16

The Acceleration of Global Contact

1450–1600

CHAPTER PREVIEW

Before 1500 Europeans were relatively marginal players in a centuries-old trading system centered on the Indian Ocean that linked Africa, Asia, and Europe. In this vibrant Afro-Eurasian trading world, Arab, Persian, Indian, African, and Chinese merchants competed for trade in spices, silks, and other goods. A century later, by 1550, the Portuguese search for better access to African gold and Asian trade goods had led to a new overseas empire in the Indian Ocean, and Spanish explorers had accidentally discovered the Western Hemisphere. Through violent conquest, the Iberian powers established large-scale colonies in the Americas, and northern European powers soon followed their example. The era of European expansion had begun, creating new political systems and forms of economic exchange as well as cultural assimilation, conversion, and resistance. This age of encounters laid the foundations for the modern world.

DEA/G. Dagli Orti/De Agostini/Getty Images

Portuguese Merchants in Japan

The arrival of the Portuguese in Japan in 1543 inspired a series of artworks depicting the *namban-jin*, or southern barbarians, as the Japanese called them. This detail from an early-seventeenth-century painted screen shows a Portuguese merchant with three South Asian slaves unloading trade goods from a merchant ship.

This chapter will explore the following questions:

THE AFRO-EURASIAN TRADE WORLD
What was the Afro-Eurasian trade world prior to the era of European exploration?

THE EUROPEAN VOYAGES OF DISCOVERY
How and why did Europeans undertake ambitious voyages of expansion?

CONQUEST AND SETTLEMENT
What was the impact of Iberian conquest and settlement on the peoples and ecologies of the Americas?

THE ERA OF GLOBAL CONTACT
How was the era of global contact shaped by new commodities, commercial empires, and forced migrations?

CHANGING ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS
How did new encounters shape cultural attitudes and beliefs in Europe and the rest of the world?

THE AFRO-EURASIAN TRADE WORLD

What was the Afro-Eurasian trade world prior to the era of European exploration?

During the Middle Ages, a type of world economy, known as the Afro-Eurasian trade world, linked the products, people, and ideas of Africa, Europe, and Asia. This trade world was centered on the Indian Ocean, where monsoon winds generated seasonal rhythms of travel. Over time, Indian Ocean trade was facilitated by the spread of Islam, which provided a common legal system, language, and faith, and also by the economic growth and political unification of China. Italian merchants served as middlemen who brought Eastern luxury goods to western Europe.

The Trade World of the Indian Ocean

Covering 20 percent of the earth's total ocean area, the Indian Ocean is the globe's third-largest waterway (after the Pacific and Atlantic). Moderate and predictable monsoon winds blow from the northeast between November and January; rougher winds blow from the south and southwest between April and August. By following the alternating directions of the monsoons, sailors profited from constantly favorable winds to maximize the speed of travel. In the fifteenth century, Arab navigator Ibn Majid published a book listing well-known trade routes in the Indian Ocean and the times of year when travel to and from different port cities was possible.

From the seventh through the fourteenth centuries, the volume and integration of Indian Ocean trade steadily increased, encouraged by two factors: the spread of Islam through much of the Indian Ocean world and the political unification and economic growth of China. Starting in the mid-seventh century, and eventually favored by the political stability and cultural unity of the Abbasid caliphate, Muslim Arab and Persian merchants expanded along the coast of East Africa and across the Indian Ocean to western India. A few centuries later, economic growth under the Song Dynasties (960–1279) enabled the Chinese to enter the Indian Ocean trade. Then, in the following Mongol era (1279–1368), Mongol emperors safeguarded the Silk Road overland trade routes through Central Asia and strengthened China's connections to the Indian Ocean world. The Venetian merchant Marco Polo's tales of his travels from 1271 to 1295 praised the splendors of the khan's court and the city of Hangzhou, which he described as "the finest and noblest in the world" in which "the number and wealth of the merchants, and the amount of goods that passed through their hands, was so enormous that no man could form a just estimate thereof."[1]

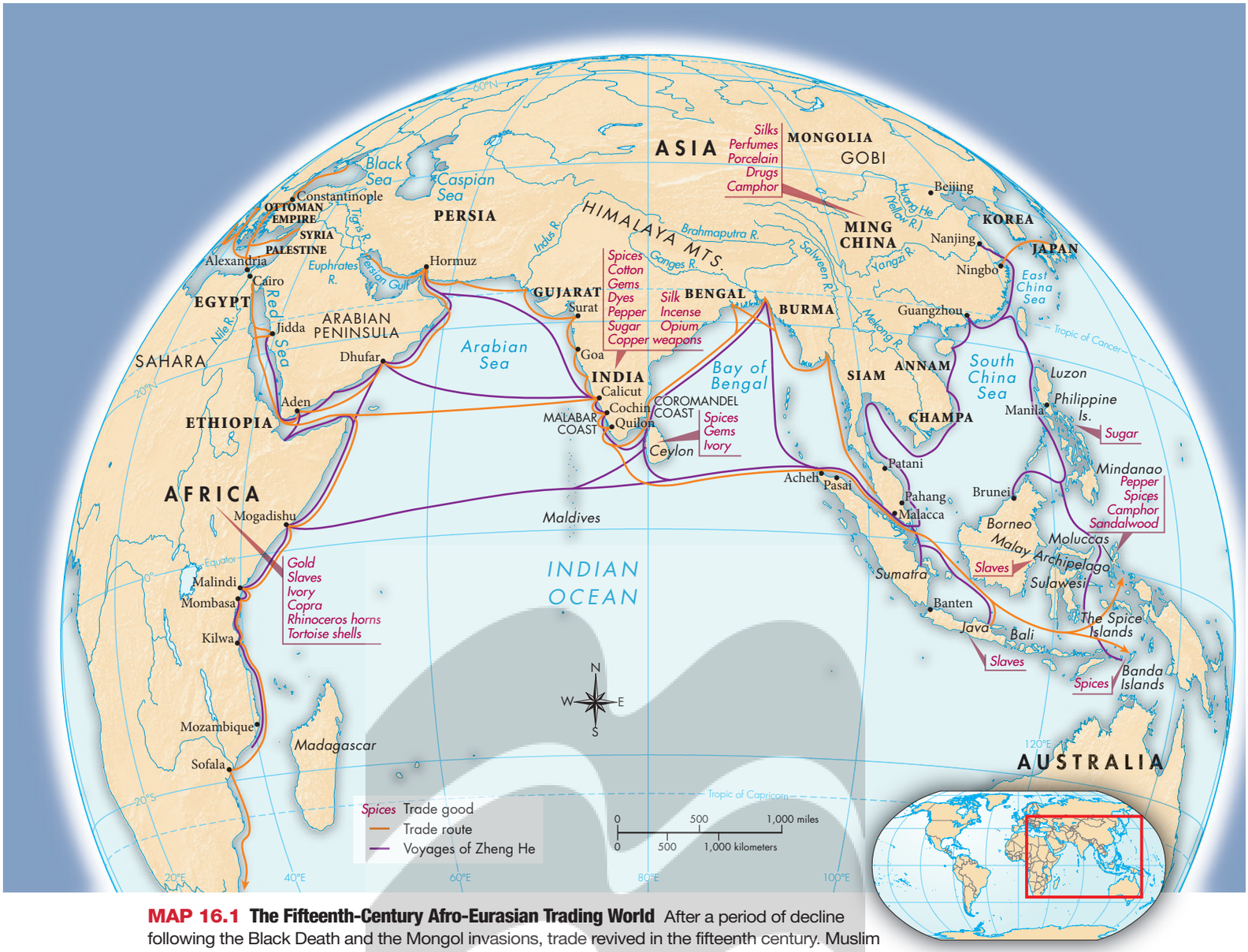
After the Mongols fell to the Ming Dynasty in 1368, China entered a new period of agricultural and commercial expansion, population growth, and urbanization (see "Ming China" in Chapter 21). The Ming emperor dispatched Admiral Zheng He (JEHNG HUH) on a remarkable series of naval expeditions that traveled the oceanic web as far as Aden in the Red Sea. From 1405 to 1433, each of his seven expeditions involved hundreds of ships and more than twenty thousand men. After the deaths of Zheng He and the emperor, the voyages ceased, but Chinese overseas traders continued vigorous activity in the South China Sea and throughout the Indian Ocean.

Shaped by monsoon patterns, Indian Ocean trade moved through three overlapping geographic circuits. The western zone, dominated by Arab traders, linked the east coast of Africa and the Arabian peninsula to the southwestern Malabar coast of India. The opposite extreme was a predominantly Chinese trade zone focused on the South China Sea that linked China to the busy trading posts of Southeast Asia (Map 16.1). The central zone of Indian Ocean trade linked the Indian subcontinent, and in particular the southeastern Coromandel coast, to Southeast Asia across the Bay of Bengal. Muslim Arab and Persian merchants who circumnavigated India on their way to trade in the South China Sea established trading posts along the southern coasts of east and west India, and cities such as Calicut and Quilon became thriving commercial centers. India was also an important contributor of goods to the world trading system. Most of the world's pepper was grown in India, and Indian cotton and silk textiles, mainly from the Gujarat region, were highly prized.

Peoples and Cultures of Southeast Asia

Just as environmental factors dictated the rhythms of Indian Ocean trade, they also shaped common ways of life and culture in Southeast Asia, a vast region composed of the northern mainland and a series of archipelagoes to the south and east. Since at least the first millennium B.C.E., the peoples of Southeast Asia have engaged in waterborne commerce. With trade came settlers from the Malay Peninsula (the southern extremity of the Asian continent), India, and China, resulting in the widespread adoption of Hinduism and

bride wealth In early modern Southeast Asia, a sum of money the groom paid the bride or her family at the time of marriage. This practice contrasted with the dowry in China, India, and Europe, which the husband controlled.



MAP 16.1 The Fifteenth-Century Afro-Eurasian Trading World After a period of decline following the Black Death and the Mongol invasions, trade revived in the fifteenth century. Muslim merchants dominated trade, linking ports in East Africa and the Red Sea with those in India and the Malay Archipelago. The Chinese admiral Zheng He followed the most important Indian Ocean trade routes on his voyages (1405–1433), hoping to impose Ming dominance of trade and tribute.

Buddhism as well as forms of monarchical rule influenced by these religious traditions.

Water brought trade, settlers, and culture; it also played a central role in the production of food. Cultivated in irrigated terraces, rice formed the staple food of the diet. The long coastlines and many rivers provided plentiful fish, crabs, and shrimp, and fishing served as the chief male occupation. With mountainous uplands and low-lying coastal plains and river basins, the region harbored rich biodiversity, allowing Southeast Asians to domesticate a large variety of fruits and other crops. Indigenous crops that were to play a key role in global trade included cloves, nutmeg, and sugarcane.

In comparison to India, China, or Europe after the Black Death, Southeast Asia was sparsely populated. People were concentrated in low-lying port cities and in areas of intense rice cultivation, which became political centers. The forested uplands were only loosely affiliated to state authority. Another way Southeast Asia differed from India, China, and Europe was the higher status of women, which was associated with their primary role in planting and harvesting rice. At marriage, which typically occurred around age twenty, the groom paid the bride a sum of money called **bride wealth**, which remained under her control. This practice was in sharp contrast to the Chinese, Indian, and European dowry, which came under the husband's control. Property was administered jointly, and family lineage was traced through both the maternal and paternal lines. All children, regardless of gender, inherited equally.

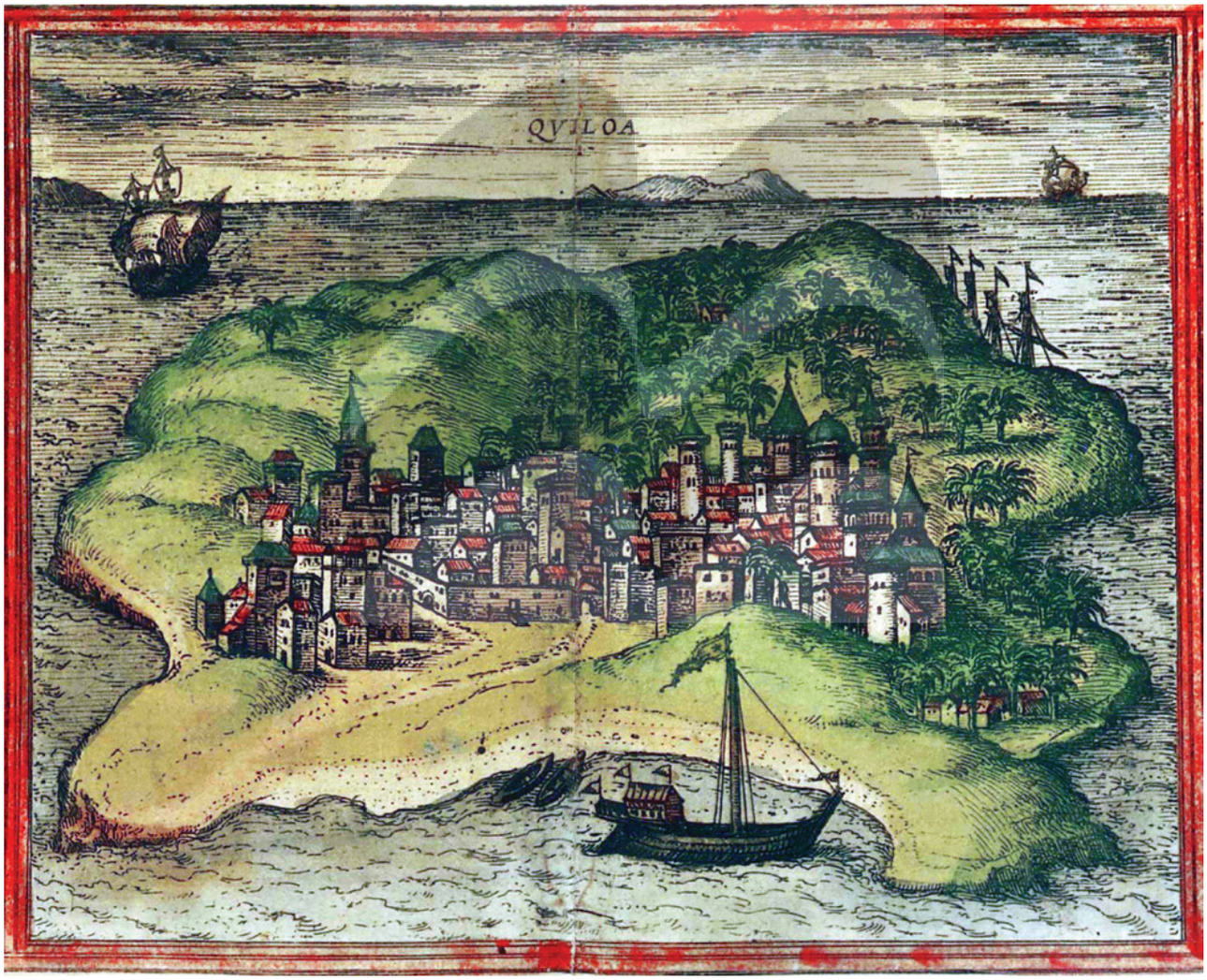
Respect for women carried over to the commercial sphere. Women participated in business as partners and independent entrepreneurs. When Portuguese and Dutch men settled in the region and married local women, their wives continued to play important roles in trade and commerce.

In contrast to most parts of the world other than Africa, Southeast Asian peoples also had an accepting attitude toward premarital sexual activity. Divorce carried no social stigma and was easily attainable by either partner if a pair proved incompatible.

Muslim Influences and African Trade

From its capital in Baghdad, the Abbasid caliphate (750–1258) controlled an enormous region reaching from Spain to the western borders of China, including the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf, the two major waterways linking the Indian Ocean trade world to the Mediterranean. The political stability endowed by the caliphate, along with the shared language of Arabic and the common legal system and culture of Islam, fostered economic prosperity and peaceful commercial relations.

On the east coast of Africa, Muslim traders established Swahili-speaking city-states that engaged directly in the Indian Ocean trade, exchanging ivory, rhinoceros horn, tortoise shells, and slaves for textiles, spices, cowrie shells, porcelain, and other goods. Cities such as Kilwa, Malindi, and Mogadishu were famed for their prosperity. From these bases and from ports like Aden on the Red Sea and Hormuz on the Persian Gulf, Arab, Persian, and Jewish traders traveled even farther across the trade routes of the Indian Ocean to China and Southeast Asia.



Island of Kilwa The small island of Kilwa, off the coast of modern-day Tanzania, was a vital center of Indian Ocean trade from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries. During this period, the sultanate of Kilwa controlled trade among the Swahili-speaking cities of the east coast of Africa; its merchants dealt in gold, silver, pearls, and porcelain. The arrival of the Portuguese in 1498 led to the loss of Kilwa's autonomy.
(From *Civitates Orbis Terrarum* [1572]/Pictures from History/Bridgeman Images)

After the Abbasids fell to the Mongols, the Mamluk rulers of Egypt proclaimed a new caliphate. Until its defeat by the Ottomans in 1517, the Mamluk empire was one of the most powerful polities on the continent. Its capital, Cairo, was a center of Islamic learning and religious authority as well as a major hub for goods moving between the Indian Ocean trade world and the Mediterranean.

West Africa also played an important role in world trade. In the fifteenth century the western part of the Sudan region and the Akan (AH-kahn) peoples living near present-day Ghana were major suppliers of gold. Transported across the Sahara by camel caravans, the gold was sold in ports along the Mediterranean. Inland nations that sat astride the north-south caravan routes grew wealthy from this trade. In the mid-thirteenth century the kingdom of Mali became an important player in the overland trade route, gaining prestige from its ruler Mansa Musa's fabulous pilgrimage to Mecca in 1324–1325. Desire to gain direct access to African gold motivated the initial Portuguese incursions into Africa.

Genoese and Venetian Middlemen

In the late Middle Ages, the Italian city-states of Venice and Genoa controlled European trade with the East. In 1304 Venice established formal relations with the Mamluk sultan, allowing Venetian merchants to purchase goods in Cairo for re-export throughout Europe. Venetians funded these purchases through trade in European woolen cloth and metal goods, as well as through shipping and trade in firearms and slaves.

Venice's ancient trading rival was Genoa. By 1270 Genoa dominated the northern route to Asia through the Black Sea. From then until the fourteenth century the Genoese expanded their trade routes as far as Persia and the Far East. In the fifteenth century, with Venice claiming victory in the spice trade, the Genoese shifted

Mansa Musa This detail from the *Catalan Atlas* of 1375, a world map created for the Catalan king, depicts a king of Mali, Mansa Musa (lower right), who was legendary for his wealth in gold. European desires for direct access to the trade in sub-Saharan gold helped inspire Portuguese exploration of the west coast of Africa in the fifteenth century. (From *The Catalan Atlas*, 1375, by Abraham Cresques/Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, France/Getty images)

focus from trade to finance and from the Black Sea to the western Mediterranean. When Spanish and Portuguese voyages began to explore the western Atlantic, Genoese merchants, navigators, and financiers provided their skills and capital to the Iberian monarchs.

A major element of Italian trade was slavery. Merchants purchased slaves in the Balkans and the Black Sea region. After the loss of the Black Sea trade routes to the Ottomans, the Genoese sought new supplies of slaves in the West, eventually seizing or buying and selling the Guanches (indigenous peoples from the Canary Islands), Muslim prisoners and Jewish refugees from Spain, and, by the early 1500s, both sub-Saharan and Berber Africans. With the growth of Spanish colonies in the New World, Genoese and Venetian merchants became important players in the Atlantic slave trade.

THE EUROPEAN VOYAGES OF DISCOVERY

How and why did Europeans undertake ambitious voyages of expansion?

Europe was by no means isolated before the voyages of exploration and the "discovery" of the New World. Italian merchants traded actively for West African gold and Indian Ocean luxury goods, but trade through intermediaries was slow and expensive. In the first decades of the fifteenth century, new European players entered the scene with novel technology, eager to spread Christianity and to find direct access to trade. First Portuguese and then Spanish expeditions undertook long-distance voyages that helped create the modern world, with immense consequences for their own continent and the rest of the planet.

Causes of European Expansion

European expansion had multiple causes. The first was economic. By the middle of the fifteenth century Europe was experiencing a revival of population and economic activity after the lows of the Black Death. This revival created renewed demand for luxuries, especially spices, from the East. Introduced by the Crusaders in the twelfth century, spices such as pepper, nutmeg, cinnamon, and cloves added variety to the monotonous European diet and were also used as incense for religious rituals and as perfumes, medicines, and dyes in daily life. Like other imported luxury goods, they demonstrated the wealth and sophistication of the social elite.

Religious fervor and the crusading spirit were the second important catalyst for expansion. Just seven months separated Isabella and Ferdinand's conquest of the emirate of Granada, the last Muslim state on the Iberian Peninsula, and Columbus's departure across the Atlantic. Overseas exploration thus transferred the militaristic religious fervor of the reconquista (reconquest) to new territories. With conquest, Iberians brought the attitudes and administrative practices developed during the reconquista to the New World. **Conquistadors** (kohn-KEES-tuh-dorz) (Spanish for "conqueror") fully expected to be rewarded with land, titles, and power over conquered peoples, just as the leaders of the reconquista had been.

Competition among European powers for the prestige and profit of overseas exploration was a third factor encouraging the steady stream of expeditions that began in the late fifteenth century. Once the profits from Portuguese expansion became evident, first the Spanish and then other European powers vied for direct access to global trade. This competition enabled merchants to gain legal authorization and financial support for their expeditions.

The small number of Europeans who could read provided a rapt audience for tales of fantastic places and unknown peoples. One of the most popular books of the time was the fourteenth-century text *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, which purported to be a first-hand account of the author's travels in the Middle East, India, and China.

Technology and the Rise of Exploration

In the quest to open new trade routes, the Portuguese were pioneers in seeking technological improvements in shipbuilding, weaponry, and navigation. Medieval European seagoing vessels consisted of single-masted sailing ships or galleys propelled by oars. Though adequate for short journeys that hugged the shoreline, such vessels were incapable of long-distance journeys or high-volume trade. In the fifteenth century the Portuguese developed the **caravel**, a two- or three-masted sailing ship. Its multiple sails and sternpost rudder made the caravel a more maneuverable vessel that required fewer crewmen to operate. The Portuguese

conquistador Spanish for "conqueror"; a Spanish soldier-explorer, such as Hernán Cortés or Francisco Pizarro, who sought to conquer the New World for the Spanish Crown.

caravel A small, maneuverable, three-masted sailing ship developed by the Portuguese in the fifteenth century that gave them a distinct advantage in exploration and trade.

Ptolemy's *Geography* A second-century work translated into Latin around 1410 that synthesized the classical knowledge of geography and introduced latitude and longitude markings.

were also the first to fit their ships with cannon, a key military advantage.

This period also saw great strides in cartography. Around 1410 a Latin translation reintroduced western Europeans to **Ptolemy's *Geography***. Written in the second century, the work synthesized the geographical knowledge of the classical world. It represented a major improvement over medieval cartography because it depicted the world as round and introduced latitude and longitude markings, but it also contained significant errors. Unaware of the Americas, Ptolemy showed the world as much smaller than it is, so that Asia appeared not very much to the west of Europe.

Navigational aids also improved. Originating in China, the magnetic compass was brought to the West in the late Middle Ages. By using the compass to determine their direction and estimate their speed of travel, mariners could track the course of a ship's voyage. In the late fifteenth century, Portuguese scholars devised a new technique of "celestial reckoning" that involved using the astrolabe, an instrument invented by the ancient Greeks, to determine the position of the stars. Commissioned by Portuguese king John II, a group of astronomers in the 1480s showed that mariners could determine their latitude at sea by using a specially designed astrolabe to determine the altitude of the polestar or the sun, and by consulting tables of these bodies' movements. This was a crucial step forward in maritime navigational techniques.

Much of the new technology that Europeans used on their voyages was borrowed from the East. Gunpowder, the compass, and the sternpost rudder were Chinese inventions. The triangular lateen sail, which allowed caravels to tack against the wind, was a product of the Indian Ocean trade world. Advances in cartography and navigation also drew on rich traditions of Jewish and Arab mathematical and astronomical learning. In exploring new territories, European sailors thus called on techniques and knowledge developed over centuries in China, the Muslim world, and trading centers along the Indian Ocean.

The Portuguese in Africa and Asia

Established during the reconquista in the mid-thirteenth century, the kingdom of Portugal had a long Atlantic coastline that favored maritime activity. By the end of the thirteenth century Portuguese merchants were trading fish, salt, and wine to ports in northern England and the Mediterranean. Nature favored the Portuguese: winds blowing along their coast offered passage to Africa, its Atlantic islands, and, ultimately, Brazil. Once they had mastered the secret to sailing against the wind to return to Europe (by sailing farther west to catch winds from the southwest), they were poised to pioneer Atlantic exploration.

In the early phases of Portuguese exploration, Prince Henry (1394–1460), a younger son of the king, played a leading role. A nineteenth-century scholar dubbed Henry "the Navigator" because of his support for Portuguese voyages of discovery. In 1415, Henry participated in Portugal's conquest of the port of Ceuta (sa-OO-tah), a major outlet for West African gold. Inspired by this victory, in the 1420s, under Henry's

Ptolemy's *Geography* The recovery of Ptolemy's *Geography* in the early fifteenth century gave Europeans new access to ancient geographical knowledge. This 1486 world map is a great advance over medieval maps but contains errors with significant consequences for future exploration. It shows a single continent watered by a single ocean, with land covering three-quarters of the world's surface. Africa is depicted as a peninsula in the world landmass, and the Indian Ocean as a landlocked sea, thus rendering the circumnavigation of Africa impossible. Australia and the Americas are nonexistent, and the continent of Asia is stretched far to the east, greatly shortening the distance from Europe to Asia via the Atlantic. (Royal Geographic Society/Getty Images)

Portuguese Mariner's Bronze Astrolabe, 1555 Between 1500 and 1635 over nine hundred ships sailed from Portugal to ports on the Indian Ocean, in annual fleets composed of five to ten ships. Portuguese sailors used astrolabes, such as the bronze example shown here, to accurately plot their positon. (Granger)

direction, the Portuguese began to settle the Atlantic islands of Madeira (ca. 1420) and the Azores (1427). In 1443 they founded their first African commercial settlement at Arguin on the West African coast.

By the time of Henry's death in 1460, his support for exploration had resulted in thriving sugar plantations on the Atlantic islands, the first arrival of enslaved Africans in Portugal, and new access to African gold. These achievements, which heralded a new phase of European exploitation of non-European peoples, places, and goods, were fully approved by the Catholic Church. In 1454, Pope Nicholas V issued a bull reiterating the rights of the Portuguese Crown to conquer and enslave non-Christians and recognizing Portuguese possession of territories in West Africa.

To consolidate their position in west African trade, the Portuguese established fortified trading posts, called factories, on the gold-rich Guinea coast (Map 16.2). By 1500 Portugal controlled the flow of African gold to Europe. In contrast to the Spanish, who later conquered the Americas, the Portuguese did not establish large settlements in West Africa and were unable to transform the lives and religious beliefs of people beyond their coastal holdings. Instead they pursued easier and faster profits by seeking entry to existing trading systems. For the first century of their relations, African rulers were equal partners with the Portuguese, benefiting from their experienced armies and European vulnerability to tropical diseases.

In 1488 Bartholomew Diaz (ca. 1451–1500) rounded the Cape of Good Hope at the southern tip of Africa (see Map 16.2), but poor conditions forced him to turn back. A decade later Vasco da Gama (ca. 1469–1524), commanding a fleet in search of a sea route to India, finally succeeded in rounding the Cape. With the help of a local pilot with experience in Indian Ocean trade, da Gama reached the port of Calicut in India. He returned to Lisbon with spices and Indian cloth, thus proving it was possible to conduct direct trade with Asia. Thereafter, a Portuguese convoy set out for passage around the Cape every March.

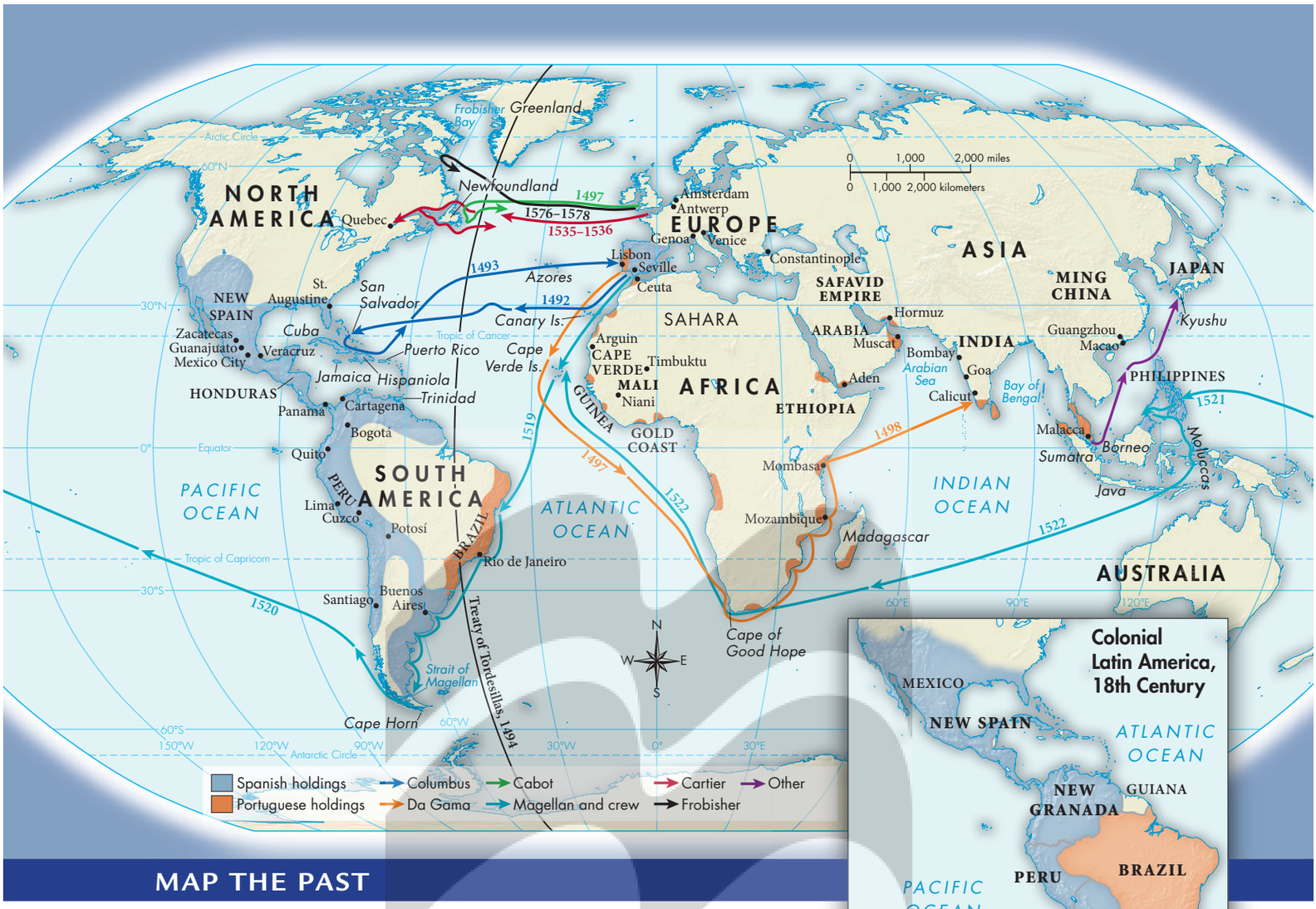
Lisbon became the entrance port for Asian goods into Europe, but this was not accomplished without a fight. From 1500 to 1515 the Portuguese used a combination of bombardment and diplomatic treaties to establish trading factories at Goa, Malacca, Calicut, and Hormuz, thereby laying the foundation for a Portuguese trading empire. The acquisition of port cities and their trade routes brought riches to Portugal, but, as in Africa, the Portuguese had limited impact on the lives and religious faith of peoples beyond coastal holdings.

Spurred by Portuguese success in overseas trade, the Spanish had also begun the quest for empire. Theirs was to be a second, entirely different mode of expansion, leading to the conquest of existing empires, large-scale settlement, and the forced assimilation of huge indigenous populations.

Spain's Voyages to the Americas

Christopher Columbus was not the first to cross the Atlantic. Ninth-century Vikings established short-lived settlements in Newfoundland, and it is probable that others made the voyage, either on purpose or accidentally, carried by westward currents off the coast of Africa. In the late fifteenth century, Portugal's control of trade via the eastern Cape route provided impetus for Christopher Columbus's attempt to find a westward route across the Atlantic to Asia.

A native of Genoa, Columbus was an experienced seaman and navigator, with close ties to Portuguese seafaring. He had worked as a mapmaker in Lisbon and spent time on Madeira, where his wife's father was a prominent sugar planter. He was familiar with *portolans*—written descriptions of the courses along



MAP THE PAST

MAP 16.2 Overseas Exploration and Conquest in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries The voyages of discovery marked a dramatic new phase in the centuries-old migrations of European peoples. This map depicts the voyages of the most significant European explorers of the period.

ANALYZE THE MAP Consider the routes and dates of the voyages shown. How might the successes of the earlier voyages have contributed to the later expeditions? Which voyage had the most impact, and why?

CONNECTIONS Do you think the importance of these voyages was primarily economic, political, or cultural? Why?

which ships sailed—and the use of the compass for dead reckoning. (He carried an astrolabe on his first voyage, but did not use it for navigation.)

Columbus was also a deeply religious man. He had witnessed the Spanish conquest of Granada and shared fully in the religious fervor surrounding that event. Like most Europeans of his age, Columbus understood Christianity as a missionary religion that should carry the hope of salvation across the earth.

Columbus first appealed to the Portuguese Crown in 1483 to support a voyage to find a westward passage to the Indies. When they refused, he turned to Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain, and finally won their backing in 1492. The monarchs agreed to make him viceroy over

ANALYZE WRITTEN EVIDENCE

Columbus Describes His First Voyage

On his return voyage to Spain in February 1493, Christopher Columbus composed a letter intended for wide circulation and had copies of it sent ahead to Isabella, Ferdinand, and others when his ship docked at Lisbon. Because the letter sums up Columbus's understanding of his achievements, it is considered the most important document of his first voyage.

■ Since I know that you will be pleased at the great success with which the Lord has crowned my voyage, I write to inform you how in thirty-three days I crossed from the Canary Islands to the Indies, with the fleet which our most illustrious sovereigns gave me. I found very many islands with large populations and took possession of them all for their Highnesses; this I did by proclamation and unfurled the royal standard. No opposition was offered.

I named the first island that I found "San Salvador," in honour of our Lord and Saviour who has granted me this miracle. . . . When I reached Cuba, I followed its north coast westwards, and found it so extensive that I thought this must be the mainland, the province of Cathay.* . . . From there I saw another island eighteen leagues eastwards which I then named "Hispaniola."† . . .

Hispaniola is a wonder. The mountains and hills, the plains and meadow lands are both fertile and beautiful. They are most suitable for planting crops and for raising cattle of all kinds, and there are good sites for building towns and villages. The harbours are incredibly fine and there are many great rivers with broad channels and the majority contain gold.‡ The trees, fruits and plants are very different from those of Cuba. In Hispaniola there are many spices and large mines of gold and other metals.§ . . .

The inhabitants of this island, and all the rest that I discovered or heard of, go naked, as their mothers bore them, men and women alike. A few of the women, however, cover a single place with a leaf of a plant or piece of cotton which they weave for the purpose. They have no iron or steel or arms and are not capable of using them, not because they are not strong and well built but because they are amazingly timid. All the weapons they have are canes cut at seeding time, at the end of which they fix a sharpened stick, but they have not the courage to make use of these, for very often when I have sent two or three men to a village to have conversation with them a great number of them have come out. But as soon as they saw my men all fled immediately, a father not even waiting for his son. And this is not because we have harmed any of them; on the contrary, wherever I have gone and been able to have conversation with them, I have given them some of the various things I had, a cloth and other articles, and received nothing in exchange. But they have still remained incurably timid. True, when they have been reassured and lost their fear, they are so ingenuous and so liberal with all their possessions that no one who has not seen them would believe it. If one asks for anything they have they never say no. On the contrary, they offer a share to anyone with demonstrations of heartfelt affection, and they are immediately content with any small thing, valuable or valueless, that is given them. I forbade the men to give them bits of broken crockery, fragments of glass or tags of any territory he might discover and to give him one-tenth of its material rewards.

Columbus's First Voyage to the New World, 1492–1493

Columbus and his small fleet left Spain on August 3, 1492. Inspired by the stories of Mandeville and Marco Polo, Columbus dreamed of reaching the court of the Mongol emperor, the Great Khan, not realizing that the Mongols had fallen to the Ming Dynasty in 1368. Based on Ptolemy's *Geography* and other texts, he expected to pass the islands of Japan and then land on the east coast of China. On October 12 Columbus landed in the Bahamas, which he christened San Salvador and claimed for the Spanish Crown. In a letter to Ferdinand and Isabella on his return to Spain, Columbus described the natives as handsome, peaceful, and primitive. Believing he was somewhere off the east coast of Japan, in what he considered the Indies, he called them "Indians," a name that was later applied to all inhabitants of the Americas. Columbus concluded that they would make good slaves and could quickly be converted to Christianity. (See "Analyze Written Evidence: Columbus Describes His First Voyage.")

Scholars have identified the inhabitants of the islands as the Taino (TIGH-noh) people. Columbus then sailed southwest, landing on Cuba on October 28. Deciding that he must be on the mainland of China near the city of Quinsay (now Hangzhou), he dispatched a small landing party to locate the city. The landing party found only small villages. This disappointment led Columbus to abandon his aim to meet the Great Khan and focus instead on finding gold or other resources. In early December he landed

laces, though if they could get them they fancied them the finest jewels in the world.

I hoped to win them to the love and service of their Highnesses and of the whole Spanish nation and to persuade them to collect and give us of the things which they possessed in abundance and which we needed. They have no religion and are not idolaters; but all believe that power and goodness dwell in the sky and they are firmly convinced that I have come from the sky with these ships and people. In this belief they gave me a good reception everywhere, once they had overcome their fear; and this is not because they are stupid—far from it, they are men of great intelligence, for they navigate all those seas, and give a marvellously good account of everything—but because they have never before seen men clothed or ships like these. . . .

In all these islands the men are seemingly content with one woman, but their chief or king is allowed more than twenty. The women appear to work more than the men and I have not been able to find out if they have private property. As far as I could see whatever a man had was shared among all the rest and this particularly applies to food. . . . In another island, which I am told is larger than Hispaniola, the people have no hair. Here there is a vast quantity of gold, and from here and the other islands I bring Indians as evidence.

In conclusion, to speak only of the results of this very hasty voyage, their Highnesses can see that I will give them as much gold as they require, if they will render me some very slight assistance; also I will give them all the spices and cotton they want. . . . I will also bring them as much aloes as they ask and as many slaves, who will be taken from the idolaters. I believe also that I have found rhubarb and cinnamon and there will be countless other things in addition. . . .

So all Christendom will be delighted that our Redeemer has given victory to our most illustrious King and Queen and their renowned kingdoms, in this great matter. They should hold great celebrations and render solemn thanks to the Holy Trinity with many solemn prayers, for the great triumph which they will have, by the conversion of so many peoples to our holy faith and for the temporal benefits which will follow, for not only Spain, but all Christendom will receive encouragement and profit.

This is a brief account of the facts.

Written in the caravel off the Canary Islands.**

15 February 1493

At your orders
THE ADMIRAL

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. How did Columbus explain the success of his voyage?
2. What was Columbus's view of the Native Americans he met? What differences between men and women does he report?
3. What did Columbus value in the peoples and lands that he found? What does his letter reveal about his motivations for exploration?

Source: J. M. Cohen, ed. and trans., *The Four Voyages of Christopher Columbus* (Penguin Classics, 1969), pp. 115–123.

*Cathay is the old name for China. In the logbook and later in this letter Columbus accepts the natives' story that Cuba is an island that they can circumnavigate in something more than twenty-one days, yet he insists here and during the second voyage that it is in fact part of the Asiatic mainland.

†Hispaniola is the second-largest island of the West Indies; Haiti occupies the western third of the island, the Dominican Republic the rest.

‡This did not prove to be true.

§These statements are also inaccurate.

**Actually, Columbus was off Santa Maria in the Azores.

on an island, called Ayti by its Taino inhabitants, that he renamed Hispaniola. The sight of Taino people on Hispaniola wearing gold ornaments suggested that gold was available in the region. In January, he headed back to Spain to report on his discovery.

On his second voyage, Columbus took control of Hispaniola and enslaved its indigenous peoples. On this and subsequent voyages, he brought settlers for the new Spanish territories, along with agricultural seed and livestock. However, Columbus's poor governing skills soon sparked revolt among the settlers on Hispaniola. He was forced to Spain, and a royal governor assumed control of the colony.

Spain "Discovers" the Pacific

Columbus never realized the scope of his achievement: that he had found a vast continent unknown to Europeans, except for the fleeting Viking presence centuries earlier. The Florentine navigator Amerigo Vespucci (veh-SPOO-chee) (1454–1512) realized what Columbus had not. Writing about his own discoveries on the coast of modern-day Venezuela, Vespucci stated: "Those new regions which we found and explored with the fleet . . . we may rightly call a New World." This letter was the first document to describe America as a continent separate from Asia. In recognition of Amerigo's bold claim, the continent was named for him.

Upon Columbus's return from the first voyage, Isabella and Ferdinand appealed to Spanish-born Pope Alexander VI for support in claiming the newly discovered territories. The pope proposed drawing an imaginary line down the Atlantic, giving Spain possession of all lands discovered to the west of the line and Portugal everything to the east. He enjoined both powers to carry the Christian faith to these newly discovered lands and peoples.

The **Treaty of Tordesillas** (tor-duh-SEE-yuhs) negotiated between Spain and Portugal in 1494 retained the pope's idea but moved the line further west as a concession to the Portuguese. This arbitrary division worked in Portugal's favor when in 1500 an expedition led by Pedro Álvares Cabral, en route to India, landed on the coast of Brazil, which Cabral claimed as Portuguese territory. (Because the line was imagined to extend around the globe, it meant that the Philippine Islands would eventually end up in Spanish control.)

The search for profits determined the direction of Spanish exploration. Because its revenue from Hispaniola and other Caribbean islands was insignificant compared to Portugal's enormous riches from the Asian spice trade, Spain renewed the search for a western passage to Asia. In 1519 Charles I of Spain (who was also Holy Roman emperor Charles V) commissioned Ferdinand Magellan (1480–1521) to find a direct sea route to Asia. Magellan sailed southwest across the Atlantic to Brazil, and eventually located the strait off the southern tip of South America that now bears his name (see Map 16.2). After passing through the strait into the Pacific Ocean in 1520, his fleet sailed north up the west coast of South America and then headed west into the Pacific.

Terrible storms, disease, starvation, and violence devastated the expedition. Magellan himself was killed in a skirmish in the Philippines, and only one of the five ships that began the expedition made it back to Spain. This ship returned home in 1522 with only eighteen men aboard, having traveled from the east by way of the Indian Ocean, the Cape of Good Hope, and the Atlantic. The voyage—the first to circumnavigate the globe—had taken close to three years.

Despite the losses, this voyage revolutionized Europeans' understanding of the world by demonstrating the vastness of the Pacific. The earth was clearly much larger than shown on Ptolemy's map. Magellan's expedition also forced Spain's rulers to rethink their plans for overseas commerce and territorial expansion. The westward passage to the Indies was too long and dangerous for commercial purposes. Thus Spain soon abandoned the attempt to oust Portugal from the Eastern spice trade and concentrated on exploiting its New World territories.

Early Exploration by Northern European Powers

Shortly following Columbus's voyages, northern European nations entered the competition for a northwest passage to the Indies. In 1497 John Cabot (ca. 1450–1499), a Venetian merchant commissioned by the English Crown, landed on Newfoundland. The next year he returned and explored the New England coast. These forays proved futile, and at that time the English established no permanent colonies in the territories they explored.

News of the riches of Mexico and Peru later inspired the English to renew their efforts, this time in the extreme north. Between 1576 and 1578 Martin Frobisher (ca. 1535–1594) made three voyages in and around the Canadian bay that now bears his name. Frobisher brought a quantity of ore back to England, but it proved to be worthless.

Early French exploration of the Atlantic was equally frustrating. Between 1534 and 1541 Frenchman Jacques Cartier (1491–1557) made several voyages and explored the St. Lawrence River of Canada, searching for a passage to the wealth of Asia. When this hope proved vain, the French turned to a new source of profit within Canada itself: trade in beavers and other furs. As had the Portuguese in Asia, French traders bartered with local peoples whom they largely treated as autonomous and equal partners. French fishermen also competed with the Spanish and English for the schools of cod they found in the Atlantic waters around Newfoundland.

CONQUEST AND SETTLEMENT

What was the impact of Iberian conquest and settlement on the peoples and states of the Americas?

Before Columbus's arrival, the Americas were inhabited by thousands of groups of indigenous peoples with distinct languages and cultures. These groups ranged from hunter-gatherer tribes organized into tribal confederations to settled agriculturalists to large-scale empires containing large cities and towns. The best estimate is that the peoples of the Americas numbered between 50 and 65 million in 1492. These numbers were decimated, and the lives of survivors radically altered, by the arrival of Europeans.

Spanish Conquest of the Aztec and Inca Empires

The first two decades after Columbus's arrival in the New World saw Spanish settlement of Hispaniola, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and other Caribbean islands. Based on rumors of a wealthy mainland civilization, the Spanish governor in Cuba sponsored expeditions to the Yucatán coast of the Gulf of Mexico, including one in 1519 under the command of Hernán Cortés

The Aztec Capital of Tenochtitlan This woodcut map was published in 1524 along with Cortés's letters describing the conquest of the Aztecs. As it shows, Tenochtitlan occupied an island and was laid out in concentric circles. The administrative and religious buildings were at the heart of the city, which was surrounded by residential quarters. Cortés himself marveled at the city in his letters: "The city is as large as Seville or Cordoba. . . . There are bridges, very large, strong, and well constructed, so that, over many, ten horsemen can ride abreast. . . . The city has many squares where markets are held. . . . There is one square . . . where there are daily more than sixty thousand souls, buying and selling. In the service and manners of its people, their fashion of living was almost the same as in Spain, with just as much harmony and order." (Newberry Library, Chicago/Bridgeman Images)

(1485–1547), a Spanish nobleman with considerable experience as an imperial administrator. Cortés and a party of several hundred Spaniards as well as enslaved Taino and African people landed on the Mexican coast on April 21, 1519. His camp soon received visits by delegations of Aztec leaders bearing gifts and news of their great emperor.

The **Aztec Empire**, formed in the early fifteenth century through an alliance of the Mexica people with other peoples in the Valley of Mexico, had expanded rapidly through conquest. At the time of the Spanish arrival, Moctezuma II (r. 1502–1520) ruled an empire of several million inhabitants from his capital at Tenochtitlan (tay-nawch-TEET-lahn), now Mexico City. The Aztec Empire was a highly organized state, with specialized law courts, advanced astronomy, mathematics, and engineering. Its cities featured urban plazas dominated by massive temple pyramids and with bustling markets selling jade, obsidian, and cacao supplied by regional trade networks. A hereditary nobility dominated the army, priesthood, and state bureaucracy and reaped the gains from the agricultural labor of the common people. The Aztec state practiced constant warfare against neighboring peoples to secure captives for religious sacrifices and laborers for agricultural and building projects. Once conquered, subject tribes paid continual tribute to the empire through their local chiefs.

The brutal nature of Aztec rule provided an opening for Cortés. Within weeks of his arrival, Cortés acquired translators who provided information on the empire and its weaknesses. (See "Think Like a Historian: Who Was Doña Marina?") In

Invasion of Tenochtitlan, 1519–1521

Treaty of Tordesillas The 1494 agreement giving Spain everything west of an imaginary line drawn down the Atlantic and giving Portugal everything to the east.

Aztec Empire An alliance between the Mexica people and their conquered allies, with its capital in Tenochtitlan (now Mexico City), that rose in size and power in the fifteenth century and possessed a sophisticated society and culture, with advanced mathematics, astronomy, and engineering.

THINK LIKE A HISTORIAN

Who Was Doña Marina?

In April 1519 Doña Marina was among twenty women given to the Spanish as slaves. Fluent in Nahuatl and Yucatec Maya (spoken by a Spanish priest accompanying Cortés), she acted as an interpreter and diplomatic guide for the Spanish. She had a close relationship with Cortés and bore his son, Don Martín Cortés, in 1522. Although no writings by Doña Marina survive, she figures prominently in both Spanish and indigenous sources on the conquest.

1 Cortés's letter to Charles I, 1522. This letter to Charles I contains one of only two written references to Doña Marina found in Cortés's correspondence with the king. He describes her as his "interpreter."

During the three days I remained in that city they fed us worse each day, and the lords and principal persons of the city came only rarely to see and speak with me. And being somewhat disturbed by this, my interpreter, who is an Indian woman from Putunchan, which is the great river of which I spoke to Your Majesty in the first letter, was told by another Indian woman and a native of this city that very close by many of Mutezuma's [Moctezuma's] men were gathered, and that the people of the city had sent away their women and children and all their belongings, and were about to fall on us and kill us all; and that if she wished to escape she should go with her and she would shelter her. All this she told to Gerónimo de Aguilar, an interpreter whom I acquired in Yucatán, of whom I have also written to Your Highness; and he informed me.

2 Díaz's account of the conquest of the Aztecs. Bernal Díaz del Castillo participated in the conquest of the Aztecs alongside Cortés. His historical account of the conquest, written much later in life, provides the lengthiest descriptions of Doña Marina.

Early the next morning many Caciques and chiefs of Tabasco and the neighbouring towns arrived and paid great respect to us all, and they brought a present of gold, . . . and some other things of little value. . . . This present, however, was worth nothing in comparison with the twenty women that were given us, among them one very excellent woman called Doña Marina, for so she was named when she became a Christian.

. . . Cortés allotted one of the women to each of his captains and Doña Marina, as she was good looking and intelligent and without embarrassment, he gave to Alonzo Hernández Puertocarrero. When Puertocarrero went to Spain, Doña Marina lived with Cortés, and bore him a son named Don Martin Cortés.

. . . Her father and mother were chiefs and Caciques of a town called Paynala. . . . Her father died while she was still a little child, and her mother married another Cacique, a young man, and bore him a son. It seems that the father and mother had a great affection for this son and it was agreed between them that he should succeed to their honours when their days were done. So that there should be no impediment to this, they gave the little girl, Doña Marina, to some Indians from Xicalango, and this they did by night so as to escape observation, and they then spread the report that she had died, and as it happened at this time that a child of one of their Indian slaves died they gave out that it was their daughter and the heiress who was dead.

The Indians of Xicalango gave the child to the people of Tabasco and the Tabasco people gave her to Cortés.

. . . As Doña Marina proved herself such an excellent woman and good interpreter throughout the wars in New Spain, Tlaxcala and Mexico (as I shall show later on) Cortés always took her with him, and during that expedition she was married to a gentleman named Juan Jaramillo at the town of Orizaba.

Doña Marina was a person of the greatest importance and was obeyed without question by the Indians throughout New Spain.

Marina . . . said that God had been very gracious to her in freeing her from the worship of idols and making her a Christian, and letting her bear a son to her lord and master Cortés and in marrying her to such a gentleman as Juan

ANALYZE THE EVIDENCE

1. How would you compare the attitudes toward Doña Marina displayed in Cortés's letter to the Spanish Crown (Source 1) and Díaz's account of the conquest (Source 2)? Why would Cortés downplay his reliance on Doña Marina in correspondence with the Spanish king?
2. What skills and experience enabled Doña Marina to act as an intermediary between the Spanish and the Aztecs? Based on the evidence, what role did she play in interactions between the Spanish and the Aztecs?
3. According to Díaz (Source 2), how did Doña Marina feel about her relationship with Cortés and the Spanish? How do you interpret this passage? Is there any evidence in the other sources that supports or undermines the sentiments he attributed to her?
4. Based on the evidence of these sources, what role did indigenous women play in relations between Spanish and Aztec men? How exceptional was Doña Marina?

Granger

3 **Doña Marina translating for Hernán Cortés during his meeting with Moctezuma.** This image was created by Tlaxcalan artists shortly after the conquest of Mexico and represents one indigenous perspective on the events.

Jaramillo, who was now her husband. That she would rather serve her husband and Cortés than anything else in the world, and would not exchange her place to be Cacica of all the provinces in New Spain.

Doña Marina knew the language of Coatzacoalcos, which is that common to Mexico, and she knew the language of Tabasco, as did also Jerónimo de Aguilar, who spoke the language of Yucatan and Tabasco, which is one and the same. So that these two could understand one another clearly, and Aguilar translated into Castilian for Cortés.

This was the great beginning of our conquests and thus, thanks be to God, things prospered with us. I have made a point of explaining this matter, because without the help of Doña Marina we could not have understood the language of New Spain and Mexico.

4 **The Florentine Codex.** In the decades following the conquest, a Franciscan monk, Bernardino de Sahagún, worked with indigenous partners to compile a history of Aztec society. Known today as the *Florentine Codex*, it contains images and text written in both Nahuatl and Spanish. The following excerpt describes the entry of the victorious Spanish into Tenochtitlan.

Next they went to Motecuhzoma's storehouse, in the place called Totocalco, where his personal treasures were kept. The Spaniards grinned like little beasts and patted each other with delight.

When they entered the hall of treasures, it was as if they had arrived in Paradise. They searched everywhere and coveted everything; they were slaves to their own greed. . . .

They seized these treasures as they were their own, as if this plunder were merely a stroke of good luck. And when they had taken all the gold, they heaped up everything else in the middle of the patio.

La Malinche [Doña Marina] called all the nobles together. She climbed up to the palace roof and cried: "Mexicanos, come forward! The Spaniards need your help! Bring them food and pure water. They are tired and hungry; they are almost fainting from exhaustion! Why do you not come forward? Are you angry with them?"

The Mexicas were too frightened to approach. They were crushed by terror and would not risk coming forward. They shied away as if the Spaniards were wild beasts, as if the hour were midnight on the blackest night of the year. Yet they did not abandon the Spaniards to hunger and thirst. They brought them whatever they needed, but shook with fear as they did so. They delivered the supplies to the Spaniards with trembling hands, then turned and hurried away.

PUT IT ALL TOGETHER

Using the sources above, along with what you have learned in class and in this chapter, imagine the events and experiences described in these sources from Doña Marina's point of view. Reflect on the various aspects of Doña Marina described in the sources — betrayed daughter, slave, concubine, mother, wife, interpreter, and commander — and write an essay that uses her experience to explore the interaction among Spanish, Aztec, and other indigenous groups during the conquest period.

Sources: (1) Hernán Cortés to Emperor Carlos V, 1522, in *Hernán Cortés: Letters from Mexico,* trans. and ed. Anthony Pagden (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), pp. 72–74; (2) Bernal Díaz del Castillo, *The Discovery and Conquest of Mexico, 1517–1521,* trans. A. P. Maudslay (New York: Noonday Press, 1965), pp. 62–63, 64, 66–67; (4) Miguel León-Portilla, ed., *The Broken Spears: The Aztec Account of the Conquest of Mexico,* pp. 68–69. Copyright © 1962, 1990 by Miguel León-Portilla. Expanded and Updated Edition © 1992 by Miguel León-Portilla.

September 1519, after initial hostilities in which many Spaniards died, Cortés formed an alliance with Tlaxcala (tlah-SKAH- lah), an independent city-state that had successfully resisted incorporation into the Aztec Empire.

In October a combined Spanish-Tlaxcalan force marched to the city of Cholula, which had recently switched loyalties from Tlaxcala to the Aztec Empire, and massacred many thousands of inhabitants, including women and children. Impressed by this display of ruthless power, other groups joined Cortés's alliance against Aztec rule. In November 1519, these combined forces marched on Tenochtitlan.

The Conquest of Peru, 1532–1533

Historians have long debated Moctezuma's response to the arrival of the Spanish. Despite the fact that Cortés was allied with his enemies, the emperor refrained from attacking the Spaniards and instead welcomed Cortés and approximately 250 Spanish followers into Tenochtitlan. Cortés later claimed that at this meeting the emperor, inspired by prophecies of the Spaniards' arrival, agreed to become a vassal of the Spanish king. Although impossible for historians to verify, Cortés and later Spanish colonists used this claim to legitimate violence against any who resisted their rule.

After spending more than seven months in the city, in an ambiguous position that combined the status of honored guests, occupiers, and detainees, the Spanish seized Moctezuma as a hostage. During the ensuing attacks and counterattacks, Moctezuma was killed. The city's population rose up against the Spaniards, who fled with heavy losses. In May 1521 the Spanish-Tlaxcalan alliance assaulted Tenochtitlan a second time, leading an army of approximately one thousand Spanish and seventy-five thousand Mesoamerican warriors.[2]

The fall of the Aztec capital in late summer 1521 was hard-won and greatly facilitated by the effects of smallpox, which had devastated the besieged population of the city. After establishing a new capital in the ruins of Tenochtitlan, Cortés and other conquistadors began the systematic conquest of Mexico, a decades-long and brutal process.

More remarkable than the defeat of the Aztecs was the fall of the remote **Inca Empire** in Peru. Living in a settlement perched more than 9,800 feet above sea level, the Incas were not in contact with the Mesoamerican civilization of the Aztecs. In 1438, the hereditary ruler of the Incas had himself crowned emperor and embarked on a successful campaign of conquest. At its greatest extent, the empire extended to the frontier of present-day Ecuador and Colombia in the north and to present-day Chile in the south, an area containing some 16 million people and 350,000 square miles.

Ruled from the capital city of Cuzco (KOOS-ko), the empire was divided into four major regions, each region into provinces, and each province into districts. Officials at each level used the extensive network of roads to transmit information and orders. While the Aztecs used a system of glyphs for writing, the Incas had devised a complex system of colored and knotted cords, called khipus, for administrative bookkeeping.

By the time of the Spanish invasion, however, the Inca Empire had been weakened by a civil war over succession and an epidemic of disease, probably smallpox, spread through trade with groups in contact with Europeans. The Spanish conquistador Francisco Pizarro (ca. 1475–1541) landed on the northern coast of Peru on May 13, 1532, the very day the Inca leader Atahualpa (ah-tuh-WAHL-puh) won control of the empire. As Pizarro advanced across the Andes toward Cuzco, Atahualpa was also heading there for his coronation.

Like Moctezuma in Mexico, Atahualpa sent envoys to greet the Spanish. His plan was to lure them into a trap, seize their horses and ablest men for his army, and execute the rest. With an army of some forty thousand men stationed nearby, Atahualpa seems to have felt he had little to fear. Instead the Spaniards ambushed and captured him, extorted an enormous ransom in gold, and then executed him on trumped-up charges in 1533. The Spanish then marched on to Cuzco, profiting, as with the Aztecs, from internal conflicts to form alliances with local peoples. When Cuzco fell in 1533, the Spanish plundered the empire's wealth in gold and silver.

As with the Aztec Empire, the fall of the imperial capital did not immediately end hostilities. Warfare between Spanish and Inca forces continued to the 1570s. During this period, civil war broke out among Spanish settlers vying for power.

For centuries students have wondered how it was possible for several hundred Spanish conquistadors to defeat powerful empires commanding large armies, vast wealth,

Inca Empire The vast and sophisticated Peruvian empire centered at the capital city of Cuzco that was at its peak in the fifteenth century but weakened by civil war at the time of the Spanish arrival.

captaincies A system established by the Portuguese in Brazil in the 1530s, whereby hereditary grants of land were given to nobles and loyal officials who bore the costs of settling and administering their territories.

viceroyalties The name for the four administrative units of Spanish possessions in the Americas: New Spain, Peru, New Granada, and La Plata.

and millions of inhabitants. This question is based on a mistaken understanding of the conquest as the quick work of Spaniards acting alone, ideas that were spread in the aftermath by the conquistadors themselves. Instead, historians now emphasize that the defeat of the Aztec and Inca Empires was a long process enabled by divisions within the empires, which produced many native allies willing to fight alongside the Spanish. Spanish steel swords, guns, horses, and dogs bestowed military advantages, but these tools of war were limited in number and effectiveness in the environmental conditions of the Americas. Perhaps the most important factor was the devastating impact of contagious diseases among the indigenous population, which swept through the Aztec and Inca Empires at the time of the conquest.

Portuguese Brazil

Unlike Mesoamerica or the Andes, the territory of Brazil contained no urban empires but instead had roughly 2.5 million nomadic and settled people divided into small tribes and many different language groups. In 1500 the Portuguese Crown named Pedro Álvares Cabral commander of a fleet headed for the spice trade of the Indies. En route, the fleet sailed far to the west, claiming the coast where they accidentally landed for Portugal under the terms of the Treaty of Tordesillas. The Portuguese soon undertook a profitable trade with local people in brazilwood, a valued source of red dye, which inspired the name of the new colony.

In the 1520s Portuguese settlers brought sugarcane production to Brazil. They initially used enslaved indigenous laborers on sugar plantations, but the rapid decline in the indigenous population soon led to the use of forcibly transported Africans. In Brazil the Portuguese thus created a new form of colonization in the Americas: large plantations worked by enslaved people. This model of slave-worked sugar plantations would spread throughout the Caribbean in the seventeenth century.

Colonial Administration

While early conquest and settlement were conducted largely by private initiatives, the Portuguese and Spanish governments soon assumed more direct control. Both Portugal and Spain required all merchandise from their American colonies to travel through a single port, where it could be taxed and then transported elsewhere in Europe. They ruled conquered peoples through a combination of European and indigenous institutions and practices.

In 1482, King John II of Portugal established a royal trading house in Lisbon to handle gold and other goods being extracted from Africa. After the Portuguese expanded into the Indian Ocean spice trade, it was named the Casa da India (House of the Indies). Through the Casa, the Crown exercised a monopoly over the export of European goods and the import and distribution of spices and precious metals. It charged taxes on all other incoming goods. The Casa also established a viceroy in the Indian city of Goa to administer Portuguese trading posts and naval forces in Africa and Asia.

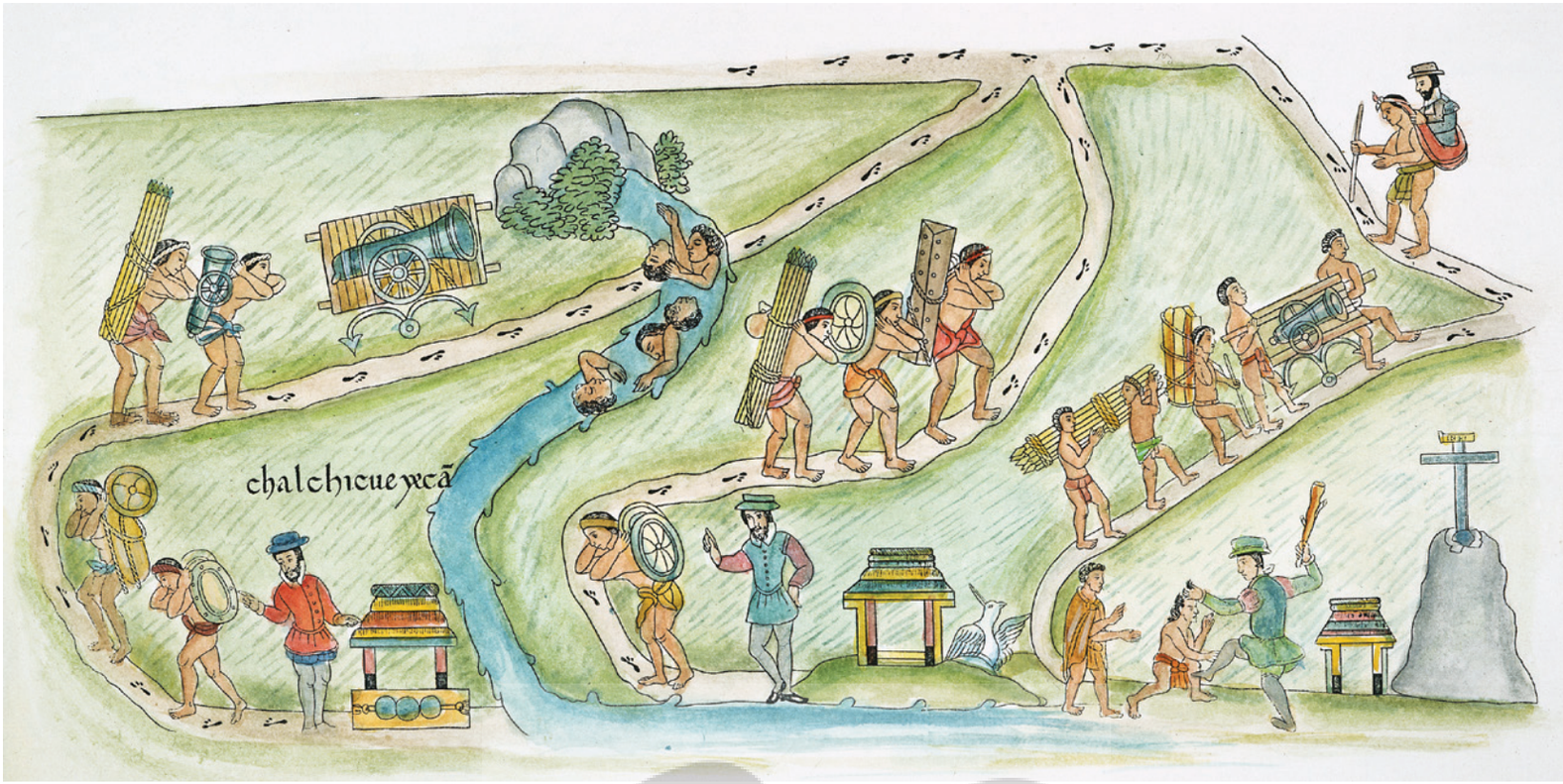
To secure the vast expanse of Brazil, in the 1530s the Portuguese implemented a distinctive system of rule called **captaincies**, in which hereditary grants of land were given to nobles and loyal officials who bore the costs of settling and administering their territories. Over time, the Crown secured greater power over the captaincies, appointing royal governors to act as administrators. The captaincy of Bahia was the site of the capital, Salvador, home to the governor general and other royal officials.

Spain adopted a similar system for overseas trade. In 1503 the Spanish granted the port of Seville a monopoly over all traffic to the New World and established the House of Trade to oversee economic matters. In 1523 Spain created the Royal and Supreme Council of the Indies, with authority over all colonial affairs subject to approval by the king.

By the end of the sixteenth century the Spanish had successfully overcome most indigenous groups and expanded their territory throughout modern-day Mexico, the southwestern United States, and Central and South America. In Mesoamerica and the Andes, the Spanish had taken over the cities and tribute systems of the Aztecs and the Incas, leaving in place well-established cities and towns, but redirecting tribute payments toward the Crown. Through laws and regulations, the Spanish Crown strove to maintain two separate populations, a "Spanish Republic" and an "Indian Republic," with distinct rights and duties for each group.

The Spanish Crown divided its New World possessions initially into two **viceroyalties**, or administrative divisions: New Spain, created in 1535; and Peru, created in 1542. In the eighteenth century two new viceroyalties, New Granada and La Plata, were created (see Map 16.2).

Within each territory, the viceroy, or imperial governor, exercised broad military and civil authority. The viceroy presided over the *audiencia* (ow-dee-EHN-see-ah), a board of judges that served as his advisory council and the highest judicial body. As in Spain, settlement in the Americas was centered on cities and towns. In each city, the municipal council, or *cabildo*, exercised local authority. Women were denied participation in public life, a familiar pattern from both Spain and precolonial indigenous society.



Spanish Exploitation of Indigenous Labor This image depicts Spanish conquistadors supervising indigenous laborers as they carry arms along the steep road from Veracruz to Tlaxcala in 1520. It was part of a larger painting, produced in the postconquest era and known as the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala*, that tells the story of the alliance between the Tlaxcala kingdom and the Spanish and their defeat of the Aztec Empire. (Sarin Images/Granger)

Economic Exploitation of the Indigenous Population

From the first decades of settlement, the Spanish made use of the **encomienda system**, by which the Crown granted the conquerors the right to force groups of Native Americans to perform labor and to demand tribute from them in exchange for providing food and shelter. The encomiendas (en-ko-me-EN-duhz) were also intended as a means to organize indigenous people for missionary work and Christian conversion. This system was first used in Hispaniola to work gold fields and then in Mexico for agricultural labor and, when silver was discovered in the 1540s, for silver mining.

A 1512 Spanish law authorizing the use of encomiendas called for indigenous people to be treated fairly, but in practice the system led to terrible abuses, including overwork, beatings, and sexual violence. King Charles I responded to complaints in 1542 with the New Laws, which set limits on the authority of encomienda holders, including their ability to transmit their privileges to heirs. The New Laws recognized indigenous people who accepted Christianity and Spanish rule as free subjects of the Spanish Crown. The New Laws provoked a revolt in Peru among encomienda holders, and the laws were little enforced throughout Spanish territories. Nonetheless, the Crown gradually gained control over encomiendas in central areas of the empire and required indigenous people to pay tributes in cash, rather than in labor.

In the second half of the sixteenth century, in response to persistent abuses in the encomiendas and a growing shortage of indigenous workers, royal officials gradually established a new government-run system of forced labor, called *repartimiento* in New Spain and *mita* in Peru. Administrators assigned a certain percentage of the inhabitants of native communities to labor for a set period each year in public works, mining, agriculture, and other tasks.

Spanish systems for exploiting the labor of indigenous peoples were both a cause of and a response to the disastrous decline in their population that began soon after the arrival of Europeans. Some indigenous people died as a direct result of the violence of conquest and the disruption of agriculture and trade caused by warfare. The most important cause of death, however, was infectious disease.

Colonial administrators responded to this population decline by forcibly combining dwindling indigenous communities into new settlements and imposing the rigors of the encomienda and the repartimiento. By the end of the sixteenth century the search for fresh sources of labor had given birth to the new tragedy of the Atlantic slave trade.

Patterns of Settlement

The century after the discovery of silver in 1545 marked the high point of Iberian immigration to the Americas. Although the first migrants were men, soon whole families began to cross the Atlantic, and the

European population began to increase through natural reproduction. By 1600 American-born Europeans, called *Creoles*, outnumbered immigrants.

Iberian settlement was predominantly urban in nature. Spaniards settled into the cities and towns of the former Aztec and Inca Empires as the native population dwindled through death and flight. They also established new cities in which settlers were quick to develop urban institutions familiar to them from Spain: city squares, churches, schools, and universities.

Despite the growing number of Europeans and the rapid decline of the indigenous population, Europeans remained a small minority of the total inhabitants of the Americas. Iberians had sexual relationships with native women, leading to the growth of a substantial population of mixed Iberian and Indian descent known as *mestizos* (meh-STEE-zohz). The large-scale arrival of enslaved Africans, starting in Brazil in the mid-sixteenth century, added new ethnic and racial dimensions to the population.

THE ERA OF GLOBAL CONTACT

How was the era of global contact shaped by new commodities, commercial empires, and forced migrations?

The centuries-old Afro-Eurasian trade world was forever changed by the European voyages of discovery and their aftermath. For the first time, a truly global economy emerged in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and it forged new links among far-flung peoples, cultures, and societies. The ancient civilizations of Europe, Africa, the Americas, and Asia confronted each other in new and rapidly evolving ways. Those confrontations often took the form of conquest, forced migration, and brutal exploitation. They also contributed to cultural exchange, ecological transformation, and new patterns of life.

Inca Women Milking Cows This illustration of Inca women milking cows is from a collection of illustrations by a Spanish bishop that offers a valuable view of life in Peru in the 1780s. (From *Codex Trujillo*, Bishop Baltasar Jaime Martínez Compañón, Palacio Real, Madrid, Spain/Photo: Albers Foundation/Art Resource, NY)

Population Loss and the Ecological Impacts of Contact

Contact between the Old and New Worlds had profound ecological ramifications. In particular, the travel of people and goods led to an exchange of animals, plants, and diseases, a complex process known as the **Columbian exchange**. Everywhere they settled, the Spanish and Portuguese brought and raised wheat. Grapes and olives imported from Spain did well in parts of Peru and Chile. Perhaps the most significant introduction to the diet of Native Americans came via the meat and milk of the livestock that the early conquistadors brought with them, including cattle, sheep, and goats. The horse enabled both the Spanish conquerors and indigenous populations to travel faster and farther and to transport heavy loads more easily.

In turn, Europeans returned home with food crops that became central elements of their diet and eventually of many parts of the world. Crops originating in the Americas included tomatoes, squash, pumpkins, peppers, and many varieties of beans, as well as tobacco. One of the most important of such crops was maize (corn). By the late seventeenth century maize had become a staple in Spain, Portugal, southern France, and Italy, and in the eighteenth century it became one of the chief foods of southeastern Europe and southern China. Even more valuable was the nutritious white potato, which slowly spread from west to east, contributing everywhere to a rise in population.

While the exchange of foods was a great benefit to cultures across the world, the introduction of European

encomienda system A system whereby the Spanish Crown granted the conquerors the right to forcibly employ groups of indigenous people as laborers and to demand tribute payments from them in exchange for providing food, shelter, and instruction in the Christian faith.

Columbian exchange The exchange of animals, plants, and diseases between the Old and the New Worlds.

pathogens to the New World had a disastrous impact on the native population. In Europe infectious diseases like smallpox, measles, and influenza—originally spread through contact with domestic animals—killed many people each year. Given the size of the population and the frequency of outbreaks, in most of Europe these diseases were experienced in childhood, and survivors carried immunity or resistance. Prior to contact with Europeans, indigenous peoples of the New World suffered from insect-borne diseases and some infectious ones, but their lack of domestic livestock spared them the host of highly infectious Old World diseases. The arrival of Europeans spread these microbes among a totally unprepared population, and they fell victim in vast numbers.

Overall, the indigenous population declined by as much as 90 percent or more, but with important regional variations. In general, densely populated urban centers were worse hit than rural areas, and tropical, low-lying regions suffered more than cooler, higher-altitude ones. The world after Columbus was thus profoundly transformed by disease as well as by trade and colonization.

The Transatlantic Slave Trade

Sugar and Early Transatlantic Slavery

Throughout the Middle Ages, slavery was deeply entrenched in the Mediterranean. The constant warfare of the reconquista had supplied captive Muslims for domestic slavery in Iberia, but the success of these wars meant that the number of captives had greatly dwindled by the mid-fifteenth century.

As Portuguese explorers began their voyages along the western coast of Africa in the 1440s, one of the first commodities they sought was slaves. While the first slaves were simply seized by small raiding parties, Portuguese merchants soon found that it was easier and more profitable to trade with African leaders, who were accustomed to dealing in enslaved people captured through warfare with neighboring powers. In 1483 the Portuguese established an alliance with the kingdom of Kongo. The royal family eventually converted to Christianity, and Portuguese merchants intermarried with Kongolese women, creating a permanent Afro-Portuguese community. From 1490 to 1530 Portuguese traders brought between three hundred and two thousand enslaved Africans to Portugal each year.

In this stage of European expansion, the history of slavery became intertwined with the history of sugar. In the Middle Ages, sugarcane—native to the South Pacific—was brought to Mediterranean islands. Population increases and greater prosperity in the fifteenth century led to increasing demand for sugar. The establishment of sugar plantations on the Canary and Madeira Islands in the fifteenth century after Iberian colonization testifies to this demand.

Sugar was a particularly difficult crop to produce for profit, requiring constant, arduous labor. The invention of roller mills to crush the cane more efficiently meant that yields could be significantly augmented, but only if a sufficient labor force was found to supply the mills. Plantation owners solved their labor problem by forcing first native islanders and then transported Africans to perform the backbreaking work.

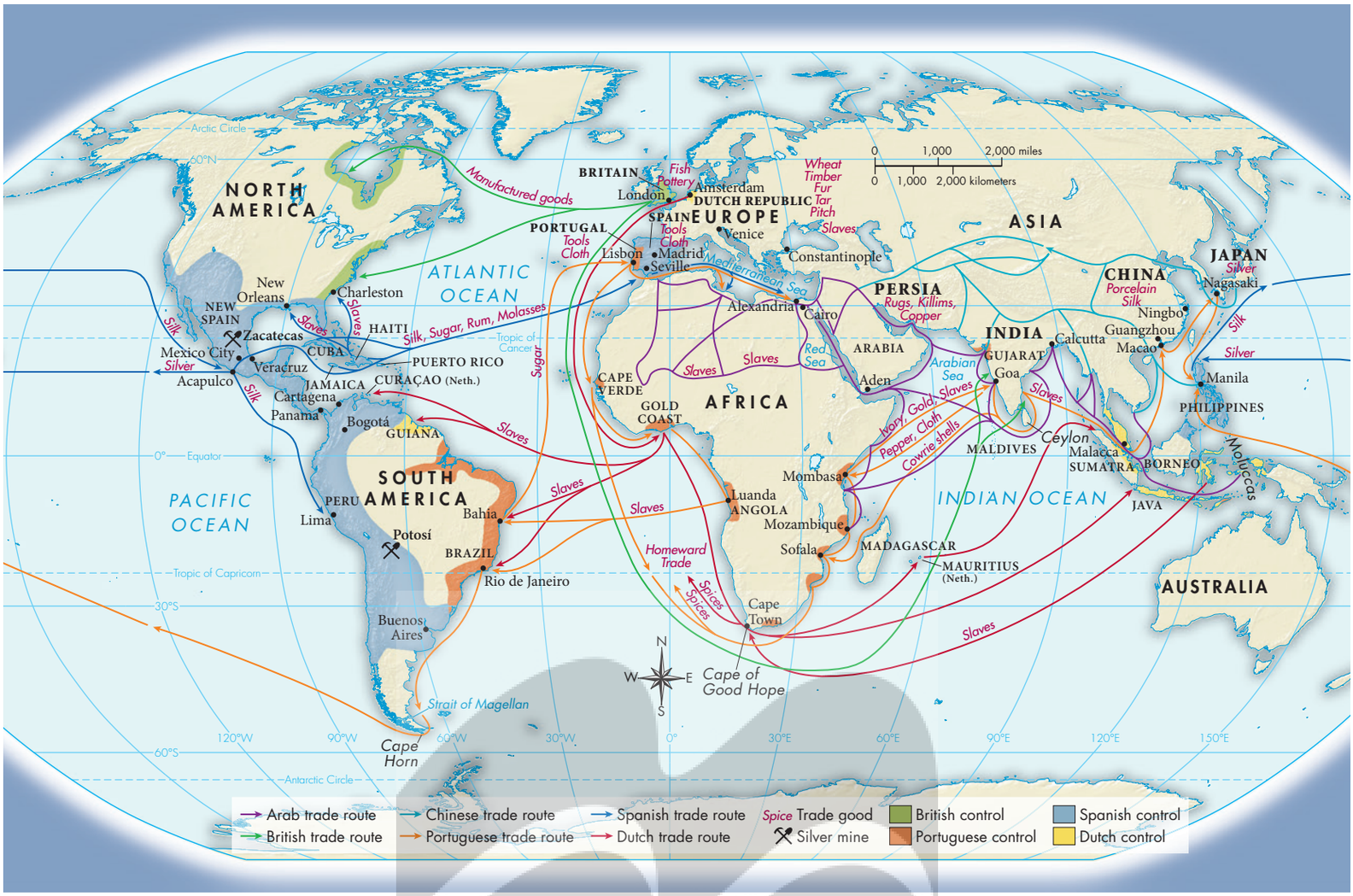
The transatlantic slave trade that would ultimately result in the forced transport of over 12 million people began in 1518, when Spanish king Charles I authorized traders to bring enslaved Africans to the Americas. The Portuguese brought the first enslaved people to Brazil around 1550. After its founding in 1621, the Dutch West India Company forcibly transported thousands of Africans to Brazil and the Caribbean, mostly to work on sugar plantations. In the late seventeenth century, with the chartering of the Royal African Company, the English entered the slave trade.

Before 1700, when slavers decided it was better business to improve conditions for the captives, some 20 percent of enslaved people died on the voyage across the Atlantic.[3] The most common cause of death was dysentery induced by poor-quality food and water, lack of sanitation, and intense crowding. On sugar plantations, death rates among enslaved people from illness and exhaustion were extremely high.

Spanish Silver and Its Economic Effects

In 1545, at an altitude of fifteen thousand feet, the Spanish discovered an extraordinary source of silver at Potosí (poh-toh-SEE) (in present-day Bolivia) in unsettled territory captured from the Inca Empire. By 1550 Potosí yielded perhaps 60 percent of all the silver mined in the world. From Potosí and the mines at Zacatecas (za-kuh-TAY-kuhs) and Guanajuato (gwah-nah-HWAH-toh) in Mexico, huge quantities of precious metals poured forth.

Mining became the most important industry in the colonies. Millions of indigenous laborers suffered brutal conditions and death in the silver mines. Demand for new sources of labor for the mines also contributed to the intensification of the African slave trade. Profits for the Spanish Crown were immense. The Crown claimed



MAP 16.3 Seaborne Trading Empires in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries
By the mid-seventeenth century trade linked all parts of the world except for Australia. Notice that trade in slaves was not confined to the Atlantic but involved almost all parts of the world.

the quinto, one-fifth of all precious metals mined in South America, which represented 25 percent of its total income. Between 1503 and 1650, 35 million pounds of silver and over 600,000 pounds of gold entered Seville's port.

Spain's immense profits from silver paid for the tremendous expansion of its empire and for the large armies that defended it. However, the easy flow of money had the unanticipated effect of dampening economic innovation. It also exacerbated the rising inflation Spain was already experiencing in the mid-sixteenth century due to population growth and stagnant production. Only after 1600, when the population declined, did prices slowly stabilize. Nevertheless, King Philip II and his successors were forced to write off the state debt several times between 1550 and 1650, thereby undermining confidence in the government and further weakening the economy.

Philip II paid his armies and foreign debts with silver bullion, and thus Spanish inflation was transmitted to the rest of Europe. Between 1560 and 1600 prices in most parts of Europe doubled and in some cases quadrupled. Because money bought less, people who lived on fixed incomes, such as nobles, were badly hurt. Those who owed fixed sums of money, such as the middle class, prospered because in a time of rising prices, debts lessened in value each year. Food costs rose most sharply, and the poor fared worst of all.

In many ways, though, it was not Spain but China that controlled the world trade in silver. The Chinese demanded silver for their products and for the payment of imperial taxes. China was thus the main buyer of world silver, absorbing half the world's production. The silver market drove world trade, with New Spain and Japan acting as major sources of the supply of silver and China dominating demand. The world trade in silver is one of the best examples of the new global economy that emerged in this period.

The Birth of the Global Economy

With Europeans' discovery of the Americas and their exploration of the Pacific, the entire world was linked for the first time in history by oceanic trade. The opening of that trade brought into being three successive commercial empires: the Portuguese, the Spanish, and the Dutch.

In the sixteenth century the Portuguese controlled the sea route to India (Map 16.3). From their bases

at Goa on the Arabian Sea and at Malacca on the Malay Peninsula, ships carried goods to the Portuguese settlement at Macao. From Macao Portuguese ships loaded with Chinese silks and porcelains sailed to Japan and the Philippines, where Chinese goods were exchanged for Spanish silver from New Spain. Throughout Asia the Portuguese traded in enslaved people, some of whom were brought all the way across the Pacific to Mexico. (See "Individuals in Society: Catarina de San Juan, Former Slave and Popular Saint.") Returning to Portugal, they brought Asian spices that had been purchased with textiles produced in India and with gold and ivory from East Africa. From their colony in Brazil they shipped sugar produced by enslaved Africans whom they had forcibly transported across the Atlantic.

Coming to empire a few decades later than the Portuguese, the Spanish were determined to claim their place in world trade. The Spanish Empire in the New World was basically land based, but across the Pacific the Spaniards built a seaborne empire centered at Manila in the Philippines. Established in 1571, the city of Manila served as the transpacific link between Spanish America and China. In Manila Spanish traders used silver from American mines to purchase Chinese silk for European markets.

In the seventeenth century the Dutch challenged the Spanish and Portuguese empires. The Dutch East India Company was founded in 1602 with the stated intention of capturing the spice trade from the Portuguese. Drawing on their commercial wealth and long experience in European trade, the Dutch emerged by the end of the century as the most powerful worldwide seaborne trading power (see "The Dutch Trading Empire" in Chapter 18).

CHANGING ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS

How did new encounters shape cultural attitudes and beliefs in Europe and the rest of the world?

The age of overseas expansion heightened Europeans' contacts with the rest of the world. These contacts gave birth to new ideas about the inherent superiority or inferiority of different groups of people, increasingly conceived as distinct "races." Religion constituted a crucial means of cultural contact, as European missionaries aimed to spread Christianity in both the New World and East Asia. The East-West contacts also led to exchanges of influential cultural and scientific ideas.

Religious Conversion

Christian conversion was one of the most important justifications for European expansion. Jesuit missionaries were active in Japan and China in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, until authorities banned their teachings. The first missionaries to the New World accompanied Columbus on his second voyage, and more than 2,500 Franciscans, Dominicans, Jesuits, and other friars crossed the Atlantic in the following century. Colonial powers built convents, churches, and cathedrals for converted indigenous people and European settlers, and established religious courts to police correct beliefs and morals.

To stamp out old beliefs, colonial authorities destroyed shrines and objects of religious worship. They harshly persecuted men and women who continued to practice traditional spiritual rituals and imposed European Christian norms of family life, especially monogamous marriage, on indigenous people. While many resisted these efforts, over time a larger number accepted Christianity. (See "Compare Viewpoints: Aztec and Spanish Views on Christian Conversion in New Spain.") It is estimated that missionaries had baptized between 4 and 9 million indigenous people in New Spain by the mid-1530s.[4]

Christian conversation was an ambiguous and complex process involving cultural exchanges that impacted both sides. Catholic friars were among the first Europeans to seek an understanding of native cultures and languages as part of their effort to render Christianity comprehensible to indigenous people. In Mexico they not only learned the Nahuatl language, but also taught it to non-Nahuatl-speaking groups to create a shared language for Christian teaching. In translating Christianity, missionaries, working in partnership with indigenous converts, adapted it to the symbols and ritual objects of pre-existing cultures and beliefs, thereby creating distinctive New World forms of Catholicism.

European Debates About Indigenous Peoples

Iberian exploitation of the native population of the Americas began from the moment of Columbus's arrival in 1492. Denunciations of this abuse by Catholic missionaries, however, quickly followed, inspiring vociferous debates in both Europe and the colonies about the nature of indigenous peoples and how they should be treated. Bartolomé de Las Casas (1474–1566), a Dominican friar and former encomienda holder, was one of the earliest and most outspoken critics of the brutal treatment inflicted on indigenous peoples.

Mounting criticism in Spain led King Charles I to assemble a group of churchmen and lawyers to debate

Catarina de San Juan, Former Slave and Popular Saint

A long journey led Catarina de San Juan from enslavement in South Asia to adulation as a popular saint in Mexico. Her journey began on the west coast of India around 1610 when Portuguese traders captured a group of children, including the small girl who would become Catarina. Their ship continued around the southern tip of India, across the Bay of Bengal, through the Strait of Malacca, and across the South China Sea. It docked at Manila, a Spanish city in the Philippines, where the girl was sold at a slave auction. In 1619 Catarina boarded a ship that was part of the Manila Galleon, the annual convoy of Spanish ships that crossed the Pacific between Manila and the Mexican port of Acapulco. After a six-month voyage, Catarina arrived in Acapulco; she then walked to Mexico City and continued on to the city of Puebla.

In Puebla, Catarina became the property of a Portuguese merchant and worked as a domestic servant. She was one of thousands of *chinos*, a term for natives of the East Indies who were brought via the Philippines to Spanish America. Many were slaves, transported as part of a transoceanic slave trade that reached from the Indian Ocean to the South China Sea and across the Pacific to the Atlantic world. They constituted a small but significant portion of people forcibly transported by Europeans to the Americas in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries to replace dwindling numbers of indigenous laborers. Chinos were considered particularly apt for domestic labor, and many wealthy Spanish Americans bought them in Manila.

Before crossing the Pacific, Catarina converted to Catholicism and chose her Christian name. In Puebla her master encouraged Catarina's faith and allowed her to attend mass every day. He also drafted a will emancipating her after his death, which occurred in 1619. With no money of her own, Catarina became the servant of a local priest. On his advice, Catarina reluctantly gave up her dream of becoming a lay sister and married a fellow chino named Domingo. The marriage was unhappy; Catarina reportedly refused to enter sexual relations with her husband and suffered from his debts, infidelity, and hostility to her faith. She found solace in renewed religious devotion, winning the admiration of priests and neighbors who flocked to her for spiritual comfort and to hear about her ecstatic visions. After fourteen years of marriage, Catarina became a widow and lived out her life in the home of wealthy supporters.

Catarina's funeral in 1688 drew large crowds. Her followers revered her as an unofficial saint, and soon the leaders of Puebla began a campaign to have Catarina beatified (officially recognized by the Catholic Church as a saint). Her former confessors published accounts of her life emphasizing her piety, beauty, and exotic Asian origins and marveling at the miraculous preservation of her virginity through the perils of enslavement, long journeys at sea, and marriage. Much of what we know about Catarina derives from these sources and must be viewed as idealized, rather than as strictly historically accurate.

The Spanish Inquisition, which oversaw the process of beatification, rejected Catarina's candidacy and, fearing that popular adulation might detract from the authority of the church, forbade the circulation of images and texts about her. Despite this ban, popular reverence for Catarina de San Juan continued, and continues to this day in Mexico.

Women of Puebla, Mexico, in traditional clothing. (DEA/G. Dagli Orti/De Agostini/Getty Images)

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. Why would the Inquisition react so negatively to popular devotion to Catarina? What dangers did she pose to the Catholic Church in New Spain?
2. What does Catarina's story reveal about the global nature of the Spanish Empire and the slave trade in this period? What does it reveal about divisions within the Catholic Church?

Sources: Tatiana Seijas, *Asian Slaves in Colonial Mexico: From Chinos to Indians* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 8–26; Ronald J. Morgan, *Spanish American Saints and the Rhetoric of Identity, 1600–1810* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2002), pp. 119–142.

COMPARE VIEWPOINTS

Aztec and Spanish Views on Christian Conversion in New Spain

In justifying their violent conquest of the Aztec and Inca Empires, Spanish conquistadors emphasized the need to bring Christianity to heathen peoples. For the conquered, the imposition of Christianity and the repression of their pre-existing religions were often experienced as yet another form of loss. The first document describes the response of the recently vanquished Aztec leaders of Tenochtitlan to Franciscan missionaries. Despite resistance, missionaries eventually succeeded in converting much of the indigenous population to Catholicism. In the second document, a firsthand account of the Spanish conquest written a few decades after the fall of Tenochtitlan, Bernal Díaz del Castillo expresses great satisfaction at the Catholic piety of some indigenous communities.

Aztec Response to the Franciscans' Explanation of Their 1524 Mission

■ You have told us that we do not know the One who gives us life and being, who is Lord of the heavens and of the earth. You also say that those we worship are not gods. This way of speaking is entirely new to us, and very scandalous. We are frightened by this way of speaking because our forebears who engendered and governed us never said anything like this. On the contrary, they left us this our custom of worshiping our gods, in which they believed and which they worshiped all the time that they lived here on earth. They taught us how to honor them. And they taught us all the ceremonies and sacrifices that we make. They told us that through them [our gods] we live and are, and that we were beholden to them, to be theirs and to serve countless centuries before the sun began to shine and before there was daytime. They said that these gods that we worship give us everything we need for our physical existence: maize, beans, chia seeds, etc. . . .

All of us together feel that it is enough to have lost, enough that the power and royal jurisdiction have been taken from us. As for our gods, we will die before giving up serving and worshiping them.

Bernal Díaz del Castillo, from *The True History of the Conquest of New Spain,* 1521

■ It is a thing to be grateful for to God, and for profound consideration, to see how the natives assist in celebrating a holy Mass. . . . There is another good thing they do [namely] that both men, women and children, who are of the age to learn them, know all the holy prayers in their own languages and are obliged to know them. They have other good customs about their holy Christianity, that when they pass near a sacred altar or Cross they bow their heads with humility, bend their knees, and say the prayer "Our Father," which we Conquistadores have taught them, and they place lighted wax candles before the holy altars and crosses, for formerly they did not know how to use wax in making candles. In addition to what I have said, we taught them to show great reverence and obedience to all the monks and priests, and, when these went to their pueblos, to sally forth to receive them with lighted wax candles and to ring the bells, and to feed them very well. . . . Beside the good customs reported by me they have others both holy and good, for when the day of Corpus Christ comes, or that of Our Lady, or other solemn festivals when among us we form processions, most of the pueblos in the neighbourhood of this city of Guatemala come out in procession with their crosses and lighted wax tapers, and carry on their shoulders, on a litter, the image of the saint who is the patron of the pueblo.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. What reasons do the leaders of Tenochtitlan offer for rejecting the teachings of Franciscan missionaries? What importance do they accord their own religious traditions?
2. What evidence does Díaz provide for the conversion of the indigenous people in the city of Guatemala?
3. How and why do you think the attitudes of indigenous peoples might have evolved from those expressed in the first document to those described in the second? Do you think the second document tells the whole story of religious attitudes under Spanish rule?

Sources: "The Lords and Holy Men of Tenochtitlan Reply to the Franciscans: Bernardino de Sahagún, Coloquios y doctrina Cristiana," ed. Miguel León-Portilla, in *Colonial Spanish America: A Documentary History*, ed. Kenneth Mills and William B. Taylor, pp. 20–21. Reproduced with permission of Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Incorporated, in the format Republish in a book via Copyright Clearance Center; Bernal Díaz, *The True History of the Conquest of New Spain*, in Stuart B. Schwartz, *Victors and Vanquished: Spanish and Nahua Views of the Conquest of Mexico* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2000), pp. 218–219.

the issue in 1550 in the city of Valladolid. One side of the **Valladolid debate**, led by Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, argued that conquest and forcible conversion were both necessary and justified to save indigenous people from the horrors of human sacrifice and idolatry. To counter these arguments, Las Casas and his supporters depicted indigenous people as rational and innocent children, who deserved protection and tutelage.

While the debate did not end exploitation of indigenous people, the Crown did use it to justify limiting

ANALYZE VISUAL EVIDENCE

Depictions of Africans in European Portraiture

Starting in the Italian Renaissance, with the emergence of portraiture as a new genre, European elites began to commission images of themselves accompanied by slaves of African descent. Their intentions in doing so were to accentuate their wealth and power. Like the imported Persian carpets, spices, and exotic animals they collected, images of enslaved people demonstrated their owners' possession of valuable and exotic foreign goods. The depiction of enslaved Africans in aristocratic portraits began in Portugal and Spain in the mid-1550s and spread to other European nations in the seventeenth century. In this painting by Flemish painter Anthony Van Dyke, Marchesa Elena Grimaldi Cattaneo is shown lavishly dressed and confidently gazing at the viewer.* A young boy of African descent holds a parasol over her head to shield the Marchesa from the sun. In this image, the dark skin of the attendant contrasts with the Marchesa's aristocratic pallor, suggesting that another function of depicting people of African descent was to valorize whiteness as an attribute of European superiority.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. What elements of the painting suggest the Marchesa's elite status within her society and her attendant's inferior status? What impression are we meant to have of each of the subjects of the painting?
2. How does the color scheme of the painting help to convey its meaning? How do you explain the different colors used to depict the two people in the painting?

* *Marchesa* (*marquise* in English) is a high-ranking noble title.

By Anthony van Dyck (1599–1641), 1623 (oil on canvas)/Widener Collection, 1942.9.92/ Image courtesy National Gallery of Art, Washington

the rights of settlers and increasing legal protections for indigenous communities. In 1573, Philip II issued detailed laws regulating how new towns should be established and administered and how Spanish settlers should interact with indigenous populations. The impact of these laws can still be seen in Mexico's colonial towns, which are laid out as grids around a central plaza.

New Ideas About Race

European conquest and settlement led to the emergence of new ideas about "race" as a form of human identity. In medieval Spain and Portugal, sharp distinctions were drawn between supposedly "pure-blooded" Christians, on the one hand, and Jews and conversos, people of Jewish origins who had converted to Christianity, on the other. In the fifteenth century, Iberian rulers issued discriminatory laws against conversos as well as against Muslims and their descendants. Feeling that conversion could not erase the taint of heretical belief, they came to see Christian faith as a type of inherited identity that was passed through the blood.

The idea of "purity of blood" changed when Iberians conquered the Americas. The colonial population included people of European, indigenous, and (after the introduction of the transatlantic slave trade) African descent. Spanish colonizers came to believe that the indigenous people of the Americas were free from the taint of unbelief because they had never been exposed to Christianity. Accordingly, the ideology of "purity of blood" they brought from Iberia could more easily incorporate indigenous populations; by contrast, Africans—viewed as having refused the message of Christ that was preached in the Old World—were seen as impure, as much on the grounds of religious difference as physical characteristics. (See "Analyze Visual Evidence: Depictions of Africans in European Portraiture.")

Valladolid debate A debate organized by Spanish king Charles I in 1550 in the city of Valladolid that pitted defenders of Spanish conquest and forcible conversion against critics of these practices.

Despite later efforts by colonial officials to segregate Europeans, Native Americans, and people of African descent, racial mixing began as soon as the first conquistadors arrived in the Americas. A complex system of racial classification, known as castas in Spanish America, emerged to refer to different proportions of European, indigenous, and African parentage. Spanish concerns about religious purity were thus transformed in the colonial context into concerns about racial bloodlines, with "pure" Spanish blood occupying the summit of the racial hierarchy and mixtures of European, indigenous and African descent ranked in descending order. These concerns put childbirth and reproduction at the center of anxieties about racial mixing, heightening scrutiny of women's sexual activities.

All European colonies in the New World, including later French and English settlements, drew racial distinctions between Europeans, indigenous people, and those of African descent. With its immense slave-based plantation agriculture system, large indigenous population, and relatively low Portuguese immigration, Brazil developed a particularly complex racial and ethnic mosaic.

In the aftermath of conquest, the Portuguese and Spanish established new forms of governance to dominate indigenous peoples and exploit their labor. The arrival of Europeans brought enormous population losses to native communities, primarily through the spread of infectious diseases. Disease was one element of the Columbian exchange, a complex transfer of germs, plants, and animals between the Old and New Worlds that helped create the first truly global economy. Tragically, a major component of global trade was the transatlantic slave trade, in which Europeans forcibly transported Africans to labor in the sugar plantations and silver mines of the New World. European nations vied for supremacy in global trade, with early Portuguese success in Asia being challenged first by the Spanish and then by the Dutch.

Increased contact with the outside world led Europeans to develop new ideas about cultural and racial differences. Debates occurred in Spain and its colonies over the treatment of the indigenous peoples of the Americas, and new ideas about racial inequality emerged. Religion was a key means of cultural contact, as European missionaries aimed to spread Christianity in the New World.

Chapter Summary

Prior to Columbus's voyages, centuries-old trade routes linked the peoples and products of Africa, Asia, and Europe. As the economy and population recovered from the Black Death, Europeans began to seek more direct and profitable access to the Afro-Eurasian trade world. Technological innovations, many borrowed from the East, enabled explorers to undertake ever more ambitious voyages.

NOTES

1. Marco Polo, *The Book of Ser Marco Polo, the Venetian: Concerning the Kingdoms and Marvels of the East*, vol. 2, trans. and ed. Colonel Sir Henry Yule (London: John Murray, 1903), pp. 185–186.
2. Thomas Benjamin, *The Atlantic World: Europeans, Africans, Indians and Their Shared History, 1400–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 141.
3. Herbert S. Klein, "Profits and the Causes of Mortality," in *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, ed. David Northrup (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath, 1994), p. 116.
4. David Carrasco, *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Mesoamerican Cultures* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 208.

MAKE CONNECTIONS LOOK AHEAD

Just three years separated Martin Luther's attack on the Catholic Church in 1517 and Ferdinand Magellan's discovery of the Pacific Ocean in 1520. Within a few short years western Europeans' religious unity and notions of terrestrial geography were shattered. In the ensuing decades Europeans struggled to come to terms with religious differences between Protestants and Catholics at home and with the multitudes of new peoples and places they encountered abroad. While some Europeans were positively inspired by this new diversity, more often the result was suffering and violence. Europeans endured decades of religious civil war, and indigenous peoples overseas underwent massive population losses as a result of European warfare, disease, and exploitation. Religious leaders condoned the transatlantic slave trade that brought suffering and death to millions as well as the conquest of Native American land and the subjugation of indigenous people.

Even as the voyages of discovery introduced new forms of diversity to European culture, they also played a role in state centralization and consolidation. Henceforth, competition to gain overseas colonies became an integral part of European politics. While Spain's

enormous profits from conquest ultimately led to a weakening of its power, over time the Netherlands, England, and France used profits from colonial trade to help build modernized, centralized states.

Two crucial consequences emerged from this era of expansion. The first was the creation of enduring contacts among five of the seven continents of the globe — Europe, Asia, Africa, North America, and South America. From the sixteenth century onward, the peoples of the world were increasingly entwined in new forms of economic, social, and cultural exchange. The second was the growth of European power. Europeans gradually asserted control over the Americas and over existing trade networks in Asia and Africa. Although China remained the world's most powerful economy until at least 1800, the beginnings of European dominance had emerged.

CHAPTER 16 REVIEW AND EXPLORE

Identify Key Terms

Identify and explain the significance of each item below.

bride wealth (p. 443)
conquistador (p. 446)
caravel (p. 446)
Ptolemy's *Geography* (p. 447)
Treaty of Tordesillas (p. 452)
Aztec Empire (p. 453)
Inca Empire (p. 456)
captaincies (p. 457)
viceroyalties (p. 457)
encomienda system (p. 458)
Columbian exchange (p. 459)
Valladolid debate (p. 465)

Review the Main Ideas

Answer the focus questions from each section of the chapter.

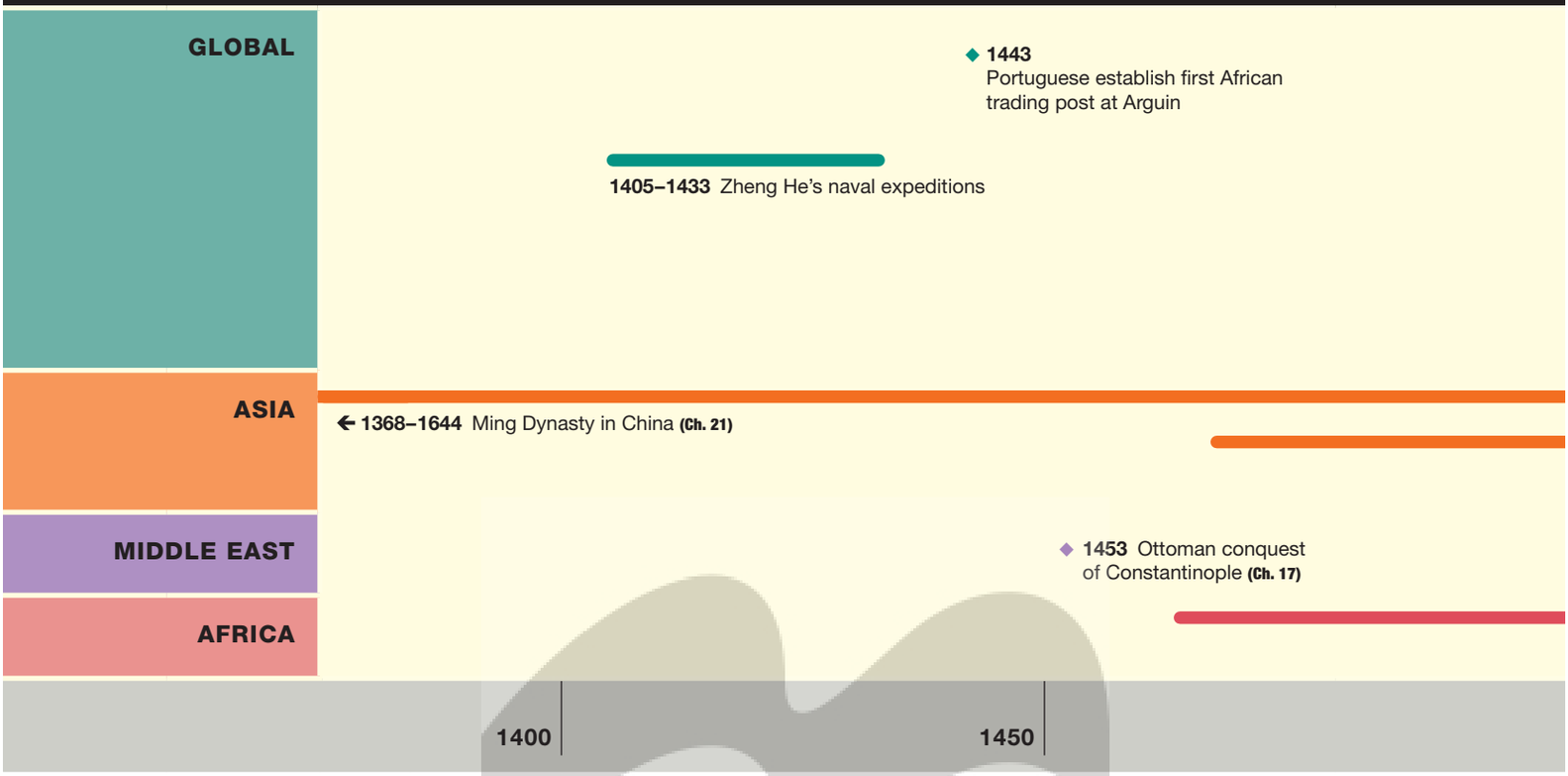
1. What was the Afro-Eurasian trade world prior to the era of European exploration? (p. 442)
2. How and why did Europeans undertake ambitious voyages of expansion? (p. 446)
3. What was the impact of Iberian conquest and settlement on the peoples and ecologies of the Americas? (p. 452)
4. How was the era of global contact shaped by new commodities, commercial empires, and forced migrations? (p. 459)
5. How did new encounters shape cultural attitudes and beliefs in Europe and the rest of the world? (p. 462)

Make Comparisons and Connections

Analyze the larger developments and continuities within and across chapters.

1. If Europe was at the periphery of the global trading system prior to 1492, what role did Europeans play by the middle of the sixteenth century? What had changed? What had not?
2. How does the spread of Christianity in the aftermath of European conquest in the New World compare with the earlier spread of Christianity under the Roman Empire (Chapter 6) and the spread of Buddhism (Chapter 7) and Islam (Chapters 9, 10, 13)?
3. How did European expansion in the period covered in this chapter draw on earlier patterns of trade and migration in Africa (Chapter 10) and Asia (Chapters 12, 13)?
4. To what extent did the European voyages of expansion and conquest inaugurate an era of global history? Did this era represent the birth of "globalization"? Why or why not?

TIMELINE



Suggested Resources

BOOKS

Brosseder, Claudia. *The Power of Huacas: Change and Resistance in the Andean World of Colonial Peru*. 2014. A fascinating study of indigenous religious practitioners in the Andes and their encounter with the colonial Spanish world; tells the story of religion from the indigenous perspective.

Crosby, Alfred W. *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492*, 30th anniversary ed. 2003. A lively and highly influential account of the environmental impact of the transatlantic movement of animals, plants, and microbes inaugurated by Columbus.

Elliot, J. H. *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America, 1492–1830.* 2006. A masterful comparative study of the British and Spanish Empires in the Americas.

Mann, Charles C. *1491: New Revelations on the Americas Before Columbus*, 2d ed. 2011. A highly readable explanation of the peoples and societies of the Americas before the arrival of Europeans.

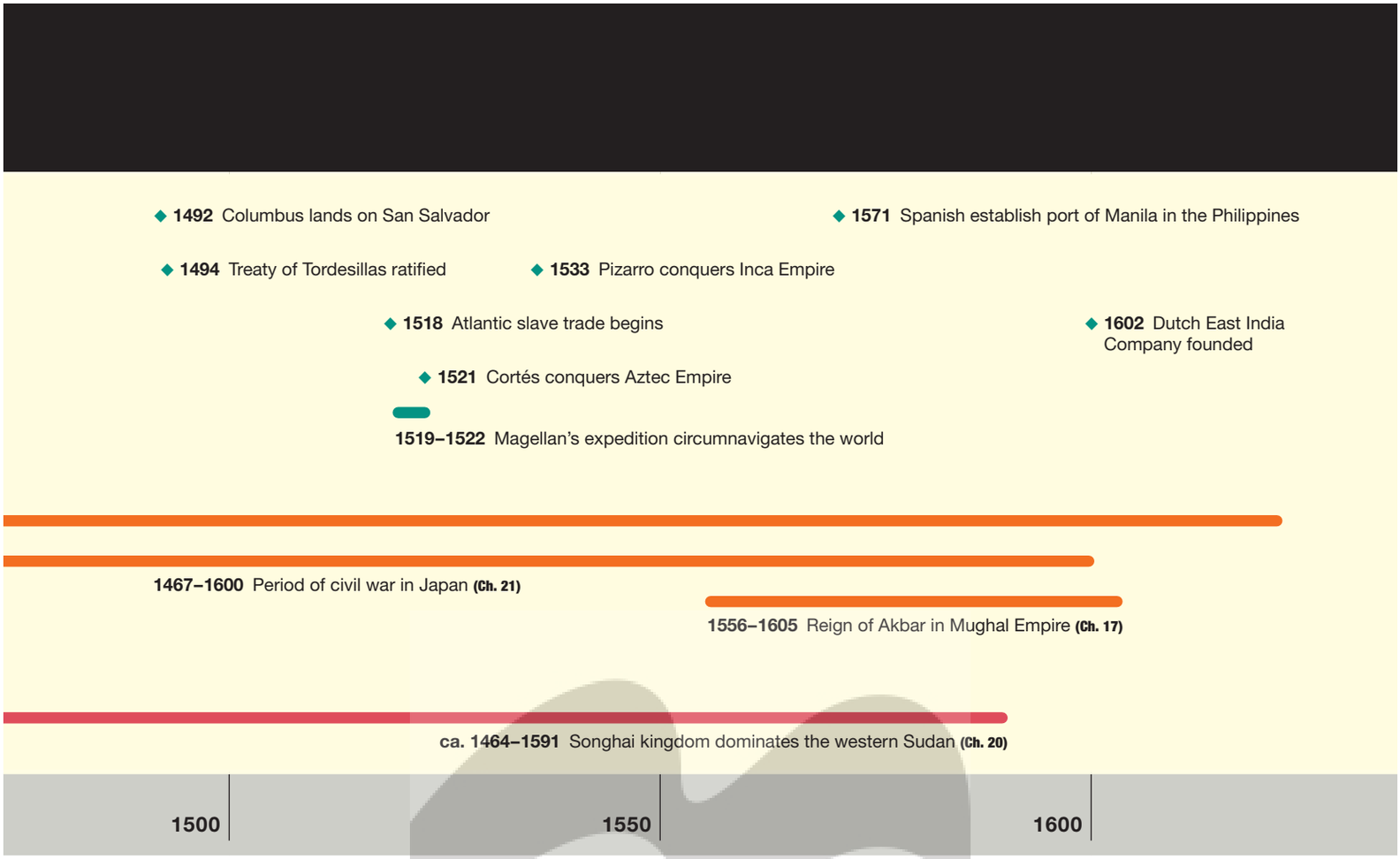
Martinez, Maria Elena. *Genealogical Fictions*: *Limpieza de Sangre, Religion and Gender in Colonial Mexico.* 2008. A fascinating study of the relationship between Spanish ideas of religious purity developed during the reconquista and the emergence of racial hierarchies in colonial Mexico.

Parker, Charles H. *Global Interactions in the Early Modern Age, 1400–1800.* 2010. An examination of the rise of global connections in the early modern period that situates the European experience in relation to the world's other empires and peoples.

Pomeranz, Kenneth, and Steven Topik. *The World That Trade Created: Society, Culture, and the World Economy, 1400 to the Present.* 1999. Presents the creation of a world market through rich and vivid stories of merchants, miners, slaves, and farmers.

Restall, Matthew. *When Montezuma Met Cortes: The True Story of the Meeting That Changed History.* 2018. A retelling of the legendary encounter between the Aztec emperor and the Spanish conquistador that invites readers to rethink common misconceptions about the Spanish conquest.

Subrahmanyam, Sanjay. *The Portuguese Empire in Asia, 1500–1700: A Political and Economic History*, 2d ed. 2012. A masterful study of the Portuguese overseas empire in Asia that draws on both European and Asian sources.



MEDIA

1421: The Year China Discovered America? (PBS, 2004). Investigates the voyages of legendary Chinese admiral Zheng He, exploring the possibility that he and his fleet reached the Americas decades before Columbus.

America Before Columbus (National Geographic, 2010). Explores the complex societies and cultures of North America before contact with Europeans and the impact of the Columbian exchange.

Black Robe (Bruce Beresford, 1991). A classic film about French Jesuit missionaries among Algonquin and Huron Indians in New France in the seventeenth century.

Conquistadors (PBS, 2000). Traveling in the footsteps of the Spanish conquistadors, the narrator tells their story while following the paths and rivers they used. Includes discussion of the perspectives and participation of native peoples.

The Globalization of Food and Plants. Hosted by the Yale University Center for the Study of Globalization, this website provides information on how various foods and plants—such as spices, coffee, and tomatoes—traveled the world in the Columbian exchange. **yaleglobal.yale.edu/globalization-food-plants**

Marco Polo (Hallmark Channel, 2007). A made-for-television film that follows Italian merchant Marco Polo as he travels to China to establish trade ties with Mongol emperor Khubilai Khan.

The New World (Terrence Malick, 2005). Set in 1607 at the founding of the Jamestown settlement, this film retells the story of John Smith and Pocahontas.

The Other Conquest (Salvador Carrasco, 1998). A Mexican film depicting the brutality of the Spanish conquest and its social and religious impact, seen from the perspective of a young Aztec man.

Silence (Martin Scorcese, 2016). Based on a 1966 Japanese novel, the film depicts the travels of two seventeenth-century Jesuits from Portugal to Japan during a time of Japanese persecution of Christians.