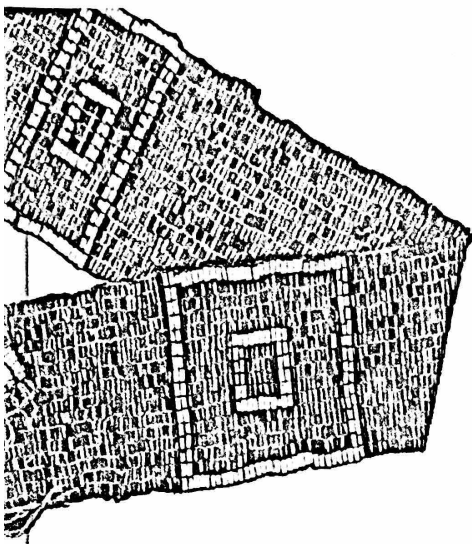


A NOT-SO- “NEW” WORLD



History is filled with ironies. Luck and accidents—the unexpected and unplanned happenings of life—often shape events more than intentions. Long before Christopher Columbus lucked upon the Caribbean Sea and an unexpected continent in his effort to find a westward passage to the Indies (east Asia), the native peoples he mislabeled “Indians” had occupied and transformed the lands of the Western Hemisphere (also called the Americas—North, Central, and South).



Initially, everyone in what came to be called America came from somewhere else. By 1492, when Columbus began his voyage west from Spain across an uncharted ocean, there were millions of Native Americans living in the Western Hemisphere. The “New World” he found was *new* only to the Europeans who began exploring, conquering, and exploiting the region at the end of the fifteenth century.

Over thousands of years, Native American peoples had developed highly sophisticated societies. Some were rooted in agriculture; others focused on trade or the conquest of others. Many Native Americans were healthier, better fed, and lived longer than Europeans, but they and their cultures were almost destroyed by the arrival of Europeans and Africans. As the two different societies—European and Native American—collided, each having its own distinct heritage and worldview, Indian peoples were exploited, infected, enslaved, displaced, and exterminated.

Yet the conventional story of invasion and occupation oversimplifies the complex process by which Indians, Europeans, and Africans interacted in the colonial period. The Native Americans, also called First Peoples, were more than passive victims of European power; they were also trading partners and military allies of the transatlantic newcomers. They became neighbors and advisers, religious converts and loving spouses. As such, they participated actively in the creation of the new society known as America.

The Europeans who risked their lives to settle in the Western Hemisphere were themselves a diverse lot. Young and old, men and women, they came from Spain, Portugal, France, the British Isles, the Netherlands (Holland), Scandinavia, Italy, and the German states (Germany would not become a united nation until the mid-nineteenth century).

A variety of motives inspired Europeans to undertake the often-harrowing transatlantic voyage. Some were fortune seekers lusting for gold, silver, and spices. Others were passionate Christians eager to create kingdoms of God in the New World. Still others were adventurers, convicts, debtors, servants, landless peasants, and political or religious exiles. Many were simply seeking opportunities for a better way of life. A settler in Pennsylvania noted that “poor people of all kinds can here get three times the wages for their labor than they can in England.”

Yet such wages never attracted sufficient numbers of workers to keep up with the rapidly expanding colonial economies, so Europeans early in the seventeenth century turned to Africa for their labor needs. In 1619, a Dutch

warship brought the first twenty Africans to the English settlement at Jamestown, near the coast of Virginia, and exchanged that human cargo for food and supplies.

This first of many transactions involving enslaved people in British America would transform American society in ways that no one at the time envisioned. Few Europeans during the colonial era saw the contradiction between the promise of freedom in America for themselves and the bondage of slavery for Africans and Indians.

The intermingling of people, cultures, plants, animals, germs, and diseases from the continents of Africa, Europe, and the Western Hemisphere gave colonial American society its distinctive vitality and variety. In turn, the diversity of the environment and the varying climate spawned different economies and patterns of living in the various regions of North America. As the original settlements grew into prosperous and populous colonies, the transplanted Europeans had to create new communities and political systems to manage growth and control rising tensions.

At the same time, bitter rivalries among the Spanish, French, English, and Dutch triggered costly wars in Europe and around the world. The monarchs of Europe struggled to manage often-unruly colonies, which, they discovered, played crucial roles in their frequent wars.

Many of the colonists had brought with them to America a feisty independence, which led them to resent government interference in their affairs. A British official in North Carolina reported that the colonists were "without any Law or Order. Impudence is so very high, as to be past bearing." The Americans and their British rulers maintained an uneasy partnership throughout the seventeenth century. But as the royal authorities tightened their control during the mid-eighteenth century, they met resistance from colonists, which exploded into revolution.

1

The Collision of Cultures



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

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

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

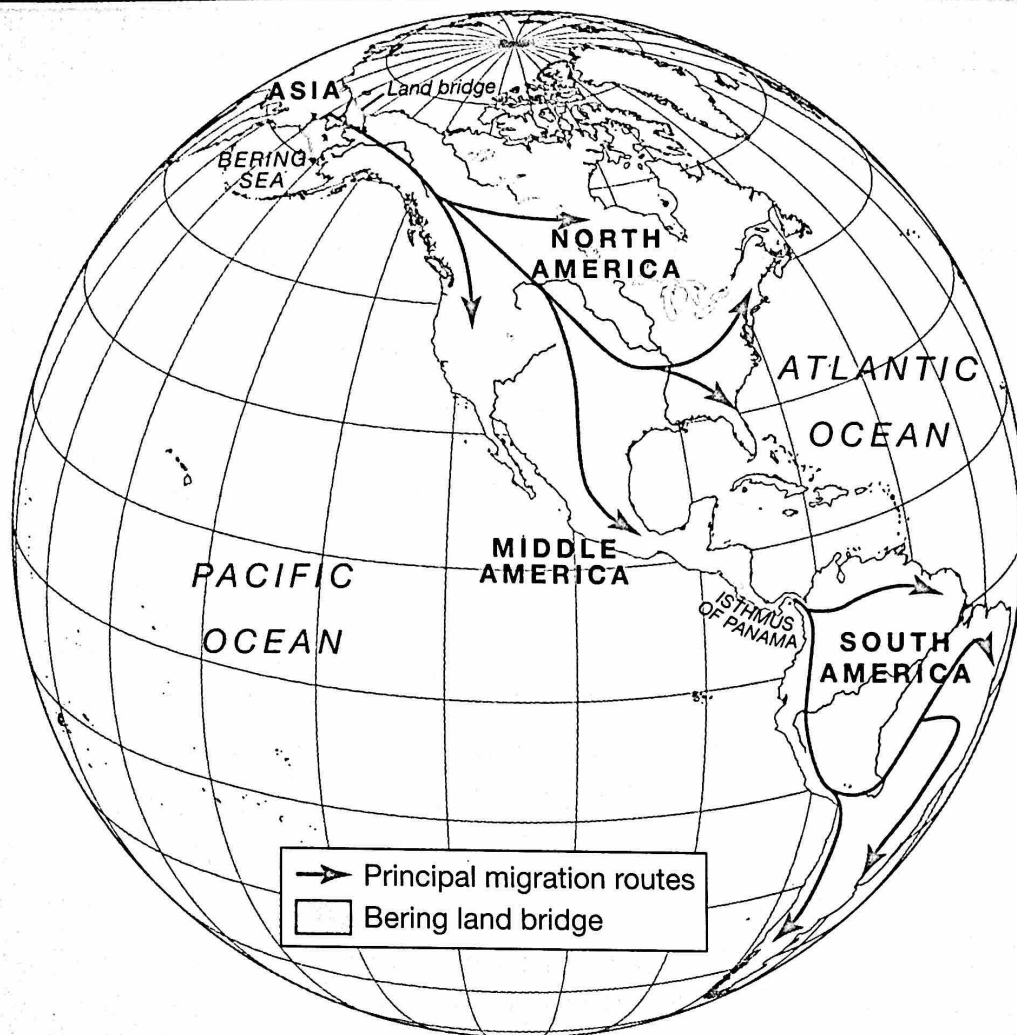
As the ice sheets receded, they left behind in the Midwest a thick blanket of fertile topsoil that had been scoured from Canada and pushed down the continent, creating what would become the world's richest farmland. The shrinking glaciers also opened valley pathways for the first immigrants to begin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

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

focus questions

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

THE FIRST MIGRATION



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

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

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

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

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

EARLY CULTURES IN AMERICA

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE MAYAS, INCAS, AND MEXICA

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

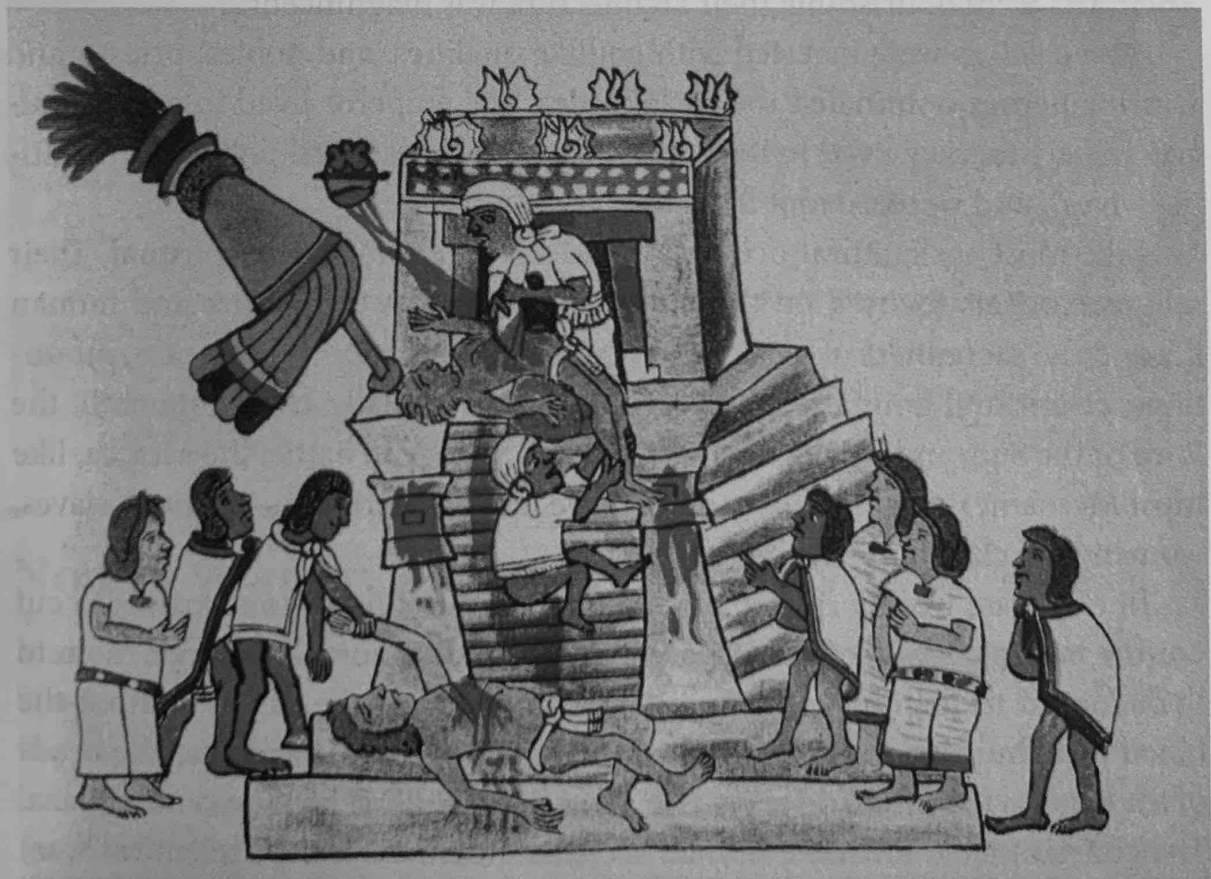


Mayan society A fresco depicting the social divisions of Mayan society. A Mayan lord, at the center, receives offerings.

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PRE-COLUMBIAN INDIAN CIVILIZATIONS IN MIDDLE AND SOUTH AMERICA

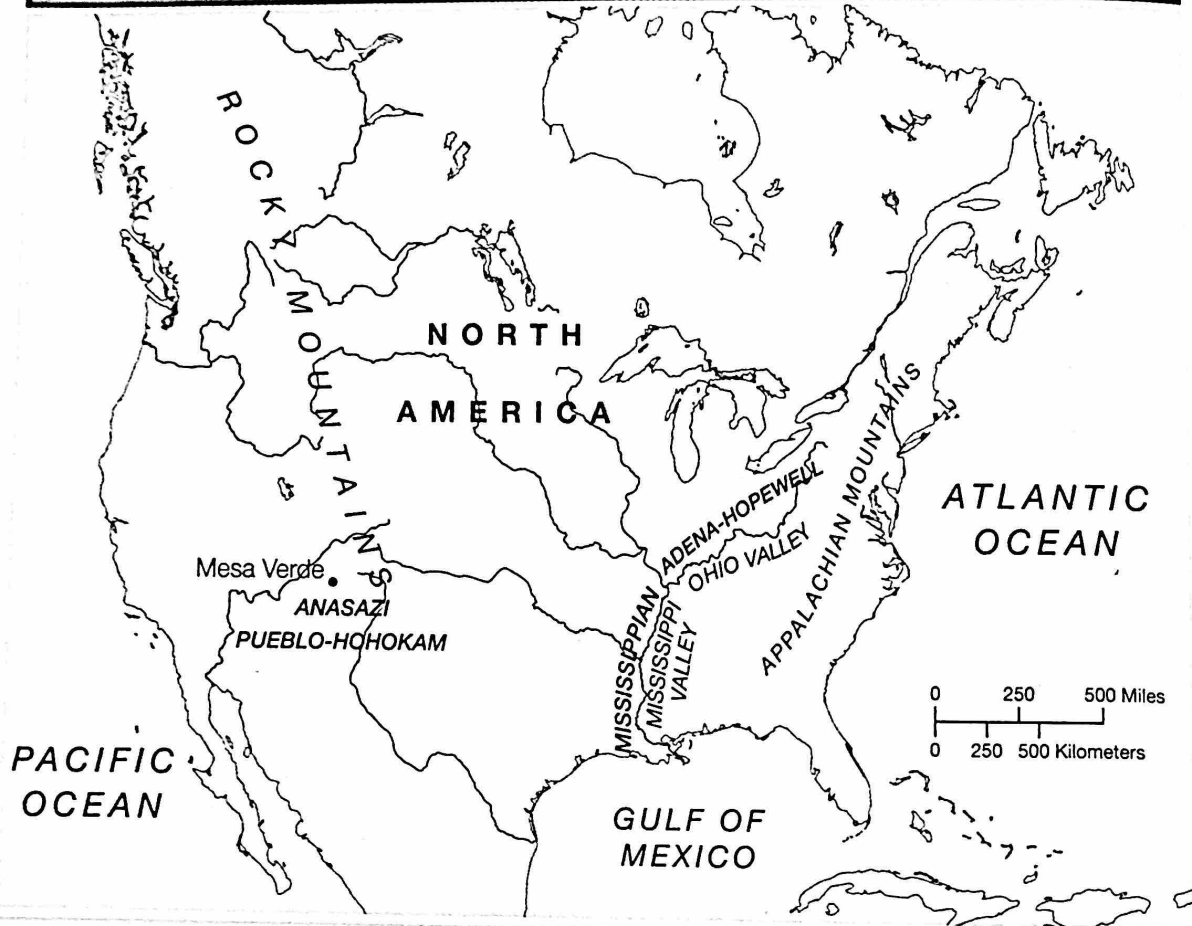


- What were the major pre-Columbian civilizations?
- What factors caused the demise of the Mayan civilization?
- When did the Aztecs build Tenochtitlán?

NORTH AMERICAN CIVILIZATIONS

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

PRE-COLUMBIAN INDIAN CIVILIZATIONS IN NORTH AMERICA



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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

EASTERN WOODLANDS PEOPLES

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

EUROPEAN VISIONS OF AMERICA

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE VOYAGES OF COLUMBUS

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

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

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

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

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



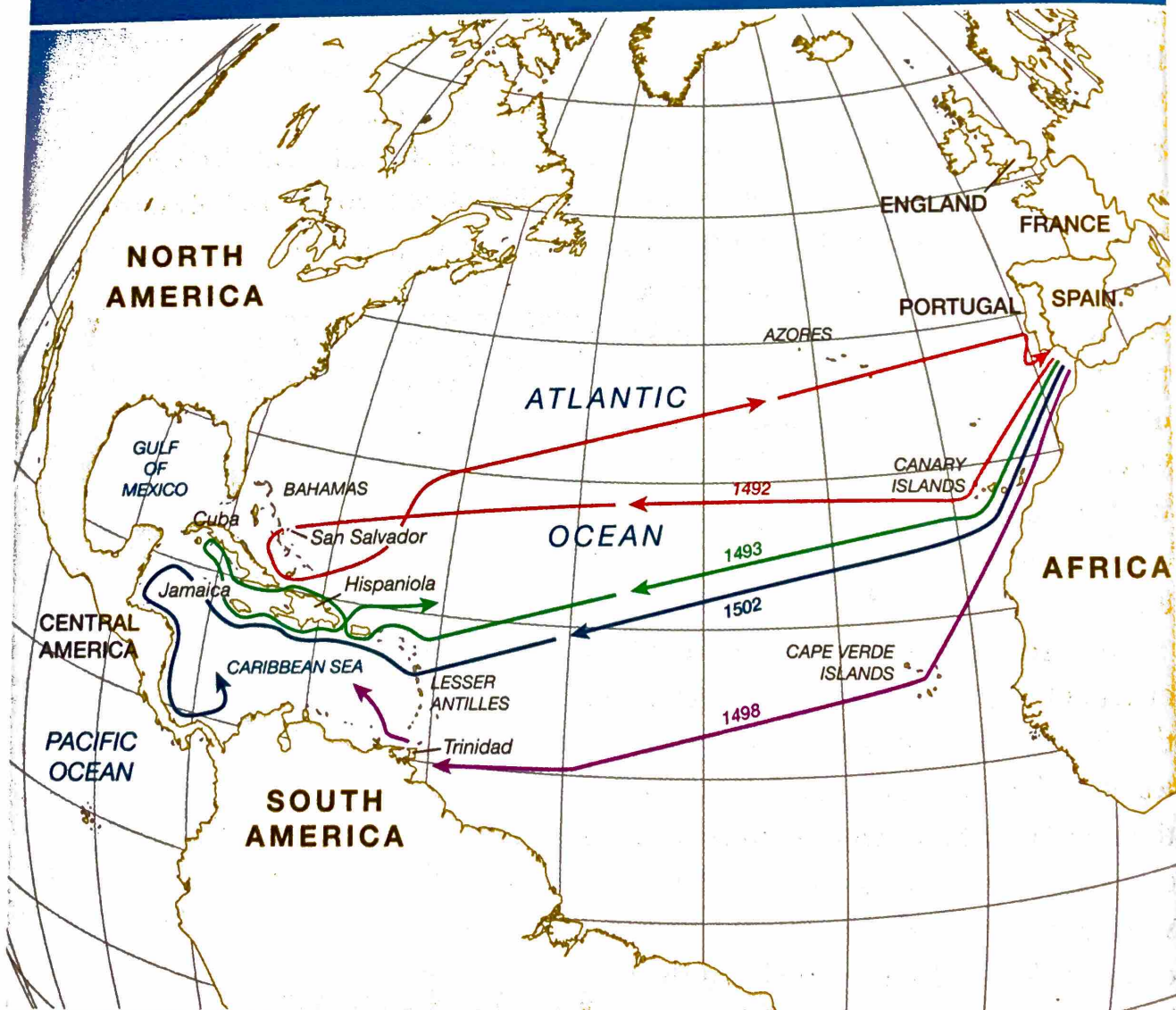
Christopher Columbus A portrait by Sebastiano del Piombo, ca. 1519.

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

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

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

COLUMBUS'S VOYAGES



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

RELIGIOUS CONFLICT IN EUROPE

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