

CHAPTER 1- COLLIDING WORLDS 1450–1600

CHAPTER OUTLINE

I. The Native American Experience

A. The First Americans

1. The first people to live in the Western Hemisphere were small bands of tribal migrants from Asia. They followed animal herds over land and by sea over fifteen thousand years ago, when the last Ice Age created a 100-mile-wide land bridge over the Bering Strait, connecting Siberia and Alaska.
2. Glacial melting then submerged the land bridge beneath the Bering Strait, reducing contact between peoples in North America and Asia for three hundred generations.
3. Anthropologists also agree that a second wave of migrants, the ancestors of the Navajos and the Apaches, crossed the narrow Bering Strait in boats approximately eight thousand years ago.
4. A third migration around five thousand years ago brought the ancestors of the Aleut and Inuit peoples, the “Eskimos,” to North America.
5. For centuries, Native Americans were hunter-gatherers. They primarily migrated in a southward direction and established thriving settlements in central Mexico and the Andes Mountains. A second wave crossed the western mountain ranges and moved into the Mississippi Valley and eastern woodland regions of North America.
6. Around 6000 B.C., many societies developed farming based on corn, potatoes, and squash. Agricultural surplus led to populous, urbanized, and wealthy societies in Mexico, Peru, and the Mississippi Valley.

B. American Empires

1. The Aztecs and Incas established highly populated and powerful empires in Mesoamerica and the Andes.
2. Tenochtitlán, the metropolis of the Aztec state with an impressive population of 250,000 by 1500, served as the center of an expansive and well-regulated tribute, agricultural, and trade network. European explorers were impressed by the city’s wealth and abundance of food items, textiles, and precious metals.
3. Aztec priests and warrior-nobles ruled over this empire by subduing most of the people of central Mexico and sacrificing captured enemies to the gods who they believed influenced life and farming cycles.
4. The Incas established a vast, highly urbanized, and well-organized empire in the high altitudes of the Andes Mountains, with Cuzco as its capital. This empire relied upon a divinely ordained king for leadership and thrived through a bureaucratized system of trade and tribute.

C. Chiefdoms and Confederacies

1. The Mississippi Valley

- a. Although Native American civilizations in North America did not grow to the size of the Aztec and Inca empires, adoption of agriculture based on maize nevertheless contributed to increased urbanization and more sophisticated social structures by A.D. 1000.
- b. In the Mississippi Valley, the city of Cahokia, with its impressive population of over 10,000, developed into the administrative and religious center of the region with nearly 30,000 inhabitants.
- c. The 120 mounds in the area functioned as burial grounds, bases for ceremonial buildings, or rulers’ homes.
- d. By 1350 overpopulation, environmental factors, and warfare led to the decline of this Mississippian civilization. Still, Mississippian institutions and practices endured for centuries along the river, and their influence reached as far east as the Carolinas and Florida.

2. Eastern Woodlands

- a. In the eastern woodlands lived several distinct societies, including the Algonquian and Iroquoian speakers to the north, who shared several language and lifestyle traits. They lived in semi-permanent villages where women farmed fields of maize, beans, and squash, gathered additional food items, and participated in community affairs, while men warred, hunted, and fished.
- b. The seasonal practice of burning cleared forests of underbrush, enhanced agriculture, and improved hunting of big game.
- c. The political system among the peoples of the eastern woodlands varied widely. Some were chiefdoms in which a single ruler held absolute power. Others, such as the Powhatans in the Chesapeake region, had adopted a

paramount chiefdom in which one chief emerged as the ruler over several subordinate chiefs and their respective communities.

- d. The Lenni Lenape and Munsee Indians along the Delaware and Hudson rivers maintained an independent and locally limited political leadership structure.
- e. Around 1500, one of the most powerful Native American groups emerged in the region between Lake Erie and the Hudson River when the Mohawks, Oneidas, Onandagas, Cayugas, and Senecas decided to end years of warfare with each other and formed the Iroquois Confederacy.
- f. Instead of chiefs, councils of sachems, or leaders, held political power and made decisions. Although men were the leaders, diplomats, and warriors, in this matriarchal society, women could also influence council decisions.
- g. Along the southern coast of the region that would come to be called New England, the Narragansetts, Wampanoags, Mohegans, and Pequots were part of a dense network of powerful chiefdoms that competed for dominance and resources.
- h. In the northern, more cold and forbidding regions, including northern New England and present-day Canada, Native Americans established complex yet smaller political units that supported their lives as hunters and gatherers.

3. The Great Lakes

- a. To the west, the Algonquian speakers of the Great Lakes region, including the Ottawas, Ojibwas, and Potawatomi tribal groups, were collectively known as the Anishinaabe people. In this region, core clan identities crossed tribal boundaries.
- b. Their highly mobile life based on hunting, fishing, and traveling influenced trade relationships, shaped military alliances, and contributed to a multitude of social and political affiliations.

4. The Great Plains and Rockies

- a. In the Great Plains and Rocky Mountain regions, the arrival of the horse—an escaped European import—forever changed the cultures and geopolitics of the indigenous people even before they personally encountered Europeans.
- b. The Comanches became impressive hunters, skilled raiders, and fierce warriors, and they greatly expanded their territory.
- c. The peoples of the Sioux nation expanded their domain westward into the Black Hills. The Crow Indians became successful bison hunters, expert horse breeders, and adept traders after their move to the eastern slope of the Rockies.
- d. Despite this increased mobility of hunter-gatherers, several native peoples maintained agricultural settlements, including the Hidatsa and Mandan Indians along the Missouri River and the Caddo Indians in the southern plains.
- e. The Numic-speaking peoples of the Great Basin between the Rockies and the Sierra Mountains adopted several traits to survive in an area of sparse resources, including long-distance travel on foot or by horseback to hunt, fish, and gather provisions.

5. The Arid Southwest

- a. The Pueblo peoples, including the Anasazis, Hohokams, and Mogollons, developed agricultural settlements by A.D. 600. They used irrigation to grow crops by A.D. 1000 and lived in architecturally distinct, multi-room stone structures, or pueblos, built into steep cliffs. The Anasazi built several small and large villages in and around Chaco Canyon and connected them through a vast network of roads.
- b. Drought brought on soil exhaustion and the collapse of Chaco Canyon and other large settlements after 1150. People dispersed to smaller settlements, and the descendants of these peoples—including the Acomas, Zuñis, Tewas, and Hopis—populated present-day New Mexico, Arizona, and western Texas when Europeans arrived.

6. The Pacific Coast

- a. A multitude of distinct hunter-gatherer groups lived along the Pacific coast in independent and socially stratified communities hunting game, gathering seeds and nuts, and catching what the sea and rivers had to offer.
- b. The Chinooks, Coast Salishes, Haidas, and Tlingits, easily distinguished through their colorful totem poles and use of large longhouses, emerged as the most powerful nations of the Pacific Northwest owing to their warrior culture, use of 60-foot-long dugout canoes, and superior fishing capabilities.

D. Patterns of Trade

1. A complex network of trade routes connected this vast Native American world and brought foods, tools, natural resources, and luxury goods to all regions.

2. The hunters and farmers of the Great Plains often met in annual trade fairs, bartering their respective products. Regional trade practices included the exchange of war captives as slaves or diplomatic gifts.
3. Long-distance trade usually centered on acquiring precious objects, such as copper from the Great Lakes, seashells from distant shores, or other highly prized luxury items like grizzly bear claws and eagle feathers.
4. Chiefs, successful hunters, and formidable rulers usually controlled the majority of locally produced items and traded goods, but the tradition of sharing and the desire to solidify authority required that these wealthy leaders redistribute most of their belongings to community and family members.

E. Sacred Power

1. Most Native Americans were animists who believed that every living thing and inanimate object had a spirit. Although specific practices varied, most sought to understand the world by interpreting dreams and visions, and they conducted ceremonies to positively influence guardian spirits and ensure successful hunts and good fortune.
2. Many believed that soil productivity was closely related to women's life-giving abilities, and that continued fertility required annual cleansing and renewal rites, such as the Green Corn Ceremony.
3. Ceremonies performed by men before, during, and after a hunt appealed to the spiritual world for protection and requested the peaceful passage of the animal's spirit from earth.
4. Warfare included many rituals as well, such as young men proving their manhood through raids, victors adopting captives into their community, or villages conducting mourning wars to avenge the death of warriors lost in previous battle.

II. Western Europe: The Edge of the Old World

A. Hierarchy and Authority

1. In the traditional European social order, authority came from above; kings and princes owned vast tracts of land, conscripted men for military service, and lived in splendor off the labor of the peasantry.
2. Noblemen who possessed large landed estates had the power to challenge royal authority through control of the local military and legislative institutions.
3. In these male-dominated societies, or patriarchies, men governed families and passed property and social status to their male heirs. Male power was codified in laws, sanctioned by social customs, and justified by the teachings of the Christian Church.
4. When an Englishwoman married, she assumed her husband's surname, committed herself to obeying his orders, and surrendered the legal rights to all her property. When he died, she received a dowry, usually one-third of the family's property for her use during her lifetime.
5. The inheritance practice of primogeniture, which bestowed all land on the eldest son, forced many younger children to join the ranks of the roaming poor; few men—and even fewer women—had much personal freedom or individual identity. Fathers often demanded that children work for them until their middle or late twenties.

B. Peasant Society

1. In 1450, most Europeans were peasants, farm workers who lived in small rural communities of compact agricultural villages surrounded by the fields they cooperatively farmed. Serfdom, or the obligatory service to a lord's estate, gradually gave way to paying rent or land ownership.
2. As with the Native Americans, many aspects of European life followed seasonal patterns, including farming tasks, household chores, and merrymaking.
3. Infant mortality rates among the peasants were high, primarily from malnourishment and disease. Constant labor and poverty were part of daily life. Although most peasants accepted their difficult circumstances, others hoped for a better life. The rural classes of Britain, Spain, and Germany would supply the majority of white migrants to the Western Hemisphere during the colonial period.

C. Expanding Trade Networks

1. For centuries, Arab scholars had safeguarded ancient knowledge about medicine, philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, and geography. Arab merchants, who dominated trade in the Mediterranean, Africa, and the Near East, had access to highly desired spices, silks, and luxury goods such as mechanical clocks from China.
2. During the twelfth century, merchants from Italian city-states, especially Venice, took over the trade routes in the Mediterranean and in the process established an enormously profitable commercial empire of wealthy merchants, bankers, and textile manufacturers.

3. These moneyed elites became the new ruling class as they established republics ruled by merchant coalitions instead of kings or princes. They also created the concept of civic humanism, an ideology that celebrated public virtue and service to the state, which in time would profoundly influence European and American concepts of government. They also sponsored artists such as Michelangelo and da Vinci, whose artistic genius reflected the cultural and educational transformation known as the Renaissance.
4. In Northern Europe, the Hanseatic League, an alliance of merchant communities, controlled the trade of lumber, furs, wheat, rye, honey, wax, and amber on the Baltic and North seas.
5. Although increased trade seemed to empower merchants and artisans, in much of Europe the rise of commerce also made kings more powerful. Monarchs forged alliances with merchants and artisans to challenge the power of the landed nobility by creating royal law courts and bureaucracies. Kings allowed merchants to trade throughout their realms, granted privileges to the artisan organizations called guilds, and protected trade, thereby encouraging domestic manufacturing and exports. In return, towns paid taxes and merchants loaned money to kings and princes to finance their armies and officials.

D. Myths, Religions, and Holy Warriors

1. The Rise of Christianity
 - a. Like the Indians of North America, European peasants originally were pagans and animists. They believed that unpredictable spiritual forces governed the natural world and that those spirits had to be paid ritual honor. The spread of Christianity changed these practices.
 - b. Christianity, once an underground sect, became the state religion of the Roman Empire after Emperor Constantine's conversion in A.D. 312. The Roman Catholic Church served as one of the great unifying forces in Western European society; the Church provided a pervasive authority and discipline through Christian dogma, a church staffed by priests in every village, and the unifying language of Latin.
 - c. Christian doctrine penetrated the lives of peasant. To eliminate paganism, Christian priests taught that a supernatural God had sent his divine son, Jesus Christ, to save humanity, which lived in a flawed and fallen natural world, from its sins. The Christian Church devised a religious calendar that transformed pagan agricultural festivals into Christian holy days.
 - d. The Church also defined people who spread doctrine conflicting with the teaching of the Church as tools of Satan, a wicked supernatural being who constantly tempted people to sin. Christian rulers dedicated their lives to suppressing false doctrine, or heresies.
2. The Crusades
 - a. One of the perceived false doctrines that Christian rulers aimed to crush was Islam. After the death of Muhammad in A.D. 632, Muslims spread Islam into Africa, India, and Indonesia, as well as into Spain and the Balkans in Europe. Between A.D. 1096 and 1291, Christian monarchs raised armies and, alongside the newly established Knights Templar and the Teutonic Knights, fought the Crusades, a series of wars that aimed to reverse Muslim advances in Europe and win back the holy lands.
 - b. The Crusades, despite their limited military success, were significant in that they strengthened Christianity in Europe and contributed to the persecution of Jews. These wars also resulted in access to new trade routes that led to China and India, thus exposing Europeans to a much wider world. The discovery of sugar derived from cane during these religious wars would also profoundly impact European commerce and the lives of Africans by the fifteenth century.
3. The Reformation
 - a. In 1517, Martin Luther initiated the Reformation through his *Ninety-five Theses*, which denounced the Church for its corrupt practices, diminished the role of the clergy, and asserted that the Bible, not the Church, was the ultimate religious authority. Luther also translated the Bible into German to make it accessible to literate Germans.
 - b. The French theologian John Calvin launched a Protestant faith based on the belief in an all-powerful God who predestines a number of people for salvation before they are born and condemns all others to eternal damnation (the doctrine of predestination). Calvin, who also believed that mankind was naturally corrupt, established model communities in Geneva, Switzerland, in which ministers strictly enforced regulations against idleness and extravagance. Calvin quickly gained converts throughout Europe, including the Puritans in England and Scotland.

- c. The Protestant Reformation, initiated by such radicals as Luther and Calvin, generated a Counter-Reformation in the Catholic Church that resulted in internal reform and the creation of new monastic and missionary orders, including the formation of the Jesuits in 1540. Competition between these two religions also shaped colonial history in the Americas. Catholics from Spain, Portugal, and France sought to convert souls in America for the Church, while Protestants from England and the Netherlands sought to establish godly communities that reflected the true gospel of Christianity.

III. West and Central Africa: Origins of the Atlantic Slave Trade

A. Empires, Kingdoms, and Ministates

1. Vast and diverse, West Africa stretches along the coast from just south of the Sahara, through the semiarid Sahel, the grasslands of the savanna, and into a tropical rain forest. Several great rivers—the Senegal, Gambia, Volta, and Niger—provide access to the interior.
2. Sudanic civilization took root at the eastern end of West Africa around 9000 B.C. and traveled westward. For centuries, Sudanic peoples lived in this area in hierarchical societies ruled by divine kings and princes. They farmed specialized crops (including sorghum, millet, and cotton), domesticated cattle, created a distinct style of pottery, and maintained a unique monotheistic faith.
3. Three successive great empires—the Ghana, Mali, and Songhai—arose in the northern Savanna between the ninth and fifteenth centuries. Each was a collection of smaller vassal kingdoms that gained wealth through access to the Saharan trade routes and protected their assets with military might.
4. Abundant quantities of gold were the primary source of power and wealth for these empires, and through trade gold became the basis for much of European, North African, and Asian currencies by 1450.
5. In the lower savanna and tropical rain forest of West Africa existed several smaller kingdoms or ministates, comparable in size to modern-day American counties, which traded with the northern empires, often fought wars with each other over access to resources and power, and pioneered the cultivation of yams.

B. Trans-Saharan and Coastal Trade

1. The Ghana, Mali, and Songhai empires monopolized the trans-Saharan trade caravans, which carried gold, copper, salt, and slaves across the Sahara to North Africa and brought back textiles and other foreign goods. For ministates along the west coast of Africa, products originating beyond the Sahara were scarce and expensive, while markets for their own products were limited.
2. The arrival of Europeans created new opportunities for coastal trade. European sailors encountered a variety of political groups; Mande-speaking states dominated trade with the interior along the Senegal and Gambia river estuaries. Akan states trading heavily in gold acquired the European name Gold Coast. Further east, the Bight of Benin came to be called the Slave Coast because it was the early center of the slave trade. Southward along the western coast of Africa existed the Kingdom of Kongo, the largest state on the Atlantic seaboard. Throughout this vast region, European traders had to negotiate contracts on local terms.

C. The Spirit World

1. Spiritual beliefs varied greatly, with most West Africans recognizing a variety of deities. West Africans who lived immediately south of the Sahara—the Fulanis in Senegal, Mande-speakers in Mali, and the Hausas in northern Nigeria—also learned about Islam from Arab merchants and missionaries.
2. Rituals varied as well and included the worship of ancestors and the manipulation of spirits for good or ill purpose, as well as celebrations of male virility and female fertility to ensure large families.

IV. Exploration and Conquest

A. Portuguese Expansion

1. Seeking a maritime route to the riches of the trans-Saharan trade routes, Prince Henry of Portugal (1394-1460) established a naval academy. Portuguese sailors developed a new ship, the caravel, rigged with a lateen or triangular sail. This innovation, which allowed for better and longer-distance sailing in the treacherous waters off the northwest African coast, led to the discovery and colonization of the Madeira and Azore islands. From there, they sailed in 1435 to sub-Saharan Sierra Leone, where they traded salt, wine, and fish for African gold and ivory.
2. Italian Genoese traders, cut off from eastern Mediterranean trade routes by the powerful Ottoman Empire, gained access to Atlantic routes by financing Portuguese and Castilian trading voyages. These voyages resulted in the discoveries of the Canaries, the Cape Verde Islands, and São Tomé.

3. European planters turned these Atlantic islands into laboratories for cash crops, including sugar cane, wheat, wine grapes, and woad, a blue dye plant. In the Canary Islands, Castilian adventurers used Guanches, the natives of the islands, as their enslaved labor force. By 1500, Madeira sugar became available in small, expensive quantities in London, Paris, Rome, and Constantinople.
4. Initially, Europeans established only small, fortified trading posts along the coast because local kingdoms were well defended and diseases such as malaria and yellow fever were lethal.
5. Portuguese sailors continued their search for an Atlantic route to Asia. In 1497, Vasco da Gama reached India and returned with a highly profitable cargo of cinnamon and pepper. Upon his return to India in 1502, da Gama's ships outgunned Arab fleets; the Portuguese government soon built fortified trading posts on several coasts along the Indian Ocean and opened trade routes from Africa to Indonesia and up the coast of Asia to China. The Portuguese, and subsequently the Dutch, had supplanted the Arabs as the leaders in Asian commerce.

B. The African Slave Trade

1. Portuguese traders also surpassed Arab merchants as the primary sellers in the slave trade. Bonded labor—through slavery, serfdom, indentured servitude—was the norm in most premodern societies. It also existed in Africa, where a person could be held as security for a debt or sold into servitude in exchange for food during famine. Most slaves were war captives sold from one kingdom to another as agricultural workers, concubines, or military recruits.
2. Historians have estimated that between A.D. 700 and 1900, 9 million Africans were sold in the trans-Saharan slave trade.
3. Although Portuguese merchants were initially more interested in gold and commodities than in human beings, they eventually exploited this trade as well and established forts at small port cities—first at Elmina in 1482—where they bought gold and slaves from African princes and warlords.
4. Initially the Portuguese carried a few thousand African slaves each year to work on sugar plantations in the Cape Verde Islands, the Azores, and the Madeira Islands; they also sold slaves in Lisbon, which soon had an African population of 9,000.
5. After 1550, the Atlantic slave trade expanded enormously as other Europeans joined West Africa's long-established trade in humans and forcefully shipped hundreds of thousands of slaves to new American sugar plantations in Brazil and the West Indies.

C. Sixteenth-Century Incursions

1. Columbus and the Caribbean

- a. Explorers financed by the Spanish monarchs Ferdinand II of Aragon and Isabella I of Castile, discovered the Western Hemisphere for Europeans. Married in an arranged match to combine their Christian kingdoms, the young rulers completed the centuries-long *reconquista* (the campaign by Spanish Catholics to drive Muslim Arabs from the European mainland) in 1492 when their armies captured Granada, the last Islamic state in Western Europe.
- b. Ferdinand and Isabella also sought to expand trade and their empire, and they enlisted the services of Christopher Columbus, a Christian mariner from Genoa.
- c. Columbus believed that the Atlantic Ocean, long feared by Arab merchants as a 10,000-mile-wide “green sea of darkness,” was a much narrower channel of water separating Europe from Asia. Although dubious about Columbus's theory, Ferdinand and Isabella arranged financial backing from Spanish merchants and charged Columbus with finding a western route to Asia and carrying Christianity to its peoples.
- d. Christopher Columbus set sail in three small ships in August 1492. After a perilous voyage of 3,000 miles, he disembarked six weeks later on an island in the present-day Bahamas, believing he had reached Asia—“the Indies,” in fifteenth-century parlance. He called the native inhabitants (the Taino, Arawak, and Carib peoples) Indians and the islands the West Indies. Although he was surprised by the crude living conditions, he also believed natives could be easily converted to Christianity. Upon hearing stories of rivers of gold, Columbus assigned forty men to the island of Hispaniola (present-day Haiti and Dominican Republic) before returning to Spain as a hero.
- e. Although Columbus found no gold, the monarchs sent three more expeditions over the next twelve years. During those expeditions, Columbus began the colonization of the West Indies, transporting more than a thousand Spanish settlers—all men—and hundreds of domestic animals.

- f. A German geographer soon labeled the newly found continents America in honor of a Florentine explorer, Amerigo Vespucci. Vespucci, who had explored the region around 1500, believed that the land was not part of Asia and called it a *nuevo mundo*, a “new world.”
2. The Spanish Invasion
 - a. After brutally subduing the Arawaks and Tainos on Hispaniola, the Spanish probed the mainland for gold and slaves. Rumors of rich Indian kingdoms in the interior encouraged other Spaniards, including hardened veterans of the *reconquista*, to launch an invasion.
 - b. In 1519, Hernán Cortés, a member of the Spanish gentry class, and his fellow Spanish conquistadors landed on the Mexican coast and began a conquest of the Aztec empire. Luck, Indian allies, and a siege strategy enabled the Spanish to emerge victorious. Moctezuma, the Aztec ruler, believed that Cortés might be a returning god and allowed him to enter the empire without challenge.
 - c. Disease also contributed to Spanish victory. A massive smallpox outbreak decimated the population of Tenochtitlán, enabling Cortés and his crew to infiltrate the city. Subsequent outbreaks of measles, influenza, and smallpox facilitated the Aztec collapse.
 - d. In the 1520s, the Spanish conquest entered a new phase when Francisco Pizarro overthrew the Inca empire in Peru; the Incas were also easy prey because of internal fighting over the throne and disease brought by the Spanish.
 - e. The Spanish invasion changed life forever in the Americas. Disease and warfare wiped out virtually all of the Indians of Hispaniola—at least 300,000 people. Peru’s population of 9 million in 1530 plunged to fewer than 500,000 a century later. The decline of Mesoamerica’s population from 20 million in 1500 to just 3 million in 1650 represented one of the great demographic disasters in world history.
 3. Cabral and Brazil
 - a. In 1500, one of the Portuguese excursions to find a sailing route around the southern tip of Africa encountered new land in the West. Commander Pedro Alvares Cabral named it the Island of the True Cross; subsequent sailors renamed it Brazil after the indigenous tree that yielded valuable red dye. Serious settlement began in the 1530s. Colonists established sugar plantations in the coastal lowlands using Native Americans as their initial labor force but gradually replaced them with slaves from Africa. Brazil became the world’s leading producer of sugar at a high cost of African lives.
 - b. By 1600, the most important aspects of European colonization of the Americas were already becoming visible. The Spanish demonstrated that the native civilizations were vulnerable to conquest and yielded precious sources of wealth. The Portuguese confirmed the feasibility of sugar plantations and established the transatlantic slave trade to operate them. Contact between Europeans and Native Americans also contributed to the phenomenon of the Columbian Exchange.