola.

Mexican nationalism in the wars for independence fought against Spain almost three centuries later.

About 250,000 Spaniards migrated to the New World during the sixteenth century. Another 200,000 made the journey between 1600 and 1650. Most colonists were single males in their late twenties seeking economic opportunities. They generally came from the poorest agricultural regions of southern Spain—almost 40 percent migrating from Andalusia. Since so few Spanish women migrated, especially in the sixteenth century, the men often married Indians and blacks, unions that produced mixed-race descendants known as *mestizos* and *mulattos*. The frequency of interracial marriage indicated that the people of New Spain were more tolerant of racial differences than were the English who settled in North America. For the people of New Spain, economic worth affected social standing as much if not more than skin color did. Persons born in the New World, even those of Spanish parentage (*criollos*), were regarded as socially inferior to natives of the mother country (*peninsulares*).

Spain claimed far more of the New World than it could manage. Spain's rulers regarded the American colonies primarily as a source of precious metals, and between 1500 and 1650, an estimated 200 tons of gold and 16,000 tons of silver were shipped back to the Spanish treasury in Madrid. This great wealth, however, proved a mixed blessing. The sudden acquisition of so much money stimulated a horrendous inflation that hurt ordinary Spaniards. They were hurt further by long, debilitating European wars funded by American gold and silver. Moreover, instead of developing its own industry, Spain became dependent on the annual shipment of bullion from America. In 1603, one insightful Spaniard declared, "The New World conquered by you, has conquered you in its turn." This weakened, although still formidable, empire would eventually extend its territorial claims north to California and the Southwest (see Chapter 4).

Quick Check

Describe the character of Spanish-Indian relations following the conquest of Mexico.

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Read the Document Bartolome de Las Casas, *The Devastation of the Indies* (1565)



THE VIRGIN OF GUADALUPE The Virgin of Guadalupe, depicted here in a 1531 representation, is a popular religious symbol of Mexico. Like the Indian Juan Diego, to whom she is said to have appeared and offered comfort, the Virgin is dark-skinned.

The French Claim Canada

1.5

What was the character of the French empire in Canada?

French interest in the New World developed slowly. More than three decades after Columbus's discovery, King Francis I sponsored the unsuccessful efforts of Giovanni da Verrazzano to find a short water route to China via a northwest passage around or through North America. In 1534, the king sent Jacques Cartier on a similar quest. The rocky, barren coast of Labrador depressed

the explorer. He grumbled, “I am rather inclined to believe that this is the land God gave to Cain.”

Discovery of a large, promising waterway the following year raised Cartier’s spirits. He reconnoitered the Gulf of Saint Lawrence, traveling up the magnificent river as far as modern Montreal. But Cartier got no closer to China, and, discouraged by the harsh winters, he headed home in 1542. Not until 65 years later did Samuel de Champlain resettle this region for France. He founded Quebec in 1608.

As with other colonial powers, the French declared they had migrated to the New World in search of wealth and to convert the Indians to Christianity. As it turned out, these economic and spiritual goals required full cooperation between the French and the Native Americans. In contrast to the English settlers, who established independent farms and regarded the Indians at best as obstacles to civilization, the French viewed the natives as necessary economic partners. Furs were Canada’s most valuable export, and to obtain the pelts of beaver and other animals, the French were absolutely dependent on Indian hunters and trappers. French traders lived among the Indians, often taking native wives and studying local cultures.

Frenchmen known as **coureurs de bois**, following Canada’s great river networks, paddled deep into the heart of the continent for fresh sources of furs. Some intrepid traders penetrated beyond the Great Lakes into the Mississippi Valley. In 1673, Père Jacques Marquette journeyed down the Mississippi River, and nine years later, Sieur Robert de La Salle reached the Gulf of Mexico. In the early eighteenth century, the French established small settlements in Louisiana, the most important being New Orleans. The spreading French influence worried English colonists living along the Atlantic coast, for the French seemed to be cutting them off from the trans-Appalachian west.

Catholic missionaries also depended on Indian cooperation. Canadian priests were drawn from two orders, the Jesuits and the Recollects, and although measuring their success in the New World is difficult, it seems they converted more Indians than did their English Protestant counterparts to the south. Like the fur traders, the missionaries lived among the Indians and learned their languages.

The French dream of a vast American empire suffered from serious flaws. The crown remained largely indifferent to Canadian affairs. Royal officials in New France received limited and sporadic support from Paris. An even greater problem was the decision to settle what many peasants and artisans considered a cold, inhospitable land. Throughout the colonial period, Canada’s European population remained small. A census of 1663 recorded only 3,035 French residents. By 1700, there were only 15,000. Men far outnumbered women, thus making it hard for settlers to form new families. Moreover, because of the colony’s geography, all exports and imports had to go through Quebec. It was relatively easy, therefore, for crown officials to control that traffic, usually by awarding fur-trading monopolies to court favorites. Such practices created political tensions and hindered economic growth.

coureurs de bois Fur trappers in French Canada who lived among the Native Americans.

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The English Take Up the Challenge

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Why did England not participate in the early competition for New World colonies?

The first English visit to North America remains shrouded in mystery. Fishermen working out of Bristol and other western English ports may have landed in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland as early as the 1480s. The huge stock of codfish of the Grand Banks undoubtedly drew vessels of all nations, and during summers sailors probably dried and salted their catches on Canada’s convenient shores. John Cabot (Giovanni Caboto), a Venetian sea captain, completed the first recorded transatlantic voyage by an English vessel in 1497, while attempting to find a northwest passage to Asia.

Cabot died during a second voyage in 1498. Although Sebastian Cabot continued his father's explorations in the Hudson Bay region in 1508–1509, England's interest in the New World waned. For the next three-quarters of a century, the English people were preoccupied with more pressing domestic and religious concerns. When curiosity about the New World revived, however, Cabot's voyages established England's belated claim to American territory.

Birth of English Protestantism

At the time of Cabot's death, England was not prepared to compete with Spain and Portugal for the riches of the Orient. Although Henry VII, the first Tudor monarch, brought peace to England in 1485 after a bitter civil war, the country still contained too many "over-mighty subjects," powerful local magnates who maintained armed retainers and often paid little attention to royal authority. Henry possessed no standing army; his small navy intimidated no one. The Tudors gave nominal allegiance to the pope in Rome, but unlike the rulers of Spain, they were not crusaders for Catholicism.

International diplomacy also worked against England's early entry into New World colonization. In 1509, to cement an alliance between Spain and England,



Read the Document Henry VII, Letters of Patent Granted to John Cabot (1496)



HENRY SEIZES THE THRONE King Henry VII's seizure of the throne of England in 1485 brought an end to a series of civil wars that had torn England apart for almost 30 years. Along with bringing stability to the kingdom, Henry VII also established England's first claims to the Americas by sponsoring the explorations of Captain John Cabot.

the future Henry VIII married Catherine of Aragon, daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella. As a result of this marital arrangement, English merchants enjoyed limited rights to trade in Spain's American colonies, but any attempt by England at independent colonization would have threatened those rights and jeopardized the alliance.

By the end of the sixteenth century, however, conditions within England had changed dramatically, in part because of the **Protestant Reformation**. The English began to consider their former ally, Spain, to be the greatest threat to English aspirations. Tudor monarchs, especially Henry VIII (r. 1509–1547) and his daughter Elizabeth I (r. 1558–1603), developed a strong central administration, while England became increasingly Protestant. The merger of English Protestantism and English nationalism helped propel England into a central role in European affairs and was crucial in creating a powerful sense of an English identity among all classes of people.

Popular anticlericalism helped spark religious reformation in England. Although they observed traditional Catholic ritual, the English people had long resented paying monies to a pope who lived in far-off Rome. Early in the sixteenth century, criticism of the clergy grew increasingly vocal. Cardinal Thomas Wolsey, the most powerful prelate in England, flaunted his immense wealth and unwittingly became a symbol of spiritual corruption. Parish priests were objects of ridicule; they seemed theologically ignorant and eager to line their own pockets. Anticlericalism did not run as deep in England as it had in Martin Luther's Germany, but by the late 1520s, the Catholic Church could no longer take for granted the allegiance of the great mass of the population. The people's growing anger is central to understanding the English Reformation. Put simply, if ordinary English men and women had not accepted separation from Rome, then Henry VIII could not have forced them to leave the church.

The catalyst for Protestant Reformation in England was the king's desire to rid himself of his wife, Catherine of Aragon. Their marriage had produced a daughter, Mary, but no son. The need for a male heir obsessed Henry. He and his counselors assumed a female ruler could not maintain domestic peace, and England would fall again into civil war. The answer seemed to be remarriage. Henry petitioned Pope Clement VII for a divorce (technically, an annulment), but the Spanish were unwilling to tolerate the public humiliation of Catherine. They forced the pope to procrastinate. In 1527, time ran out. The king fell in love with Anne Boleyn and moved to divorce Catherine with or without papal consent. Anne would become his second wife in 1533 and would later deliver a daughter, Elizabeth.

The final break with Rome came swiftly. Between 1529 and 1536, the king, acting through Parliament, severed all ties with the pope, seized church lands, and dissolved many of the monasteries. In March 1534, the Act of Supremacy announced, "The King's Majesty justly and rightfully is supreme head of the Church of England." The entire process, which one historian termed a "state reformation," was conducted with impressive efficiency. Land formerly owned by the Catholic Church passed quickly into private hands, and within a short period, property holders throughout England had acquired a vested interest in Protestantism. Beyond breaking with the papacy, Henry showed little enthusiasm for theological change. Many Catholic ceremonies survived.

The split with Rome, however, opened the door to increasingly radical religious ideas. In 1539, an English translation of the Bible first appeared in print. Before then, Scripture had been widely available only in Latin, the language of an educated elite. For the first time in English history, ordinary people could read the word of God in the vernacular. It was a liberating experience that persuaded some men and women that Henry had not sufficiently reformed the English church.

With Henry's death in 1547, England entered a period of political and religious instability. Edward VI, Henry's young son by his third wife, Jane Seymour, came to the throne, but he was a sickly child. Militant Protestants took control, insisting the Church of England remove every trace of its Catholic origins. When young Edward died in

Protestant Reformation

Sixteenth-century religious movement to reform and challenge the spiritual authority of the Roman Catholic Church.

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Quick Check

What was the impact of the Protestant Reformation on English politics?

1553, these ambitious efforts came to a sudden halt. Henry's eldest daughter, Mary I, ascended the throne. Fiercely loyal to the Catholic faith of her mother, Catherine of Aragon, Mary vowed to return England to the pope.

Hundreds of Protestants were executed; others scurried off to the safety of Geneva and Frankfurt, where they absorbed the most radical Calvinist doctrines of the day. When Mary died in 1558 and was succeeded by Elizabeth I, the "Marian exiles" flocked back to England, more eager than ever to rid the Tudor church of Catholicism. Queen Elizabeth governed the English people from 1558 to 1603, an intellectually exciting period during which some of her subjects took the first halting steps toward colonizing the New World. Elizabeth recognized that her most urgent duty as queen was to end the religious turmoil that had divided the country for a generation. She established a unique church, Catholic in much of its ceremony and government but clearly Protestant in doctrine. Under her so-called Elizabethan settlement, the queen assumed the title "Supreme Governor of the Church in England." Some churchmen urged her to abolish all Catholic rituals, but she ignored these strident reformers. The young queen understood that she could not rule effectively without the full support of her people, and that neither radical change nor widespread persecution would gain a monarch lasting popularity.

Religion, War, and Nationalism

Slowly, but steadily, English Protestantism and English national identity merged. A loyal English subject in the late sixteenth century loved the queen, supported the Church of England, and hated Catholics, especially those who lived in Spain. Elizabeth herself came to symbolize this militant new chauvinism. Her subjects adored the Virgin Queen and applauded when her famed "Sea Dogs"—dashing figures such as Sir Francis Drake and Sir John Hawkins—seized Spanish treasure ships in American waters. These raids were little more than piracy, but in this undeclared state of war, such harassment passed for national victories. There seemed to be no reason patriotic Elizabethans should not share in the wealth of the New World. With each engagement, each threat, each plot, English nationalism took deeper root. By the 1570s, it had become obvious that powerful ideological forces similar to those that had moved the Spanish subjects of Isabella and Ferdinand almost a century earlier were driving the English people.

In the mid-1580s, Philip II, who had united the empires of Spain and Portugal in 1580, decided that England's arrogantly Protestant queen could be tolerated no longer. He ordered the construction of a mighty fleet, hundreds of transport vessels designed to carry Spain's finest infantry across the English Channel. When one of Philip's lieutenants viewed the Armada at Lisbon in May 1588, he described it as *la felicissima armada*, the invincible fleet. The king believed that with the support of England's oppressed Catholics, Spanish troops would sweep Elizabeth from power.

The Spanish Armada was a grand scheme; it was an even grander failure. In 1588, a smaller, more maneuverable English navy dispersed Philip's Armada, and severe storms finished it off. Spanish hopes for Catholic England lay wrecked along the rocky coasts of Scotland and Ireland. English Protestants interpreted victory in providential terms: "God breathed and they were scattered."

Even as the Spanish military threat grew, Sir Walter Raleigh, one of the Queen's favorite courtiers, launched a settlement in North America. He diplomatically named his enterprise Virginia, in honor of his patron Elizabeth, the Virgin Queen. In 1587, Raleigh dispatched colonists under the command of John White to Roanoke, a site on the coast of present-day North Carolina, but poor planning, preparation for war with Spain, and hostilities with Native Americans doomed the experiment. When English vessels finally returned to Roanoke, the settlers had disappeared. No one has ever explained what happened to the "lost" colonists.

The Spanish Armada Spanish fleet sent to invade England in 1588.

Quick Check

How did Protestantism and English national identity become merged under Queen Elizabeth I?

Conclusion: Campaign to Sell America

Had it not been for Richard Hakluyt the Younger, who publicized explorers' accounts of the New World, the dream of American colonization might have died in England. Hakluyt never saw America. Nevertheless, his vision of the New World powerfully shaped English public opinion. He interviewed captains and sailors and collected their stories in a massive book titled *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, and Discoveries of the English Nation* (1589).

The work appeared to be a straightforward description of what these sailors had seen across the sea. That was its strength. In reality, Hakluyt edited each piece so it would drive home the book's central point: England needed American colonies. Indeed, they were essential to the nation's prosperity and independence. In Hakluyt's America, there were no losers. "The earth bringeth fourth all things in abundance, as in the first creations without toil or labour," he wrote of Virginia. His blend of piety, patriotism, and self-interest proved popular, and his *Voyages* went through many editions.

Hakluyt's enthusiasm for the spread of English trade throughout the world may have blinded him to the aspirations of other peoples who actually inhabited those distant lands. He continued to collect testimony from adventurers and sailors who claimed to have visited Asia and America. In a popular new edition of his work published between 1598 and 1600 and entitled *the Voyages*, he catalogued in extraordinary detail the commercial opportunities awaiting courageous and ambitious English colonizers. Hakluyt's entrepreneurial perspective obscured other aspects of the European Conquest, which would soon transform the face of the New World. He paid little attention, for example, to the rich cultural diversity of the Native Americans; he said not a word about the pain of the Africans who traveled to North and South America as slaves. Instead, he and many other polemicists for English colonization led the ordinary men and women who crossed the Atlantic to expect a paradise on earth. By fanning such unrealistic expectations, Hakluyt persuaded European settlers that the New World was theirs for the taking, a self-serving view that invited ecological disaster and human suffering.

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Chapter Review

Native Americans Before the Conquest

- 1.1** What explains cultural differences among Native American groups before European conquest? p. 3

Paleo-Indians crossed into North America from Asia 20,000 years ago. During the migrations, they divided into distinct groups, often speaking different languages. The Agricultural Revolution sparked population growth, allowing some groups, such as the Aztecs, to establish complex societies. The Eastern Woodland Indians, who lived along the Atlantic coast, had just begun to practice agriculture Europeans arrived.

Conditions of Conquest

- 1.2** How did Europeans interact with West Africans and Native Americans during the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries? p. 7

In Africa, early Europeans found powerful local rulers who knew how to profit from commercial exchange. Slaves who had been captured in distant war were taken to slave factories where they were sold to Europeans and shipped to the New World. In the Americas, European newcomers insisted on “civilizing” Native Americans who often resented and rejected efforts to transform their cultures. Contagious Old World diseases, such as smallpox, decimated the Indians, leaving them vulnerable to cultural.

Europe on the Eve of Conquest

- 1.3** What factors explain Spain’s central role in New World exploration and colonization? p. 12

The unification of Spain under Ferdinand and Isabella, and the experience of the *Reconquista*, provided Spain with advantages in its later conquest of the New World. The Spanish crown supported the explorations of Christopher Columbus, giving the Spanish a head start.

Spain in the Americas

- 1.4** How did Spanish conquest of Central and South America transform Native American cultures? p. 15

Conquistadores conquered vast territories in the Caribbean, Mexico, and Central and South America during the sixteenth century. Catholic missionaries followed to convert the Indians to Christianity. Although the Spanish conquerors cruelly exploited the Indians as laborers, intermarriage between the groups created a new culture blending Spanish and Indian elements.

The French Claim Canada

- 1.5** What was the character of the French empire in Canada? p. 20

The French in Canada focused on trading rather than settlement. The *coureurs de bois* and Catholic missionaries lived among the Indians, learning their languages and customs. French explorers

followed the extensive river networks of North America and claimed vast stretches along the St. Lawrence and Mississippi Rivers.

The English Take Up the Challenge

- 1.6** Why did England not participate in the early competition for New World colonies? p. 21

During the early 1500s, religious turmoil preoccupied England’s monarchs. After ascending the throne in 1558, Queen Elizabeth I ended internal religious struggle by establishing an English Church that was Protestant in doctrine but Catholic in ceremony. Under Elizabeth, English nationalism merged with anti-Catholicism to challenge Spanish control of the Americas.

Timeline

