

Chapter

1

New World Beginnings: 33,000 BCE–1680 CE

The supreme god, Yi-Na-yes-gon-I, directed the people westward. As they journeyed, small parties became separated and settled by the wayside. These were given different names and languages.

Apache Origin Tale, N.D.*

I have come to believe that this is a mighty continent which was hitherto unknown . . . Your Highnesses have an Other World here.

Christopher Columbus, 1498

Chapter Outline

- The geology of the Americas
- Native Americans before Columbus
- Europe's widening world
- Columbus and the early explorers
- The Columbian Exchange
- Spain's New World empire
- The legacy of Spanish conquest

Examining the Evidence:
Making Sense of the New World

Contending Voices: Europeans and Native Americans

Makers of America: The Spanish Conquistadores

Several billion years ago, that whirling speck of cosmic dust known as Earth, fifth in size among the planets, came into being.

About sixteen thousand years ago—a short time ago, geologically speaking—the first humans settled the North American continent. Twelve thousand years later, the recorded history of the Western world began, as some Middle Eastern societies began developing the first systems of writing around 3500 BCE.

A mere five hundred years ago, European explorers stumbled on the Americas. This dramatic accident forever altered the future of both the Old World and the New, and of Africa and Asia as well (refer to Figure 1.1).

Focus Questions

1. What geological, geographical, and climatic conditions set the stage for human history in America?
2. What were the primary features of the diverse Native American cultures of the Americas, and how did those features change over time?
3. What developments in European and global history paved the way for Columbus's voyage and the subsequent collision of "two worlds"?
4. How did the mutual interaction of Native Americans, Europeans, and Africans shape a genuinely new biological, cultural, and economic world in the Americas?
5. How did Spain's conquest of the great Native American civilizations of Mexico and South America shape the essential features of its vast New World empire?

*Frank Russell, "Myths of the Jicarilla Apaches," *Journal of American Folklore* 11, no. 43 (1898). 255.

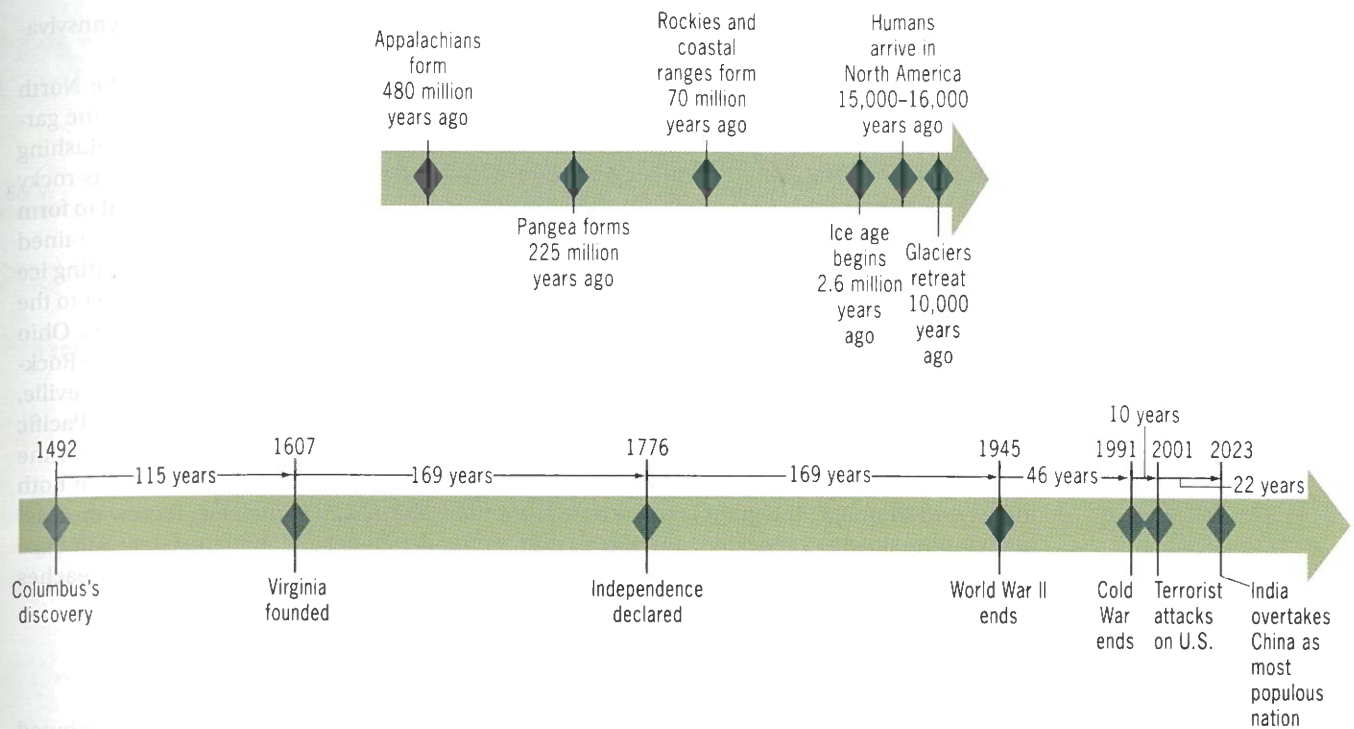


Figure 1.1 The Arc of Time

1-1 The Shaping of North America

Planet Earth took on its present form slowly. Some 225 million years ago, a single supercontinent, called Pangea by geologists, contained all the world's dry land. Then enormous chunks of terrain began to drift away from this colossal landmass, opening the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, narrowing the Pacific Ocean, and forming the great continents of Eurasia, Africa, Australia, Antarctica, and the Americas. That today's continents separated from a single supercontinent has been proved in part by the discovery of nearly identical species of fish that swim today in long-separated freshwater lakes throughout the world.

Continued shifting and folding of Earth's crust thrust up mountain ranges, while volcanic activity added new topography to the land. The Appalachians were probably formed even before continental separation, perhaps as many as 480 million years ago. The majestic ranges of western North America—the Rockies, the Sierra Nevada, the Cascades, and the Coast Ranges—arose much more recently, beginning some 70 million years ago. They are truly “American” mountains, born after the continent took on its own separate geological identity.

By about 10 million years ago, nature had sculpted the basic geological shape of North America. The continent was geologically anchored in its northeastern corner by the massive **Canadian Shield**—a sheet of ancient rock, probably the first part of what became the North American landmass to have emerged above sea level. A narrow eastern coastal plain, or “tidewater” region, creased by many river valleys, sloped gently upward to the timeworn ridges of the Appalachians. Those ancient mountains slanted away on their western side into the huge midcontinental basin that rolled downward to the Mississippi Valley bottom and then rose relentlessly to the towering peaks of the Rockies. From the Rocky Mountain crest—the “roof of America”—the land fell off jaggedly into the intermountain Great Basin, bounded by the Rockies on the east and the Sierra and Cascade ranges on the west. The valleys of the Sacramento, San Joaquin, and Columbia-Snake Rivers and the Willamette-Puget Sound trough seamed the interiors of present-day California, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington. The land at last met the foaming Pacific, where the Coast Ranges rose steeply from the sea.

Nature laid a chill hand over much of this terrain in the most recent Ice Age, beginning about 2.6 million years ago. Ice sheets up to two miles thick crept from the polar regions to blanket parts of Europe, Asia, and the Americas. In North America the great glaciers carpeted most of

nia through the Ohio Country and the Dakotas to the Pacific Northwest.

When the glaciers finally retreated about ten thousand years ago, they left the North American landscape transformed, looking much as we know it today. The weight of the gargantuan ice mantle had depressed the level of the Canadian Shield. The grinding and flushing action of the moving and melting ice had scoured away the shield's topsoil, pitting its rocky surface with thousands of shallow depressions into which the melting glaciers flowed to form lakes. The same glacial action scooped out and filled the Great Lakes. They originally drained southward through the Mississippi River system to the Gulf of Mexico. When the melting ice unblocked the Gulf of St. Lawrence, the lake water sought the St. Lawrence River outlet to the Atlantic Ocean, lowering the Great Lakes' level and leaving the Missouri-Mississippi-Ohio system to drain the enormous midcontinental basin between the Appalachians and the Rockies. Similarly, in the West, water from the melting glaciers filled sprawling Lake Bonneville, covering much of present-day Utah, Nevada, and Idaho. It eventually drained to the Pacific Ocean through the Snake and Columbia River systems until diminishing rainfall from the ebbing ice cap lowered the water level, cutting off the Snake River outlet. Deprived of both inflow and drainage, the giant lake became a gradually shrinking inland sea. It grew increasingly saline, slowly evaporated, and left an arid, mineral-rich desert. Only the Great Salt Lake remains as a relic of Bonneville's former vastness. Today Lake Bonneville's ancient beaches are visible on mountainsides up to 1,000 feet above the dry floor of the Great Basin.

1-2 Peopling the Americas

The Great Ice Age shaped more than the geological history of North America. It also contributed to the origins of the continent's human history. Recent archaeological discoveries suggest that some early peoples may have reached the Americas in crude coast-hugging boats as long as thirty thousand years ago. But most migrants probably came by land. Some 35,000 years ago, a glacial advance congealed a significant portion of the world's oceans into massive ice-pack glaciers, lowering the level of the sea. As the sea level dropped, it exposed a land bridge connecting Eurasia with North America in the area of the present-day Bering Sea between Siberia and Alaska. Across that bridge, probably following migratory herds of game, ventured small bands of nomadic Asian hunters—the "immigrant" ancestors of the Native Americans. The first of these land-trekking newcomers likely headed into the Americas fifteen thousand to sixteen thousand years ago. From the Alaskan region they moved southward, slowly peopling the American continents (refer to Map 1.1). As the Ice Age ended and the glaciers melted, the sea level rose again, inundating the land bridge about ten thousand years ago. Nature thus barred the door to further immigration for many thousands of years, leaving this part of the human family marooned for millennia in relative isolation on the American continents.

Time did not stand still for these original Americans. The same climatic warming that melted the ice and drowned the bridge to Eurasia gradually opened ice-free valleys through which vanguard bands groped their way southward and eastward across the Americas. Roaming slowly through this awesome wilderness, they eventually reached the far tip of South America, some fifteen thousand miles from Siberia. By the time Europeans arrived in America in 1492, perhaps 54 million people inhabited the two American continents.* Over the centuries they split into countless groups, evolved more than two thousand separate languages, and developed many diverse religions, cultures, and ways of life.

Incas in Peru, **Mayans** in Central America, and **Aztecs** in Mexico shaped stunningly sophisticated civilizations. Their advanced agricultural practices, based primarily on the cultivation of maize, which is Indian corn, fed large populations, perhaps as many as 20 million in Mexico alone. Although without large draft animals such as horses and oxen, and lacking even the simple technology of the wheel, these peoples built elaborate cities and carried on far-flung commerce. Talented mathematicians, they made strikingly accurate astronomical observations. The Aztecs also routinely sought the favor of their gods by offering human sacrifices, cutting the hearts out of the chests of living victims, who were often captives conquered in battle. By some accounts more than five thousand people were ritually slaughtered to celebrate the crowning of one Aztec chieftain.

*Much controversy surrounds estimates of the pre-Columbian Native American population. The figures here are from William M. Denevan, ed., *The Native Population of the Americas in 1492*, rev. ed. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992).



Map 1.1 The First Discoverers of America The precise origins of the first Americans remain something of a mystery. This map shows possible routes of migration from Asia. The newcomers gradually dispersed southward down ice-free valleys, populating both the American continents.

1-3 The Earliest Americans

Native American societies were as diverse as the jungles, deserts, mountains, and plains of the North American continent they inhabited. They included urban dwellers in the teeming valley of central Mexico; nomadic hunter-gatherers in subarctic Canada; maritime seafarers in the Pacific Northwest; and farming villagers in the Southeast. From powerful empires of millions to itinerant bands no larger than an extended family, each Native American culture had its distinct history, traditions, rivalries, and economies long before the first Europeans set foot upon the continent.

Making Sense of the New World

This map from 1546 by Sebastian Münster represents one of the earliest efforts to make geographic sense out of the New World (*Nouus Orbis* and *Die Nüw Welt* on the map). The very phrase *New World* suggests just how staggering a blow to the European imagination was the discovery of the Americas. Europeans reached instinctively for the most expansive of all possible terms—*world*, not simply *places*, or even *continents*—to comprehend Columbus's startling report that lands and peoples previously unimagined lay beyond the horizon of Europe's western sea.

Gradually, the immense implications of the New World's existence began to impress themselves on Europe, with consequences for literature, art, politics, the economy, and, of course, cartography. Maps can only be *representations*

of reality and are therefore necessarily distortions. This map bears a recognizable resemblance to modern map-makers' renderings of the American continents, but it also contains gross geographic inaccuracies (note the location of Japan—*Zipangri*—relative to the North American west coast) as well as telling commentaries on what sixteenth-century Europeans found remarkable (note the Land of Giants—*Regio Gigantum*—and the indication of cannibals—*Canibali*—in present-day Argentina and Brazil, respectively). What further clues to the European mentality of the time does the map offer? In what ways might misconceptions about the geography of the Americas have influenced further exploration and settlement patterns?



The most densely populated Native American societies, in Mexico and South America, relied on large-scale agriculture, particularly corn-growing. By at least 5000 BCE, hunter-gatherers in high-land Mexico developed a wild grass into the staple crop of maize. It became their staff of life and the foundation of the complex, centralized Aztec and Incan civilizations that eventually emerged. Cultivation of corn spread across the Americas from the Mexican heartland (refer to Image 1.2).

Corn-planting reached the present-day American Southwest as early as 2000 BCE. The Pueblo peoples in the Rio Grande Valley eventually constructed intricate irrigation systems to water their cornfields. They were dwelling in villages of multistoried, terraced buildings when Spanish explorers encountered them in the sixteenth century. (*Pueblo* means “village” in Spanish.)

Corn cultivation reached other parts of North America considerably later. The timing of its arrival in different localities explains much about how different Native American societies evolved (refer to Map 1.2). Throughout the continent to the north and east of the land of the Pueblos, Native American settlements tended to be smaller and less dependent on planted crops. Some Native Americans fished and whaled; some hunted deer and buffalo and trapped small mammals; others supplemented their maize harvests by digging for shellfish and gathering acorns, wild rice, berries, roots, and wild plants. No dense concentrations of population or complex **nation-states** comparable to the Aztec empire existed in North America outside of Mexico at the time of the Europeans’ arrival. Instead, a variety of leagues, confederations, and chiefdoms created a patchwork of large and small communities.

Native American civilizations rose and fell in the many millennia before Europeans reached North America. The Anasazis (the Navajo word for “ancient ones”) built impressive cliff-dwellings throughout the present-day Southwest, including an elaborate structure of more than six hundred interconnected rooms at Chaco Canyon in modern-day New Mexico. But mysteriously, perhaps due to prolonged drought, those ancient cultures fell into decline by about 1300 CE. The Mound Builders of the Ohio River Valley constructed enormous earthen monuments, which served at once as temples, town squares, and burial sites. The Mississippian settlement at **Cahokia** (refer to Image 1.3), near present-day East St. Louis, was at one time home to as many as twenty-five thousand people and the center of a vast trading network that stretched across the South and lower Midwest. Its central mound rose to a height of one hundred feet and covered sixteen acres at its base. Mississippian settlements, including Cahokia, began to disappear between 1100 CE and 1300 CE, possibly devastated by flooding caused by climate change and deforestation.

The cultivation of maize, as well as of high-yielding strains of beans and squash, reached the southeastern Atlantic seaboard region of North America about 1000 CE. These plants made possible **three-sister farming**, with beans growing on the trellis of the cornstalks and squash covering the planting mounds to retain moisture in the soil. The rich diet provided by this environmentally clever farming technique produced some of the highest population densities on the continent, among them the Creek, Choctaw, and Cherokee peoples—likely descendants of the scattered Mississippians.

In the northeastern woodlands, the Haudenosaunee League, known to their enemies as the Iroquois, inspired by a legendary leader named Hiawatha, had created perhaps the closest North American approximation to the great empires of Mexico and Peru. The Iroquois Confederacy developed the political and organizational skills to sustain a robust military alliance that menaced its neighbors, Native American and European alike, for centuries (refer to “Makers of America: The Haudenosaunee (Iroquois),” Section 2-12, pp. 42–43).

The Iroquois relied heavily on agriculture to feed themselves, as did their Huron rivals in the Great Lakes region; the Pueblo peoples of the Southwest; and the Creek, Cherokee, and other Native American groups of the Southeast. These Native Americans lived in stable, permanent villages, but elsewhere on the continent, more nomadic ways of life prevailed. In parts of present-day Canada and the Great Plains, many Native American groups roamed in search of game, fish, and the iconic buffalo. In the northeast, some Native Americans maintained summer and winter villages, moving between them as the seasons changed. In more settled agricultural groups, women tended the crops while men hunted, fished, gathered fuel, and cleared fields for planting. This pattern of life frequently conferred substantial authority on women, and many North American Native peoples, including the Iroquois, developed matrilineal cultures in which power and possessions passed down the female side of the family line. Trade between Native groups spread exotic goods to the far corners of the continent: shells, shark and alligator teeth, copper, silver, furs, obsidian, mica, and pottery.

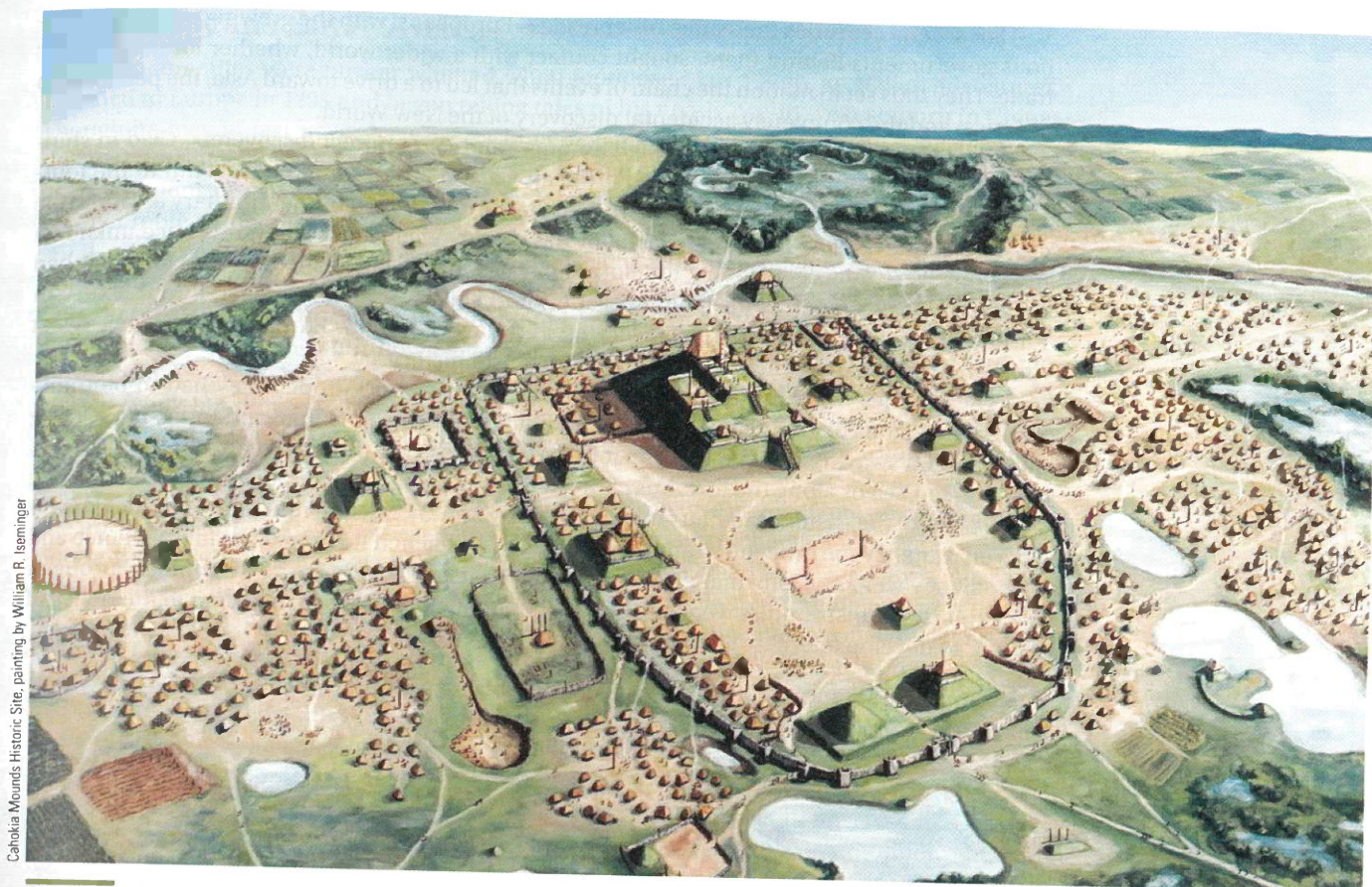


Image 1.2 Corn Culture

This statue of a corn goddess from the Moche culture of present-day coastal Peru, made between 200 and 600 BCE, vividly illustrates the centrality of corn to Native American peoples a thousand years before the rise of the great Incan and Aztec empires that the Europeans later encountered.



Map 1.2 Native North Americans ca. 1500 This map depicts the location of various Native American peoples when Europeans began arriving in North America. Initial contacts between Native Americans and Europeans took place between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries, as both populations moved dynamically over the continent, thereby varying when their paths crossed. This map contains only a crude approximation of the "original" territory of any particular Native American people, unable to capture the fluidity of Native American life. For example, the Navajo and Apache peoples had migrated from present-day northern Canada only shortly before the Spanish first encountered them in the present-day American Southwest in the 1500s. The Indigenous populations of the southeastern and mid-Atlantic regions are especially difficult to represent accurately in a map like this because intertribal conflicts by 1500 had so scrambled the Native inhabitants that it is virtually impossible to determine which groups were originally where.



Cahokia Mounds Historic Site, painting by William R. Iseninger

Image 1.3 Cahokia Houses and mounds dot the landscape in an artist's rendering of ancient Cahokia ca. 1150. Its population at that time is estimated to have been twenty thousand, exceeding contemporary London's and rivaling that of the Incan capital of Cuzco, yet far smaller than the giant Mesoamerican complex at Teotihuacan, which may have numbered over 100,000 souls.

Many Native cultures expressed strong reverence for the natural environment through their religions and oral traditions, often endowing the physical world with spiritual properties. Yet, like humans everywhere, they also manipulated and sometimes dramatically altered their worlds. Many used fire as a tool, deliberately torching thousands of acres of trees to create better hunting habitats, especially for deer. This practice accounted for the open, parklike appearance of the eastern woodlands that so amazed early European explorers. The Mayans of Central America also deforested their land, inadvertently exacerbating the damage from a prolonged drought in the ninth century CE, forcing them to abandon cities that had housed tens of thousands of residents.

But in a broad sense, the land did not feel the hand of the Native Americans heavy upon it, partly because they were so few in number. They were so thinly spread across the continent that vast areas were virtually untouched by a human presence. In the fateful year 1492, perhaps 10 million Native Americans padded through the whispering, primeval forests and paddled across the sparkling waters of the continent north of Mexico. Little did they realize that the historic isolation of the Americas was about to end forever, as the land and the Native peoples alike felt the full shock of the European "discovery."

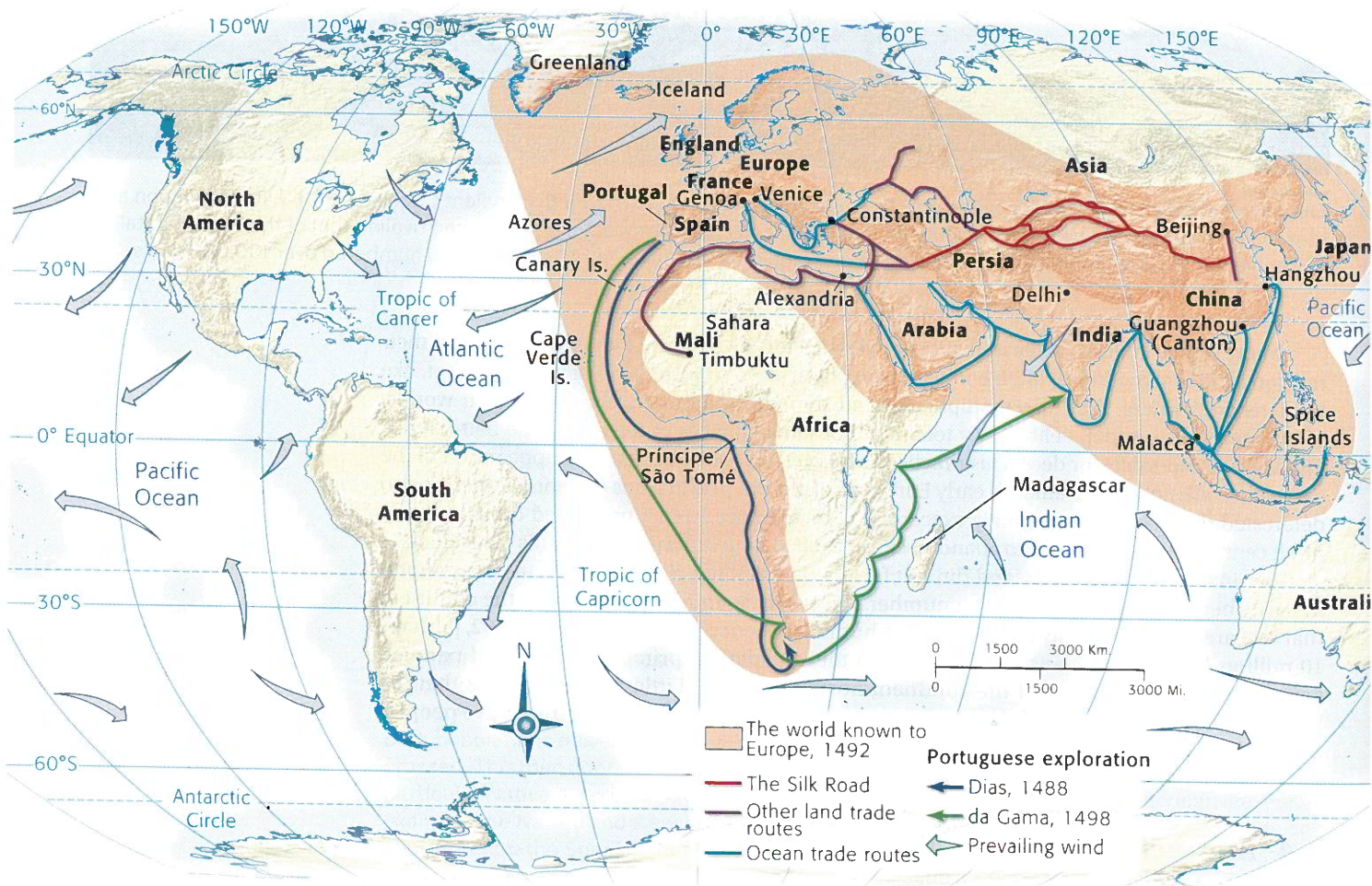
1-4 Indirect Discoverers of the New World

Europeans, for their part, were equally unaware of the existence of the Americas. Blond-bearded Norse seafarers from Scandinavia had chanced upon the northeastern shoulder of North America about 1000 CE. They landed at a place near L'Anse aux Meadows in present-day Newfoundland that abounded in wild grapes, which led them to name the spot Vinland. But no strong nation-state, yearning to expand, supported these venturesome voyagers. Their flimsy settlements consequently were soon abandoned, and their discovery was forgotten, except in Scandinavian saga and song.

For several centuries thereafter, other restless Europeans, with the growing power of ambitious governments behind them, sought contact with a wider world, whether for conquest or trade. They thus set in motion the chain of events that led to a drive toward Asia, the penetration of Africa, and the completely accidental discovery of the New World.

Christian crusaders must rank high among America's indirect discoverers. Clad in shining armor, tens of thousands of these European warriors tried from the eleventh to the fourteenth centuries to wrest Jerusalem from Muslim control. Foiled in their military assaults, the crusaders nevertheless acquired a taste for the exotic delights of Asia. Goods once unknown in Europe were now craved—silk for clothing, drugs for aching flesh, perfumes for unbathed bodies, colorful draperies for gloomy castles, and spices (especially sugar, a rare luxury in Europe before the crusades) for preserving and flavoring food. Europe's developing sweet tooth would have momentous implications for world history.

The luxuries of the East were prohibitively expensive in Europe. They had to be transported enormous distances from the Spice Islands (Indonesia), China, and India, in creaking ships and on swaying camel back. The journey led across the Indian Ocean, the Persian Gulf, and the Red Sea or along the tortuous caravan routes of Asia or the Arabian Peninsula, ending at the ports of the eastern Mediterranean (refer to Map 1.3). Muslim middlemen exacted heavy tolls en route. By the time the strange-smelling goods reached Italian merchants at Venice and Genoa, they were so costly that purchasers and profits alike were narrowly limited. European consumers and distributors were naturally eager to find a less expensive route to the riches of Asia or to develop alternate sources of supply.



Map 1.3 The World Known to Europe and Major Trade Routes with Asia, 1492 Goods on the early routes passed through so many hands along the way that their ultimate source remained mysterious to Europeans.

1-5 Europeans Enter Africa

European appetites were further whetted when footloose Marco Polo, an Italian adventurer, returned to Europe in 1295 and began telling tales of his nearly twenty-year sojourn in China. Though he may in fact never have seen China (legend to the contrary, the hard evidence is sketchy), he must be regarded as an indirect discoverer of the New World, for his book, with its descriptions of rose-tinted pearls and golden pagodas, stimulated European desires for a cheaper route to the treasures of the East.

These accumulating pressures eventually brought a breakthrough for European expansion. Before the middle of the fifteenth century, European sailors refused to sail southward along the coast of West Africa because they could not beat their way home against the prevailing northerly winds and south-flowing currents. About 1450, Portuguese mariners overcame those obstacles. Not only had they developed the **caravel**, a ship that could sail more closely into the wind, but they had discovered that they could return to Europe by sailing northwest-erly from the African coast toward the Azores, where the prevailing westward breezes would carry them home.

The new world of sub-Saharan Africa now came within the grasp of questing Europeans. The northern shore of Africa, as part of the Mediterranean world, had been known to Europe since antiquity. But because sea travel down the African coast had been virtually impossible, Africa south of the forbidding Sahara Desert barrier had remained remote and mysterious. African gold, perhaps two-thirds of Europe's supply, crossed the Sahara on camelback, and shadowy tales may have reached Europe about the flourishing West African kingdom of Mali in the Niger River valley, with its impressive Islamic university at Timbuktu. But Europeans had no direct access to sub-Saharan Africa until the Portuguese navigators began to creep down the West African coast in the middle of the fifteenth century.

The Portuguese promptly set up trading posts along the African shore for the purchase of gold—and enslaved people. Arab flesh merchants and Africans themselves had traded enslaved peoples for centuries before the Europeans arrived. The slavers routinely charged higher prices for captives from distant sources because they could not easily flee to their native villages or be rescued by their kin. Slave brokers also deliberately separated persons from the same tribes and mixed unlike people together to frustrate organized resistance. Thus, from its earliest days, slavery by its very nature disrupted African communities and inhibited the expression of regional African cultures and tribal identities.

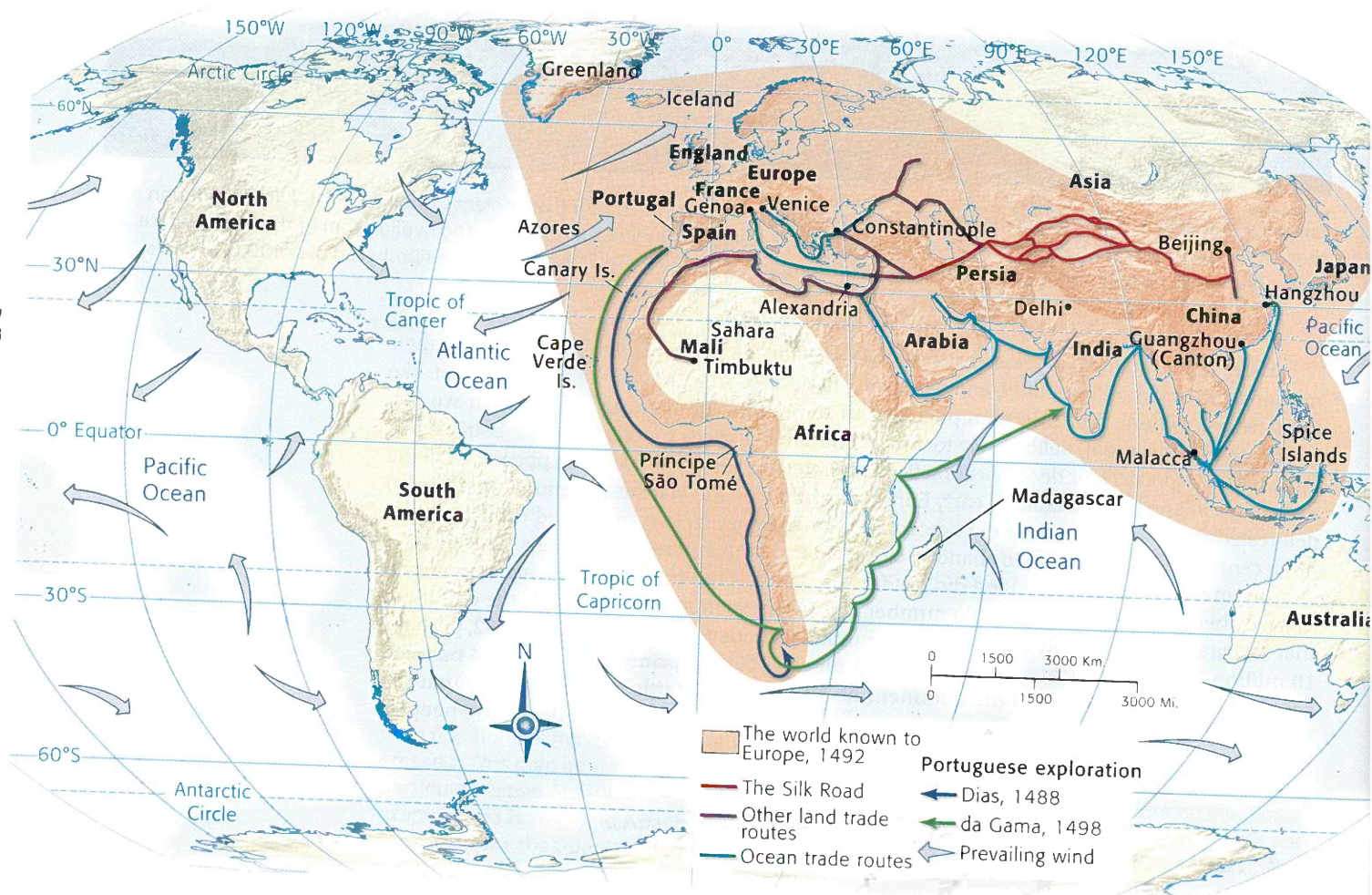
The Portuguese adopted these Arab and African practices. They built up their own systematic traffic in enslaved people to work the sugar plantations that Portugal, and later Spain, established on the African coastal islands of Madeira, the Canaries, São Tomé, and Príncipe. The enormous Portuguese appetite for enslaved people dwarfed the modest scale of the pre-European traffic. Slave trading became a big business. Some forty thousand Africans were carried away to the Atlantic sugar islands in the last half of the fifteenth century. Millions more were to be wrenched from their home continent after the discovery of the Americas (refer to Images 1.4A and B). In these fifteenth-century Portuguese experiments in Africa were to be found the origins of the modern **plantation** system, based on large-scale commercial agriculture and the wholesale exploitation of slave labor. This brutal system would create the wealth of much of the New World.

The seafaring Portuguese pushed still farther southward in search of the water route to Asia. Edging cautiously down the African coast, Bartholomeu Dias rounded the southernmost tip of the "Dark Continent" in 1488. Ten years later Vasco da Gama finally reached India (hence the name "Indies," given by Europeans to all the mysterious lands of the Orient) and returned home with a small but tantalizing cargo of jewels and spices.

Meanwhile, the kingdom of Spain became united in the late fifteenth century—an event pregnant with destiny. This new unity resulted primarily from the marriage of two sovereigns, Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile, and from the brutal expulsion of the "infidel" Muslim Moors from Spain after centuries of Christian-Islamic warfare. Glorifying in their sudden strength, the Spaniards were eager to outstrip their Portuguese rivals in the race to tap the wealth of the Indies. To the south and east, Portugal controlled the African coast and thus the gateway to the round-Africa water route to India. Of necessity, therefore, Spain looked westward.

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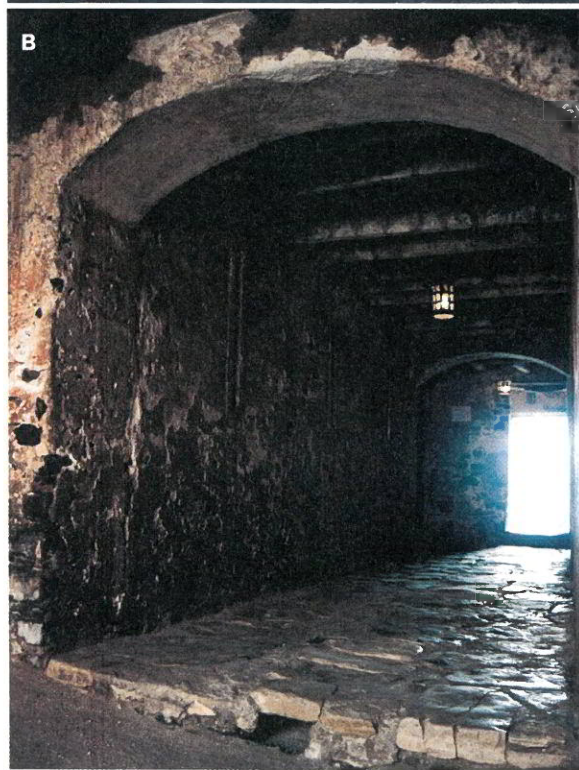


Image 1.4A and B Gorée Island Slave Fortress From this holding station off the coast of Senegal (1.4A), thousands of African captives passed through the “Door of No Return” (1.4B) into a lifetime of slavery in the New World.

1-6 Columbus Comes upon a New World

The stage was now set for a cataclysmic shift in the course of history—the history not only of Europe but of all the world. Europeans clamored for more and cheaper products from the lands beyond the Mediterranean. Africa had been established as a source of abundant slave labor for plantation agriculture. The Portuguese voyages had demonstrated the feasibility of long-range ocean navigation. In Spain a modern national state was taking shape, with the unity, wealth, and power to shoulder the formidable tasks of discovery, conquest, and colonization. The dawn of the Renaissance in the fourteenth century nurtured an ambitious spirit of optimism and adventure. Printing presses, introduced about 1450, facilitated the spread of scientific knowledge. The mariner’s compass, possibly borrowed from the Arab people, eliminated some of the uncertainties of sea travel. Meanwhile, across the ocean, the unsuspecting peoples of the New World lived and labored unaware of their European “discoverers.”

Onto this stage stepped Christopher Columbus. This skilled Italian seafarer persuaded the Spanish monarchs to outfit him with three tiny but seaworthy ships, manned by a motley crew. Daringly, he unfurled the sails of his cockleshell craft and headed westward. His superstitious sailors, fearful of venturing into the oceanic unknown, grew increasingly mutinous. After six weeks at sea, failure loomed until, on October 12, 1492, the crew sighted an island in the Bahamas. A new world thus swam within the vision of Europeans.

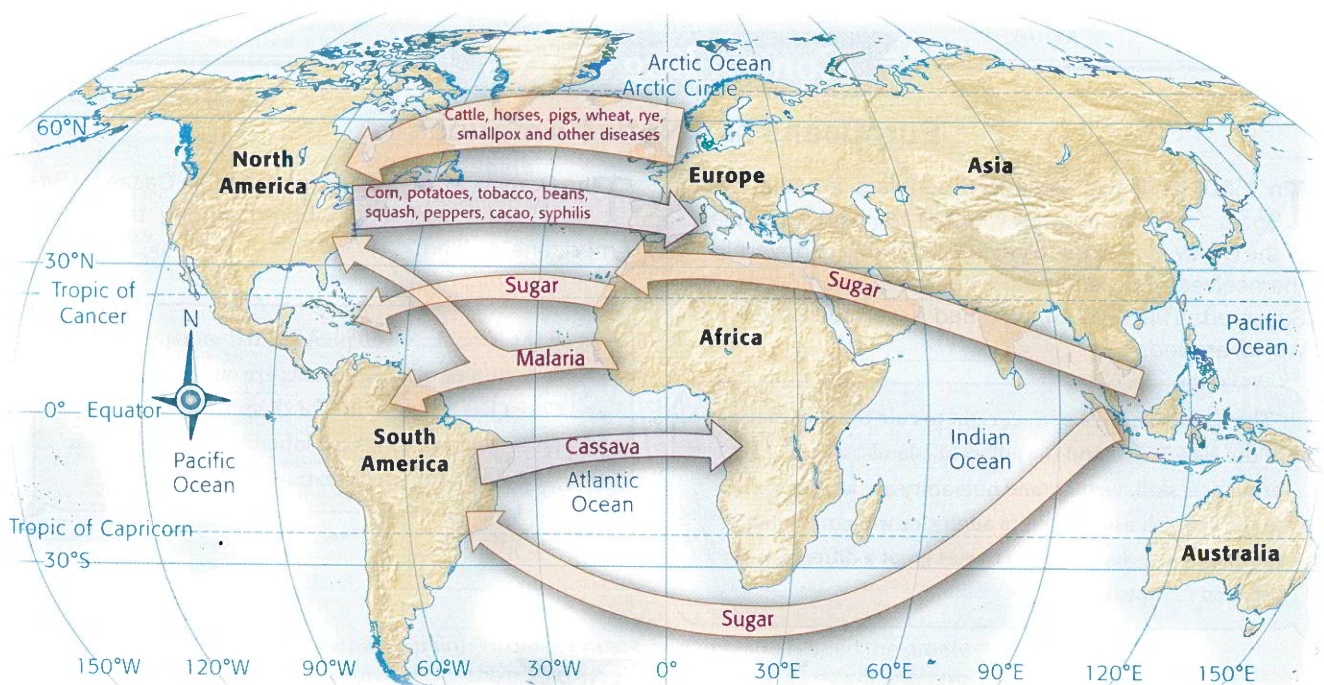
Columbus’s consequential achievement obscures the fact that he was one of the most successful failures in history. Seeking a new water route to the fabled Indies, he in fact had bumped into an enormous land barrier blocking the ocean pathway. For decades thereafter explorers strove to get through it or around it. The truth gradually dawned that sprawling new continents had been discovered. Yet Columbus was at first so certain that he had skirted the rim of the “Indies” that he called the Native peoples Indians, a gross geographical misnomer that somehow stuck.

Columbus's discovery would eventually convulse four continents—Europe, Africa, and the two Americas. Thanks to his epochal voyage, an interdependent global economic system emerged on a scale undreamed-of before he set sail. Its workings touched every shore washed by the Atlantic Ocean. Europeans commanded the markets, the capital, and the technology; kidnapped Africans furnished labor and agricultural knowledge; and the New World offered its raw materials, especially its precious metals, and soil for the cultivation of sugar cane and other transformative foodways. For Europeans as well as for Africans and Native Americans, the world after 1492 would never be the same, for better or worse.

1-7 When Worlds Collide

Two ecosystems—the fragile, naturally evolved networks of relations among organisms in a stable environment—commingled and clashed when Columbus waded ashore. The reverberations from that historic encounter—often called the **Columbian exchange** (refer to Map 1.4)—echoed for centuries after 1492. The flora and fauna—as well as the peoples—of the Old and New Worlds had been separated for thousands of years. European explorers marveled at the strange sights that greeted them, including exotic beasts such as iguanas and “snakes with castanets” (rattlesnakes). Native New World plants such as tobacco, maize, beans, tomatoes, and especially the lowly potato eventually revolutionized the international economy as well as the European diet, feeding the rapid population growth of the Old World. These foodstuffs were among the most important Native American gifts to the Europeans and to the rest of the world. Perhaps three-fifths of the crops cultivated around the globe today originated in the Americas. Ironically, the introduction into Africa of New World foodstuffs like maize, manioc, and sweet potatoes may have fed an African population boom that numerically, though not morally, more than offset the losses inflicted by the slave trade.

In exchange, the Europeans introduced Old World crops and animals to the Americas. Columbus returned to the Caribbean island of Hispaniola (present-day Haiti and the Dominican Republic) in 1493 with seventeen ships that unloaded twelve hundred men and a virtual Noah's Ark of cattle, swine, and horses. The horses soon reached the North American mainland through Mexico. Over the next two centuries, they spread as far as Canada. Southwestern Native American tribes like the Comanche, Apache, and Navajo swiftly adopted the horse—northern tribes like the Lakota, Shoshone, and Blackfeet somewhat later. Horses transformed newly mounted cultures into highly



Map 1.4 Major Items in the Columbian Exchange Columbus's discovery initiated the kind of explosion in international commerce that a later age would call "globalization."



Sarin Images/Granger—All rights reserved.

Image 1.5 The Scourge of Smallpox These scenes of Aztec peoples afflicted with smallpox contracted from the Spaniards were drawn by a Native artist to illustrate Father Bernardino de Sahagun's remarkable sixteenth-century treatise, "General History of the Things of New Spain," a pioneering work of ethnography and anthropology.

The lethal germs spread among the New World peoples with the speed and force of a hurricane, swiftly sweeping far ahead of the human invaders; most of those afflicted never laid eyes on a European. In the centuries after Columbus's landfall, as many as 90 percent of the Native Americans perished from disease, violence, and enslavement—a demographic catastrophe without parallel in human history. This depopulation was surely not intended by the Spanish, but it was nevertheless so severe that entire cultures, languages, and ancient ways of life were extinguished forever. Baffled, enraged, and vengeful, Native American enslaved people sometimes kneaded tainted blood into their masters' bread, to little effect. Perhaps it was poetic justice that the Native Americans unintentionally took revenge by infecting the early explorers with syphilis. Whether contracted through consensual or coerced sexual contact, that lethal sexually transmitted disease was injected for the first time into Europe.

mobile, wide-ranging hunter-warrior societies that roamed the grassy Great Plains in pursuit of the shaggy buffalo. They also aggressively suppressed unmounted peoples like the Paiute. Columbus also brought seedlings of sugar cane, which thrived in the warm Caribbean climate. A "sugar revolution" consequently took place in the European diet, fueled by the forced migration of millions of Africans to work the cane fields and sugar mills of the New World.

Unwittingly, the Europeans also brought other organisms in the dirt on their boots and the dust on their clothes, such as the seeds of Kentucky bluegrass, dandelions, and daisies. Most ominous of all, in their bodies they carried the germs that caused smallpox, yellow fever, and malaria. Old World diseases quickly devastated the Native Americans (refer to Image 1.5). During the Native Americans' millennia of isolation in the Americas, most of the Old World's killer maladies had disappeared from among them. But generations of freedom from those illnesses had also wiped out protective antibodies. Devoid of natural resistance to Old World sicknesses, Native Americans died in droves. Within fifty years of the Spanish arrival, the population of the Taino people in Hispaniola dwindled from some 1 million people to about two hundred. Enslavement and armed aggression took their toll, but the deadliest killers were microbes, not muskets.

Contending Voices

Europeans and Native Americans

In 1550–1551, two renowned scholars in Valladolid, Spain, formally debated whether the Native peoples of the New World were "true men," capable of governing themselves and becoming Christians. Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda (1489–1573), who had never seen the New World, argued:

"The Spanish have a perfect right to rule these barbarians of the New World and the adjacent islands, who in prudence, skill, virtues, and humanity are as inferior to the Spanish as children to adults, or women to men, for there exists between the two as great a difference as between . . . apes and men."

The Dominican friar Bartolomé de Las Casas (1484–1566), who had long labored among the Native Americans, replied:

"I call the Spaniards who plunder that unhappy people torturers. . . . The Indians are our brothers, and Christ has given his life for them. Why, then, do we persecute them with such inhuman savagery when they do not deserve such treatment?"

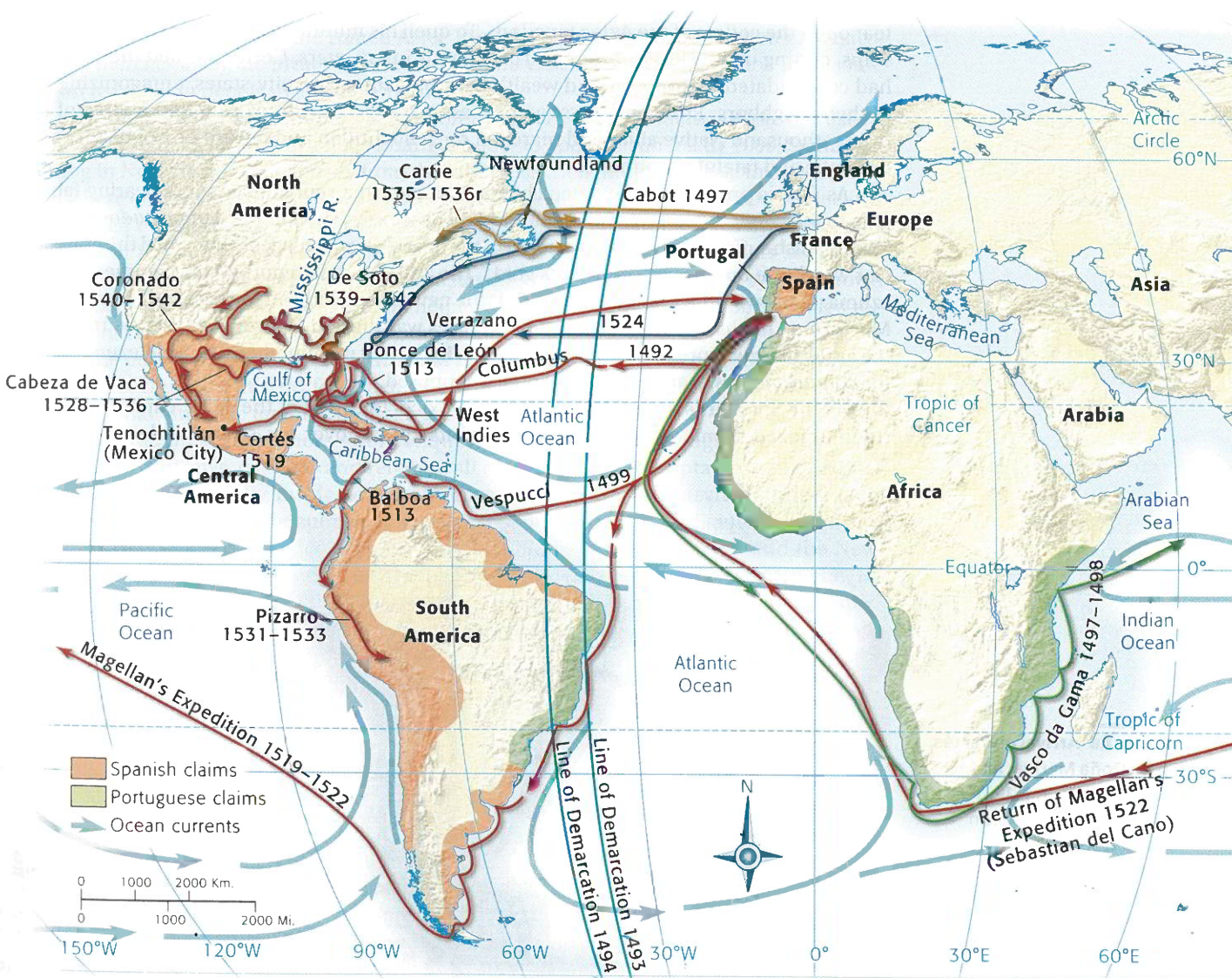
Consider This:

To what extent did attitudes like those persist over the next several centuries?

1-8 The Conquest of Mexico and Peru

Gradually, Europeans realized that the American continents held rich prizes, especially the gold and silver of the advanced Indigenous civilizations in Mexico and Peru. Spain secured its claim to Columbus's discovery in the **Treaty of Tordesillas** (1494), dividing with Portugal the "heathen lands" of the New World (refer to Map 1.5). The lion's share went to Spain, but Portugal received compensating territory in Africa and Asia, as well as title to lands that one day would be Brazil.

The islands of the Caribbean Sea—the West Indies as they came to be called, in yet another perpetuation of Columbus's geographic confusion—served as offshore bases for staging the Spanish invasion of the mainland Americas (refer to "Makers of America: The Spanish *Conquistadores*," pp. 20–21). Here supplies could be stored, and men and horses could be rested and acclimated, before proceeding to the conquest of the continents. The loosely organized and vulnerable Native communities of the West Indies also provided laboratories for testing the techniques that would eventually subdue the advanced Indigenous



Map 1.5 Principal Voyages of Discovery Spain, Portugal, France, and England reaped the greatest advantages from the New World, but much of the earliest exploration was done by Italians, notably Christopher Columbus of Genoa. John Cabot, another native of Genoa (his original name was Giovanni Caboto), sailed for England's King Henry VII. Giovanni da Verrazano was a Florentine employed by France.

civilizations of Mexico and Peru. The most important such technique was the institution known as the *encomienda*. It empowered the Spanish government to “commend,” or give, Indigenous people to certain colonists in return for the promise to try to Christianize them. In all but name, it was slavery. Spanish missionary Bartolomé de Las Casas, appalled by the *encomienda* system in Hispaniola, called it “a moral pestilence invented by Satan.”

In 1519, Hernán Cortés set sail from Cuba with sixteen fresh horses and several hundred men aboard eleven ships, bound for Mexico—and for the annals of history. On the island of Cozumel off the Yucatán Peninsula, he rescued a Spanish castaway who had been enslaved for several years by the Mayan-speaking Indigenous peoples. A short distance farther on, he picked up the Native enslaved female Malinche, who knew both Mayan and Nahuatl, the language of the powerful Aztec rulers of the great empire in the highlands of central Mexico. In addition to his superior firepower, Cortés now had the advantage, through these two interpreters, of understanding the speech of the Native peoples whom he was about to encounter, including the Aztecs. Malinche eventually learned Spanish and was baptized with the Spanish name of Doña Marina (refer to Image 1.6).

Near present-day Veracruz, Cortés made his final landfall. He had heard alluring tales of the gold and other wealth stored up in the legendary Aztec capital of Tenochtitlán and lusted to tear open the coffers of the Aztec kingdom. To quell his mutinous troops, he boldly burned his ships, cutting off any hope of retreat. Through his interpreters, Cortés learned that the Aztecs had consolidated their power and wealth by subjugating rival city-states, antagonizing many of their neighbors. Promising revenge to these Aztec rivals, Cortés gathered a force of some twenty thousand Native allies and marched on Tenochtitlán and toward one of history’s most dramatic and fateful encounters.

As Cortés proceeded, the Aztec chieftain Moctezuma sent ambassadors bearing fabulous gifts to welcome the approaching Spaniards. These only whetted the *conquistador’s* appetite. “We Spanish suffer from a strange disease of the heart,” Cortés allegedly informed the emissaries, “for which the only known remedy is gold.” The ambassadors reported this comment to Moctezuma, along with the astonishing fact that the newcomers rode on the backs of “deer” (horses). Moctezuma might also have believed that Cortés was the god Quetzalcoatl, whose return from the eastern sea was predicted in Aztec legends. Expectant yet apprehensive, Moctezuma allowed the *conquistadores* to approach his capital unopposed.

As the Spaniards entered the Valley of Mexico, the sight of the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlán amazed them. With 300,000 inhabitants spread over ten square miles, it rivaled in

Image 1.6 Arrival of Cortés, with Doña Marina, at Tenochtitlán in 1519

This painting by a Mexican artist depicts Cortés in the dress of a Spanish gentleman. His translator Malinche, whose Christian name was Marina, is given an honorable place at the front of the procession. She eventually married one of Cortés’s soldiers, with whom she traveled to Spain and was received by the Spanish court.



size and pomp any city in contemporary Europe. The Aztec metropolis rose from an island in the center of a lake, surrounded by floating gardens of extraordinary beauty. It was connected to the mainland by a series of causeways and supplied with fresh water by an artfully designed aqueduct.

Moctezuma treated Cortés hospitably at first, but soon the Spaniards' hunger for gold and power exhausted their welcome. "They thirsted mightily for gold; they stuffed themselves with it; they starved for it; they lusted for it like pigs," said one Aztec. On the *noche triste* (sad night) of June 30, 1520, the Aztecs attacked, driving the Spanish down the causeways from Tenochtitlán in a frantic, bloody retreat. Cortés then laid siege to the city, and it capitulated on August 13, 1521. That same year a smallpox epidemic burned through the Valley of Mexico. The combination of conquest and disease took a grisly toll. The Aztec empire gave way to three centuries of Spanish rule. The temples of Tenochtitlán were destroyed to make way for the Christian cathedrals of Mexico City, built on the site of the ruined Aztec capital. And the Native population of Mexico, winnowed mercilessly by the invaders' diseases and the violence of slavery, shrank from some 20 million to 2 million people in less than a century.

Shortly thereafter in South America, the ironfisted conqueror Francisco Pizarro crushed the Incas of Peru in 1532, adding a huge hoard of booty to Spanish coffers. By 1600, Spain was swimming in New World silver, mostly from the fabulously rich mines at Potosí in present-day Bolivia, where enslaved Native Americans toiled under Spanish masters. This flood of precious metal touched off a price revolution in Europe that increased consumer costs by as much as 500 percent in the hundred years after the mid-sixteenth century. Some scholars see in this ballooning European money supply the fuel that fed the growth of the economic system known as **capitalism**. Certainly, New World bullion helped transform the world economy. It filled the vaults of bankers from Spain to Italy, laying the foundations of the modern banking system. It clinked in the purses of merchants in France and Holland, stimulating the spread of commerce and manufacturing. And it paid for much of the burgeoning international trade with Asia, whose sellers had little use for any European good except silver.

Yet the invaders brought more than conquest and death. They brought crops and animals, language and laws, customs and religion, all of which proved adaptable to the peoples of the Americas. Especially in Mexico, they intermarried with the surviving Indigenous peoples, creating a distinctive culture of *mestizos*, people of mixed Indigenous and European heritage. To this day Mexico remains a unique blend of the Old World and the New, producing both ambivalence and pride among its people. Cortés's translator, Malinche, for example, has given her name to the Mexican language in the word *malinchista*, or "traitor." But Mexicans also celebrate Columbus Day as the *Día de la Raza*—the birthday of a wholly new race of people.

Bartolomé de Las Casas (1484–1566), a reform-minded Dominican friar, wrote *The Destruction of the Indies* in 1542 to chronicle the awful fate of the Native Americans and to protest Spanish policies in the New World. He was especially horrified at the catastrophic effects of disease on the Native peoples:

"Who of those in future centuries will believe this? I myself who am writing this and saw it and know the most about it can hardly believe that such was possible."

1-9 Exploration and Imperial Rivalry

In the service of God, as well as in search of gold and glory, Spanish *conquistadores* (conquerors) continued to fan out across the New World and beyond. On Spain's long roster of notable deeds, two spectacular exploits must be headlined. Vasco Núñez Balboa, hailed as the European discoverer of the Pacific Ocean, waded into the foaming waves off Panama in 1513 and boldly claimed for his king all the lands washed by that sea. Ferdinand Magellan started from Spain in 1519 with five tiny ships. After beating through the storm-lashed strait off the tip of South America that still bears his name, he was slain by the inhabitants of the Philippines. His one remaining vessel creaked home in 1522, completing the first circumnavigation of the globe.

Other ambitious Spaniards ventured into North America. In 1513 and 1521, Juan Ponce de León explored Florida, which he at first thought was an island. Seeking gold—and probably not the mythical "fountain of youth"—he instead met with death by a Native American arrow. In 1540–1542 Francisco Coronado, in quest of fabled golden cities that turned out to



The Spanish Conquistadores

In 1492, the same year that Columbus sighted America, the great Moorish city of Granada, in Spain, fell after a ten-year siege. For five centuries the Christian kingdoms of Spain had been trying to drive the North African Muslim *Moors* ("the Dark Ones," in Spanish) off the Iberian Peninsula, and with the fall of Granada, they succeeded. But the lengthy *Reconquista* had left its mark on Spanish society. Centuries of military and religious confrontation nurtured an obsession with status and honor, bred religious zealotry and intolerance, and created a large class of men who regarded manual labor and commerce contemptuously. With the *Reconquista* ended, some of these men turned their restless gaze to Spain's New World frontier.

At first, Spanish hopes for America focused on the Caribbean and on finding a sea route to Asia. Gradually, however, word filtered back of rich kingdoms on the mainland. Between 1519 and 1540, Spanish *conquistadores* swept across the Americas in two wide arcs of conquest—one driving from Cuba through Mexico into what is now the southwestern United States; the other starting from Panama and pushing south into Peru. Within half a century of Columbus's arrival in the Americas, the *conquistadores* had extinguished the great Aztec and Incan empires and claimed for church and crown a territory that extended from Colorado to Argentina, including much of what is now the continental United States.

The military conquest of this vast region was achieved by just ten thousand men, organized in a series of private expeditions. Hernán Cortés, Francisco Pizarro, and other aspiring conquerors signed contracts with the Spanish monarch, raised money from investors, and then went about recruiting an army. Only a small minority of the *conquistadores*—leaders or followers—were nobles. About half were professional soldiers and sailors; the rest comprised peasants, artisans, and members of the middling classes. Most were in their twenties and early thirties, and all knew how to wield a sword.

Diverse motives spurred these motley adventurers. Some hoped to win royal titles



Image 1.7 Conquistadores, ca. 1534 This illustration for a book called the *Köhler Codex of Nuremberg* may be the earliest depiction of the *conquistadores* in the Americas. It portrays men and horses alike as steadfast and self-assured in their work of conquest.

be adobe pueblos, wandered with a clanking cavalcade through Arizona and New Mexico (refer to Image 1.9), penetrating as far east as Kansas. En route his expedition discovered two awesome natural wonders: the Grand Canyon of the Colorado River and enormous herds of buffalo (bison). Hernando de Soto, with six hundred armored men, undertook a fantastic gold-seeking expedition during 1539–1542. Floundering through marshes and pine barrens from Florida westward, he discovered and crossed the majestic Mississippi River just north of its junction with the Arkansas River. After brutally mistreating the Native Americans with iron collars and fierce dogs, he at length died of fever and wounds. His troops secretly disposed of his remains at night in the Mississippi, lest the Native Americans exhumate and abuse their abuser's corpse.

Spain's colonial empire grew swiftly and impressively. Within about half a century of Columbus's landfall, hundreds of Spanish cities and towns flourished in the Americas,

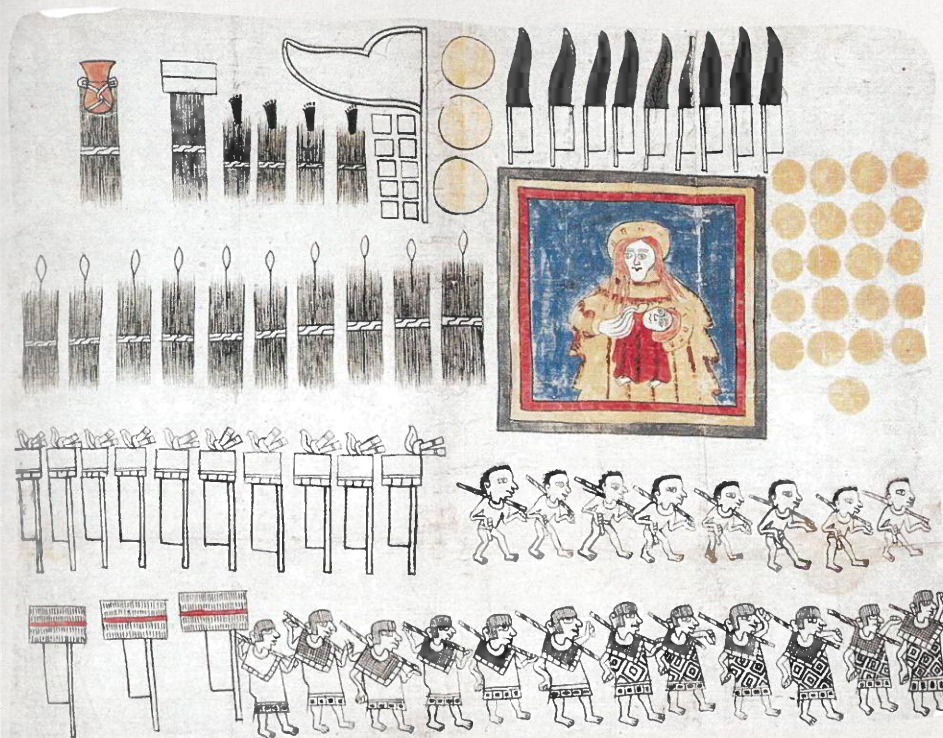


Image 1.8 An Aztec View of the Conquest, 1531 Produced just a dozen years after Cortés's arrival in 1519, this drawing by an Aztec artist pictures the Native people rendering tribute to their conquerors. The inclusion of the banner showing the Madonna and child also illustrates the early incorporation of Christian beliefs by the Native peoples.

and favors by bringing new peoples under the Spanish flag. Others sought to ensure God's favor by spreading Christianity to the pagans. Some men hoped to escape dubious pasts, and others sought the kind of historical adventure experienced by heroes of classical antiquity. Nearly all shared a lust for gold. As one of Cortés's foot soldiers put it, "We came here to serve God and the king, and also to get rich." One historian adds that the *conquistadores* first fell on their knees and then fell upon the aborigines.

Because of a scarcity of Spanish women in the early days of the conquest, many of the *conquistadores* married Native women. The soldiers who conquered Paraguay received three Native women each, and Cortés's soldiers in Mexico—who were forbidden to consort with pagan women—quickly had their lovers baptized into the Catholic faith. Their offspring, the "new race" of *mestizos*, formed a cultural and a biological bridge between Latin America's European and Native American races.

especially in the great silver-producing centers of Peru and Mexico. Some 160,000 Spaniards, mostly men, aided by their lethal pathogen allies, had subjugated millions of Indigenous peoples. Majestic cathedrals dotted the land, printing presses turned out books, and scholars founded distinguished universities, including those at Mexico City and Lima, Peru, both established in 1551, eighty-five years before Harvard, the first college established in the English colonies.

But how secure were these imperial possessions? Other powers were already sniffing around the edges of the Spanish domain, eager to bite off their share of the promised wealth of the new lands. The upstart English sent Giovanni Caboto (known in English as John Cabot) to explore the northeastern coast of North America in 1497 and 1498. The French king dispatched another Italian mariner, Giovanni da Verrazano, to probe the eastern seaboard in 1524. Ten years later, the Frenchman Jacques Cartier journeyed hundreds of miles up the St. Lawrence River.

Armed with horses and gunpowder and preceded by disease, the *conquistadores* capitalized on local Native American rivalries, as Cortés had in central Mexico, to overpower the Indigenous peoples. But most never achieved their dreams of glory. Few received titles of nobility, and many of the rank and file remained permanently indebted to the absentee investors who paid for their equipment. Even when an expedition captured exceptionally rich booty, the spoils were unevenly divided: men from the commander's home region often received more, and men on horseback generally got two shares to the infantryman's one. The *conquistadores* lost still more power as the crown gradually tightened its control in the New World. By the 1530s in Mexico and the 1550s in Peru, colorless colonial administrators had replaced the freebooting *conquistadores*.

Nevertheless, the *conquistadores* achieved a kind of immor-



Wil Meinders/Buiten-beek/Minden Pictures

Image 1.9 Pueblo Bonito, Chaco Canyon At Chaco Canyon in modern-day New Mexico, the Anasazis built an elaborate pueblo of more than six hundred interconnected rooms. But mysteriously, perhaps due to climatic changes such as prolonged drought or deforestation, all those ancient cultures fell into decline between about 1100 and 1300 CE.

To safeguard the northern periphery of their New World domain against such encroachments and to convert more Indigenous peoples' souls to Christianity, the Spanish began to fortify and settle their North American borderlands. In a move to block French ambitions and to protect the sea-lanes to the Caribbean, the Spanish erected a fortress at St. Augustine, Florida, in 1565, thus founding the oldest continually inhabited European settlement in the future United States.

In Mexico, the tales of Coronado's expedition of the 1540s to the upper Rio Grande and Colorado River regions continued to beckon the *conquistadores* northward. A dust-begrimed expeditionary column, with eighty-three rumbling wagons and hundreds of grumbling men, traversed the bare Sonora Desert from Mexico into the Rio Grande Valley in 1598. Led by Don Juan de Oñate, the Spaniards cruelly abused the Pueblo peoples they encountered. In the **Battle of Acoma** in 1599, the victorious Spanish sentenced young Native American survivors to twenty years servitude and severed one foot of males over 25 years of age. The victors proclaimed the area to be the province of New Mexico in 1609 and founded its capital at Santa Fe the following year (refer to Map 1.6).

The Spanish settlers in New Mexico found a few furs and precious little gold, but they did discover a wealth of souls to be harvested for the Christian religion. The Roman Catholic mission became the central institution in colonial New Mexico until the missionaries' efforts to suppress Native religious customs provoked a Native American uprising called the **Pueblo Revolt** of 1680. The Pueblo rebels destroyed every Catholic church in the province and killed a score of priests and hundreds of Spanish settlers. In a reversal of Cortés's treatment of the Aztec temples more than a century earlier, the Indigenous peoples rebuilt a *kiva*, or ceremonial religious chamber, on the ruins of the Spanish plaza at Santa Fé. It took nearly half a century for the Spanish fully to reclaim New Mexico from the insurrectionary Pueblos. Meanwhile, the



Map 1.6 Spain's North American Frontier, 1542-1823

Spanish horses left behind in the wake of the revolt began to spread northward, utterly transforming the Native cultures on the Great Plains.

As a further hedge against the ever-threatening French, who had sent an expedition under Robert de La Salle down the Mississippi River in the 1680s, the Spanish began around 1716 to establish settlements in Texas. Some refugees from the Pueblo uprising trickled into Texas, and a few missions were established there, including the one at San Antonio later known as the Alamo. But for at least another century, the Spanish presence remained weak in this distant northeastern outpost of Spain's Mexican empire.

To the west, in California, no serious foreign threat loomed, and Spain directed its attention there only belatedly. Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo had explored the California coast in 1542, but he failed to find San Francisco Bay or anything else of much interest. For some two centuries thereafter, California's Native peoples lived undisturbed by European intruders. Then in 1769, Spanish missionaries led by Father Junipero Serra founded at San Diego the first of a chain of twenty-one missions that wound up the coast as far as Sonoma, north of San Francisco Bay. Father Serra's brown-robed Franciscan friars toiled with zealous determination to Christianize the 300,000 Native Californians and to secure their land and labor for the Spanish crown. They corralled the seminomadic Native Americans into fortified missions and used their forced labor in mission farms and workshops. Crowded within the missions' stucco walls and brutally punished if they attempted to leave, these "mission Indians" did adopt Christianity, but they also died by the scores from European diseases for which they had no immunity.

As the Spanish pushed northward from Mexico, they were preceded by their four-legged companions. By 1680, when the Pueblos revolted and seized large numbers of Spanish horses, Indigenous peoples as far north as present-day Texas and New Mexico were already breeding and trading them. Over the next century, traded as well as feral horses spread throughout the western half of the continent, forever altering many long-established Native cultures (refer to Map 1.7). Forest-dwellers moved to the plains; buffalo-hunters revolutionized their techniques; everywhere, a new mobility suffused the lives of horse-breeding Native Americans. Most importantly, equine speed gave riders an enormous new military advantage. Mounted Comanches in particular extended their dominion over a vast territory, intimidating Native American and Spanish neighbors alike.



Map 1.7 The Spread of the Horse in North America, to 1750 North America had no domesticated animals larger than a dog before the arrival of Europeans. When horses were first introduced, some Native American cultures quickly embraced them, fundamentally altering their ways of life. The massive release of Spanish horses following the Pueblo Revolt of 1680 led to astonishingly swift and pervasive changes among the tribes of the Great Plains.

The violent progress of the Spanish in the New World helped give birth to the **Black Legend**. This concept—popularized by Spain's Protestant rivals and given staying power by successive centuries of anti-Catholic prejudice—held that the heartless conquerors tortured and butchered Native peoples, stole their gold, infected them with smallpox, and left little but misery behind. Yet the Spanish invaders also erected a colossal and inclusive empire, sprawling from California and Florida to Tierra del Fuego, absorbing and incorporating the Indigenous cultures they had encountered and subjugated. They mingled their culture, laws, religion, and language with a wide array of Native societies, laying the foundations for a score of Spanish-speaking nations, rather than shunning and eventually isolating the Native peoples as their English adversaries would do.

The Spaniards, who had more than a century's head start over the English, were empire builders and cultural innovators with far-reaching and long-lasting influence in the New World. As compared with their Anglo-Saxon rivals, their colonial establishment was larger and richer, and was destined to endure more than a quarter of a century longer.

Chapter Summary

Millions of years ago, the two American continents became geologically separated from the Eastern Hemisphere landmasses where humanity originated. The first people to enter these continents probably came across a temporary land bridge from Siberia about fifteen thousand years ago. Spreading across the two continents, these first people developed a great variety of societies based largely on hunting and corn agriculture. In North America, some ancient peoples such as the Pueblos, the Anasazi, and the Mississippian culture centered in Cahokia developed elaborate settlements. But on the whole, Native American societies in North America were less numerous and urbanized than those in Central and South America, though they were equally diverse in culture and social organization.

The impetus for European exploration came from the desire for new trade routes to Asia, the spirit and

technological discoveries of the Renaissance, and the power of the new European national monarchies. The European encounters with America and Africa, beginning with the Portuguese and Spanish explorers, convulsed the entire world. Biological change, disease, population loss, cultural change, and economic expansion were just some of the consequences of the commingling of two ecosystems.

After they conquered and then intermarried with the Aztecs and Incas in South America and Mexico, the Spanish *conquistadores* expanded northward into the northern border territories of Florida, New Mexico, Texas, and California, which later became part of the United States. There they established small but permanent settlements in competition with the French and English explorers who also were venturing into North America.

Key Terms

- Canadian Shield (5)
- Incas (6)
- Mayans (6)
- Aztecs (6)
- nation-states (9)
- Cahokia (9)
- three-sister farming (9)
- caravel (13)
- plantation (13)
- Columbian exchange (15)
- Tordesillas, Treaty of (17)
- *encomienda* (18)
- *noche triste* (19)
- capitalism (19)
- *mestizos* (19)
- *conquistadores* (19)
- Acoma, Battle of (22)
- Pueblo Revolt (22)
- Black Legend (24)

People to Know

- Ferdinand of Aragon
- Isabella of Castile
- Christopher Columbus
- Francisco Coronado
- Francisco Pizarro
- Bartolomé de Las Casas
- Hernán Cortés
- Malinche (Doña Marina)
- Moctezuma
- Giovanni Caboto (John Cabot)
- Robert de La Salle
- Father Junipero Serra

Chronology

ca. 33,000–8000 BCE	• First humans cross into Americas from Asia	ca. 2000 BCE	• Corn planting reaches present-day American Southwest
ca. 5000 BCE	• Corn is developed as a staple crop in highland Mexico	ca. 1000 CE	• Norse voyagers discover and briefly settle in northeastern North America • Corn cultivation reaches Midwest and southeastern Atlantic seaboard
ca. 4000 BCE	• First civilized societies develop in the Middle East	ca. 1100 CE	• Height of Mississippian settlement at Cahokia

ca. 1100–1300 CE	• Christian crusades arouse European interest in the East	1532	• Pizarro crushes Incas
1295	• Marco Polo returns to Europe	1534	• Cartier journeys up the St. Lawrence River
late 1400s	• Spain becomes united	1539–1542	• De Soto explores the Southeast and discovers the Mississippi River
1488	• Dias rounds southern tip of Africa	1540–1542	• Coronado explores present-day Southwest
1492	• Columbus lands in the Bahamas	1542	• Cabrillo explores California coast for Spain
1494	• Treaty of Tordesillas between Spain and Portugal	1565	• Spanish build fortress at St. Augustine
1498	• Da Gama reaches India • Cabot explores northeastern coast of North America for England	late 1500s	• Iroquois Confederacy founded, according to Iroquois legend
1513	• Balboa claims all lands touched by the Pacific Ocean for Spain	ca. 1598–1609	• Spanish under Oñate conquer Pueblo peoples of Rio Grande Valley
1513, 1521	• Ponce de León explores Florida	1609	• Spanish found New Mexico
1519–1521	• Cortés conquers Mexico for Spain	1680	• Pueblo Revolt in New Mexico
1522	• Magellan's vessel completes circumnavigation of the world	1680s	• French expedition down Mississippi River under La Salle
1524	• Verrazano explores eastern seaboard of North America for France	1769	• Serra founds first California mission, at San Diego

To Learn More

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