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The Collision of Cultures



De Soto and the Incas This 1596 color engraving shows Spanish conquistador Hernando de Soto's first encounter with King Atahualpa of the Inca Empire. Although artist Theodor de Bry never set foot in North America, his engravings helped shape European perceptions of Native Americans in the sixteenth century.

America was born in melting ice. Tens of thousands of years ago, during a long period known as the Ice Age, vast glaciers some two miles thick inched their way southward from the Arctic Circle at the top of the globe. Their awesome power crushed hills, rerouted rivers, and scraped bare all the land in their path.

Vast glacial ice sheets eventually covered much of North America—Canada, Alaska, the Upper Midwest, New England, Montana, and Washington. Then, as the continent's climate began to warm, the ice started to melt, year after year, century after century. So much of the world's water was bound up in glacial ice that the slow melt ultimately caused sea levels to rise more than 400 feet.

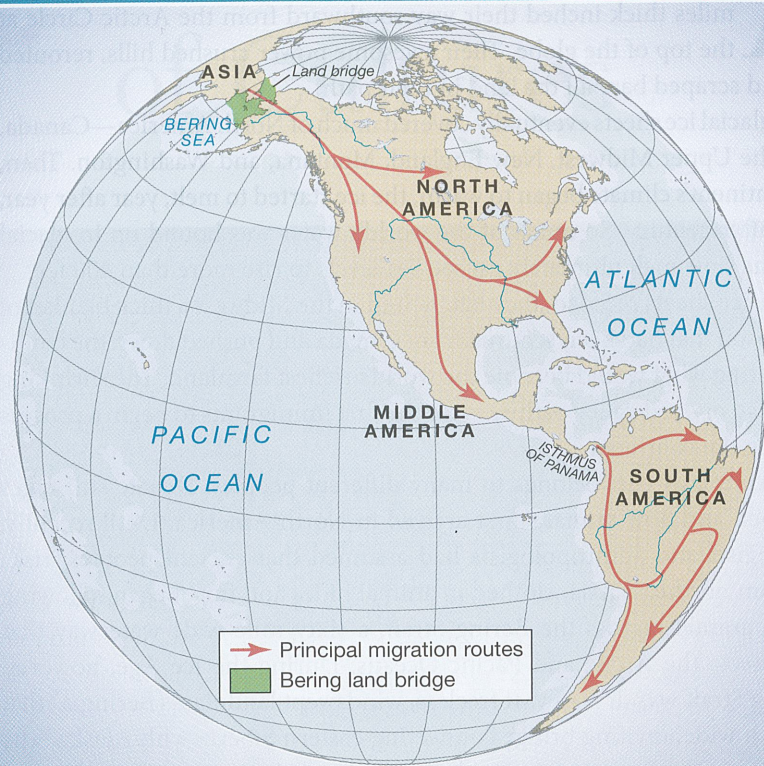
As the ice sheets receded, they left behind in the Midwest a thick blanket of fertile topsoil that had been scoured from Canada and pushed down the continent, creating what would become the world's richest farmland. The shrinking glaciers also opened valley pathways for the first immigrants to begin a process of crossing the continent.

The American past belongs to many different peoples. Debate still rages about when and how humans first arrived in North America. Until recently, archaeologists and anthropologists had assumed that ancient peoples, risk-takers from northeast Asia, clothed in animal hides and furs, began following big game animals across the Bering Strait, a sixty-mile-wide waterway that now connects the Arctic and Pacific Oceans. During the Ice Age, however, the Bering Strait was dry—a vast treeless, windswept landmass (Beringia) that served as a wide, inviting bridge connecting eastern Siberia with Alaska. The oldest place in the Bering region with traces of early human activity is Broken

focus questions

1. Why were there so many diverse societies in the Americas before Europeans arrived?
2. What were the major developments in Europe that enabled the Age of Exploration?
3. How were the Spanish able to conquer and colonize the Americas?
4. How did the Columbian Exchange between the "Old" and "New" Worlds affect both societies?
5. In what ways did the Spanish form of colonization shape North American history?

THE FIRST MIGRATION



- When did people first cross the Bering Sea? What evidence have archaeologists and anthropologists found from the lives of the first people in America?
- Why did those people travel to North America?

Mammoth, a 14,000-year-old site in central Alaska where the first aboriginal peoples, called Paleo-Indians (Old Indians), arrived in North America. More recently, archaeologists in central Texas unearthed evidence of people dating back almost 16,000 years.

Over hundreds of years, as the climate kept warming and the glaciers continued to melt, small hunting groups, carrying their few possessions with them, crossed into Alaska and then fanned out during the summers southward across the entire Western Hemisphere, from the Arctic Circle to the tip of South America. Some of them may also have traveled by boats hugging the coast. One major land pathway followed the Pacific coast while the other used an open land corridor between two ice sheets east of the Rocky Mountains.

Paleo-Indians were risk-taking pioneers, skilled hunters and gatherers who moved in search of large grazing mammals, rabbits, whales, seals, fish, and wild plants, berries, nuts, roots, and seeds. As they moved southward toward warmer weather, they trekked across the prairies and the plains, encountering massive animals unlike any found there today: mastodons, giant sloths, camels, bison (buffalos), lions, saber-toothed tigers, cheetahs, and giant wolves, beavers, and bears.

Recent archaeological discoveries in Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Chile, however, suggest that prehistoric humans may have arrived much earlier from various parts of Asia—and some may even have crossed the Atlantic Ocean from southwestern Europe. Regardless of when humans first set foot in North America, the continent eventually became a crossroads for various adventurous peoples from around the world: Europeans, Africans, Asians, and others, all bringing with them distinctive backgrounds, cultures, technologies, religions, and motivations that helped form the multicultural society known as America.

EARLY CULTURES IN AMERICA

Archaeologists have labeled the earliest humans in North America the *Clovis* peoples, named after a site in New Mexico where ancient hunters around 9500 B.C.E. (before the Common Era) killed tusked woolly mammoths using distinctive “Clovis” stone spearheads. They also used a wooden device called an *atlatl*, which gave them added leverage to hurl spears farther and more accurately. Over many centuries, as the climate warmed, days grew hotter and many of the largest mammals—mammoths, mastodons, giant bison, and single-hump camels—died and grew extinct.

Skeletal remains of Paleo-Indians reveal that the women were much smaller than the men, who were bold, aggressive, and hypermasculine. More than half of the male skeletons show signs of injuries caused by violence. Four out of ten have fractured skulls. The physical evidence is clear: Paleo-Indian men assaulted and killed each other with regularity.

Over time, the ancient Indians adapted to their diverse environments—coastal forests, grassy plains, southwestern deserts, eastern woodlands. Some continued to hunt large animals; others fished and trapped small game. Some gathered wild plants and herbs and collected acorns and seeds; others farmed. Many did some of each.

Contrary to the romantic myth of early Indian civilizations living in perfect harmony with nature and one another, they in fact often engaged in warfare, exploited the environment by burning large wooded areas to plant fields, and overhunted large game animals. They also mastered the use of fire; improved

technology such as spear points, basketry, and pottery; and developed their own nature-centered religions.

By about 5000 B.C.E., Native Americans had adapted to the warmer climate by transforming themselves into farming societies. Agriculture provided reliable, nutritious food, which accelerated population growth and enabled a once nomadic (wandering) people to settle down in villages. Indigenous peoples became expert at growing the plants that would become the primary food crops of the entire hemisphere, chiefly **maize** (corn), beans, and squash, but also chili peppers, avocados, and pumpkins. Many of them also grew cotton. The annual cultivation of such crops enabled Indian societies to grow larger and more complex, with their own distinctive social, economic, and political institutions.

THE MAYAS, INCAS, AND MEXICA

Around 1500 B.C.E., farming towns first appeared in what is now Mexico. Agriculture supported the development of sophisticated communities complete with gigantic temple-topped pyramids, palaces, and bridges in Middle



Mayan society A fresco depicting the social divisions of Mayan society. A Mayan lord, at the center, receives offerings.

America (*Mesoamerica*, what is now Mexico and Central America, where North and South America meet). The Mayas, who dominated Central America for more than 600 years, developed a rich written language and elaborate works of art. They also used sophisticated mathematics and astronomy to create a yearly calendar more accurate than the one the Europeans were using at the time of Columbus.

THE INCAS Much farther south, as many as 12 million people speaking at least twenty different languages made up the sprawling Inca Empire. By the fifteenth century, the Incas' vast realm stretched some 2,500 miles along the Andes Mountains in the western part of South America. The mountainous Inca Empire featured irrigated farms, enduring stone buildings, and interconnected networks of roads made of stone.

THE MEXICA (AZTECS) During the twelfth century, the Mexica (Me-SHEE-ka)—whom Europeans later called Aztecs ("People from Aztlán," the place they claimed as their original homeland)—began drifting southward



Aztec sacrifices to the gods Renowned for their military prowess, Aztecs preferred to capture and then sacrifice their enemies.

from northwest Mexico. Disciplined, determined, and energetic, they eventually took control of the sweeping valley of central Mexico, where they started building the city of Tenochtitlán in 1325 on an island in Lake Tetzoco, the site of present-day Mexico City. Tenochtitlán would become one of the largest cities in the world.

Warfare was a sacred ritual for the Mexica, but it was a peculiar sort of fighting. The Mexica fought with wooden swords intended to wound rather than kill, since they wanted captives to sacrifice to the gods and to work as slaves. Gradually, the Mexica conquered many of the neighboring societies, forcing them to pay tribute (taxes) in goods and services and developing a thriving trade in gold, silver, copper, and pearls as well as agricultural products. Towering stone temples, broad paved avenues, thriving marketplaces, and some 70,000 adobe huts dominated the dazzling capital city of Tenochtitlán.

When the Spanish invaded Mexico in 1519, they found a vast **Aztec Empire** connected by a network of roads serving 371 city-states organized into thirty-eight provinces. As their empire had expanded across central and southern Mexico, the Aztecs had developed elaborate urban societies supported by detailed legal systems; efficient new farming techniques, including irrigated fields and engineering marvels; and a complicated political structure. Their arts were flourishing; their architecture was magnificent.

Aztec rulers were invested with godlike qualities, and nobles, priests, and warrior-heroes dominated the social order. The emperor lived in a huge palace; the aristocracy lived in large stone dwellings, practiced polygamy (multiple wives), and were exempt from manual labor.

Like most agricultural peoples, the Mexica were intensely spiritual. Their religious beliefs focused on the interconnection between nature and human life and the sacredness of natural elements—the sun, moon, stars, rain, mountains, rivers, and animals. To please the gods, especially Huitzilopochtli, the Lord of the Sun, and bring good harvests and victory in battle, the Mexica, like most Mesoamericans, regularly offered live human sacrifices—captives, slaves, women, and children—by the thousands.

In elaborate weekly rituals, blood-stained priests used stone knives to cut out the beating hearts of sacrificial victims and ceremonially offered them to the sun god to help his fight against the darkness of the night; without the blood from human hearts, he would be vanquished by the darkness. The heads of the victims were then displayed on a towering skull rack in the central plaza. The constant need for more human sacrifices fed the Mexica's relentless warfare against other indigenous groups. A Mexica song celebrated their warrior code: "Proud of itself is the city of Mexico-Tenochtitlán. Here no one fears to die in war. This is our glory."

PRE-COLUMBIAN INDIAN CIVILIZATIONS IN MIDDLE AND SOUTH AMERICA

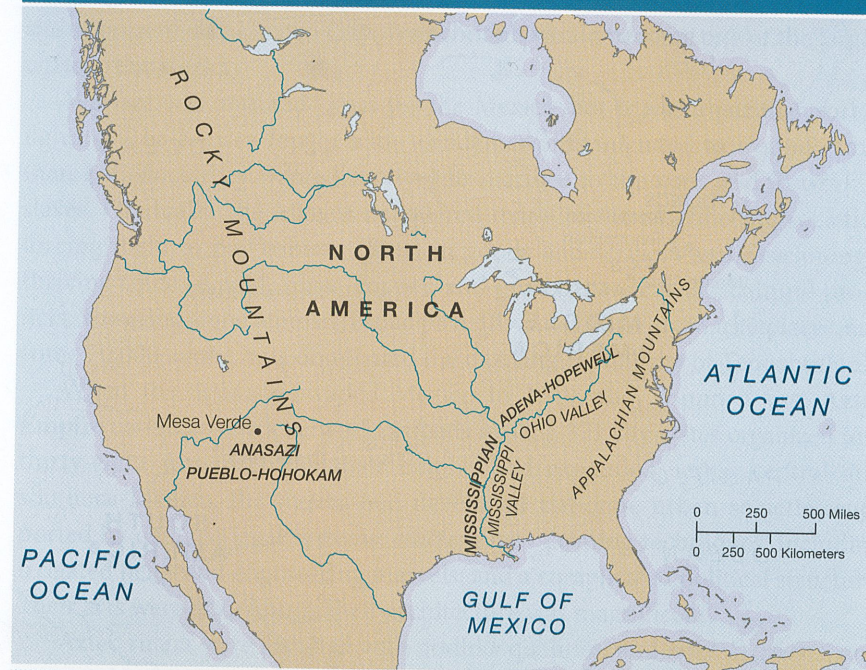


- What were the major pre-Columbian civilizations?
- What factors caused the demise of the Mayan civilization?
- When did the Aztecs build Tenochtitlán?

NORTH AMERICAN CIVILIZATIONS

Many indigenous societies existed north of Mexico, in the present-day United States. They shared several basic spiritual myths and social beliefs, including the sacredness of land and animals (animism); the necessity of communal living; and the importance of collective labor, communal food, and respect for elders. Native Americans did not worship a single god but believed in many "spirits." To the Sioux, the ruling spirit was Wakan Tanka, the Great Spirit, who ruled over all the other spirits. The Navajo believed in the Holy People: Sky, Earth, Moon, Sun, Thunders, Winds, and Changing Woman.

PRE-COLUMBIAN INDIAN CIVILIZATIONS IN NORTH AMERICA



- What were the dominant pre-Columbian civilizations in North America?
- Where was the Adena-Hopewell culture centered?
- How was the Mississippian civilization similar to that of the Mayans or the Aztecs?
- What made the Anasazi culture different from the other North American cultures?

Many societies believed in ghosts, the spirits of dead people who acted as bodyguards in battle. War dances the night before a battle invited the spirits to join the combat.

For all of their similarities, the indigenous peoples of North America developed in different ways at different times and in different places, often as strangers unaware of each other. In North America alone, there were probably 10 million native people organized into 240 different societies speaking many different languages when the Europeans first arrived in the early sixteenth century.

Native Americans owned land in common rather than separately, and they had well-defined social roles. Men were hunters, warriors, and leaders. Women tended children, made clothes, blankets, jewelry, and pottery; dried animal skins, wove baskets, built and packed tipis; and gathered, grew, and cooked food. Indians often lived together in extended family groups in a lodge or tipi (a Sioux word meaning “dwelling”). The tipis were mobile homes made of buffalo skins. Their designs had a spiritual significance. The round floor represented the earth, the walls symbolized the sky, and the supporting poles served as pathways from the human world to the spiritual world.

THE SOUTHWEST The dry Southwest (what is now Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada, and Utah) hosted corn-growing societies, elements of which exist today and heirs to which (the Hopis, Zunis, and others) still live in the multi-story adobe (sunbaked mud) cliff-side villages (called *pueblos* by the Spanish) erected by their ancient ancestors. About 500 c.e. (Common Era), the native Hohokam (“those who have vanished”) people migrated from Mexico northward to southern and central Arizona, where they built hundreds of miles



Cliff dwellings Ruins of Anasazi cliff dwellings in Mesa Verde National Park, Colorado.

of irrigation canals to water crops. They also crafted decorative pottery and turquoise jewelry, and constructed temple mounds (earthen pyramids used for sacred ceremonies). Perhaps because of prolonged drought, the Hohokam society disappeared during the fifteenth century.

The most widespread and best known of the Southwest pueblo cultures were the Anasazi (Ancient Ones). They developed extensive settlements in the Four Corners region where the modern-day states of Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, and Utah meet. Unlike the Aztecs and Incas, Anasazi society was remarkable for *not* having a rigid class structure. The religious leaders and warriors worked much as the rest of the people did. The Anasazi engaged in warfare only as a means of self-defense. (*Hopi* means “Peaceful People.”) Environmental factors shaped Anasazi culture and eventually caused its decline. Toward the end of the thirteenth century, a lengthy drought and the aggressiveness of Indian peoples migrating from the north led to the disappearance of Anasazi society.

THE NORTHWEST Along the narrow coastal strip running up the heavily forested northwest Pacific coast, from northern California to Alaska, where shellfish, salmon, seals, whales, deer, and edible wild plants were abundant, there was little need for farming. In fact, many of the Pacific Northwest peoples, such as the Haida, Kwakiutl, and Nootka, needed to work only two days to provide enough food for a week. Because of plentiful food and thriving trade networks, the Native American population was larger and more concentrated than in other regions.

Such social density enabled the Pacific coast peoples to develop intricate religious rituals and sophisticated woodworking skills. They carved towering totem poles featuring decorative figures of animals and other symbolic characters. For shelter, they built large, earthen-floored, cedar-plank houses up to 100 feet long, where whole groups of families lived together. They also created sturdy, oceangoing canoes carved out of red cedar tree trunks—some large enough to carry fifty people. Socially, the Indian bands along the northwest Pacific coast were divided into slaves, commoners, and chiefs. Warfare usually occurred as a means to acquire slaves.

THE GREAT PLAINS The many different peoples living on the Great Plains (Plains Indians), a vast, flat land of cold winters and hot summers west of the Mississippi River, and in the Great Basin (present-day Utah and Nevada) included the Arapaho, Blackfeet, Cheyenne, Comanche, Crow, Apache, and Sioux. As nomadic hunter-gatherers, they tracked enormous herds of bison

across a sea of grassland, collecting seeds, nuts, roots, and berries as they roamed. At the center of most hunter-gatherer religions is the animistic idea that the hunted animal is a willing sacrifice provided by the gods (spirits). To ensure a successful hunt, these nomadic peoples performed sacred rites of gratitude beforehand. Once a buffalo herd was spotted, the hunters would set fires to drive the stampeding animals over cliffs.

THE MISSISSIPPIANS East of the Great Plains, in the vast woodlands from the Mississippi River to the Atlantic Ocean, several “mound-building” cultures flourished as predominantly agricultural societies. Between 800 B.C.E. and 400 C.E., the Adena and later the Hopewell peoples (both names derive from the archaeological sites in Ohio) developed communities along rivers in the Ohio Valley. The Adena-Hopewell cultures focused on agriculture, growing corn, squash, beans, and sunflowers, as well as tobacco for smoking. They left behind enormous earthworks and 200 elaborate **burial mounds** shaped like great snakes, birds, and other animals, several of which were nearly a quarter mile long. Artifacts buried in the mounds have revealed a complex social structure featuring a specialized division of labor, whereby



Great Serpent Mound At over 1,300 feet in length and three feet high, this snake-shaped burial mound in Adams County, Ohio, is the largest of its kind in the world.

different groups performed different tasks for the benefit of the society as a whole. Some were fisher folk; others were farmers, hunters, artists, cooks, and mothers.

Like the Adena, the Hopewell also developed an extensive trading network from the Gulf of Mexico to Canada, exchanging exquisite carvings, metalwork, pearls, seashells, copper ornaments, and jewelry. By the sixth century, however, the Hopewell culture disappeared, giving way to a new phase of Native American development east of the Mississippi River, the Mississippian culture, which flourished from 800 to 1500 C.E.

The Mississippians, centered in the southern Mississippi Valley, were also mound-building and corn-growing peoples led by chieftains. They grew corn, beans, squash, and sunflowers, and they built substantial towns around central plazas and temples. The Mississippian peoples, the most powerful of which were the Natchez, developed a far-flung trading network that extended to the Rocky Mountains. Their ability to grow large amounts of corn each year in the fertile flood plains of rivers spurred rapid population growth around regional centers.

CAHOKIA The largest of these advanced regional centers, called *chiefdoms*, was **Cahokia** (1050–1250 C.E.), in southwest Illinois, just a few miles across the Mississippi River from what is now St. Louis, Missouri. There the Mississippians constructed an intricately planned farming settlement with monumental public buildings, spacious ceremonial plazas, and more than 100 flat-topped earthen pyramids with thatch-roofed temples on top.

Over the years, the Cahokians cut whole forests to create their huge village and to protect it with a two-mile-long stockade built of 15,000 oak and hickory logs twenty-one feet tall. At the height of its influence, prosperous Cahokia hosted 15,000 people on some 3,200 acres, making it the largest city north of Mexico. Outlying towns and farming settlements ranged up to fifty miles in all directions.

Cahokia, however, vanished after 1250 and its people dispersed. What caused its collapse remains a mystery, but environmental changes are the most likely reason. The overcutting of trees may have set in motion ecological changes that doomed the community when a massive earthquake struck around 1200 C.E. The loss of trees led to widespread flooding and the erosion of topsoil that finally forced people to seek better lands. As Cahokia disappeared, however, its former residents carried with them its cultural traditions and spread its advanced ways of life to other areas across the Midwest and into what is now the American South.

EASTERN WOODLANDS PEOPLES

After the collapse of Cahokia, the **Eastern Woodlands peoples** rose to dominance along the Atlantic seaboard from Maine to Florida and along the Gulf coast to Louisiana. They included three regional groups distinguished by their different languages: the Algonquian, the Iroquoian, and the Muskogean. These were the societies the Europeans would first encounter when they arrived in North America.

THE ALGONQUIANS The Algonquian-speaking peoples stretched from the New England seaboard to lands along the Great Lakes and into the Upper Midwest and south to New Jersey, Virginia, and the Carolinas. They constructed no great mounds or temple-topped pyramids. Most Algonquians lived in small, round shelters called *wigwags* or multifamily longhouses. Their villages typically ranged in size from 500 to 2,000 people, but they often moved their villages with the seasons.

The Algonquians along the Atlantic coast were skilled at fishing and gathering shellfish; the inland Algonquians excelled at hunting deer, moose, elk, bears, bobcats, and mountain lions. They often traveled the region's waterways using canoes made of hollowed-out tree trunks (dugouts) or birch bark.

All of the Algonquians foraged for wild food (nuts, berries, and fruits) and practiced agriculture to some extent, regularly burning dense forests to improve soil fertility and provide grazing room for deer. To prepare their vegetable gardens, women broke up the ground with hoes tipped with clam shells or the shoulder blades from deer. In the spring, they planted corn, beans, and squash in mounds. As the cornstalks rose, the tendrils from the



Algonquian in war paint From the notebook of English settler John White, this sketch depicts a Native American chieftain.

climbing bean plants wrapped around them for support. Once the crops ripened, women made a nutritious mixed meal of *succotash*, combining corn, beans, and squash.

THE IROQUOANS West and south of the Algonquians were the powerful Iroquoian-speaking peoples (including the Seneca, Onondaga, Mohawk, Oneida, and Cayuga nations, as well as the Cherokee and Tuscarora), whose lands spread from upstate New York southward through Pennsylvania and into the upland regions of the Carolinas and Georgia. The Iroquois were farmer/hunters who lived together in extended family groups (clans), sharing bark-covered *longhouses* in towns of 3,000 or more people. The oldest woman in each longhouse was deemed the “clan mother” of the residents. Villages were surrounded by *palisades*, tall fences made of trees intended to fend off attackers. Their most important crops were corn and squash, both of which figure prominently in Iroquois mythology.

Unlike the Algonquian culture, in which men were dominant, women held the key leadership roles in the Iroquoian culture. As an Iroquois elder explained, “In our society, women are the center of all things. Nature, we believe, has given women the ability to create; therefore it is only natural that women be in positions of power to protect this function.”

Men and women were not treated as equals. Rather, the two genders operated in two separate social domains. No woman could be a chief; no man could head a clan. Women selected the chiefs, controlled the distribution of property, and planted and harvested the crops. After marriage, the man moved in with the wife’s family. In part, the Iroquoian matriarchy reflected the frequent absence of Iroquois men, who as skilled hunters and traders traveled extensively for long periods, requiring women to take charge of domestic life.

War between rival groups of Native Americans, especially the Algonquians and Iroquois, was commonplace, usually as a means of settling feuds or gaining slaves. Success in fighting was a warrior’s highest honor. As a Cherokee explained in the eighteenth century, “We cannot live without war. Should we make peace with the Tuscaroras, we must immediately look out for some other nation with whom we can engage in our beloved occupation.”

EASTERN WOODLANDS INDIANS The third major Native American group in the Eastern Woodlands included the southern peoples along the Gulf coast who spoke the Muskogean language: the Creeks, Chickasaws, and Choctaws. Like the Iroquois, they were often matrilineal societies, meaning that ancestry was traced only through the mother’s line, but they had a more

rigid class structure. The Muskogean lived in towns arranged around a central plaza. In the region along the coast of the Gulf of Mexico, many of their thatched-roofed houses had no walls because of the hot, humid summers.

Over thousands of years, the native North Americans had displayed remarkable resilience, adapting to the uncertainties of frequent warfare, changing climate, and varying environments. They would display similar resilience in the face of the challenges created by the arrival of Europeans.

EUROPEAN VISIONS OF AMERICA

The European exploration of the Western Hemisphere resulted from several key developments during the fifteenth century. In Europe, dramatic intellectual changes and scientific discoveries transformed religion, warfare, family life, and the economy. In addition, the resurgence of old vices—greed, conquest, exploitation, oppression, racism, and slavery—would help fuel European expansion abroad.

A severe population decline caused by warfare, famine, and plagues (the Black Death) left once-great noble estates without enough agricultural workers to maintain them. By the end of the fifteenth century, medieval feudalism’s static agrarian social system, in which serfs worked for local nobles in exchange for living on and farming the land, began to disintegrate. People were no longer forced to remain in the same locality and keep the same social status in which they were born. A new “middle class” of profit-hungry bankers, merchants, and investors emerged. They were committed to a more dynamic commercial economy fueled by innovations in banking, currency, accounting, and insurance.

The growing trade-based economy in Europe freed monarchs from their dependence on feudal nobles, enabling them to unify the scattered cities ruled by princes (principalities) into large kingdoms with stronger, more centralized governments. The rise of towns, cities, and a merchant class provided kings and queens with new tax revenues, and the once dominant nobility was gradually displaced by powerful new merchants, bankers, and monarchs.

THE RENAISSANCE At the same time, the rediscovery of ancient Greek and Roman writings about representative government (republics) spurred an intellectual revolution known as the *Renaissance* (rebirth). Educated people throughout Europe began to challenge prevailing beliefs as well as the absolute authority of rulers and churchmen. They discussed controversial new ideas about politics, religion, and science; engaged in scientific research; and unleashed their artistic creativity.

The Renaissance also brought the practical application of new ideas that sparked the Age of Exploration. New knowledge and new technologies made possible the construction of larger sailing ships capable of oceanic voyages. The development of more-accurate magnetic compasses, maps, and navigational instruments such as *astrolabes* and *quadrants* helped sailors determine their ship's location. The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries also brought the invention of gunpowder, cannons, and firearms—and the printing press.

THE RISE OF GLOBAL TRADE By 1500, trade between western European nations and the Middle East, Africa, and Asia was flourishing. The Portuguese, blessed with expert sailors and fast, three-masted ships called *caravels*, took the lead, roaming along the west coast of Africa collecting grains, gold, ivory, spices, and slaves. Eventually, these mariners continued all the way around Africa in search of the fabled Indies (India and Southeast Asia), and continued on to China and Japan, where they found what they had dreamed about: spices, silk cloth, and other exotic trade goods.

By the end of the fifteenth century, four powerful nations had emerged in western Europe: England, France, Portugal, and Spain. The marriage of King Ferdinand of Aragon and Queen Isabella of Castile in 1469 led to the unification of their two kingdoms into a single new nation, Spain. The Spanish king and queen were Christian expansionists eager to spread the Catholic faith to peoples around the world. On January 1, 1492, after nearly eight centuries of religious warfare between Spanish Christians and Moorish Muslims on the Iberian Peninsula, Ferdinand and Isabella declared victory for Catholicism at Granada, the last Muslim stronghold. The Christian monarchs gave the defeated Muslims, and soon thereafter, the Jews living in Spain and Portugal (called Sephardi), the same desperate choice: convert to Catholicism or leave.

The forced exile of Muslims and Jews was one of the many factors that prompted Europe's involvement in global expansion. Other factors—urbanization, world trade, the rise of centralized nations, plus advances in knowledge, technology, and firepower—combined with natural human curiosity, greed, and religious zeal to spur the exploration and conquest of the Western Hemisphere. Beginning in the late fifteenth century, Europeans set in motion the events that, as one historian has observed, would bind together “four continents, three races, and a great diversity of regional parts.”

THE VOYAGES OF COLUMBUS

These were the circumstances that led Christopher Columbus to pursue his own dream of finding a route to the Indies west across the Atlantic. Born

in Genoa, Italy, in 1451, the son of a weaver, Columbus took to the sea at an early age, teaching himself geography, navigation, and Latin. By the 1480s, he was eager to spread Christianity across the globe and win glory and riches. The tall, red-haired Columbus eventually persuaded Ferdinand and Isabella to finance his voyage. They agreed to award him a one-tenth share of any riches he gathered; they would keep the rest.

CROSSING THE ATLANTIC On August 3, 1492, Columbus and a crew of ninety men and boys, mostly from Spain but from seven other nations as well, set sail on three tiny ships, the *Santa María*, the *Pinta*, and the *Niña*, respectively about sixty, fifty-five, and fifty feet long. They traveled first to Lisbon, Portugal, and then headed west. For weeks they journeyed across the open sea, hoping with each dawn to sight the shore of Asia, only to be disappointed. By early October, the worried sailors rebelled at the “madness” of sailing blindly and forced Columbus to promise that they would turn back if land were not sighted within three days.

Then, at dawn on October 12, a sailor named Rodrigo, on watch atop the masthead, yelled, “Tierra! Tierra!” (“Land! Land!”). He had spotted a small island in the Bahamas east of Florida that Columbus named San Salvador (Blessed Savior). Columbus mistakenly assumed that they must be near the Indies, so he called the island people “Indios.” At every encounter with these peaceful native people, known as Tainos or Arawaks, his first question was whether they had any gold. If they did, the Spaniards seized it; if they did not, the Europeans forced them to search for it.

The Arawaks, unable to understand or repel the strange visitors, welcomed the Europeans by offering gifts of food, water, and parrots. Columbus described them as “well-built, with good bodies, and handsome features. Their hair is short and coarse, almost like the hairs of a horse's tail.” He marveled that they “would make fine servants,” boasting that “with fifty men we could subjugate them all and make them do whatever we want.” Thus began the typical



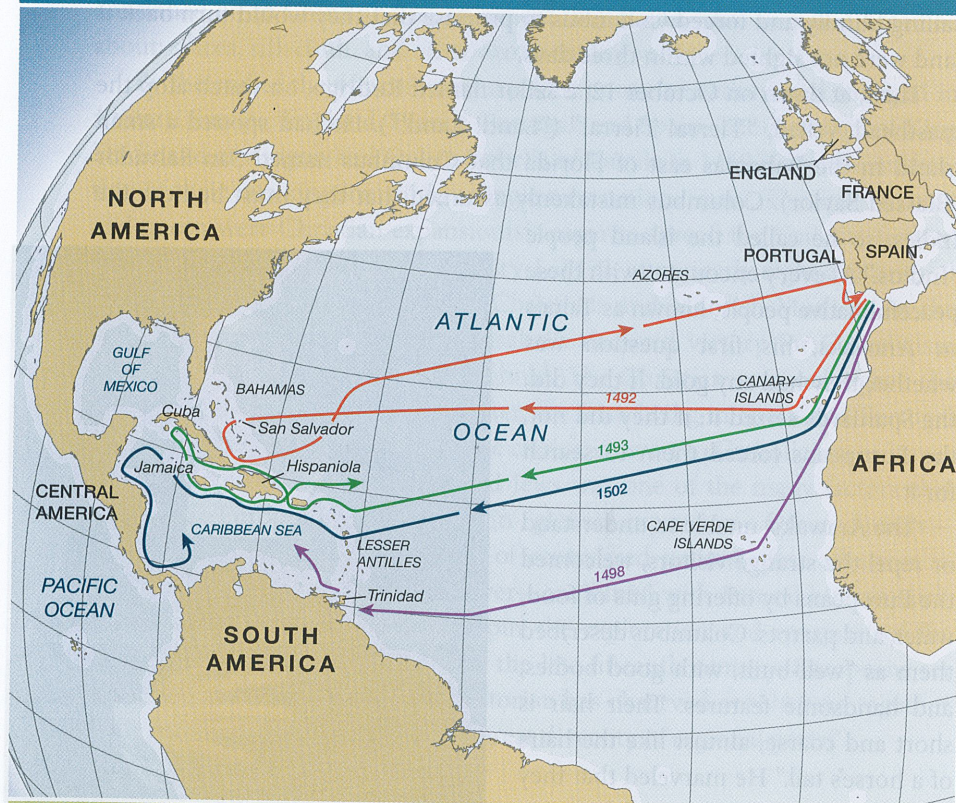
Christopher Columbus A portrait by Sebastiano del Piombo, ca. 1519.

European bias displayed toward the Indians: they were inferior peoples worthy of being exploited and enslaved.

EXPLORING THE CARIBBEAN After leaving San Salvador, Columbus continued to search for a passage to the Indies. He went ashore in Cuba, sword in one hand, cross in the other, exclaiming that this is the “most beautiful land human eyes have ever beheld.” After a few weeks, he sailed eastward to the island he named Hispaniola (now Haiti and the Dominican Republic). There he found indigenous people who wore gold jewelry and introduced him to smoking tobacco.

At the end of 1492, Columbus, still convinced he had reached an outer island of Japan, sailed back to Spain after leaving about forty men on Hispan-

COLUMBUS'S VOYAGES



- How many voyages did Columbus make to the Americas?
- What is the origin of the name for the Caribbean Sea?
- What happened to the colony that Columbus left on Hispaniola in 1493?

iola and capturing a dozen Arawaks to present as gifts to the Spanish king and queen. Upon reaching Spain, he received a hero's welcome as he excitedly told people about the “new world” he had discovered. He promised Ferdinand and Isabella that his discoveries would provide them “as much gold as they need . . . and as many slaves as they ask.”

Thanks to the newly invented printing press, news of Columbus's path-breaking voyage spread rapidly across Europe. The Spanish monarchs told Columbus to prepare for a second voyage, instructing him to “treat the Indians very well and lovingly and abstain from doing them any injury.” Columbus and his men would repeatedly defy this order.

Spain worked quickly to secure its legal claim to the New World. With the help of the Spanish-born pope, Alexander VI, Spain and Portugal signed the Treaty of Tordesillas (1494). With the stroke of a pen, it divided the non-Christian world, giving most of the Western Hemisphere to Spain, while Africa and what would become Brazil were granted to Portugal. In practice, this meant that while Spain developed its American empire in the sixteenth century, Portugal would provide it with enslaved African laborers.

The Treaty of Tordesillas was a remarkable illustration of the Catholic worldview and the power of the papacy. Pope Alexander's effort to give Spain, his homeland of less than 7 million people, control over virtually the entire Western Hemisphere, reflected his desire to convert all the native peoples to Catholicism and to “train them in good morals.” This missionary impulse of the Catholic Church joined with the quest for gold and silver among the explorers to drive the efforts of Columbus and others to lay claim to the as yet unknown boundaries of the New World.

In 1493, Columbus returned across the Atlantic with seventeen ships and 1,400 men. Also on board were Catholic priests eager to convert the native peoples to Christianity. Upon his arrival back in Hispaniola, Columbus discovered that the men he had left behind had lost their senses, raping women, robbing villages, and, as Columbus's son later added, “committing a thousand excesses for which they were mortally hated by the Indians.”

The Europeans also carried with them to the Americas a range of infectious diseases—smallpox, measles, typhus—that would prove disastrous for the indigenous peoples, who had no natural immunities to them. The Spaniards found little gold, so they loaded their ships with hundreds of enslaved Indians to be sold in Europe, half of whom died during the voyage to Spain.

NAMING AMERICA Columbus would make two more voyages to the Caribbean. To the end of his life, he insisted that he had discovered the outlying parts of Asia, not a new continent. By one of history's greatest ironies,

this led Europeans to name the New World not for Columbus but for another Italian sailor-explorer, astronomer Amerigo Vespucci.

In 1499, with the support of Portugal's monarchy, Vespucci sailed across the Atlantic, landing first at Brazil and then sailing along 3,000 miles of the South American coastline in hope of finding a passage to Asia. In the end, Vespucci reported that South America was so large that it must be a *new* continent rather than Asia. In 1507, a German mapmaker paid tribute to Vespucci's navigational skills by labeling the New World using a variant of his first name: America.

PROFESSIONAL EXPLORERS News of the remarkable voyages of Columbus and Vespucci raced across Europe and stimulated other expeditions to the Western Hemisphere. Over the next two centuries, Spain, Portugal, France, Britain, the Netherlands, and Russia dispatched ships and claimed territory in the Americas by "right of discovery."

The first explorer to sight the North American continent was John Cabot, an Italian sponsored by King Henry VII of England. His landfall in 1497 at what the king called "the new founde lande," in present-day Canada, gave England the basis for a later claim to all of North America. During the early sixteenth century, however, the English grew so preoccupied with internal divisions and war with France that they failed to follow up on Cabot's discoveries.

Lusting for gold and sudden riches, the Spanish still sought a passage from the Atlantic to the Pacific to reach Asia. In 1505, a Spanish ship unloaded pigs and goats in Puerto Rico, intending them to grow and multiply in anticipation of settling a colony there. Puerto Rico would be the first European settlement on what would become, in 1902, a territory of the United States of America.

In 1519, Ferdinand Magellan, a Portuguese sea captain hired by the Spanish, discovered the strait at the southern tip of South America that now bears his name. Magellan then kept sailing north and west across the Pacific Ocean, making landfall on the island of Guam and, eventually, the Philippines, where indigenous people killed him. Surviving crew members made their way back to Spain, arriving in 1522. Their dramatic accounts of the voyage around the world quickened Spanish interest in global exploration.

RELIGIOUS CONFLICT IN EUROPE

At the same time that explorers were crossing the Atlantic, powerful religious conflicts were tearing Europe apart in ways that would greatly influence settlement in the New World.

When Columbus sailed west in 1492, all of Europe acknowledged the thousand-year-old supremacy of the Roman Catholic Church and its pope in Rome. The brutal efforts of the Spanish to convert native peoples to **Roman Catholicism** illustrated the murderous intensity with which European Christians embraced religious life in the sixteenth century. Spiritual concerns inspired, comforted, and united them. People fervently believed in heaven and hell, devils and witches, demons and angels, magic and miracles. And they were willing to kill and die for their beliefs.

MARTIN LUTHER

The enforced unity of Catholic Europe began to crack in 1517, when Martin Luther, a thirty-three-year-old German priest who taught at the University of Wittenburg, changed the course of history by launching what became known as the **Protestant Reformation**.

Luther was a genuine spiritual revolutionary who undermined the authority of the Catholic Church by showing that many of its officials were corrupt. He called the pope "the greatest thief and robber that has appeared or can appear on earth" and denounced the Catholic Church as "the kingdom of sin, death, and hell."

LUTHER'S BELIEFS Luther especially criticized the sale of *indulgences* (whereby priests would forgive sins in exchange for money or goods). God alone, through Christ, he insisted, offered people salvation; people could not earn it through their good deeds or buy it from priests. Salvation, in other words, resulted from belief. "Christ is the only Savior. One does not save oneself." As Luther exclaimed, "By faith alone are you saved!"

Luther tried to democratize Christianity by centering faith on the individual believer rather than in the authority of the church and its priests. He urged believers to read the Bible themselves rather than blindly follow the dictates of Catholic priests and the distant pope. The people, he claimed, represented a "priesthood of all believers," perhaps his most revolutionary idea. To help Germans be their own "priests," Luther produced the first Bible in a German translation, and he reassured Christians that God was not an angry judge but a forgiving father.

THE CATHOLIC REACTION Lutheranism exploded Catholic assumptions and certainties like a bomb. Angry Catholic officials lashed out at Luther's "dangerous doctrines." Luther fought back with equal fury, declaring

that he was “born to war.” When Pope Leo X expelled Luther (a “wild boar”) from the Catholic Church in 1521 and sentenced him to death, civil war erupted throughout the German principalities. Amid the fighting, a powerful German prince protected Luther from the Church’s wrath.

What had begun as a fierce religious drama now became a political reformation, too. Luther was no longer simply an outspoken priest; he was a spiritual revolutionary, a folk hero, and a political prophet, encouraging German princes and dukes to separate themselves from the Italian papacy.

The wars of the Reformation were especially brutal conflicts involving tortures and burnings of believers from both sides of the religious divide. A settlement between warring Lutherans and Catholics did not come until 1555, when each prince was allowed by the Treaty of Augsburg to determine the religion of his subjects.

JOHN CALVIN

Soon after Martin Luther began his revolt against the shortcomings of Catholicism, Swiss Protestants also challenged papal authority. They were led by John Calvin (1509–1564), a brilliant French scholar who had fled Catholic France to more tolerant Geneva and brought the Swiss city under the sway of his powerful beliefs.

CALVINISM In his great theological work, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1536), Calvin set forth a stern doctrine. All Christians, he taught, were damned by Adam’s original sin, but Christ’s sacrifice on the cross made possible the redemption of those whom God “elected” to be saved and thus had “predestined” to salvation from the beginning of time.

Intoxicated by godliness, Calvin insisted that a true Christian life practiced strict morality and hard work. Moreover, he taught that God valued every form of work, however lowly it might be. Calvin also permitted church members a share in the governance through a body of elders and ministers called the presbytery. Calvin’s doctrines formed the basis for the German Reformed Church, the Dutch Reformed Church, the Presbyterians in Scotland, some of the Puritans in England (and, eventually, in America), and the Huguenots in France.

CALVIN’S IMPACT Through these and other Protestant groups, John Calvin exerted a greater influence upon religious belief and practice in the English colonies than did any other leader of the Reformation. His insistence on the freedom of individual believers, as well as his recognition that monarchs and political officials were sinful like everyone else, helped contribute

to the evolving ideas of representative democracy, whereby the people elected their rulers, and of the importance of separating church power from state (governmental) power.

THE PROTESTANT REVOLUTION

Even though the Catholic Church launched an aggressive Counter-Reformation, the Protestant revolt continued to spread rapidly during the sixteenth century. Most of northern Germany, along with Scandinavia, became Lutheran; the areas that did so often called themselves the “Protesting Estates,” from which came the label “Protestants.”

The Reformation thus formed in part a theological dispute, in part a political movement, and in part a catalyst for social change, civil strife, and imperial warfare. Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Catholics and Protestants persecuted, imprisoned, tortured, and killed each other in large numbers in Europe—and in the Americas.

Every major international conflict involved, to some extent, a religious holy war between Catholic and Protestant nations. Equally important, the Protestant worldview, with its emphasis on the freedom of the individual conscience and personal Bible reading, would play a major role in the colonization of America.

THE REFORMATION IN ENGLAND In England, the Reformation followed a unique course, blending aspects of Protestantism with Catholicism. The Church of England, or the Anglican Church, emerged through a gradual process of integrating Calvinism with English Catholicism. In early modern England, the church and government were united and mutually supportive. The monarchy required people to attend religious services and to pay taxes to support the church. The English rulers also supervised the church officials: two archbishops, twenty-six bishops, and thousands of parish clergy. The royal rulers often instructed religious leaders to preach sermons in support of particular government policies. As one English king explained, “People are governed by the pulpit more than the sword in time of peace.”

KING HENRY VIII Purely political reasons initially led to the rejection of papal authority in England. Brilliant and energetic Henry VIII ruled between 1509 and 1547. The second monarch of the Tudor dynasty, he had won from the pope the title Defender of the Faith for refuting Martin Luther’s rebellious ideas. Henry’s marriage to Catherine of Aragon, his brother’s widow, had produced no male heir, however, and for him to marry again required that

he convince the pope to annul, or cancel, his marriage. Catherine, however, was the aunt of Charles V, king of Spain and ruler of the Holy Roman Empire, whose support was vital to the church in Rome.

The pope refused to grant an annulment. Henry angrily responded by severing England's nearly 900-year-old connection with the Catholic Church. He then named a new archbishop of Canterbury, who granted the annulment, thus freeing Henry to marry his mistress, the lively Anne Boleyn.

In one of history's greatest ironies, Anne Boleyn gave birth not to the male heir that Henry demanded but to a remarkable daughter named Elizabeth. The disappointed king took vengeance on his wife. He accused her of adultery, ordered her beheaded, and declared the infant Elizabeth a bastard. Yet Elizabeth received a first-rate education and grew up to be quick-witted and nimble, cunning and courageous.

THE REIGN OF ELIZABETH After the bloody reigns of her Protestant half brother, Edward VI, and her Catholic half sister, Mary I, she ascended the throne in 1558, at the age of twenty-five. Over the next forty-five years, Elizabeth proved to be the greatest female ruler in history. Her long reign over the troubled island kingdom was punctuated by frequent political turmoil, religious strife between Protestants and Catholics, economic crises, and foreign wars. Yet Queen Elizabeth came to rule confidently over England's golden age.

Born into a traditionally man's world and given a traditionally man's role, Elizabeth could not be a Catholic, for her birth was illegitimate. During her long reign, from 1558 to 1603, therefore, the Church of England became Protestant, but in its own way. The Anglican organizational structure, centered on bishops and archbishops, remained much the same as the Roman Catholic Church, but the church service changed; the clergy were permitted to marry; and the pope's authority was no longer recognized.

THE SPANISH EMPIRE

During the sixteenth century, Spain was creating the world's most powerful empire at the same time it was trying to repress the Protestant Reformation. At its height, Spain controlled much of Europe, most of the Americas, parts of Africa, and various trading outposts in Asia.

But it was the gold and silver looted from the Americas that fueled Spain's "Golden Empire." By plundering, conquering, and colonizing the Americas

and converting and enslaving its inhabitants, the Spanish planted Christianity in the Western Hemisphere and gained the resources to rule the world.

SPAIN IN THE CARIBBEAN The Caribbean Sea served as the gateway through which Spanish power entered the Americas. After establishing colonies on Hispaniola, including Santo Domingo, which became the capital of the West Indies, the Spanish proceeded eastward to Puerto Rico (1508) and westward to Cuba (1511–1514). Their motives, as one soldier explained, were "to serve God and the king, and also to get rich."

Bartolomé de Las Casas (1474–1566), a Catholic priest whose father sailed with Columbus, described the native Cubans as generally peaceful people who lived in large communal wood buildings roofed with palm fronds. "Marriage laws," he explained, "are non-existent: men and women alike choose their mates and leave them as they please, without offense, jealousy, or anger."

Native Cubans wore colorful feathers on their heads, fashioned bead necklaces from fish bones and shells, and "put no value on gold and other precious things." They lived lives of simple sufficiency, relying solely on nature for their basic needs.

Las Casas noted with regret that the Spaniards "committed irreparable crimes against the Indians." Soldiers "thought nothing of knifing Indians by tens and twenties and of cutting off slices of them to test the sharpness of their blades." Cuban men were forced to work full-time in the mountains digging for gold while their wives stayed behind to tend vast fields of *cassava*, a starchy root vegetable known as the "bread of the tropics."

Within a few years after the arrival of Europeans, most of the Indians throughout the Caribbean had died. Disunity everywhere—civil disorder, rebellion, and tribal warfare—left them vulnerable to foreign conquest. Attacks by well-armed soldiers and deadly germs from Europe overwhelmed entire Indian societies.

A CLASH OF CULTURES

The often-violent relationship between the Spanish and Indians involved more than a clash between different peoples. It also involved contrasting forms of technological development. The Indians of Mexico used wooden canoes for transportation, while the Europeans crossed the ocean in heavily armed sailing vessels. The Spanish, with their steel swords, firearms, explosives, and armor, terrified most Indians, whose arrows and tomahawks were seldom a match for guns, cannons, and warhorses. A Spanish priest in Florida observed

that gunpowder “frightens the most valiant and courageous Indian and renders him slave to the white man’s command.”

The Europeans enjoyed other cultural advantages. Before their arrival, for example, the only domesticated four-legged animals in North America were dogs and llamas. The Spanish brought with them strange beasts: horses, pigs, sheep, and cattle. Horses provided greater speed in battle and gave the Spanish a decided psychological advantage. “The most essential thing in new lands is horses,” reported one Spanish soldier. “They instill the greatest fear in the enemy and make the Indians respect the leaders of the army.” Even more feared among the Indians were the fighting dogs that the Spanish used to guard their camps.

CORTÉS’S CONQUEST The most dramatic European conquest on the North American mainland occurred in Mexico. On February 18, 1519, thirty-four-year-old Hernán Cortés, driven by dreams of gold and glory, set sail for Mexico from Cuba. His fleet of eleven ships carried nearly 600 soldiers and sailors. Also on board were 200 indigenous Cubans, sixteen horses, and cannons.

After the invaders landed on the coast of the Gulf of Mexico, Cortés convinced the Totomacs, a society conquered by the Mexica, to join his assault against the dominant Mexica, their hated rivals. To prevent any of his heavily armed and helmeted soldiers, called *conquistadores* (conquerors), from retreating or deserting, Cortés had the ships dismantled.

Conquistadores were then widely recognized as the best soldiers in the world, loyal to the monarchy and the Catholic Church. They received no pay; they were pitiless professional warriors willing to risk their lives for a share in the expected plunder. One conquistador explained that he went to America “to serve God and His Majesty, to give light to those who were in darkness, and to grow rich, as men desire to do.”

With his small army, cannons, horses, and Indian allies, Cortés bravely set out to conquer the sprawling Mexica (Aztec) Empire, which extended from central Mexico to what is today Guatemala. The nearly 200-mile march of Cortés’s army through the mountains to the magnificent Mexica capital of Tenochtitlán (modern Mexico City) took nearly three months. Along the way, Cortés used treachery and terror to intimidate and then recruit the native peoples, most of whom had been conquered earlier by the Mexica.

After entering the city of Cholula, home to the largest pyramid in the Americas (as well as 40,000 people), Cortés learned of a plot to ambush his army. He turned the tables on his hosts by inviting the local chieftains and nobles to the city’s ceremonial plaza to talk and exchange gifts. When they

arrived, however, the Spanish and their Indian allies, the Tlaxcalans, killed the leaders as well as thousands of other Cholulans.

SPANISH INVADERS As Cortés and his invading army continued their march across Mexico, they heard fabulous accounts of the carefully planned Mexica city of Tenochtitlán. With some 200,000 inhabitants, it was larger than most European cities. Graced by wide canals and bridges, stunning gardens, and formidable stone pyramids, the lake-encircled city and its stone buildings seemed impregnable.

One of the Spanish conquistadores described their first glimpse of the great capital city: “Gazing on such wonderful sights we did not know what to say or whether what appeared before us was real; for on the one hand there were great cities and in the lake ever so many more, and the lake itself was crowded with canoes, and in the causeway were many bridges at intervals, and in front of us stood the great City of Mexico, and we—we did not number even four hundred soldiers!”

Yet the vastly outnumbered Spanish made the most of their assets—their fighting experience, superior weapons, numerous Indian allies, and an aggressive sense of religious and racial superiority. Through a combination of threats and deceptions, the invaders entered Tenochtitlán peacefully and captured the



Cortés in Mexico Page from the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala*, a historical narrative from the sixteenth century. The scene, in which Cortés is shown seated on a throne, depicts the arrival of the Spanish in Tlaxcala.

emperor, Montezuma II. Cortés explained to the emperor why the invasion was necessary: “We Spaniards have a disease of the heart that only gold can cure.” Montezuma submitted in part because he mistook Cortés for a god.

After taking the Mexicas’ gold and silver, sending 20 percent of it to the Spanish king (referred to as “the royal fifth”), and dividing the rest among themselves, the Spanish forced the native Mexicans to mine more of the precious metals.

Then, in the spring of 1520, disgruntled Mexica decided that Montezuma was a traitor. They rebelled, stoned him to death, and, armed only with swords and wicker shields, they attacked the conquistadores. Forced to retreat, the Spaniards lost about a third of their men.

The Spaniards’ 20,000 Indian allies remained loyal, however, and Cortés’s forces gradually regrouped. They surrounded the imperial city (“the most beautiful city in the world,” said Cortés) for eighty-five days, cutting off its access to water and food and allowing a highly infectious smallpox epidemic to devastate the inhabitants. Bernal Diaz del Castillo, a Spanish soldier, recalled that “God saw fit to send the Indians small pox.” One of the Mexica reported that the smallpox “spread over the people as great destruction. Some it covered on all parts—their faces, their heads, their breasts, and so on. There was great havoc. Very many died of it. . . . They could not move; they could not stir.”

For three months, the Mexica bravely defended their capital. Then the siege came to a bloody end. The ravages of smallpox and the support of thousands of anti-Aztec Indians help explain how such a small force of determined Spaniards was able to vanquish a proud nation of nearly 1 million people.

After the Aztecs surrendered, a merciless Cortés ordered the leaders hanged and the priests devoured by dogs. He reported that, in the end, 117,000 Aztecs were killed.

In two years, Cortés and his disciplined army and Indian allies had conquered a fabled empire that had taken centuries to develop. Cortés became the first governor of New Spain and began replacing the Mexica leaders with Spanish bureaucrats and church officials. The Spanish conquest of Mexico established the model for waves of plundering conquistadores to follow. Within twenty years, Spain had established a vast empire in the New World.

In 1531, Francisco Pizarro led a band of conquistadores down the Pacific coast of South America from Panama toward Peru, where they brutally subdued the huge Inca Empire. The Spanish invaders seized Inca palaces, took royal women as mistresses and wives, and looted the empire of its gold and

SPANISH EXPLORATIONS OF THE MAINLAND



- What were the Spanish conquistadores’ goals for exploring the Americas?
- How did Cortés conquer the Aztecs?
- Why did the Spanish first explore North America, and why did they establish St. Augustine, the first European settlement in what would become the United States?

silver. From Peru, Spain extended its control southward through Chile by about 1553 and north, to present-day Colombia, by 1538.

SPANISH EXPLORERS Throughout the sixteenth century, the Spanish expanded their control over much of North America, bullying and brutalizing, looting and destroying the native peoples, then forcing them to work the mines and plantations in return for learning the Spanish language and embracing the Catholic religion.

Juan Ponce de León, then governor of Puerto Rico, made the earliest-known exploration of what the Spanish called La Florida—the Land of Flowers—in 1513. Meanwhile, other Spanish explorers skirted the coast of the Gulf of Mexico, scouted the Atlantic coast all the way north to Canada, and established a short-lived colony on the Carolina coast.

Sixteenth-century knowledge of the North American interior came mostly from would-be conquistadores who plundered the region. The first, Pánfilo de Narváez, landed in 1528 at Tampa Bay, marched northward to Alabama, and then returned to the Gulf coast, where he and his crew built crude boats out of animal hides and headed for Mexico.

High winds and heavy seas, however, wrecked the vessels on the Texas coast. Some of the survivors worked their way overland. After *eight* years, including periods of captivity among the Indians, they wandered into a Spanish outpost in Mexico.

In 1539, Hernando de Soto, a conquistador who had helped conquer the Incas in Peru, set out to explore Florida. With 600 soldiers, a pair of women, and a few priests, as well as horses, mules, pigs, and fighting dogs, he landed on Florida's west coast.

De Soto and his party traveled north as far as western North Carolina, and then moved westward, becoming the first Europeans to see the Mississippi River. Along the way, they looted and destroyed Native American villages, and took enslaved Indians with them in chains and iron collars. De Soto tried to impress the Indians by claiming to be “a son of the sun.”

In the spring of 1542, having wandered America for three years, de Soto died near Natchez, Mississippi. The next year, the survivors among his party floated down the Mississippi River, and 311 of the original adventurers found their way to Spanish Mexico. They left behind them a trail of infectious diseases which continued to ravage the Indians for years thereafter.

In 1540, Francisco Vázquez de Coronado led an expedition of 1,500 Spaniards and Indian allies, 1,000 horses, 500 cattle, and 5,000 sheep northward into New Mexico and northeast as far as present-day Kansas.

NEW SPAIN The Spanish established provinces in North America not so much as commercial enterprises but as protective buffers to defend their empire in Mexico and South America. They were concerned about French traders infiltrating from Louisiana, English settlers crossing into Florida, and Russian seal hunters wandering down the California coast.

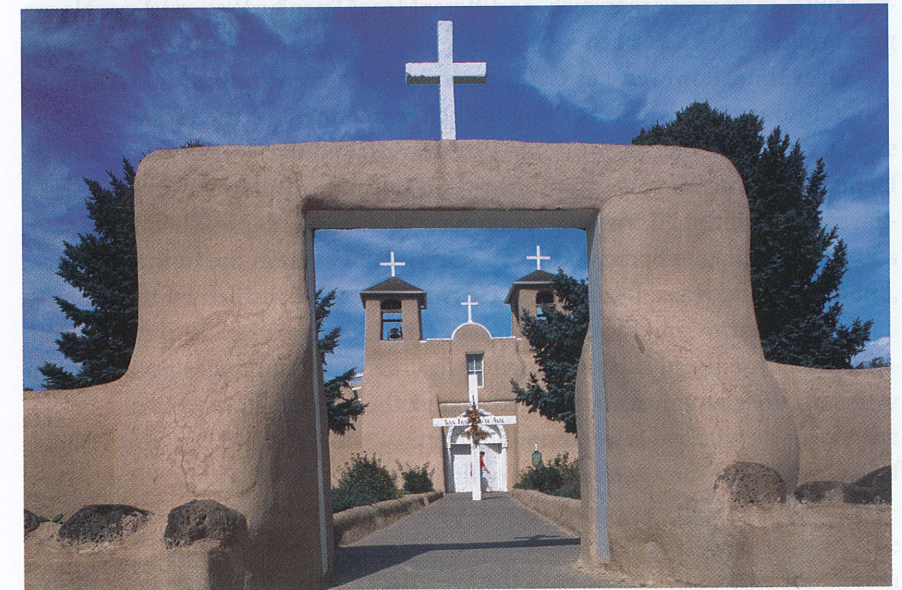
As the sixteenth century unfolded, the Spanish shifted from looting the native peoples to enslaving them. To reward the crusading conquistadores,

Spain transferred to America a medieval socioeconomic system known as the *encomienda*, whereby favored army officers were given huge parcels of land. They were to provide the Indians with protection in exchange for “tribute”—goods and labor, tending farms or mining for gold and silver.

New Spain therefore developed a society of extremes: wealthy *encomenderos* and powerful priests at one end of the spectrum, and Indians held in poverty at the other. The Spaniards used brute force to ensure that Indians accepted their new role as serfs. Nuño de Guzman, a conquistador who became the governor of a Mexican province, loved to watch his massive fighting dog tear apart rebellious Indians. After a Spaniard talked back to him, he had the man nailed to a post by his tongue.

A CATHOLIC EMPIRE The Spanish (and later the French) launched a massive effort to convert the Indians (deeming them “heathens”) into Catholic servants. During the sixteenth century, hundreds of priests fanned out across New Spain (and, later, New France).

Many of the Catholic missionaries decided that the Indians of Mexico could be converted only by force. “Though they seem to be a simple people,” a Spanish priest declared in 1562, “they are up to all sorts of mischief, and



Missionaries in the “New World” A Spanish mission in New Mexico, established to spread the Catholic faith among the indigenous peoples.

are obstinately attached to the rituals and ceremonies of their forefathers. The whole land is certainly damned, and without compulsion, they will never speak the [religious] truth." By the end of the sixteenth century, there were more than 300 monasteries or missions in New Spain, and Catholicism had become a major instrument of Spanish imperialism.

Some Spanish officials criticized the forced conversion of Indians and the *encomienda* system. In 1514, the Catholic priest Bartolomé de Las Casas resolved to spend the rest of his life aiding the Indians. He gave away his land in Hispaniola, freed his slaves, and began urging the Spanish to change their approach: "Everything done to the Indians thus far," he claimed, "was unjust and tyrannical."

Las Casas spent the next fifty years advocating better treatment for indigenous people. He was officially named "Protector of the Indians." Las Casas insisted that the Indians be converted to Catholicism only through "peaceful and reasonable" means. His courageous efforts aroused furious opposition, however. Most colonizers believed, as a Spanish bishop in Mexico declared in 1585, that the Indians must be "ruled, governed, and guided" to Christianity "by fear more than by love."

A leading Spanish scholar, Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, directly challenged Las Casas's cry for justice. Indians, he claimed, are as inferior "as children are to adults, as women are to men, as different from Spaniards as cruel people are from mild people."

Over time, however, Las Casas convinced the monarchy and the Catholic Church to issue new rules calling for better treatment of the Indians in New Spain. At Las Casas's urging, Pope Paul III declared that Indians were human beings deserving of respect and Christian salvation. Still, the use of "fire and the sword" continued, and angry colonists on Hispaniola banished Las Casas.

On returning to Spain, Las Casas said, "I left Christ in the Indies not once, but a thousand times beaten, afflicted, insulted and crucified by those Spaniards who destroy and ravage the Indians." In 1564, two years before his death, he bleakly predicted that "God will wreak his fury and anger against Spain some day for the unjust wars waged against the Indians."

THE COLUMBIAN EXCHANGE

The first European contacts with the Western Hemisphere began the **Columbian Exchange** (also called the Great Biological Exchange), a worldwide transfer of plants, animals, and diseases that ultimately worked in favor of the Europeans at the expense of the indigenous peoples.

The plants and animals of the two worlds differed more than the peoples and their ways of life. Europeans had never encountered iguanas, bison, cougars, armadillos, opossums, sloths, tapirs, anacondas, condors, or hummingbirds. Nor had the Native Americans seen horses, cattle, pigs, sheep, goats, chickens, and rats, which soon flooded the Americas.

THE EXCHANGE OF PLANTS AND FOODS The exchange of plant life between the Western Hemisphere and Europe/Africa transformed the diets of both regions. Before Columbus's voyage, three foods were unknown in Europe: maize (corn), potatoes (sweet and white), and many kinds of beans (snap, kidney, lima, and others). The white potato, although commonly called Irish, is actually native to South America. Explorers brought it back to Europe, where it thrived.

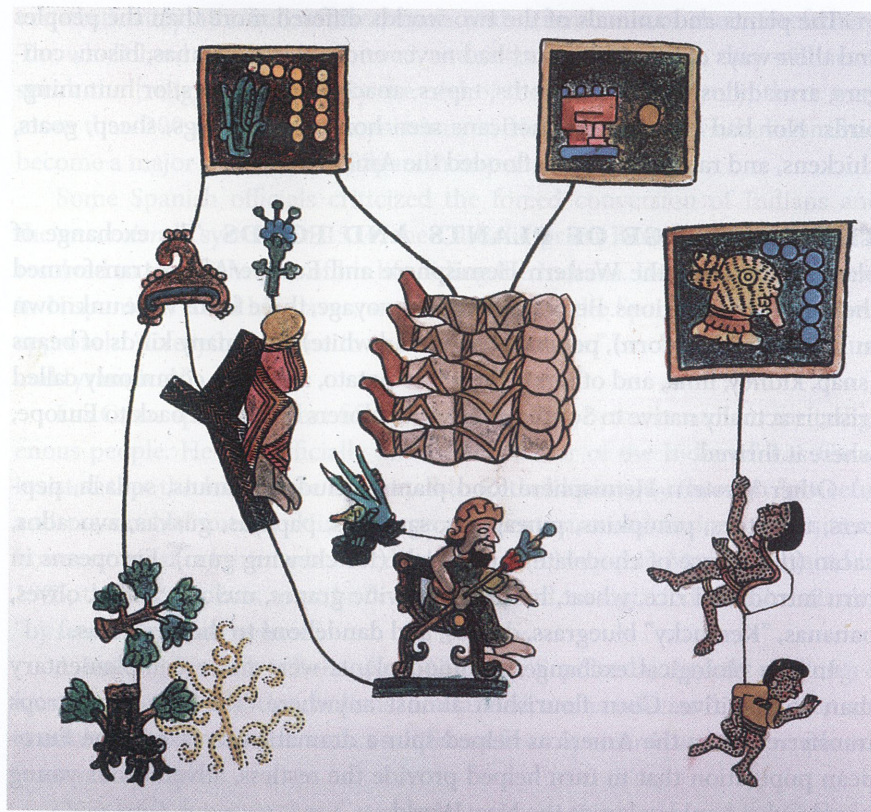
Other Western Hemisphere food plants included peanuts, squash, peppers, tomatoes, pumpkins, pineapples, saffras, papayas, guavas, avocados, cacao (the source of chocolate), and chicle (for chewing gum). Europeans in turn introduced rice, wheat, barley, oats, wine grapes, melons, coffee, olives, bananas, "Kentucky" bluegrass, daisies, and dandelions to the Americas.

In this biological exchange, the food plants were more complementary than competitive. Corn flourished almost anywhere. The new food crops transferred from the Americas helped spur a dramatic increase in the European population that in turn helped provide the restless, adventurous young people who would colonize the New World.

AN EXCHANGE OF DISEASES The most significant aspect of the biological exchange, however, was not food crops but the transmission of **infectious diseases**. During the three centuries after Columbus's first voyage, Europeans and enslaved Africans brought with them deadly diseases that Native Americans had never encountered: smallpox, typhus, diphtheria, bubonic plague, malaria, yellow fever, and cholera.

The results were catastrophic. Far more Indians—tens of millions—died from infections than from combat. Smallpox was an especially ghastly killer. In central Mexico alone, some 8 million people, perhaps a third of the entire Indian population, died of smallpox within a decade of the arrival of the Spanish. A Spanish explorer noted that half the Indians died from smallpox and "blamed us." Often there were not enough survivors to bury the dead; Europeans arrived at villages to discover only rotting corpses strewn everywhere.

Unable to explain or cure the diseases, Native American chieftains and religious leaders often lost their stature—and their lives, as they were



Smallpox Aztec victims of the 1538 smallpox epidemic are covered in shrouds (center) as two others lie dying (at right).

usually the first to meet the Spanish and thus were the first infected. As a consequence of losing their leaders, the indigenous peoples were less capable of resisting the European invaders. Many Europeans, however, interpreted such epidemics as diseases sent by God to punish those who resisted conversion to Christianity.

THE SPANISH IN NORTH AMERICA

Throughout the sixteenth century, no European power other than Spain held more than a brief foothold in what would become the United States. By the time the English established Jamestown in Virginia in 1607, the Spanish had

already explored the Smoky Mountains and the Great Plains, and established colonies in the Southwest and Florida.

Spain had the advantage not only of having arrived first but also of having stumbled onto those regions that would produce the quickest profits. While France and England were preoccupied with political disputes and religious conflicts, Spain had forged an intense national unity that enabled it to dominate Europe as well as the New World.

ST. AUGUSTINE

The first Spanish outpost in the continental United States emerged in response to the French. In the 1560s, spirited French Protestants (called Huguenots) established France's first American colonies, one on the coast of what became South Carolina and the other in Florida. They did not last long.

In 1565, the Spanish founded St. Augustine, on the Atlantic coast of Florida. It became the first European town in the present-day United States. It included a fort, church, hospital, fish market, and more than 100 shops and houses—all built decades before the first English settlements in America.

In September 1565, Spanish soldiers from St. Augustine assaulted Fort Caroline, the French Huguenot colony in northeastern Florida, and hanged all the men over age fifteen. The Spanish commander notified his Catholic king that he had killed all the French he "had found [in Fort Caroline] because . . . they were scattering the odious Lutheran doctrine in these Provinces." Later, when survivors from a shipwrecked French fleet washed ashore on Florida beaches after a hurricane, the Spanish commander told them they must abandon Protestantism and swear their allegiance to Catholicism. When they refused, he killed 245 of them.

THE SPANISH SOUTHWEST

The Spanish eventually established other permanent settlements in what are now New Mexico, Texas, and California. From the outset, in sharp contrast to the later English experience, the Spanish settlements were sparsely populated, inadequately supplied, and dreadfully poor. These northernmost regions of New Spain were so far from the capital in Mexico City that they were regularly neglected.

The Spanish colonies in America were extensions of the monarchy's absolute power. Democratic ideals and notions of equal treatment were nonexistent; people were expected to follow orders. There was no freedom of speech

or religion or movement, no local elections, no real self-government. The military officers, bureaucrats, wealthy landowners, and priests appointed by the king to govern New Spain regulated every detail of colonial life. Settlers could not travel within the colonies without official permission.

NEW MEXICO The land that would later be called New Mexico was the first center of Catholic missionary activity in the American Southwest. In 1595, Juan de Oñate, the rich son of a Spanish mining family in Mexico, whose wife was a descendant of both Cortés and Montezuma II, received a land grant for *El Norte*, the mostly desert territory north of Mexico above the Rio Grande—Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, California, and parts of Colorado. Over the next three years, he recruited an army of colonists willing to move north with him: soldier-settlers and hundreds of Mexican Indians and *mestizos* (the offspring of Spanish and indigenous parents).

In 1598, the caravan of colonists, including women, children, and 7,000 cattle, horses, goats, and sheep, began moving north from the mountains above Mexico City across the harsh desert landscape of parched mesas, plateaus, and canyons enlivened by lush river valleys. “O God! What a lonely land!” one of the footsore travelers wrote to relatives in Mexico City.

Upon crossing the Rio Grande at what became El Paso, Texas, Oñate claimed the entire region for the Spanish monarchy. Indians who resisted were killed. A priest recorded that Oñate “had butchered many Indians, human blood has been shed, and he has committed thefts, sackings, and other atrocities.”

After walking more than 800 miles in seven months, along ancient Indian footpaths that the Spanish settlers called the *Camino Real* (royal road), they established the colony of New Mexico, the farthest outpost of New Spain. The Spanish called the local Indians “Pueblos” (a Spanish word meaning village) for the city-like aspect of their terraced, multistoried buildings, sometimes chiseled into the walls of cliffs. They also dug out underground chambers called *kivas*, where they held religious ceremonies and stored sacred objects such as prayer sticks and feathered masks.

The Pueblos (mostly Hopis and Zunis) were farmers who used irrigation to water their crops. They were also skilled at making clay pottery and woven baskets. Some of the Native Americans wore buffalo skins, most wore decorative cotton blankets. “Their corn and vegetables,” Oñate reported, “are the best and largest to be found anywhere in the world.” Most of their customs resembled those practiced by the Mexicans. “Their government,” he noted, “is one of complete freedom, for although they have chieftains, they obey them badly and in few matters.”

Unlike the later English colonists in America, the Spanish officials did not view Native Americans as *racially* inferior. Instead, they believed that the Indians were “burdened” by *culturally* inferior ways of life. The Spanish government never intended to establish large colonies of Spanish immigrants in America.

The goal of Spanish colonialism was to force the Native Americans to adopt the Spanish way of life, from Catholicism to modes of dress, speech, work, and conduct. Oñate, New Mexico’s first governor, told the Pueblos that if they embraced Catholicism and followed his orders, they would receive “an eternal life of great bliss” instead of “cruel and everlasting torment.”

Oñate soon discovered that there was no gold or silver in New Mexico. Nor was there enough corn and beans to feed the Spanish invaders, who had to be resupplied by expensive caravans traveling for months from Mexico City.

So eventually Oñate established a system that forced the Indians to pay annual tributes (taxes) to the Spanish authorities in the form of a yard of cloth and a bushel of corn each year.

CATHOLIC MISSIONS Once it became evident that New Mexico had little gold, the Spanish focused their attention on religious conversion. Priests established Catholic missions where Indians were forced to work the fields they had once owned and perform personal tasks for the priests and soldiers, cooking, cleaning, and even providing sexual favors. Soldiers and priests used whips to herd the Indians to church services and to punish them for not working hard enough. A French visitor to a mission reported that it “reminded us of a . . . West Indian [slave] colony.”

After about ten years, a mission would be secularized, stripped of its religious role. Its lands would be divided among the converted Indians, the



Cultural conflict This Peruvian illustration, from a 1612–1615 manuscript by Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala, shows a Dominican Catholic friar forcing a native woman to weave.

mission chapel would become a parish church, and the inhabitants would be given full Spanish citizenship—including the privilege of paying taxes. The soldiers who were sent to protect the missions were housed in *presidios*, or forts; their families and the merchants accompanying them lived in adjacent villages.

Some Indian peoples welcomed the Spanish missionaries as “powerful witches” capable of easing their burdens. Others tried to use the European invaders as allies against rival Indian groups. Still others rebelled. Before the end of New Mexico’s first year, in December 1598, the Acoma Pueblos revolted, killing eleven soldiers.

Oñate’s response to the rebellion was brutal. Over three days, Spanish soldiers destroyed the entire pueblo, killing 500 Pueblo men and 300 women and children. Survivors were enslaved. Twenty-four Pueblo men had one foot cut off to frighten others and keep them from escaping or resisting. Children were taken from their parents into a Catholic mission, where, Oñate remarked, “they may attain the knowledge of God and the salvation of their souls.”

THE MESTIZO FACTOR Spanish women were prohibited from traveling to the New World unless they were married and accompanied by a husband. This policy had unexpected consequences. There were so few Spanish women in North America that soldiers and settlers often married Native Americans or otherwise fathered mestizos.

By the eighteenth century, mestizos were a majority in Mexico and New Mexico. Such widespread intermarriage and interbreeding led the Spanish to adopt a more inclusive social outlook toward the Indians than the English later did in their colonies along the Atlantic coast. Once most colonial officials were mestizo themselves, they were less likely to belittle the Indians. At the same time, many Native Americans falsely claimed to be mestizo as a means of improving their status and avoiding having to pay annual tribute.

THE PUEBLO REVOLT The Spanish presence in New Mexico expanded slowly. In 1608, the government decided to turn New Mexico into a royal province and moved its capital to Santa Fe (“Holy Faith” in Spanish), the first permanent seat of government in the present-day United States. By 1630, there were fifty Catholic churches and monasteries in New Mexico as well as some 3,000 Spaniards. Roman Catholic missionaries in New Mexico claimed that 86,000 Pueblos had been converted to Christianity during the seventeenth century.

In fact, however, resentment among the Indians had increased as the Spanish stripped them of their ancestral ways of life. In 1680, a charismatic Indian

spiritual leader named Popé (meaning “Ripe Plantings”) organized a massive rebellion. The Spanish claimed that he had cast a magical spell over his people, making “them crazy.”

The Indians, painted for war, burned Catholic churches, tortured, mutilated, and executed priests; destroyed all relics of Christianity; and forced the 2,400 survivors to flee the region in humiliation, eventually making their way to El Paso. The entire province of New Mexico was again in Indian hands. The Spanish governor reported that the Pueblos “are very happy without religion or Spaniards.”

The Pueblo Revolt of 1680 was the greatest defeat that Indians ever inflicted on European efforts to conquer the New World. It took twelve years and four military assaults for the Spanish to reestablish control over New Mexico.

HORSES AND THE GREAT PLAINS

Another major consequence of the Pueblo Revolt was the opportunity it gave Indian rebels to gain possession of thousands of Spanish horses (Spanish authorities had made it illegal for Indians to ride or own horses). Stealing horses became one of the most honored ways for warriors to prove their courage.

HORSES AND INDIAN CULTURE The Pueblos established a thriving horse trade with the Navajos, Apaches, and others. By 1690, horses were in Texas. They soon spread across the Great Plains, the vast rolling grasslands extending from the Missouri Valley in the east to the base of the Rocky Mountains in the west.

Prior to the arrival of European horses, Indians hunted on foot and used dogs as their beasts of burden. Dogs are carnivores, however, and it was always difficult to find enough meat to feed them.

The introduction of the horse changed everything. Horses provided the Plains Indians with a new source of mobility and power. The vast grasslands of the Great Plains were the perfect environment for horses, since the prairies offered plenty of forage for grazing animals. Horses could also haul up to seven times as much weight as dogs, and their speed and endurance made the indigenous people much more effective hunters and warriors. On the Great Plains, an Indian family’s status reflected the number of horses it owned.

By the late seventeenth century, Native American horsemen were fighting the Spaniards on more equal terms. This helps explain why the Indians of the Southwest and Texas, unlike the Indians in Mexico, were able to sustain their



Plains Indians The horse-stealing raid depicted in this hide painting demonstrates the essential role horses played in Plains life.

cultures for the next 300 years: on horseback, they were among the most fearsome fighters in the world.

BISON HUNTING Horses transformed the economy and ecology of the Great Plains. The Arapaho, Cheyenne, Comanche, Kiowa, and Sioux reinvented themselves as horse-centered cultures. They left their traditional woodland villages on the fringes of the plains and became nomadic bison (buffalo) hunters. A male bison could weigh over a ton and stand five feet tall at the shoulder.

Indians used virtually every part of the bison they killed: meat for food; hides for clothing, shoes, bedding, and shelter; muscles and tendons for thread and bowstrings; intestines for containers; bones for tools; horns for eating utensils; hair for headdresses; and dung for fuel. They used tongues for hair brushes and tails for fly swatters. One scholar has referred to the bison as the “tribal department store.”

The night after a successful hunt, the Indians would stage a festival feast, with singing and dancing throughout the night. To preserve meat for later, it would be cut into long strips and hung over wooden racks to dry in the sun or over a fire. The dried meat was called jerky. Tougher cuts of buffalo meat would be pounded with a mallet and mixed with fat and berries to make *pemmican*.

Horses eased some of the physical burdens on women, but also imposed new demands. Women and girls tended to the horses, butchered and dried the bison meat, and tanned the hides. As the value of the bison hides grew, Indian hunters began practicing polygamy, primarily for economic reasons: more wives could process more bison carcasses. The rising value of wives eventually led Plains Indians to raid other tribes in search of captive brides.

The introduction of horses into the Great Plains was a mixed blessing. The horse brought prosperity and mobility to the Plains Indians but also triggered more conflict among them. Over time, the Indians on horseback eventually killed more bison than the herds could replace. Further, horses competed with the bison for food, often depleting the prairie grass. And, as Indians on horses traveled greater distances and encountered more people, infectious diseases spread more widely. Still, by 1800, a white trader in Texas would observe that “this is a delightful country, and were it not for perpetual wars, the natives might be the happiest people on earth.”

HISPANIC AMERICA

Spanish culture etched a lasting imprint upon American ways of life. Spain’s colonial presence in the Americas lasted more than three centuries, much longer than either England’s or France’s.

New Spain was centered in Mexico, but its borders extended from Florida to Alaska. Hispanic place-names—San Francisco, Los Angeles, Tucson, Santa Fe, San Antonio, and St. Augustine—survive to this day, as do Hispanic influences in art, architecture, literature, music, law, and cuisine.

The Spanish encounters with Indians and their diverse cultures produced a two-way exchange by which the contrasting societies blended, coexisted, and interacted. Even when locked in mortal conflict and driven by hostility and mutual suspicion, the two cultures necessarily affected each other. In other words, New Spain, while savaged by violence, coercion, and intolerance, eventually produced a mutual accommodation with Native Americans that enabled two living traditions to persist side by side. The Spanish introduced cattle, horses, sheep, and goats to Texas, New Mexico, and California, as well as such words as *rodeo*, *bronco*, and *ranch* (*rancho*), and the names of four states: California, Colorado, Florida, and Nevada.

CHALLENGES TO THE SPANISH EMPIRE

Catholic Spain's successful conquests in the Western Hemisphere spurred Portugal, France, England, and the Netherlands (Holland) to begin their own exploration and exploitation of the New World.

The French were the first to pose a serious threat. Spanish treasure ships sailing home from Mexico, Peru, and the Caribbean offered tempting targets for French pirates. In 1524, the French king sent Italian Giovanni da Verrazano westward across the Atlantic. Upon sighting land (probably at Cape Fear, North Carolina), Verrazano ranged along the coast as far north as Maine. On a second voyage, in 1528, he was killed by Carib Indians.

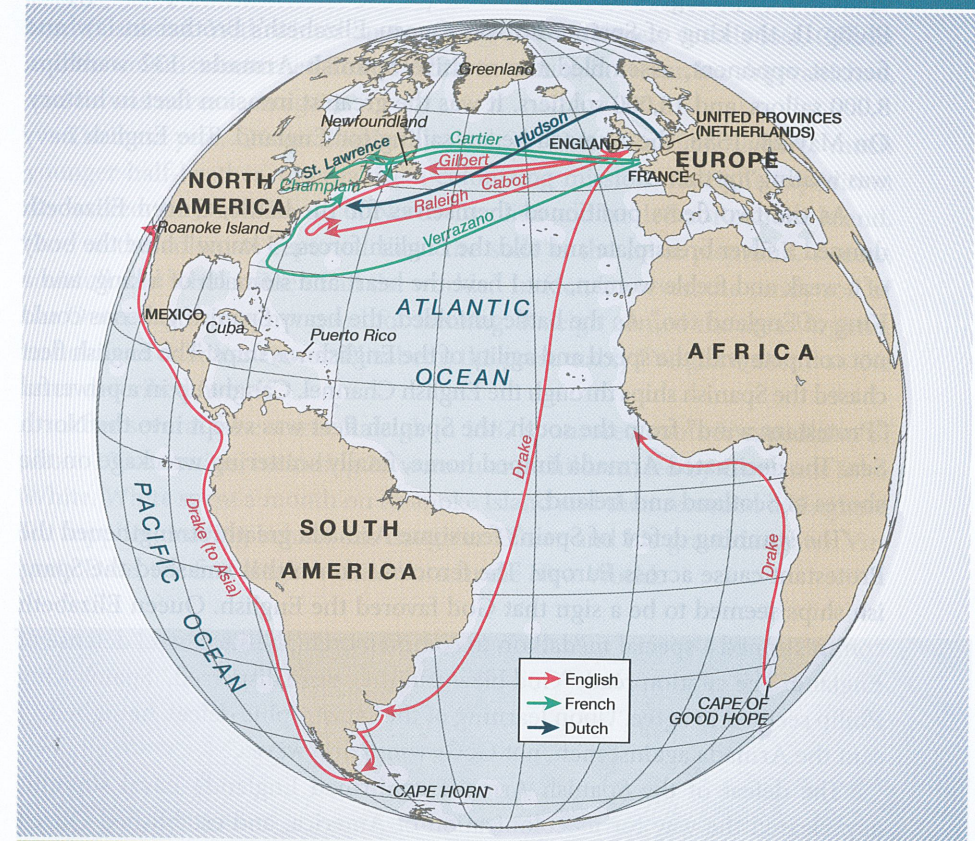
NEW FRANCE Unlike the Verrazano voyages, those of Jacques Cartier, beginning in the next decade, led to the first French effort at colonization in North America. During three voyages, Cartier explored the Gulf of St. Lawrence and ventured up the St. Lawrence River, now the boundary between Canada and New York. Twice he got as far as present-day Montreal, and twice he wintered at the site of Quebec, near which a short-lived French colony appeared in 1541–1542.

France after midcentury, however, plunged into religious civil wars, and the colonization of Canada had to await the coming of Samuel de Champlain, “the Father of New France,” after 1600. Champlain would lead twenty-seven expeditions from France to Canada during a thirty-seven-year period.

THE DUTCH REVOLT From the mid-1500s, greater threats to Spanish power in the New World arose from the Dutch and the English. In 1566, the Netherlands included seventeen provinces. The fragmented nation had passed by inheritance to the Spanish king in 1555, but the Dutch spurned Catholicism and had become largely Protestant (mostly Calvinists making up what was called the Dutch Reformed Church). During the second half of the sixteenth century, the Dutch began a series of sporadic rebellions against Spanish Catholic rule.

A long, bloody struggle for political independence and religious freedom ensued in which Protestant England aided the Dutch. The Dutch revolt, as much a civil war as a war for national independence, was not a single cohesive event but rather a series of different uprisings in different provinces at different times. Each province had its own institutions, laws, and rights. Although seven provinces joined together to form the Dutch Republic, the Spanish did not officially recognize the independence of the entire Netherlands until 1648.

ENGLISH, FRENCH, AND DUTCH EXPLORATIONS



- Who were the first European explorers to rival Spanish dominance in the New World, and why did they cross the Atlantic?
- Why was the defeat of the Spanish Armada important to the history of English exploration?
- What was the significance of the voyages of Gilbert and Raleigh?

THE DEFEAT OF THE ARMADA Almost from the beginning of the Protestant revolt in the Netherlands, the Dutch captured Spanish treasure ships in the Atlantic and carried on illegal trade with Spain's colonies. While England's strong, skillful Queen Elizabeth steered a tortuous course to avoid open war with Spain, she encouraged both Dutch and English privateers to attack Spanish ships and their colonies in America.

The English raids on Spanish ships continued for some twenty years before open war erupted between the two nations. Determined to conquer England, Philip II, the king of Spain who was Queen Elizabeth's brother-in-law and fiercest opponent, assembled the massive **Spanish Armada**: 132 warships, 8,000 sailors, and 18,000 soldiers. It was the greatest invasion fleet in history. On May 28, 1588, the Armada began sailing for England. The English navy was waiting for them.

As the two fleets positioned themselves for the battle, Queen Elizabeth donned a silver breastplate and told the English forces, "I know I have the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and a King of England too." As the battle unfolded, the heavy Spanish galleons could not compete with the speed and agility of the English warships. The English fleet chased the Spanish ships through the English Channel. Caught up in a powerful "Protestant wind" from the south, the Spanish fleet was swept into the North Sea. The decimated Armada limped home, finally scattering wreckage on the shores of Scotland and Ireland.

The stunning defeat of Spain's fearsome Armada greatly strengthened the Protestant cause across Europe. The ferocious storm that smashed the Spanish ships seemed to be a sign that God favored the English. Queen Elizabeth commissioned a special medallion to commemorate the successful defense of England. The citation read, "God blew and they were dispersed." Spain's King Philip seemed to agree. Upon learning of the catastrophic defeat, he sighed, "I sent the Armada against men, not God's winds and waves."

The defeat of the Spanish Armada confirmed England's naval supremacy, cleared the way for its colonization of America, and established Queen Elizabeth's stature as a great ruler. Although she had many suitors eager to marry her, she refused to divide her power. She would have "but one mistress [England] and no master." Eager to live and die a virgin, she married herself to the fate of England. By the end of the sixteenth century, Elizabethan England had begun an epic transformation from a poor, humiliated, and isolated nation into a mighty global empire.

ENGLISH EXPLORATION OF AMERICA

English efforts to colonize America began a few years before the great battle with the Spanish Armada. They were driven by a desire to weaken Spain's control over the Americas. In 1578, Queen Elizabeth had given Sir Humphrey Gilbert permission to establish a colony in the "remote heathen and barbarous lands" of America.

Gilbert's group set out in 1583, intending to settle near Narragansett Bay (in present-day Rhode Island). They instead landed in fogbound Newfoundland (Canada). With winter approaching and his largest vessels lost, Gilbert and the colonists returned home. While in transit, however, his ship vanished, and he was never seen again.

The next year, Queen Elizabeth asked Sir Walter Raleigh, Gilbert's much younger half-brother, to organize a colonizing mission. Raleigh's expedition discovered the Outer Banks of North Carolina and landed at Roanoke Island. One of the colonists reported that "the soile is the most plentifull, sweete, fruitfull and wholesome of all the worlde." In fact, however, the sandy soil of the Outer Banks was not good for farming. Raleigh named the area Virginia, in honor of childless Queen Elizabeth, the presumably "Virgin Queen," as she once described herself.

After several false starts, Raleigh in 1587 sponsored another expedition of about 100 colonists, including 26 women and children, led by Governor John White. White spent a month on Roanoke Island and then returned to England for supplies, leaving behind his daughter Elinor and his granddaughter Virginia Dare, the first English child born in the New World.



The English in Virginia The arrival of English explorers on the Outer Banks, with Roanoke Island at left.

White's journey back to Virginia was delayed because of the naval war with Spain. When he finally returned, in 1590, the Roanoke outpost had been abandoned and pillaged, much of it having been burned by a lightning-ignited fire. The rude cabins had been dismantled and removed, suggesting that the colonists had left intentionally. On a post at the entrance to the village, someone had carved the word "CROATOAN," leading White to conclude that the settlers had set out for the island of that name some 50 miles south, where friendly Indians lived.

The "lost colonists" were never found. They may have been killed by Indians or Spaniards. The most recent evidence indicates that the "Lost Colony" suffered from a horrible drought that prevented the colonists from growing enough food to survive. While some may have gone south, the main body of colonists appears to have gone north, to the southern shores of Chesapeake Bay, as they had talked of doing, and lived there for some years until they were killed by local Indians.

There were no English colonists in North America when Queen Elizabeth died in 1603. The Spanish controlled the only colonial outposts on the continent. But that was about to change. Inspired by the success of the Spanish in exploiting the New World, and emboldened by their defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588, the English—as well as the French and the Dutch—would soon develop American colonial empires of their own.

NEW SPAIN IN DECLINE

During the one and a half centuries after 1492, the Spanish developed the most extensive, rich, and envied empire the world had ever known. It spanned southern Europe and the Netherlands, much of the Western Hemisphere, and parts of Asia.

The monarchy financed its imperial ambitions with riches looted from the Americas. Between 1545 and 1660, the Spanish forced Native Americans and Africans to mine 7 million pounds of silver in the New World, twice as much silver as existed in all of Europe in 1492. The massive amounts of silver and gold from the New World led Spanish kings to mobilize huge armies and the naval armada in an effort to conquer all of Protestant Europe.

Yet the Spanish rulers overreached themselves. The widespread religious wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries killed millions, created intense anti-Spanish feelings among the English and the Dutch, and eventually helped bankrupt the Spanish government. At the same time, the Spanish Empire grew so vast that its sprawling size and complexity eventually led to its disintegration.

During the sixteenth century, New Spain gradually developed into a settled society with the same rigid class structure of the home country. From the

outset, the Spanish in the Americas behaved more like occupying rulers than permanent settlers, carefully regulating every detail of colonial administration and life.

New Spain was an extractive empire, less interested in creating self-sustaining colonial communities than in taking gold, silver, and copper while enslaving the indigenous peoples and converting them to Christianity. Spain never encouraged vast numbers of settlers to populate New Spain, and, with few exceptions, those who did travel to the New World rarely wanted to make a living off the land; they instead wanted to live off the labor of the native population.

For three centuries after Columbus arrived in the New World, the Spanish explorers, conquistadores, and priests imposed Catholicism on the native peoples as well as a cruel system of economic exploitation and dependence. That system created terrible disparities in wealth, education, and opportunity that would trigger repeated revolts and political instability. As Bartolomé de Las Casas concluded, "The Spaniards have shown not the slightest consideration for these people, treating them (and I speak from first-hand experience, having been there from the outset) . . . as piles of dung in the middle of the road. They have had as little concern for their souls as for their bodies."

CHAPTER REVIEW

SUMMARY

- **Native American Societies** Hunter-gatherers came across the Bering Strait by foot and settled the length and breadth of the Americas, forming groups with diverse cultures, languages, and lifestyles. Global warming enabled an agricultural revolution, particularly of *maize*, that allowed former hunter-gather peoples to settle and build empires, such as that of the *Mexica*, whose *Aztec Empire* included subjugated peoples and a vast system of trade and tribute. Some North American peoples developed an elaborate continental trading network and impressive cities like *Cahokia*; their *burial mounds* reveal a complex and stratified social organization. The *Eastern Woodlands peoples* that the Europeans would first encounter included both patriarchal and matriarchal societies as well as extensive language-based alliances. The Algonquian, Iroquoian, and Muskogean were among the major Indian nations. Warfare was an important cultural component, leading to shifting rivalries and alliances among tribes and with European settlers.
- **Age of Exploration** By the 1490s, Europeans were experiencing a renewed curiosity about the world. Warfare, plagues, and famine undermined the old agricultural feudal system in Europe, and in its place arose a middle class that monarchs could tax. Powerful new nations replaced the land estates and cities ruled by princes. Scientific and technological advances led to the creation of better maps and navigation techniques, as well as new weapons and ships. Navies became the critical component of global trade and world power. When the Spanish began to colonize the New World, the conversion of Indians to Roman Catholicism was important, but the search for gold and silver was primary. The rivalries of the *Protestant Reformation* in Europe shaped the course of conquest in the Americas.
- **Conquering and Colonizing the Americas** Spanish *conquistadores* such as Hernán Cortés were able to exploit their advantages in military technology, including steel, gunpowder, and domesticated animals such as the horse, in order to conquer the powerful Aztec and Inca Empires. European diseases, first introduced by Columbus, did even more to ensure Spanish victories. The Spanish *encomienda* system demanded goods and labor from their new subjects. As the Indian population declined, the Spanish began to import enslaved Africans.
- **Columbian Exchange** Contact between the Old World and the New resulted in the *Columbian Exchange*, sometimes called the Great Biological Exchange. Crops such as *maize*, beans, and potatoes became staples in the Old World. Native peoples incorporated into their culture such Eurasian animals as the horse and pig. But the invaders also carried *infectious diseases* that set off pandemics of smallpox, plague, and other illnesses to which Indians had no immunity. The Americas were depopulated and cultures destroyed.

- **Spanish Legacy** Spain left a lasting legacy in the borderlands from California to Florida. Catholic missionaries contributed to the destruction of the old ways of life by exterminating “heather” beliefs in the Southwest, a practice that led to open rebellion in *New Mexico* in 1598 and 1680. Spain’s rival European nation-states began competing for gold and glory in the New World. England’s defeat of the *Spanish Armada* cleared the path for English dominance in North America.

CHRONOLOGY

by 12,000 B.C.E.	Humans have migrated to the Americas
5000 B.C.E.	Agricultural revolution begins in Mexico
1050–1250 C.E.	The city of Cahokia flourishes in North America
1325	Mexica (Aztec) Empire founded in Central Mexico
1492	Columbus makes his first voyage of discovery in the Americas
1503	Spaniards bring first African slaves to the Americas
1517	Martin Luther launches the Protestant Reformation
1519	Cortés begins the Spanish conquest of Mexico
1531	Pizarro subdues the Inca Empire in South America for Spain
1565	Spaniards found St. Augustine, the first permanent European outpost in the present-day United States
1584–1587	Raleigh’s Roanoke Island venture
1588	The English navy defeats the Spanish Armada
1680	Pueblo Revolt

KEY TERMS

maize p. 8	Protestant Reformation p. 25
Mexica p. 9	conquistadores p. 30
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