

The Clash of Civilizations

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This chapter may contain graphic images, explicit content, or racial slurs as used in their historical context (see Preface)

1.1 Those Who Came First

Before the voyage of Christopher Columbus in 1492 initiated European colonization of the New World, there were approximately four million indigenous people in what would become the United States, organized into a multiplicity of tribes and speaking hundreds of discrete languages. Clearly, humans had inhabited the Western Hemisphere for thousands of years before Columbus arrived. The exact date of the arrival of the first Americans is in dispute, but historians generally believe that they arrived somewhere between 15,000 and 20,000 years ago. Prior to the twentieth century, historians believed that the earliest humans had only arrived in North America 3,000–4,000 years ago. Then a discovery was made near Folsom, New Mexico, in 1908 that proved that humans had in fact arrived in North America thousands of years earlier. Nineteen flint spear points were found amid the bones of a giant bison—a species that has been extinct for 10,000 years. In particular, one of the spear points was still stuck between the ribs of an extinct giant bison, thus proving that the spear points had not merely been dropped on the site at a later date. These “**Folsom Points**” proved that the first Americans had migrated to the Western Hemisphere at least 10,000 years ago.

Folsom Points

Nineteen flint spear points, discovered near Folsom, New Mexico, that prove that the first Americans had migrated to the Western Hemisphere at least 10,000 years ago

1.1a The Land Bridge to Alaska

It has been generally believed by scholars that these earliest Americans emigrated from Asia during the earth's last ice age when massive continental glaciers covered much of North America. With more water trapped on land in the form of ice (and therefore not in the ocean), the ocean level was low enough to expose a **land bridge to Alaska** across the Bering Strait from Asia. Thousands of migrants then moved south over the millennia and spread themselves across a vast region. Using the tools of archaeology, genetics, climatology, and dendrochronology (using tree rings to date events in the past), scholars have been able to learn a fair amount about these

Land bridge to Alaska

Exposed ground during the last ice age that was part of the Bering Strait between Asia and Alaska, used by the first Americans to migrate to America from Asia



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During the earth's last ice age, when massive continental glaciers covered much of North America, it is believed that thousands of migrants moved south over the millennia and spread themselves across a vast region.

people. This theory has been challenged in 2019 by a team of researchers at an archaeological dig at Cooper's Ferry, Idaho, where they found evidence that the first Americans arrived by boat as much as 16,000 years ago. Whether or not this becomes the most widely held perspective in the future is as of yet unclear. Human discovery and learning about the first Americans is an ongoing process.

1.1b The Earliest Americans

The earliest Americans were nomadic hunters who had developed techniques for making weapons and tools. These first Americans apparently specialized in hunting mammoths—long-extinct, elephant-like creatures that they killed and processed for food, clothing, and building materials. Most scholars believe these earliest Americans first migrated to America while following their prey.

Others argue, however, that the land bridge would have been covered with ice and therefore the land could not have supported the vegetation necessary for large foraging animals, thus lending support to the “arrived by boat” theory. The scientific studies continue.

In situations where the data are not entirely conclusive, scholars have attempted to make educated guesses. It appears that about 11,000 years ago the early Americans were confronted with a major crisis when a period of global warming evidently caused the mammoths and other big game animals they hunted (mastodons, camels, and ancient species of horses) to become extinct. Thus, as the early Americans spread out over the Western Hemisphere, they were forced to adapt to a changing environment. They developed new food sources, including smaller animals, fish, nuts, berries, and insects. Then, about five thousand years ago, they began to cultivate corn, squash, and beans. This shift from hunting and gathering to cultivating basic crops is normally referred to as the **agricultural revolution**.

Agricultural revolution

The transition from hunting and gathering to the domestication of plants and animals, which allowed vast changes in lifestyle and technology to take place



Adapted US-PD courtesy of National Park Service via nps.gov



1.1c The Agricultural Revolution

The agricultural revolution brought great changes to indigenous cultures in addition to changes in dietary patterns. Agriculture allows a food surplus, since many crops—especially grain crops—can be stored and preserved for long periods of time. The same could not be said for meat in the era prior to refrigeration. The development of agriculture and a food surplus allowed Native Americans to settle in one place, and therefore also allowed the development of technology and culture, and the accumulation of goods. As long as people hunted and gathered to sustain themselves, they were forced to limit their possessions. Following animal herds made it necessary for people to travel with as few possessions as possible; hence, there was little room for sculptures or painted pottery or other items that did not directly contribute to survival. As a consequence, the development of technology and numerous art forms was greatly hindered. Similarly, population growth was hindered in nomadic societies because women could not have more children than they could carry or nurse at one time. After the development of agriculture, however, people were able to have more children because the children would not have to be carried or keep up with the rest of the group while the tribe followed the herds. In short, technological advancement and advancement in the arts accompanied the development of agriculture, both because agricultural people had more leisure time and because they no longer had to keep their possessions at a minimum.

Gradually, the indigenous peoples developed substantial civilizations, though the civilizations—including their living standards—varied greatly. For example, the Karankawa tribes of the Gulf Coast of Texas had a formidable reputation for cannibalism and bestiality. In the words of one Spanish traveler in the sixteenth century, “They are cruel, inhuman, and ferocious. When one nation makes war with another, the one that conquers puts all the old men and old women to the knife and carries off the little children for food to eat on the way.” In contrast to the Karankawas tribes were the Coahuiltecs, who lived near the mouth of the Rio Grande and subsisted primarily by digging and grubbing. The Coahuiltec diet consisted of spiders, ant eggs, lizards, rattlesnakes, worms, insects, agave bulbs, lechuguilla, maguey, rotting wood, and deer dung. The Coahuiltecs roasted mesquite beans and ate them with sides of dirt. They also ate products from what is known as the “second harvest”—seeds and similar items picked from human feces. In addition, they ate prickly pear cactus and chewed another cactus, called peyote, that produces a hallucinogenic effect. When the Coahuiltecs caught fish, they roasted them whole, set them in the sun for several days to collect flies and maggots, and then ate the bug-enriched food. Because food was scarce for the Coahuiltecs, they also frequently practiced infanticide because they did not have enough food to go around.

1.1d The Advanced Societies

In contrast to the Coahuiltecs, other indigenous peoples built technologically advanced and elaborate societies. For example, in Peru, the **Incas** assembled an empire of approximately six million people with irrigated farmland, paved roads, and a complex political system. In southern Mexico and the Yucatan, the **Mayas** assembled a civilization that had a written language, an advanced system of mathematics, an accurate calendar, an advanced agricultural system, and impressive pyramids—many of which stand to this day. Similarly, the **Aztecs** (also known as Mexicans) of central Mexico constructed an elaborate political system complete with educational and medical systems that rivaled those of Europe in the sixteenth century. The Aztec capitol, **Tenochtitlan**, had a population of over 250,000 with impressive temples equal in size to the Great Pyramid of Egypt. In comparison, Seville, Spain—the port from which the



“Mitos y Fantasías de los aztecas foto 102,” by Guillermo Marin, available under a CC by SA 3.0 license via Wikimedia

The Aztec religion required human sacrifice on a massive scale as evidenced by the hundred thousand skulls the Spanish found.

Incas

Advanced Native American civilization of the Andes

Mayas

Advanced Native American civilization of the Yucatan Peninsula

Aztecs

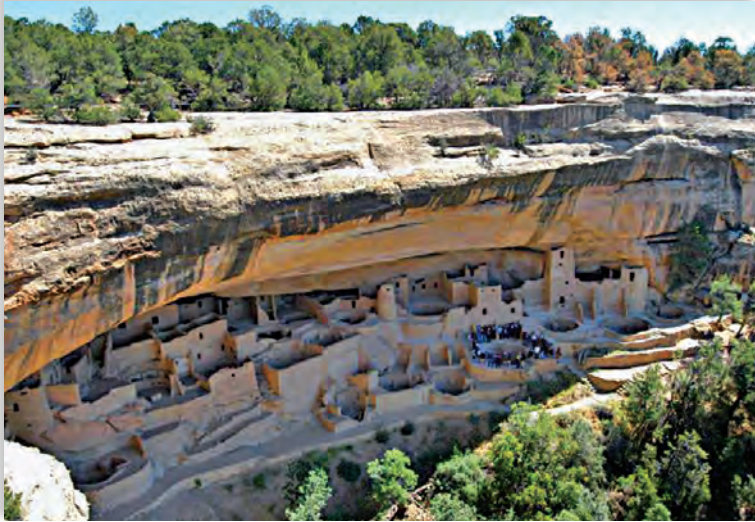
Advanced Native American civilization of the south Central Mexican Plateau

Tenochtitlan

The capital city of the Aztecs

Spanish sailed—had a population of approximately 50,000 at that time. The Aztec religion, however, required human sacrifice on a massive scale, as evidenced by the one hundred thousand skulls the Spanish found at one location in 1519. The Aztecs also shocked the Spanish by bringing them a meal soaked in human blood when they mistook the Spanish for bloodthirsty “gods” according to their own religious folklore, which foretold of the coming of white men.

In the territory that was to become the United States, there were no indigenous societies as advanced and elaborate as the Mayas, Aztecs, or Incas; however, there were numerous indigenous societies prior to Columbus that are worthy of note. We can look more closely at a few of these groups about whom the most is known.



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The Cliff Palace is the largest cliff dwelling in North America. The structure was built by the Ancient Pueblo Peoples in Colorado, in the southwestern United States.

1.1e The Anasazi

After arriving in the Southwest in the fifteenth century, the Navajos called the people who had inhabited the region earlier the **Anasazi**, meaning “ancient ones” in Navajo. This name is still commonly employed to refer to this society, whose members built so well that some of their structures have survived for a thousand years—all while wringing a living from a harsh environment. Ancestors of the modern Pueblo Indians, the Anasazi lived in what is now called the Four Corners region, where the states of Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, and Colorado come

together. They learned how to grow corn, beans, and squash in this arid region in such a way as to take advantage of virtually every precious drop of rainfall. They even built irrigation devices to improve their chances of watering the crops adequately. Moreover, archaeologists have discovered parrot feathers among their remains, which could only have originated some 1,500 miles to the south in Mesoamerica. We know, therefore, that the Anasazi traded with those who were a long way away. Further, there is compelling evidence that the Anasazi knew how to keep track of key dates, such as the solstices, because various ruins contain spirals that are pierced by a dagger of sunlight at noon—only on the day in question. And finally, the four hundred-plus miles of roads in one of the most important Anasazi regions, Chaco Canyon in New Mexico, attest to a complex web of interconnectedness within the region itself. The Anasazi road system connected Chaco Canyon by road to more than seventy outlying villages. Several of the Anasazi roads were almost one hundred miles long.

It is their buildings, however, that have captivated succeeding generations since the first Euro-Americans discovered the structures in the mid-nineteenth century. Some were built into hillsides—hence the term *cliff-dweller*, which has been used to characterize the Anasazi. Others were free-standing and built on a scale that suggests a people with a sophisticated social structure. The largest complex is called Pueblo Bonito, and it is located in Chaco Culture National Historical Park. With at least 650 rooms, and stretching up to four stories, Pueblo Bonito poses many mysteries: Was it an apartment complex, a ceremonial center, a storehouse for supplies? What is certain is that the people who built it included master architects and skilled masons.

Beginning around 300 BCE, the Anasazi culture flourished for more than a millennium. Then, for reasons which are still not known with certainty, around CE 1150 the Anasazi abandoned their carefully constructed dwellings and moved on. Generations of archaeologists have wrestled with many explanations, including environmental stress, conflict, and soil exhaustion, but no definitive answer has been found.

Anasazi

The cliff dwelling Native American society in the American Southwest

1.1f The Mound-Builders

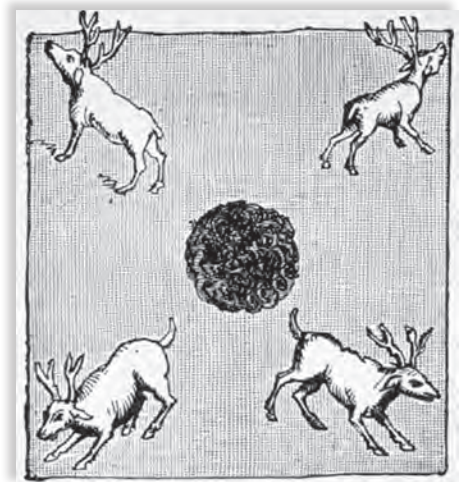
In contrast to the Anasazi, the people who lived in the Mississippi watershed enjoyed a lush environment with abundant water and a temperate climate. What the two groups had in common, however, was their ambitious building projects, developed around the same time: CE 900–1100. At the largest settlement of **mound-builders**—**Cahokia**, located in Illinois just across the Mississippi from St. Louis—there were more than one hundred earthen mounds, used for ceremonial purposes. The principal one, Monks Mound, is the largest prehistoric earthen construction in the Western Hemisphere, rising one hundred feet with a base spreading over fourteen acres. It is believed that these Native Americans were sun worshipers and that the purpose of the mounds was to elevate elites nearer to the divine power of the sun. Sun calendars have been unearthed at this site, too, as well as other evidence of a complex social organization ruled by powerful chiefs. In one mound, a man—presumably a chief—was buried with the bodies of more than sixty people who were evidently executed at the time of the chief’s burial. Several bodies, thought to be either servants or enemies, were buried with their hands cut off. Also in the mound were found the bodies of fifty young women, presumably wives, who evidently had been strangled. The entire Cahokia site encompasses almost twenty acres, and it is estimated that it was once home to twenty thousand people, easily the largest settlement in North America prior to Columbus.

Also known as the “Mississippians,” these people had a well-developed agricultural system, once again based on corn, beans, and squash. They were able to supplement this diet with animal protein, thanks to abundant hunting and fishing, and consequently had a good enough food supply to support the construction of actual cities, with houses built around plazas. They, too, engaged in extensive trade; and they, too, abandoned their sites—circa CE 1500—for reasons which are not fully known. The contributing factors may have been some combination of war, disease, and depletion of natural resources.

1.1g The Five Nations Iroquois

When we discuss the Iroquois, we are talking about a group who came into intense contact with Europeans, and who were subsequently entered into the historical record. Member tribes of the Iroquois included the Seneca, Cayuga, Oneida, Onondaga, and Mohawk people. They lived in large villages in the woodlands of modern day New York and Ontario, Canada. Their success in the cultivation of corn and other crops allowed them to build permanent settlements composed of bark-covered longhouses, some up to one hundred feet in length, which housed as many as ten families each. Women were the primary agriculturalists whereas male jobs centered on hunting and warfare, which was frequent. Iroquoian societies were matrilineal, with property of all sorts—including land, children and inheritance—belonging to women. Women were considered the heads of households and family clans, and they selected the male chiefs who governed the tribes. Jesuit priests who lived among them in the colonies known as New France were much struck by their culture, including the close attention they paid to dreams, and by their child-rearing practices, which seemed overly permissive to the Europeans.

It was their breakthrough in political organization, however, for which they are best-known. One hundred or so years before the Europeans arrived—that is, in the fifteenth century—there was apparently a substantial enough population increase among the Iroquois that they began to put pressure on the hunting grounds of neighboring tribes, such as the Algonquian. Not surprisingly, this led to even more frequent warfare. Scholars believe that it was this increase in conflict that led the Five Nations to form a confederacy for mutual defense. In the early sixteenth century, a prophet by the name of Deganawida appeared among them. He and his chief disciple, Hiawatha, preached the benefits of unity and peace; this persuaded the Five Nations to form a Great League of Peace and Power that remained powerful well into the eighteenth century, the eve of the American Revolution.



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Pictured are deer-like creatures that were totem symbols of the Iroquois, a confederacy of Five Nations.

Mound-builders

The Mississippian Native American culture that built earthen burial mounds

Cahokia

The largest settlement of the Mississippian culture

1.1h Commonalities

Although they varied greatly, certain elements were held in common among the different native peoples. First, one can say with certainty that none had gender roles at all like those held among the Europeans—who were profoundly patriarchal. In some tribes, such as the Iroquois, the sexual division of labor favored relatively greater equality between men and women than anything known to the Old World.

Another commonality lay in their religious beliefs. Despite all of the differences among the tribes, they had in common a way of looking at the world and its origins that is called *animistic*. For the native peoples, the distinction made by Europeans between “natural” and “supernatural” was nonexistent. The native world was filled with spirits. Rivers, the sun, the moon, forests, the ocean, great rocks, and so on—all had spirits that one must take care not to disturb. Moreover, unlike the Judeo-Christian tradition, in which creation was an all-male undertaking, most tribes had cosmologies in which there were Great Mother figures, as well as Great Fathers. The natives also had their own creation myths and their own “fall of man” myths. For instance, the Cherokees believed that the land was created by a busy water bug who built the continents one grain of sand at a time by diving to the bottom of the ocean and bringing earth to the surface. After trillions of trips, the continents were built. As for the mountains and valleys, a giant bird swooped down and scraped the earth with its wings, carving out valleys and depositing the earth into hills and mountains in the process. The Cherokees also explained their fall from grace as being the result of a Cherokee who distracted God. According to the Cherokees, God kept all the animals in a cave and allowed the Cherokees to eat them as needed until a Cherokee boy distracted God’s attention from his guard duty, allowing all the animals to escape. The Cherokee, therefore, were forced to chase the escaped game ever since.

Tragically, another commonality lay in their vulnerability to European pathogens, such as smallpox transmitted from other people. There were no hogs and cattle in the Western Hemisphere prior to the arrival of the Europeans, and it is from hogs that influenza is believed to have originated. The Europeans had resistances to these diseases from centuries of contact with hogs, whereas the indigenous peoples of the Western Hemisphere had none. The conquerors brought these animals and the accompanying diseases, to which indigenous American people had never before been exposed—and the native peoples succumbed in ghastly numbers. Demographers estimate that, typically, only about one-tenth of the original native population of a given area was left after a generation or so of contact with Europeans. Warfare played a role in this decimation, but its role was secondary to that of disease.

1.2 Background to Colonization

1.2a The Beginnings of European Expansion

America had been discovered as early as CE 1000, when the Vikings dominated northern Europe and the northern Atlantic. Erik the Red led a group of Norsemen from Iceland to Greenland, geographically a North American island, in CE 982. There, Erik came into contact with indigenous people of North America and established a permanent settlement. In CE 1001, Erik’s son, **Leif Erikson**, made a voyage from Greenland to North America and landed perhaps at Labrador or Newfoundland. Leif made three more voyages, the last in 1014 when he began a colony he named “Vinland” on the north coast of Newfoundland at a place now called L’Anse aux Meadows. The indigenous peoples of Newfoundland resisted the Norse incursion vigorously. In one engagement, just as the Norse were about to be wiped out in battle, Freydis—the illegitimate daughter of Erik the Red and the first white woman known to North American history—saved the Norse by bearing her breasts, slapping them with a sword, and screaming ferociously. At these sights and sounds, the indigenous attackers turned and fled.

Leif Erikson

The Norse leader who founded a settlement in North America in 1001

Unfortunately, once established, the Norse colonists quarreled among themselves and may have ended up destroying their own colony. The Norse abandoned Vinland after their brief settlement in 1014, but continued to visit North America for another hundred years. A twelfth century Norse coin recovered from a Native American site in Maine proves that the Norse had continuing contact with North America at least until the early twelfth century.

In spite of this relatively long period of contact between the Norse and North America, their adventures did not stimulate European expansion into the New World. Obviously, a significant change had taken place in western Europe by the time of Columbus's voyage in 1492, not only making overseas expansion possible but also instilling an adventurous spirit among Europeans; thus they were even more eager to explore new lands and new opportunities.

Essentially, it was a change from medieval agrarianism and the feudal mindset to the economic developments characteristic of early modern Europe and a more inquiring mind. In the Middle Ages, western Europe had been dominated by the feudal and manorial systems in which each family's place in society—ranging from the peasantry to the nobility—was determined by the relationship of the male head of the household to the land. The commodities produced were consumed by the inhabitants of the manor. The rise of early modern capitalism brought with it a revival of trade, the rise of the city, the emergence of a merchant class, the idea of production for an outside market, and the growth of banking. As a result, people were no longer dependent exclusively upon their relationship to the land. Business transactions brought an accumulation of money, and money could be employed to finance new enterprises.

The mind of Europe was awakened. The Crusades, beginning in the eleventh century, introduced western Europe to the ways of the Near East and to such exotic commodities as spices and silk. Italian merchants—most notably, Marco Polo—journeyed all the way to China and Japan to trade. Fear of the unknown and of new experiences that had gripped many people in the Middle Ages began to disappear with the Renaissance of the fifteenth century, giving way to the spirit of innovators, whose minds were stimulated by a curiosity about the unknown and a wish to exploit the riches of the East. The Renaissance fostered a more expansive outlook and encouraged more creative thinking. This time period also witnessed greater centralization of political authority under a group of leaders whom historians call the New Monarchs. The New Monarchs gained power over the local nobles, who had dominated in the feudal system, and extracted taxation on a national scale, which could be used to fund expansion. As a result, the nation-state system emerged in Europe.

Portugal was the first nation bordering the Atlantic to engage in wide-scale exploration, especially along the western coast of Africa. This primacy was not accidental. Portugal was the first of the Atlantic nations to be unified, giving its leaders an opportunity to look outward, no longer preoccupied with internal disorder. During the fifteenth century, a time in which most of Europe was beset by war and internal upheaval, Portugal enjoyed internal peace and reasonably efficient government. Portugal's location, at the intersection of the Mediterranean and Atlantic, also encouraged the Portuguese to look outward and consider the maritime possibilities. The Portuguese were aware that Arab caravans crossed the Sahara to bring back gold, slaves, and ivory from sub-Saharan Africa. Arab traders also spoke of how the Mandingo king, Musa of Mali, controlled more gold than anyone in Europe. The Portuguese believed that an Atlantic voyage to the West African coast south of the Sahara could tap into Africa's riches and undercut the Arab traders.

Among the most forward-looking of the Portuguese leaders was **Prince Henry the Navigator** (1394–1460), who established a center for the study of cartography and astronomy, and for the improvement of ships and seamanship. The Portuguese studied the Arab ships, borrowed from their design, and then improved upon them. The Portuguese increased the ratio of length to width from a standard 2:1 ratio to 3:1, borrowed the lateen (triangular) sail from the Arabs, and created a new kind of ship called the Caravel—an example of which was the *Niña*, used on Columbus's first voyage. The Portuguese also learned how to mount heavy cannons on their ships, made full use of the compass, and borrowed from the Arabs the astrolabe—a device that permitted the calculation of latitude simply from looking at the stars. Prince Henry sponsored some fifteen voyages along the African coast and launched Portugal's

Prince Henry the Navigator

The Portuguese prince who provided the impetus for the great era of European navigation

era of expansion. The Portuguese began colonization efforts by taking possession of the uninhabited Madeira Islands off the northwest coast of Africa in 1418, followed by the Azores due west of Portugal in 1427, and then the Cape Verde Islands off of Africa's west coast in 1450.



"Columbus Before the Queen," by Emanuel Leutze circa 1843, oil on canvas, courtesy of Brooklyn Museum collection via Wikimedia. US-PD

Unable to find anyone in Portugal who would finance his expedition, Columbus turned to Spain, where Queen Isabella agreed to finance his voyage. Columbus believed himself to be a messenger appointed by God to seek out the new heaven and the new earth.

Trade between the Europeans and West Africans was not new; it had been going on indirectly for hundreds of years. West Africans had been producing iron for centuries and had been supplying Europe with most of its gold for centuries as well through trade caravans across the Sahara. Beginning in the 1440s, the trade relationship changed as the Portuguese colonists began using African slave labor on sugar plantations and in vineyards throughout their new colonies. The Portuguese would purchase their slaves from African traders, who often sold enemies captured through tribal warfare. The Portuguese were thus able to build a profitable slave trade by exploiting rivalries between the tribes on the West African coast. Slavery, and the agricultural products that were profitably produced through the use of slave labor, became a major impetus to overseas exploration. For the first three hundred years after Columbus, the majority of people brought to the Western Hemisphere were not European settlers

but rather African slaves brought to the Americas to provide the labor for sugar, rice, indigo, tobacco, and later cotton plantations.

Because of the profits made possible by slavery and African gold, Portuguese exploration was able to continue, as was their expansion throughout the fifteenth century. By the 1480s, Portugal sought a water route to Asia that would take them around the tip of Africa. Portugal was eventually rewarded when Bartholomew Diaz rounded Africa's southernmost Cape of Good Hope in 1488, followed by Vasco da Gama, who reached India by way of the Cape of Good Hope in 1498. Da Gama's voyage lasted over two years, but resulted in large profits from the spices that Da Gama eventually brought back to Portugal from India. Subsequent Portuguese sailors would eventually come to trade in both Japan and Indonesia. Settlement of the lands where the Portuguese traded, however, was not a major Portuguese goal. Only when Pedro Alvares Cabral accidentally discovered Brazil in 1500 (he was blown off course while trying to round the Cape of Good Hope) did the Portuguese attempt to settle a faraway land where their mariners traded.

Successful overseas expansion required the support of a stable government and a unified nation-state. The significance of national unity was underscored when Columbus's voyage in 1492 coincided with the expulsion of the Islamic Moors from Spain, when Granada was captured by Spanish soldiers. For the first time in centuries, the entire Iberian Peninsula was united under Christian rule. Columbus's voyage, sailing west to reach the fabulous riches of the East, marked the great historical divide which eventually made the Atlantic, rather than the Mediterranean, the principal artery of trade and communication.

1.2b Christopher Columbus

Christopher Columbus was born and raised in Genoa, Italy, in 1451 to a master weaver. Columbus began his life on the sea at age 14; in 1476, he journeyed to Lisbon where he would do most of his sailing as a young man in the service of Portugal. Through his seafaring experience, Columbus became intrigued by the possibility of reaching Asia by sailing west. Like most fifteenth century mariners, Columbus was aware that the Greek scholar Ptolemy had

postulated that the earth was round six centuries before Christ. However, Columbus thought that the world was much smaller than it actually is and expected to find Asia approximately 2,500 miles west of the Canary Islands. His calculations were off by about 8,000 miles. When Columbus was unable to find anyone in Portugal who would finance his expedition, he turned to Spain, where Queen Isabella agreed to finance his voyage. Isabella outfitted Columbus with his three small ships—the *Niña*, the *Pinta*, and the *Santa Maria*—and ninety men, including the Pinzon brothers, who would navigate. Columbus was a religious man and believed his voyage to be part of a divine mission. In the words of Columbus, “God made me the messenger of the new heaven and the new earth, and he showed me the spot where to find it.”

On October 12, 1492—only thirty-three days after leaving the Canary Islands—Columbus landed in the Bahamas after a smooth voyage across calm seas. He named the island San Salvador. Columbus found neither the gold nor the black pepper he had hoped to bring back; instead, he brought seven Native Americans, whom he misnamed “Indians,” back to Spain with him. In Columbus’s diary he described the natives as friendly, but “naked as their mothers bore them.” Columbus also reported that the natives had no knowledge of metals because when he showed them swords “they took them by the edge and through ignorance cut themselves.” The natives called themselves “Tainos,” which meant “good” or “noble” in their language; and they engaged in agriculture, growing cassava, sweet potatoes, corn, cotton, and tobacco. The natives also fished and traveled from island to island in canoes. Columbus did notice, however, small pieces of gold in the noses of some of the natives, and he sought to find the source of the gold so that he could bring it back to Spain.

Upon Columbus’s return, the Spanish awarded him the title “Admiral of the Ocean Sea,” and the seven Tainos were all baptized as Christians. In 1493, Columbus returned to the Caribbean with seventeen ships and a thousand men and began a colony on the Island of Hispaniola. Upon his return, Columbus found that the thirty-nine men he had left on the Island had all been killed by the Tainos. Columbus’s men had kidnapped Taino women and forced them into personal harems. The Tainos retaliated by killing all of the Spaniards, showing that the Native Americans were not completely passive.

Finding neither gold nor spices, Columbus forced the natives to bring him either cotton or gold to ship to Spain to make his voyage profitable. Columbus imposed a quota for natives of twenty-five pounds of cotton or a “hawk’s bell” full of gold. Those who did not comply were severely punished by having a hand, nose, or ear cut off. When those efforts also failed to produce the desired profits, Columbus began selling the natives into slavery.

In 1494, Spain and Portugal almost went to war over who would control the riches of the newly found territories. Spain insisted on complete control over the lands discovered by Columbus, while Portugal wanted its share of the new discoveries. More importantly, Portugal wanted to exclude Spain from the coast of Africa, which had been explored extensively by Portugal. Pope Alexander VI negotiated a settlement of the dispute that became the **Treaty of Tordesillas**. The Treaty divided the new territory (which all parties still believed to be in Asia) by a line of longitude located 270 leagues west of the Azores. Any land west of the line belonged to Spain, and those lands east of the line belonged to Portugal. Unknown to all parties at the time, much of undiscovered Brazil lay east of the line.

With the bulk of the new land secured for Spain by the pope, Columbus made a third voyage in 1498 where he reached the coast of South America, which he still believed was part of Asia. He died in 1506, never realizing that he had, in fact, discovered an entirely different continent. In 1500, Italian explorer **Amerigo Vespucci** published an account of his voyages across the Atlantic that was sufficient to convince European mapmakers that Columbus had indeed discovered a previously unknown continent, rather than simply a new passage to Asia. It is from Amerigo Vespucci that America got its name. From 1519 to 1522, **Ferdinand Magellan**—a Portuguese mariner in the service of Spain—led a voyage around the globe (though Magellan himself was killed in a skirmish with natives in the Philippines), thus putting to rest forever the questions of whether or not the earth is round and whether Asia could be reached from Europe by sailing west.

Treaty of Tordesillas

Negotiated by Pope Alexander VI, this treaty divided the new territory by a line of longitude located 270 leagues west of the Azores. Any land west of the line belonged to Spain, and those lands east of the line belonged to Portugal.

Amerigo Vespucci

The Italian explorer from whom America received its name because it was he who first proved that Columbus had not reached Asia, but in fact a previously undiscovered continent

Ferdinand Magellan

The explorer whose expedition is credited with being the first to sail around the world in 1522



"Christopher Columbus," by Sebastiano del Piombo, circa 1519, oil on canvas, courtesy of Metropolitan Museum of Art collection, via Wikimedia, US-PD

Christopher Columbus, explorer from Genoa (present day Italy), headed four voyages across the Atlantic Ocean. Columbus began the movement of further exploration and later colonization by European countries of the American continents.

The efforts of Portugal and Spain to find new routes to the East were prompted, in large part, by their desire to challenge the commercial monopoly of the Italians. Italian cities, because of their geographical position, dominated trade with the East by way of the Mediterranean. By sailing around the world—and showing a substantial profit despite the loss of all but one ship, the commander, and most of the men—the expedition of Ferdinand Magellan proved that the Mediterranean could be bypassed, and the Italian monopoly broken.

Spain followed the voyage of Columbus by establishing an American empire, thereby setting an example that the other nations of western Europe would attempt to imitate. The Spaniards constructed a tightly knit, closely supervised colonial system with the object of making its American colonies a source of wealth for the mother country, while preventing any encroachment by other nations. All of the Spanish conquests, including those of Columbus, were cloaked under the guise of spreading Christianity. Wherever Columbus went, he planted a cross and made (as he said) the "declarations that are required" to claim the land for Spain and Christianity. Spanish explorers who came after Columbus would be required to read to natives a document known as the **Requerimiento** (requirement) that informed the natives of the "truth" of Christianity, and the necessity to swear immediate allegiance to the pope and the Spanish crown. The natives were informed that they would be the slaves of the Spanish, and those who rejected these blessings of Christianity deserved to die. The actual text of the document read thusly:

I certify to you that, with the help of God, we shall powerfully enter into your country and shall make war against you in all ways and manners that we can, and shall subject you to the yoke and obedience of the Church of Their Highnesses. We shall take you and your wives and your children, and shall make slaves of them, and as such shall sell and dispose of them as Their Highnesses may command. And we shall take your goods, and shall do you all the mischief and damage that we can, as to vassals who do not obey and refuse to receive their Lord and resist and contradict him.

Generally, the *Requerimiento* was read to the bewildered natives in Spanish (which most natives could not understand)—after the natives had already been put in chains.

1.2c Columbus's Tainted Image

Although Columbus has been enshrined as an American hero (though he never actually set foot in the area that is now the United States) and Columbus Day has been a national holiday in the US, the true history of Columbus is more mixed; his savagery was such that he has been denounced in many places in Latin America in a manner similar to the Soviet denunciation of Stalin in the 1950s. The denunciation of Columbus is not without warrant. Long before the *Requerimiento*, Columbus had begun kidnapping and enslaving the Native Americans—even on his very first voyage. On one occasion during Columbus's first voyage, he sent a raiding party ashore to capture some women to keep the males he had already captured company because, as he wrote in his journal, his past experience in African slave trading taught him that "the Indian men would behave better in Spain with women of their own country than without them."

On Columbus's second voyage, he embarked on a much larger slave roundup and gathered 1,600 natives on the Island of Hispaniola, 550 of whom he took back to Spain. The involuntary nature of the roundup was described by Italian nobleman Michele da Cuneo, who wrote, "Among them were many women who had infants at the breast. They, in order the better to escape us ... left their infants anywhere on the ground and started to flee like desperate people." Of the 550 slaves Columbus took back to Spain, 200 died en route; and many of the others died shortly after reaching Spain. Of the event, Columbus wrote, "in the name of the Holy Trinity, we can send from here all the slaves and brazil-wood which could be sold." Columbus even viewed

Requerimiento

The Spanish document informed the natives of the "truth" of Christianity and required that the natives swear immediate allegiance to the pope and the Spanish crown. The natives were declared to be slaves of the Spanish, and those who rejected the blessings of Christianity were thought to deserve to die

the native death rate optimistically, writing that “although they die now, they will not always die. The Negroes and Canary Islanders died at first.” And die they did.

Spanish historian Peter Martyr d’Anghiera described the situation in 1516 thusly, “Packed in below deck, with hatchways closed to prevent their escape, so many slaves died on the trip that a ship without compass, chart, or guide, but only following the trail of dead Indians who had been thrown from the ships could find his way from the Bahamas to Hispaniola.” This, unfortunately, was only the beginning of a campaign of rape, murder, and genocide, perpetrated by Columbus and the Spanish on Hispaniola.

Upon Columbus’s arrival in Hispaniola in 1493, in addition to his demands for quotas of food, gold, and cotton, and the aforementioned punishment for noncooperation, he was most explicit in his demand for sex from the natives. Columbus’s friend, Michele da Cuneo, reported that he was personally given a beautiful Caribe woman by Columbus during Columbus’s second voyage. Da Cuneo stated:

I conceived desire to take pleasure. I wanted to put my desire into execution but she did not want it and treated me with her finger nails in such a manner that I wished I had never begun. But seeing that, I took a rope and thrashed her well, for which she raised such unheard of screams that you would not have believed your ears. Finally, we came to an agreement.

In 1500, Columbus wrote to a friend and gleefully proclaimed, “A hundred castellanoes are as easily obtained for a woman as for a farm, and it is very general and there are plenty of dealers who go about looking for girls; those from nine to ten are now in demand.”

In 1495, the natives attempted a rebellion, which Columbus brutally put down. According to a witness to the slaughter, “The soldiers mowed down dozens with point blank volleys, loosed the dogs to rip open limbs and bellies, chased fleeing Indians into the bush to skewer them on sword and pike, and with God’s aid soon gained a complete victory.” The Spanish reports of their own deliberate cruelty are legion. In the words of one observer, “For a lark they tore babes from their mother’s breast by their feet and dashed their heads against the rocks. The bodies of other infants they spitted ... together.” After losing in battle, many natives chose suicide rather than a life of slavery for the Spanish. As Pedro de Córdoba wrote in 1517:

Occasionally a hundred have committed mass suicide. The women, exhausted by labor, have shunned conception and childbirth ... Many, when pregnant, have taken something to abort and aborted. Others after delivery have killed their children with their own hands, so as not to leave them in such oppressive slavery.

The Spanish annihilation of the natives on Hispaniola was thorough and complete. At one point, the Spanish even hunted the natives for sport and then fed them to the dogs. Historians estimate the population of Hispaniola to have been as high as eight million upon Columbus’s arrival. By 1496, Columbus’s brother Bartholomew estimated the population of adults at 1.1 million. By 1516, the native population was only 12,000; and by 1555, there were no Native Americans remaining. Elsewhere in the Caribbean, what natives still survived had all been enslaved by the Spanish by 1525. Although the vast majority in this great holocaust surely died from European diseases such as influenza, the brutal Spanish policies of slavery and subordination clearly share the blame. What’s more, this pattern of genocide perpetrated by the Spanish was carried out on other Caribbean Islands as well, including the Bahamas, where Columbus first landed. By 1516, Spanish historian Peter Martyr reported that the Bahamas were “deserted.” Similar proceedings were repeated in Puerto Rico and Cuba.

1.2d The Conquistadores

Very early in the sixteenth century, the Spanish ceased to view the New World as an obstacle to reaching Asia’s wealth and began to look at the New World as a place that could provide riches for Spain, in and of itself. Thus began the era of the **Conquistadores**. In 1519, the Spanish, under

Conquistadores

Spanish explorers and conquerors of the Native American peoples in the sixteenth century

Hernán Cortés, began an exploration of Mexico with the purpose of finding and conquering a great kingdom that they had heard of during their conquest of the Caribbean. Aided by a native woman named Malintzin, whom Cortés received from a native chief in the Yucatan, Cortés eventually found the capital of the Aztec empire at Tenochtitlan (present-day Mexico City). The name Aztec was given to them by the Spanish; the people referred to themselves as Mexicans. The Aztec leader, **Moctezuma II**, also known as Montezuma II or, more accurately, Motecuhzoma II Xocoyotzin, mistook the Spaniards for the coming of the Aztec god Quetzalcoatl, whose arrival had been prophesied in the Aztec religion. Malintzin had previously informed Cortés about the legend of Quetzalcoatl, encouraging Cortés to don some native ceremonial regalia indicating to the Aztecs that he was indeed the prophesied god. Hoping to please the god, Moctezuma II sent Cortés not only a large quantity of food soaked in human blood but also a large golden disk the size of a cartwheel—proof of the Aztec’s wealth. Moctezuma II welcomed the Spanish into Tenochtitlan and presented Cortés and his men with gifts, but Cortés quickly took Montezuma hostage and held him under house arrest. Cortés then ruled from the background, attempting to use Montezuma as a puppet until the Aztecs revolted on June 30, 1520. Cortés and his men were forced to flee from Tenochtitlan to Tlaxcala, approximately one hundred miles away, where they made an alliance with an Aztec enemy, the Tlaxcalans. Cortés and his men had also left behind the deadly smallpox virus, producing an epidemic so horrible in Tenochtitlan that the Aztecs lacked the manpower to bury all the bodies.

In the spring of 1521, Cortés, his men, and tens of thousands of Tlaxcalan allies laid siege to the city. Cortés destroyed the Aztec’s food and water supplies and burned the magnificent Aztec public buildings, marketplaces, parks, gardens, and aviaries containing thousands of wondrous birds. The city that the Spanish had, just months earlier, described as the most beautiful city on earth, quickly became a place of rubble, dust, flame, and death. Because the city was built on canals, burning was not always the most efficient means of destruction, so the Spanish crushed houses and other buildings and piled the debris into the canals. Cortés wrote that his intention was to kill everyone in Tenochtitlan, and that there were so many bodies in the streets that the Spanish were forced to walk upon them. Lastly, the Spanish burned the books of Aztec religion and learning, and fed Aztec priests to Spanish dogs.

The Spanish conquerors fanned out from Tenochtitlan, searching for more gold and plunder. As a result, 95 percent of the indigenous populations of Mexico and South America would perish. It is estimated that the indigenous population in the Western Hemisphere just before the arrival of Columbus was approximately eighty million—equal to that of Europe. It is also estimated that only approximately 5 percent of these Native Americans lived in what is now the United States and Canada.

In addition to the slaughter initiated by Columbus, it is estimated that Spanish troops under Pedro de Alvarado alone were responsible for as many as five million deaths in southern Mexico and Central America between 1525 and 1540. In South America, the Spanish under **Francisco Pizarro** in 1532 repeated the pattern established by Columbus, Cortés, and Alvarado when they conquered the Incan empire of six million people, using only two hundred men. Pizarro and his men captured the Incan Emperor Atahualpa and held him for ransom. The Incas responded with a pile of gold and silver equal to fifty years’ worth of precious metal production in Europe in the



"Monumento de Moctezuma y Hernan Cortés," by Fabioj at Spanish Wikipedia, available under a CC by SA 3.0 license via Wikimedia

Monument marking the encounter between Moctezuma II Xocoyotzin and conquistador Hernán Cortés in 1519

Hernán Cortés

The Spanish conquistador who conquered the Aztecs

Moctezuma II

Chief of the Aztecs; also known as Montezuma II or Motecuhzoma II Xocoyotzin

Francisco Pizarro

The Spanish conquistador who conquered the Incas

sixteenth century. After receiving the ransom, the Spanish then executed Atahualpa anyway. Over the next hundred years, 95 percent of the Incan population would perish.

To replace the Native American population, the Spanish immigrated to the New World in large numbers. In 1574, long before the English had established a successful colony in the New World, the Spanish population in Mexico City alone exceeded 15,000; throughout the New World, it exceeded 160,000. By 1650, over 450,000 Spaniards had immigrated to the New World, more than two hundred Spanish cities and towns had been founded, and Mexico City boasted a university. Most of the immigrants were single males seeking economic opportunity. The principal agency used by Spain to transplant the culture of the Old World to the New was the Catholic Church—the only church in existence in the Western world at the time that the Spanish colonial system was founded. The Church established missions throughout the New World, many of which are located in Florida and the southwestern United States.

The Spanish colonial policy—unlike that which was later introduced by the English—considered native people subjects of the sovereign and American resources as wealth to be plundered. The result was a fusion of cultures still characteristic of Latin America today, as well as the shipment of 200 tons of gold and 16,000 tons of silver back to Spain between 1500 and 1650. The influx of metals into Spain, however, had the negative effect of producing inflation since gold and silver were at that time used as currency; therefore the money supply expanded faster than the growth of tangible goods.

The Spanish colonial system also extended into territory that has since become part of the United States. As early as 1512, Ponce de León had begun launching expeditions from the West Indies to explore the coast of Florida, returning on a second voyage some seven years later. In 1528 Pánfilo de Narváez led a disastrous expedition of about six hundred men—equipped with horses, livestock, and other supplies—which landed on the Gulf Coast of Florida. After exploring the region extending westward to Alabama and encountering illness, starvation, and hostile American Indians, the survivors of the expedition were forced to kill their horses and build barges of horse hide in an attempt to follow the coastline to Mexico. The barges foundered, and the Spanish were forced ashore on the Texas coast. The Spanish then attempted to trek overland to Spanish settlements in Mexico. Only four members of the group, led by Cabeza de Vaca, reached Mexico City some eight years later, after suffering almost unbelievable hardship—including enslavement by native tribes in Texas. In 1539, **Hernando de Soto** and six hundred men landed in Florida, and de Soto and his men explored the southeastern US all the way to Texas. In 1542 De Soto himself died and was buried in the Mississippi River before his men turned back without ever finding another city of riches like Tenochtitlan.

1.2e The *Encomiendas*

The Spanish empire in the New World was primarily the effort of private entrepreneurs, with little direct support from the Spanish government. For individuals who desired to launch expeditions into the New World, it was required that they first get licenses from the Spanish government. Those who obtained licenses (***encomiendas***) were essentially rewarded with possession of conquered native villages. *Encomenderos* (those with *encomiendas*) were given the authority to demand labor from the natives, in return for legal protection and religious guidance.

1.2f Spanish Colonization in the United States

In 1565 **Pedro Menéndez de Avilés** founded St. Augustine, the earliest continuous settlement within the present limits of the United States. Spanish expansion into what is today Texas, the American Southwest, and California was sufficiently influential to leave an enduring imprint. Spanish soldiers and Franciscan priests established a chain of garrisons and mission stations throughout the territory. Santa Fe, New Mexico, was founded in 1610 and San Antonio, Texas, in 1718. In the eighteenth century more than twenty missions were organized in California, including San Diego, San Francisco, and Santa Barbara.

Hernando de Soto

Spanish conquistador who explored the southeastern United States

Encomiendas

Licenses granted by Spain to adventurers in the New World that essentially rewarded them with possession of conquered native villages

Pedro Menendez de Aviles

Founded St. Augustine in 1565

By the end of the sixteenth century, the Spanish empire was the largest in the history of the world, encompassing most of South America, Central America, Mexico, the Caribbean, Florida, and the southwestern United States, in addition to Spain itself. The Spanish, however, had imposed upon the colonies a small ruling class, which existed to serve the Spanish crown, and had not established anything resembling European society in the New World. The fact that the Spanish colonists were largely single men (men outnumbered women ten to one) meant that the Spanish men in America typically took Native American wives, and thus fused bloodlines and cultures. Eventually, what emerged in Latin America became known as the “fifth great race” (the Latin Americans). The majority of people in Latin America by the eighteenth century were **mestizos** or persons of mixed Spanish and Native American ethnicity. However, men from the Spanish ruling class were more likely than commoners to bring their European wives with them; consequently, Latin America became dominated, by an ethnically European elite class ruling over the mestizo masses. The Europeans also brought approximately eleven million African slaves to Latin America, further diversifying the ethnic mix. Brazil and the Caribbean were the destination for most of the African slaves, and the population of Haiti is still over 90 percent of African origin in the twenty-first century. In contrast, in some of the more remote regions of Latin America, such as in the Amazon Basin and some areas high in the Andes, the Spanish mixed very little with the indigenous populations; thus, the Native American populations in those areas remained much larger than those in North America and have remained so through the present. The Spanish also brought the first Africans to land in what is now the United States in what is believed to be present-day South Carolina or northern Georgia in 1526. The 100 African slaves were brought by the Spanish to dig for gold and replace enslaved Native Americans who had perished doing the same. The African slaves quickly revolted within weeks after their arrival in what is now the US and vanished into the hinterland. Thus, the first enslaved Africans brought to what is now the US were also the first to revolt, but what happened to them afterward is unknown. A few weeks later, the Spanish abandoned the colony due to disease and starvation.

The Spanish are also believed to have brought the first Asian people to land in what is now the US on October 15, 1587, in Morro Bay, near what is now San Luis Obispo, California. A landing party from a Spanish galleon sailing out of Manila that included Filipinos claimed the area for Spain and erected a cross made of branches. Two days later, the landing party was attacked by natives and one of the Filipinos was killed, the first death of an Asian person in what is now the United States. Eight years later in 1595, Filipino sailors were aboard the Spanish galleon San Agustín when it shipwrecked in the San Francisco Bay area on its way to Acapulco.

The Spanish imported new crops to the Western Hemisphere, including sugar cane and bananas, and new livestock, including cattle, pigs, sheep, goats, cats, chickens, and, perhaps most importantly, horses. With no natural enemies, the new animals grew rapidly in population in the new land. The American Indians quickly learned to cultivate the new crops and domesticate the new animals—thus furthering the spread of the flora and fauna, but also changing forever the Native American cultures. By the mid-nineteenth century, for instance, the Great Plains Indians of North America were known for their expertise in horsemanship. The exchange was not all one way, however. The Spanish also brought New World crops, including potatoes, corn, tomatoes, and tobacco, back with them to Europe along with Native American slaves—and an epidemic of syphilis. This transatlantic exchange of people and goods became known as the **Columbian exchange**. The impact of the Columbian exchange on Europe cannot be understated. Without it, the Irish would not be known for their potatoes, nor the British for their fish and chips. The Germans would not have their potato salad nor their pom frites, and the Italians would not have their tomatoes and red peppers in their food. Also, the Spanish would not have their famous tomato-throwing-food-fight festival at Bunol known as La Tomatina.

The sixteenth century belonged to the Spanish, who had not only discovered the New World but also exploited it for their own enrichment. As the sixteenth century came to a close, however, the Spanish empire was beginning its decline; the Spanish were facing new challenges from the French, Dutch, and English in Europe, on the open seas, and in the New World. The Spanish had subdued the people of the New World and instituted the Columbian exchange, thus

Mestizos

Persons of mixed Spanish and Native American heritage

Columbian exchange

The exchange of food, clothing, language, plants, animals, and disease between Europe and the Americas



providing a model for those who would come later. The lesson that the Spanish example taught the rest of Europe was that there were riches in the New World for the taking. As other European powers rose to challenge Spanish dominance, they would launch their own expeditions purposed to do just that. The Treaty of Tordesillas benefited Portugal by, in effect, granting it a vast expanse east of the Andes in South America that, though not discovered until later, eventually became a flourishing Portuguese colony in what is now known as Brazil. With South America carved up between the Spanish and Portuguese, France, England, and the Netherlands looked to North America as a place to find their fortunes.



"Verrazzano," by Louis-Garden, 2006, from Greve in Chianti, Tuscany, Italy available under a CC by SA 3.0 license via Wikimedia

Statue of Giovanni da Verrazzano, an Italian-born explorer who sailed under the flag of France to seek out a Northwest passage to Asia, and the first of many to seek out such a route unsuccessfully

1.2g France in the New World

The earliest explorer to the New World sailing under the flag of France was Italian-born **Giovanni da Verrazzano**, who came to North America in 1524 in search of the **Northwest Passage**, believed to lead to Asia. Verrazzano sailed the East Coast of North America, from Nova Scotia to the Carolinas, but could find no such passage. A decade later, **Jacques Cartier** made the first of his three voyages (1534–1543) to North America in search of the Northwest Passage and a legendary wealthy kingdom known as Saguenay. Cartier sailed up the St. Lawrence River to the Great Lakes, but found neither Saguenay nor the Northwest Passage. The severity of the Canadian winters caused Cartier and the French to cease exploration of the northern latitudes of the New World until the seventeenth century when **Samuel de Champlain** revived French colonization efforts.

Champlain made eleven voyages, between 1600 and 1635, to the area that is now Canada, planting permanent settlements in **Quebec** in 1608 and **Acadia** (now Nova Scotia). New France, as the collection of French settlements in North America was called, was slow to grow, being virtually all male. Trading in furs was the most lucrative enterprise, and it flourished in a wilderness setting. Settlers from farms and villages intruded upon the wilderness and its inhabitants.

Champlain sought friendly relations with the American Indians, and the French colonists married and cohabited with American Indian women. Champlain desired to convert the American Indians to Christianity, and he attempted to ensure that there would be religious freedom for both Catholics and French Protestants (known as **Huguenots**) in the New World. Champlain's efforts at ecumenism were thwarted in 1625, however, when France declared that only the Catholic religion could be practiced in New France.

By the 1630s, the Society of Jesus, also called the **Jesuits**—a well-educated but religiously uncompromising Catholic order—had begun establishing missions in New France. Though the Jesuits had little tolerance for Protestants, they allowed Native American converts to retain all aspects of their native cultures that did not conflict with Catholicism. By 1670, the Jesuits had converted ten thousand American Indians to Christianity. Their efforts were hindered, however, by the fact that they often performed baptisms for American Indians who were dying of smallpox. Other American Indians perceived a correlation between death and baptism, and therefore resisted conversion. This resistance to conversion helped French fur traders eventually become more influential with the American Indians than the Jesuits. Instead of the focal point being the

Giovanni da Verrazzano

Earliest explorer to the New World sailing under the flag of France, in 1524

Northwest Passage

A nonexistent water passage sought by the Europeans, believed to cut through North America to Asia

Jacques Cartier

French explorer who explored from the St. Lawrence River to the Great Lakes (1534–1543) in search of the Northwest Passage and a legendary, wealthy kingdom known as Saguenay, but found neither

Samuel de Champlain

Champlain made eleven voyages between 1600 and 1635 to the area that is now Canada, planting permanent settlements in Quebec (in 1608) and Acadia (now Nova Scotia)

Quebec

An area of French Canada along the St. Lawrence River at Montreal and Quebec City

Acadia

An area of French Canada along the Atlantic, in what is now Nova Scotia

Huguenots

French Protestants

Jesuits

A well-educated, but religiously uncompromising Catholic order that established missions in New France

Jesuit missions, approximately 25 percent of the population of New France became concentrated in three fur-trading cities on the St. Lawrence River: Montreal, Three Rivers, and Quebec.

Beginning in 1663, King Louis XIV and his minister, **Jean Baptiste Colbert**, began exercising tighter control over New France. Government consisted of a governor and an intendant (judge), as well as soldiers sent to New France to protect the king's possession. In an effort to boost population growth, Colbert sent 774 women to New France and offered bonuses to couples who produced large families. Families were provided with land, livestock, seeds, and tools. Colbert also threatened to impose fines on fathers whose children failed to marry before the end of their teens. In five years the population in New France doubled. By 1700, the population of New France had grown to an estimated fourteen thousand. The French developed wheat agriculture on the fertile land along the St. Lawrence River, and New France was self-sufficient in food production by 1700. The success of agriculture combined with the fur trade to make New France economically prosperous, but the harsh Canadian winters caused most French immigrants to the New World to begin to look elsewhere.

The French encouraged exploration further inland, sending Jesuit priests along with specially selected explorers. In 1673, **Father Jacques Marquette**, whose personal goal was to establish missions among the Illinois natives, was ordered by his superior in Quebec to accompany Louis Joliet (picked by the governor of New France) to explore the "Great River," the Mississippi. Accompanied by five trappers, Marquette and Joliet followed the Wisconsin River down to the Mississippi River, which awed them with its grandeur. No less a surprise, downstream they found the roaring Missouri River, emptying into the Mississippi.

Marquette kept a lively journal describing the buffalo, the Native Americans they met, the heat—it was mid-July—and their experiences and encounters along the route. After feasting on dog meat and other delicacies with the Indians along the Arkansas River, the explorers decided to return to Canada—in part because of their fear of capture by the Spanish, should they proceed to the mouth of the Mississippi.

Robert de La Salle launched a less successful expedition in 1682, although he did reach the mouth of the Mississippi. These expeditions not only gave New France a strong claim to the interior of the territory of mid-America but also encouraged the French to fortify the Mississippi and Ohio rivers, laying the groundwork for an inevitable clash of interests between the British and French in North America. The French also developed colonies in the West Indies at St. Dominique (Haiti), Guadeloupe, and Martinique, based on sugar plantation agriculture and African slave labor.

Jean Baptiste Colbert

French minister to the king who fostered population growth in New France

Father Jacques Marquette

Jesuit priest who explored the Mississippi River in 1673

Robert de La Salle

Explored the Mississippi for France in 1682

John Cabot

First English explorer to North America in 1497

Sir Walter Raleigh

Responsible for planting the English colony at Roanoke

Roanoke

The first English attempt at colonization in North America in 1585, which ended in failure in 1588

1.2h English Expansion

Although **John Cabot**, representing the English crown, explored the eastern coast of North America within a decade of Columbus's voyage (1497), successful English settlement was delayed for a century. Cabot himself landed on the North American coast, perhaps at Newfoundland or Labrador, but did not journey further than the range of a crossbow from the shore line. The English would not attempt to establish a settlement in North America until 1583, when Humphrey Gilbert led an expedition to Newfoundland. Though Gilbert was successful in at least landing on the coast of Newfoundland, he was proceeding along the coast of the island in search of a good place for a military outpost when he became caught in a storm and was lost at sea, thus leaving England without a North American colony.

1.2i The Lost Colony of Roanoke

Undeterred by Gilbert's failure, in 1585 **Sir Walter Raleigh** dispatched a group under the command of Richard Grenville to an island called **Roanoke**, off the coast of North Carolina. The English experienced problems with the native peoples almost immediately when the English accused the natives of theft in the case of a missing silver cup. In retaliation, the English destroyed a native village, leading to enmity with them. When Sir Francis Drake arrived on the island in the spring of 1586, the colonists boarded his ship and abandoned the colony. The next year (1587), Raleigh dispatched another expedition of ninety-one men, seventeen women, and nine children, who

he hoped would begin a successful plantation. Shortly after arrival, one of the women gave birth to a daughter, Virginia Dare, who was the first person born in North America to English parents. Dare's grandfather, John White, returned to England a few weeks after her birth to recruit more settlers and bring more supplies. When he returned to Roanoke in 1590, he found the island deserted with no clues to the fate of the settlers, other than the inscription "Croatoan" carved on a post.

Theories abound as to what happened to the settlers. Some argue that they were all killed in a war with the American Indians; others argue that they were adopted by the natives and then taken off the island. Perhaps segments of both theories are correct, but no conclusive evidence has ever been found to prove either. In any case, it would be twenty years before another English group would attempt to establish a colony in North America.

In spite of the failure at Roanoke, other factors would lead to further English colonization attempts in North America. The economic, religious, and political factors that led to the establishment of the English colonies were entirely different from those that had influenced the Spanish colonies. Two outstanding economic changes took place in trade and agriculture. Whereas no trading companies flourished in 1500, over two hundred English trading companies were operating aggressively by 1600, including the Muscovy Company (1553), the Levant Company (1592), and the famous East India Company (1600). In 1500, German and Italian merchants dominated English trade. By 1600, this domination had been eliminated, and a strong group of English merchants had emerged. In 1500, most of the raw wool raised in England was shipped to Flanders to be made into cloth. By 1600, the textile industry in England absorbed much of the wool produced there.

These economic changes had a direct effect upon the development of the English colonies. The first three successful English colonies in America—Plymouth, Virginia, and Massachusetts Bay—were planted by cooperatively owned, joint-stock companies, precursors of modern corporations, in which a number of investors pooled their capital. Many of those engaged in the American enterprises had gained their experience in trading elsewhere, and they continued to participate in

trading enterprises throughout the world. As Charles M. Andrews, a prominent historian of the colonial period, has written: "English America would hardly have been settled at this time had not the period of occupation coincided with the era of capitalism in the first flush of its power."

This experience in trade influenced mercantilist thought in England. Mercantilism embodied a set of economic ideas held throughout Western Europe from 1500 to 1800, though the details differed from country to country. The mercantilists advocated that the economic affairs of the nation should be regulated to encourage the development of a strong state. A number of propositions were customarily included in this policy: A nation could become stronger by exporting more than it imported, resulting in a "favorable balance of trade." National self-sufficiency could be encouraged by subsidy of domestic manufacturers. A nation's wealth was to be measured by the volume of precious metals it could obtain (thus the emphasis on the accumulation of bullion). Labor should be regulated for the well-being and benefit of the state. And colonies should be established to provide the nation with those raw materials that it was unable to produce at home.



"Sir Walter Raleigh," by William Segar, circa 1598, oil on canvas courtesy of National Gallery of Ireland, via Wikimedia. US-PD

Sir Walter Raleigh dispatched two groups to the island of Roanoke. The first expedition experienced irreconcilable difficulties with the natives, and the second disappeared mysteriously.



"Virginia Dare," 1871 advertising lithograph from F. Heppenheimer & Co, courtesy of Library of Congress

A tobacco brand was named for Virginia Dare, the first person born in North America to English parents.



"Henry VIII king of England," circa 1537, oil on canvas courtesy of Walker Art Gallery via Wikimedia, US-PD

With Parliament's help, King Henry VIII of England broke with the Roman Catholic Church and established the Anglican Church, which made him the ecclesiastical sovereign of England.

King Henry VIII

King of England (1509–1547) who broke England away from the Catholic Church—and began the Anglican Church—when the Catholic Church refused to grant him a divorce

Act of Supremacy (1534)

Declared that Henry VIII, instead of the pope, was the ecclesiastical sovereign of England

Puritans

Protestant religious group that viewed the Anglican Church as corrupt and sought the purification of it

Although this does not exhaust the list of propositions supported by mercantilist thinkers, it does show that trade was considered one of the most important measures of a nation's wealth, and that colonies were valued because they contributed to that wealth. In England, the mercantile emphasis between 1500 and 1600 was upon internal regulation. After 1600, the emphasis was on external regulation—particularly the commercial relationship between England and its colonies. The phenomenal increase in English mercantile activity not only provided an agency—the joint-stock company—to create colonies but also provided a national purpose for doing so.

A second significant economic change took place in agriculture. Between 1500 and 1600, an enclosure movement gained strength in Britain. Essentially, "enclosure" meant that smaller landholdings in certain areas of England were incorporated into larger holdings, forcing some people off the land. The result was a dislocation of population that caused many political thinkers to conclude that England was overpopulated, and that almost anyone should be permitted to go to the New World to reduce this burden. Spain, by contrast, had restricted immigration to selected individuals favored by the crown.

In the sixteenth century, the Protestant Reformation swept through Europe and profoundly affected the religious and political development of England, which in turn placed an enduring stamp upon its colonies in America. In 1500, England (and the Continent) was still within the fold of the Catholic Church. By 1600, not only had England broken away and established the national Anglican Church, but the religious rupture had also encouraged the rise of religious splinter groups.

The story of this religious rupture in England is too involved for extended treatment in this text; however, of particular importance is the fact that, in the process of waging his contest with the Roman Catholic Church, **King Henry VIII** enlisted the aid of Parliament. Parliament passed a series of enactments creating a national church, culminating in the **Act of Supremacy (1534)**, which made Henry—instead of the pope—the ecclesiastical sovereign of England. Eventually, by means of further parliamentary acts, lands in England belonging to the Roman Catholic Church were taken over by the king, greatly enhancing his wealth.

Although the ramifications of these actions permeated almost every sphere of English life, two consequences had a particularly strong effect on the colonies: (1) The king, by utilizing the support of Parliament, demonstrated that in practice, the authority of the crown was limited—a concept carried to the English colonies in America, and in direct opposition to Spanish doctrine (which held that the power of the sovereign was to be without restriction); and (2) the break with the Catholic Church opened the way for a wider diversity of religious groups.

Some people, believing that separation from the Catholic Church should never have taken place, remained Roman Catholics. Others felt that Henry VIII (and later, Elizabeth I) had not gone far enough. The **Puritans**, an impassioned and vocal minority, believed that the Reformation in England had stopped short of its goal—that ritual should be further simplified and that the authority of crown-appointed bishops should be lessened. However, they resolved to stay within the Anglican Church and attempted to achieve their goals—that is, to "purify" the church—without further division. The Separatists, a small minority, believed that each congregation should become its own judge of religious orthodoxy. They were no more willing to give allegiance to the crown than they had been to give it to the pope. This religious factionalism was transferred to the American colonies. Of the first four settlements, Virginia was Anglican; Plymouth was Separatist; Massachusetts Bay was Puritan; and Maryland was officially Catholic.

Early in the seventeenth century, a number of English "dissenters"—men and women who were dissatisfied with the political, economic, and/or religious conditions in England—were ready to migrate to the New World; and English trading companies provided an agency for this kind of settlement.

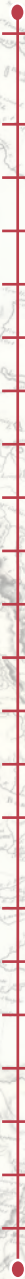
Map 1.1 Voyage of Exploration



Adapted from Universal Map, "Exploration and Empires, 1400 – 1700"

Timeline

MAP OF
NORTH AMERICA,
INCLUDING PART OF THE

- 
- 20,000–12,000 BCE* Asian peoples migrate to North America, perhaps across the land bridge on the Bering Strait.
 - 9,000 BCE Global warming leads to the extinction of mammoths and other large game animals.
 - 1,500 BCE Agriculture develops in North America.
 - 300 BCE Beginning of Anasazi culture
 - 900–1100 CE* Mississippian culture
 - 982 CE Erik the Red reaches North America.
 - 1001 CE Leif Erikson establishes a Norse settlement in North America.
 - 1095 CE Crusades begin.
 - 1150 CE Anasazi culture vanishes.
 - 1418 Portugal takes the Madeira Islands and begins colonization.
 - 1477 Marco Polo's *Travels* is published in Europe.
 - 1492 Columbus lands in the New World.
 - 1497 John Cabot is the first English explorer to North America.
 - 1498 Vasco da Gama reaches India via the Cape of Good Hope.
 - 1493–1555 Spanish conquests and European diseases decimate native populations in the Caribbean and Central America.
 - 1512–1565 Spain explores the southern portion of North America.
 - 1519–1521 Cortés conquers the Aztecs.
 - 1519–1522 Magellan's expedition sails around the world.
 - 1532–1535 Pizarro conquers the Incas.
 - 1565 Spain founds a colony at St. Augustine, Florida.
 - 1585–1588 The first English colonization attempt fails at Roanoke.
 - 1608 Champlain plants French colonies at Quebec and Acadia.

*Before Common Era

*Common Era

Chapter Summary

The first Americans migrated over a land bridge from Asia to the Western Hemisphere during the last ice age, some 15,000 years ago. Eventually, the descendants of these hunting and gathering societies would develop agriculture, including irrigated agriculture, 3,000 years before the arrival of Columbus. Advanced societies were developed in the Andes, Yucatan, and Central Valley of Mexico by the Incas, Mayas, and Aztecs, who built pyramids, produced advanced mathematics, and created accurate calendars.

The journeys of Marco Polo overland to Asia prompted Europeans to seek an easier route to Asia, via the sea, to exploit Asian wealth in gold and spices. Norse explorers, under Leif Erikson, began a colony in North America in 1001, but abandoned it the next year; and the Western Hemisphere remained unknown to Europeans. Portugal pioneered navigation and exploration under Prince Henry the Navigator in the fifteenth century, culminating in Vasco da Gama's successful voyage to Asia around the Horn of Africa in 1498. Meanwhile, Columbus, seeking a western water route to Asia on behalf of Spain, landed in the New World in 1492, touching off an age of European exploration and colonization. The Spanish conquered Native American societies with horses, swords, guns, and European diseases. Meanwhile, the English and French, who arrived later to the colonization game, would plant colonies in North America. The first permanent Spanish settlement in the US was at St. Augustine, Florida, established in 1565, while the French planted colonies in 1608 in what are now Quebec and Nova Scotia. The first English attempt at colonization in North America, at Roanoke in 1585, ended in failure in 1588.

Terms

Acadia	15	Jesuits	15
Act of Supremacy (1534)	18	King Henry VIII	18
Agricultural revolution	2	Land bridge to Alaska	1
Anasazi	4	Magellan, Ferdinand	9
Aztecs	3	Marquette, Father Jacques	16
Cabot, John	16	Mayas	3
Cahokia	5	Mestizos	14
Cartier, Jacques	15	Moctezuma II	12
Colbert, Jean Baptiste	16	Mound-builders	5
Columbian exchange	14	Northwest Passage	15
Conquistadores	11	Menendez de Aviles, Pedro	13
Cortés, Hernán	12	Pizarro, Francisco	12
da Verrazzano, Giovanni	15	Prince Henry the Navigator	7
de Champlain, Samuel	15	Puritans	18
de La Salle, Robert	16	Quebec	15
de Soto, Hernando	13	Raleigh, Sir Walter	16
<i>Encomiendas</i>	13	<i>Requerimiento</i>	10
Erikson, Leif	6	Roanoke	16
Folsom Points	1	Tenochtitlan	3
Huguenots	15	Treaty of Tordesillas	9
Incas	3	Vespucci, Amerigo	9

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Pop Quiz

1. The discovery of the Folsom Points suggests that the earliest immigrants to America arrived _____.
 - a. 10,000 years ago
 - b. 6,000 years ago in the Garden of Eden
 - c. In 1492
 - d. 1,000,000 BCE
2. A Native American tribe with a reputation for cannibalism and bestiality was the _____ tribe.
 - a. Anasazi
 - b. Coahuiltecan
 - c. Karankawa
 - d. Maya
3. Which of the following best characterizes the Aztecs?
 - a. An elaborate political system
 - b. Temples that rival the pyramids of Egypt
 - c. A capital (Tenochtitlan) with over 250,000 in population
 - d. All of the above
4. Which of the following is true of the Iroquois?
 - a. They were matrilineal.
 - b. They built bark-covered longhouses of up to a hundred feet in length.
 - c. They formed a confederacy for mutual defense.
 - d. All of the above
5. In 1014, why did the Norseman abandon Vinland?
 - a. Because natives tortured Freydis by slicing her breasts.
 - b. The colony was wiped out by Indian attacks.
 - c. Because they may have quarreled amongst themselves.
 - d. They didn't; they froze to death in the harsh Canadian winter.
6. The new Portuguese ship that provided a boost to exploration was the _____.
 - a. caramel
 - b. caravel
 - c. catamaran
 - d. capri
7. On October 12, 1492, Columbus landed on _____.
 - a. Long Island
 - b. the site that would become Jamestown, Virginia
 - c. Plymouth Rock
 - d. an island in the Bahamas that he named "San Salvador"
8. The explorer who headed the first expedition to voyage around the world was _____.
 - a. Christopher Columbus
 - b. Ferdinand Magellan
 - c. Vasco de Gama
 - d. Amerigo Vespucci
9. What was the primary effect of the influx of gold and silver from the New World?
 - a. It made Spain the wealthiest nation in Europe for centuries to come.
 - b. It caused monetary inflation in Europe.
 - c. Spain abandoned the monetization of gold and silver.
 - d. All of the above
10. The Spanish who explored what is now the United States had which of the following in common?
 - a. They all found "cities of gold."
 - b. None of them found riches on the scale of Tenochtitlan.
 - c. They all rejected Catholic Christianity.
 - d. They all established permanent settlements in what is now the U.S.
11. Mestizos are _____.
 - a. persons of Spanish ancestry
 - b. persons of Native American ancestry
 - c. persons of mixed Spanish and Native American ancestry
 - d. persons who do not know their ancestry
12. The French explorer who planted settlements in Acadia and Quebec was _____.
 - a. Giovanni da Verrazzano
 - b. Stephen Colbert
 - c. Samuel de Champlain
 - d. Rene Quebec
13. The first successful English colony in what is now the United States was planted by _____.
 - a. a Christian mission
 - b. land grants from the King to an English proprietor
 - c. a joint-stock company
 - d. none of the above
14. Ferdinand Magellan was killed in the _____.
15. The Protestant Reformation split the _____.

ANSWER KEY:

1. a 2. c 3. d 4. d 5. c 6. b 7. d 8. b
9. b 10. b 11. c 12. c 13. c 14. Philippines
15. Catholic Church



Short Answer Questions

1. How did humans first immigrate to America?
2. What accomplishments of the Mayas indicate an advanced society?
3. What is the significance of Monks Mound?
4. Why do historians view Prince Henry the Navigator as a forward-looking leader?
5. What were the provisions of the Treaty of Tordesillas?
6. What was the purpose of the Requerimiento?
7. Who founded St. Augustine, and why is the city noteworthy?
8. How did French colonists act toward the American Indians?
9. What propositions accompanied mercantilist policy?
10. What were the ramifications of the Act of Supremacy (1534)?

Essay Questions

1. Evaluate the impact of the agricultural revolution on the native cultures of the Americas.
2. Compare and contrast pre-Columbian, Native American civilizations.
3. Consider the political, economic, and technological factors that contributed to Portugal's early lead in Atlantic exploration.
4. Why do many in Latin America denounce Columbus and other Spanish explorers as villains rather than heroes?
5. How did Spanish colonization and the resultant Columbian exchange diversify the Americas?
6. Assess the strategies employed by France to colonize North America.
7. Identify developments in British trade and agriculture that fueled aggressive English colonization in the Americas.