Big Era 6
The Great Global Convergence
1400-1800 CE

Landscape Teaching Unit 6.1
Oceanic Ventures
And the Joining of the Continents
1400-1550 CE

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World History for Us All
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Why this unit?

Long-distance maritime travel had a long history before the pioneering voyages that began in the late fifteenth century. The oceanic voyages of the 1400 to 1550 period, however, produced radically new information. First, mariners proved that there was open water to the south of Africa and that Europe could be linked to Asia by sailing east. Second, by sailing west to try to reach Asia, they discovered the Americas, two continents that peoples of Afroeurasia had previously not known about. And third, they demonstrated that the western Atlantic was not land-locked, that there was open water to the south of the Americas leading to the Pacific, and that Asia could indeed be reached directly from Europe as well as from the Americas by sailing west.

The new sea routes discovered became increasingly busy channels of communication between continents and countries. Across these routes passed, by conscious intent or not, people, goods, plants, animals, technologies, ideas, and diseases. Contacts multiplied over a wider range of ecosystems, involving more and more diverse peoples. The advantages of this situation increasingly became slanted towards Europeans, though the process was gradual and did not become full-fledged until well beyond 1550.

The development of our contemporary world of international organizations, multinational corporations, **globalization**, and both the spread of and resistance to European cultural ideas and institutions, was heavily influenced by what happened during this period of long-distance maritime exploration and encounter.

Time and materials

This unit is versatile. The variety and number of student readings, discussion questions, and activities provided are meant to give teachers choices in using materials most suited to their students, interests, and circumstances. Time taken for the unit will vary depending on teachers' selections and on whether the Student Handouts and some of the activities are assigned as homework. Each of the three lessons in the unit may be used alone. Lesson 1 is likely to take the least time, and Lesson 3 the most. If the time available is severely limited, Lesson 2, which is the core of the unit, could be minimally covered in two class periods. Each of the other lessons would take an additional one to three class periods. No materials are needed other than pencil, paper, and Student Handouts.

Unit objectives

Upon completing this unit, students will be able to:

1. Identify reasons why mariners undertook long-distance oceanic voyages both east and west during the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, and compare the Chinese, Portuguese, and Spanish ventures.
2. Evaluate what promoted, and what hindered, the novel sea voyages and their achievements during the period 1400 to 1550.
3. Explain how, and with what results, Spain and Portugal turned the search for new sea routes into a grasp for empire in the sixteenth century.
4. Analyze ways in which each side viewed the other in the encounters of Africans, Native Americans, and Asians with Iberians (Spanish and Portuguese) during and after the latter's maritime expeditions of 1400 to 1550.
5. Develop a toolkit for assessing the reliability of historical documents as evidence, and gain practice in its use.

Author

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The historical context

Early modern beginnings: Thriving trade links connected various parts of Afroeurasia.

About 1400 and for a considerable time thereafter, India and China were the hub and driving force of the **Afroeurasian** economy. They had the largest populations, the greatest wealth, and by far the largest volume of exchanges. A many-stranded commercial network linked them to Southeast and Inner Eurasia, the Islamic world, parts of sub-Saharan Africa, the Mediterranean, and Europe.

Long distance maritime trade from Asia to Europe was at this time largely in the hands of Muslim merchants, though people of many faiths and origins participated. They brought goods by ship from China, Indonesia, the Indian Ocean rim lands, and, on the final leg, from the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf overland to ports on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean and to Egypt. From there ships from Venice, the leading southern European seaport, typically picked up the merchandise and distributed it to consumers in the rest of Europe.

More than just merchandise was passed along the routes. In addition to trade goods, political, cultural, economic, religious, technological information, and sometimes infectious microorganisms traveled as well. The flow of information favored **collective learning** among human communities and sparked innovation. Also, the exchange of diseases between densely-settled areas eventually increased the overall immunities of people in those areas.

The groundwork was laid slowly for growth of European dominance and for an expanded and integrated world.

Shifts in this long-established system took place as a result of the deliberate series of European long-distance sea voyages started in the fifteenth century by peoples of the Iberian Peninsula. They were not the only people to undertake such voyages. Imperially-sponsored Chinese navigators took part in a series of marine expeditions in the first third of the century. These voyages crossed the Indian Ocean and reached ports as far as Arabia and the East African coast. However, these destinations were not new to them, and their short-lived visits were not intended to establish permanent colonies or achieve conquests.

Iberian mariners' voyages, on the other hand, resulted in finding new sea routes, lands previously unknown to Europe, and a shift from a search for profits to a grasp for domination. The consequences that followed, both intentional and unintentional, gradually brought Europe from the edges to the center of the world's trade. Over some 300 years, the opening of the oceanic passages contributed to the growth of European power on the world scene economically, politically, and culturally. They also helped promote:

- Intensification of every kind of exchange worldwide.
- Increased volume and speed of the movement of goods, peoples, information, and ideas.
- That entanglement of diverse economies and societies, which we now call globalization.

As a result of these developments, both diversity within groups and uniformity across groups have increased. So have inequality between and within groups, as well as environmental costs. From the sixteenth century on, deforestation became a bigger problem than earlier owing to over-use of timber to meet the increasing demands for ships and for smelting ores, such as gold, silver, and iron. The trend of moving more people and more goods for longer distances was given a mighty push in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Since then it has accelerated, accompanied, from the later eighteenth century, by the steep rise in use of the fossil fuels, which has contributed to growing pollution and **global warming** in our own time.

The beginnings were small steps. For nearly a century, Iberian seafarers explored the Atlantic islands close to Africa, and the Portuguese crept down the west coast of that continent. Then, during a third of a century starting in 1492, mariners sponsored by Spanish and Portuguese rulers set out on long-distance voyages. They did not set off into the unknown. They thought they knew their destinations, but they were looking for previously unknown routes to reach them. Spaniards went looking for an alternative and more direct route to the spices and other treasures of the Indies. Instead, they came across huge amounts of gold, silver, and land in the Americas, which they proceeded to conquer, subdue, and exploit, using unfree labor. The Portuguese first looked for gold in West Africa. Their search led them gradually to the carriers and sources of the spice

trade. They used their cannon-equipped ships, based at forts and trading stations along the edges of the Indian Ocean, to intimidate or eliminate competitors. Their aim was to establish a monopoly over the distribution of spices and, more generally, of sea-borne trade in the region.

In the course of their search, between them the mariners sailing from Iberia made a series of revolutionary discoveries. They found:

- An unexpected continent, first an obstacle in the way of reaching Asia from Europe by a western sea route, then a major contributor to the rise of European power.
- Proof that routinely crossing the Atlantic Ocean both ways was possible, thereby linking Europe and the American continent.
- Proof that there was open sea below the southern tip of Africa and that an entirely water-borne crossing from the Atlantic into the Indian Ocean was possible.
- A sea-passage that allowed bypassing America, proving the possibility of an uninterrupted passage by sea from the Atlantic into the Pacific, which was at that time barely glimpsed by Europeans.
- The path across the Pacific to Indonesia, proof of Columbus' idea that reaching the East by sailing west was possible, though a return voyage east across the Pacific was not managed until after 1550.
- The possibility of circumnavigating the globe. Having crossed the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian oceans, and rounded Africa's southern tip, European mariners were able to home in on the Spanish port where their westward voyage had begun. This proved that the seas were all connected and could serve as an uninterrupted highway linking the world's landmasses with each other.

The driving forces that underlay early modern Iberian maritime enterprises were varied and complex.

Insofar as we can now reconstruct motivations for the so-called voyages of discovery by Europeans in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, primary among them were the following:

- Continued rivalry with Muslim powers in the Mediterranean region. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Ottoman Turkish empire conquered the Byzantine state, the Balkan Peninsula in southeastern Europe, and the eastern and southern shores of the Mediterranean.
- Intensified search for Christian rulers in Africa or Asia, who might be enlisted as allies against Muslims. Legends about these rulers may have been based on the existence of a Christian kingdom in Ethiopia.
- Increased zeal among Roman Catholics for conversion of unbelievers to Christianity, an enthusiasm that emerged partly from the Protestant Reformation and the ensuing loss of the Roman Church's Christian monopoly in western and central Europe.
- Increasing demand in the West for luxury goods such as spices, silks, porcelain, and other products of Asia, stimulated by the significant growth of population after the **Black Death** and the rise in incomes that came about after death rates had made labor scarce.

- Increasing need for gold to pay for the Asian goods that Europeans desired. Europeans had few other exports of significant interest to Asian markets.
- Search for new ways to access sources of gold on the one hand and of goods from China, India, and Indonesia on the other. The aim here was twofold. One was to stop profits from going to Muslim middlemen, then the primary carriers of trade between East and West. The other was to gain all profits for Christian merchants and countries.
- Achievement of individual fame and honor in services to God, Church, and ruler.

Several different conditions favored the undertaking and continuation of long-distance European ocean voyages in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

The success of long-distance maritime exploration of regions new to Europeans was promoted, to varying degrees, by

- The existence of wind systems in the Atlantic and Pacific as well as in the Indian oceans that could be counted on to blow consistently in a known direction at known times of the year at known latitudes.
- Gradual technological changes from the Middle Ages onward that upgraded the sailing qualities and sturdiness of Iberian ships, by combining existing features of Atlantic, Mediterranean, and Indian Ocean ship designs.
- Western mariners' learning to use the altitude of the Pole Star or the sun to establish latitude and thereby a ship's position when out of sight of land. The development of instruments to help measure latitude.
- Translations of Greek and Arabic texts, which allowed recovery by Renaissance humanists of classical geographical information and access to more recent Islamic cartography and geographical scholarship.
- The Renaissance values of interest in the natural and physical world.
- The printing press, which made news of discoveries, travel accounts, and sailing manuals available to more people faster and more cheaply, thereby both whetting appetites for further exploration and aiding in carrying it out.
- The strong financial interest of rulers in the fruits of overseas ventures, and their resulting enthusiastic support for it.
- The institution in Iberia of formal instruction, examinations, and licensing of pilots to improve navigation in the early sixteenth century.
- The use of cannon on board Iberian ships and the lack of comparably-armed competition in the Indian Ocean until the 1530s or so.
- The land-orientation at the time of major political units such as Ming China, the Delhi Sultanate, the Vijayanagar empire in South India, and the Aztec and Inca empires in the Americas. Also, their lack of vital interests in either overseas trade or possession of large navies.

Overseas discoveries, and their consequences, played themselves out against a background of complicated cultural and religious changes and political power plays in Europe and the wider world.

The Spanish and Portuguese oceanic voyages of the fifteenth century, and the possibilities they opened, were soon followed by other voyages sponsored by other European nations as well.

In the 1400 to 1550 period, Iberian mariners' expeditions, and those of their imitators, took place in a context that in Europe included:

- The European Renaissance, an intellectual and aesthetic movement to resurrect ancient learning and to experiment with new modes of literary and artistic expression.
- The rapid spread of ideas owing to the technology of moveable-type printing and other improved communications.
- The "gunpowder revolution," resulting in widespread adoption of cannon, muskets and bigger armies.
- The Protestant and Catholic Reformations.
- Christian states' attempts to organize resistance against the advancing Ottomans, with whom they warred intermittently throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.
- The series of wars between the huge Habsburg empire of Charles V on the one hand, and France, sometimes allied with the Ottoman empire, on the other.
- The consolidation and centralization of territorial states with bureaucracies and police that more vigorously collected taxes from their subjects.
- The beginnings of the **scientific revolution**.

In a world context, the Iberian maritime expeditions were contemporaneous with:

- A rise in population in most areas of Afroeurasia, though not in the Americas. Afroeurasia's population surged in the sixteenth century from about 418 million to 545 million. At the same time, the native populations of the Americas plunged. In 1600, therefore, something close to 98 percent of all human beings lived in Afroeurasia.
- Expansion of the Ottoman empire into Europe from the late fourteenth to the late seventeenth century.
- The conversion to Christianity in 1491 of the king of Kongo and many of his people, the greatest success of Portuguese missionary effort in Africa.
- The flowering of Songhay, one of the largest African empires in history, under King Askia Mohammed (1493-1529). He took control of western trans-Saharan caravan routes and made his expanded and consolidated empire a center of Islamic scholarship.
- Foundation of the native Iranian Safavid dynasty in Persia, which established Shi'a Islam as the official religion of its empire.
- Expansion of the Muslim sultanate of Aceh in Sumatra. After 1511 its rulers began deliberately to compete with the Portuguese for the area's spice-trade, successfully attracting Muslim merchants to their own territory at the expense of Portuguese-occupied Malacca.
- Decimation of Indian populations in the Americas by disease and European exploitation.

- Accelerated export of slaves from Africa to the Americas.
- Beginnings of large-scale changes in American ecosystems, owing to agricultural practices that favored monoculture, and the introduction of new plant and animal species.
- Routing by Baber, descendant of Tamerlane and Chingis Khan, of the Delhi Sultanate in 1526 and the subsequent establishment of the Mughal empire in North India.
- Introduction of firearms to Japan in 1543 and subsequently growth of a gun manufacturing industry there.

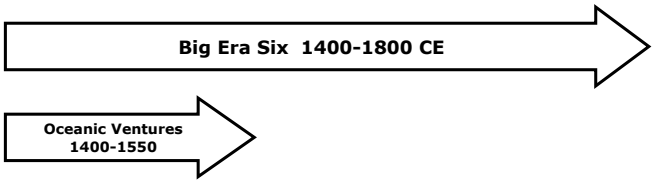
In spite of the revolutionary nature of the long-distance oceanic voyages' discoveries, their immediate consequences on a world-scale were limited.

In the short run, say by 1550, their impact was felt most by governments, and mostly in some of the countries bordering seas; by those involved in commerce and finance; by some among the educated and literate in some countries, virtually all of them men. Much less or not at all affected worldwide were the rural and agricultural populations, urban laborers, and still-isolated tribal societies that, between them, made up the vast majority of the world's inhabitants.

The long run was a different story. While the "trickle-down" effects came gradually and took centuries to fully unfold, the repercussions of the 1400 to 1550 oceanic ventures left hardly anyone in the world untouched by the nineteenth century.

Though it was not obvious at the time, with hindsight this period has proved to be one of the turning points in world history.

This unit in the Big Era timeline



Lesson 1
What Was Needed to Link Continents?

Introduction

- Students can work on most activities and questions as a whole class, as individuals, or in groups. Results of individual and group work usually need to be shared with the whole class.
- Unless stated otherwise, "Document" means both the head note and the excerpt from an original source that follows the head note.
- Giving students the questions they are going to be asked to answer, and the activities they will be asked to do, *before* they read the documents on which the questions and the activities are based, helps their concentration, comprehension, and performance.
- Questions and activities typically start with the relatively simple, and go on to probes of increasing complexity.
- Encourage students to keep notes of answers to discussion questions and results of activities, since some subsequent questions build on these.
- Maps of the Indian and Atlantic oceans in the Appendix show the location of places that figure in the Teaching Unit as well as dates when Portuguese or Spanish, between 1400 and 1550, first formally claimed, conquered, or settled those locations.

Introductory Activities

Ask students to respond to the following questions. If time is limited, each of the following questions (or parts of one) could be assigned to a different group, which would report its conclusions to the rest of the class.

1. If you were planning a long-distance sea voyage during the second half of the fifteenth century to little-known destinations along unknown routes, what problems with the physical environment would you expect to have to deal with during the voyage? What problems of human-to-human relations would you expect to have to deal with on board and on arrival at your destination? What preparations might you make to avoid or minimize the problems you expect? What personal characteristics would most help you, and your crew, deal with these problems? What solutions to the problems might you try?

2. At the time of the long-distance sea voyages of 1400-1550, what else was going on in the world? Brainstorm happenings you know of during that time in Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Americas. Could any of these have helped, or hindered, venturing long-distance sea voyages? Which? How? (Ask students about those parts of the world with which they would likely be familiar.)

3. If American astronauts were to meet intelligent alien life forms on Mars in the coming years, what information and what frames of reference about meeting and dealing with unfamiliar

peoples or societies on earth could they draw on to help them manage the extraterrestrial encounter? (Ask students to think about images from literature and mass media, history, and politics, as well as ideas about power, opportunity, diversity, gain, threat, cooperation, and conflict.)

What reactions by the astronauts to such a meeting do you think would be most likely, based on their frames of reference and on the notions they have about the "Other"? Would they draw on a different set of notions, and react differently, if the Martians had turned up at the Kennedy Space Center, instead of earth astronauts appearing on their turf? If so, what would be the difference? Why?

4. Brainstorm a list of characteristics that you think define an "empire". Take a few minutes to try them out on empires you know something about. How well do the characteristics you have hypothesized fit? Ask students to arrive at a class consensus on the characteristics that you agree define an empire. Can America today be described as an "empire"? Why or why not? (Students might be reminded of earlier work, if any, on the nature of empires, such as in Big Era Four Panorama Teaching Unit, Lesson 3, "Recipe for Successful Empires," or in Big Era Five, Landscape Teaching Unit 5.4, Lesson 1, "The Mongol Moment.")

5. If a student asked you how to go about deciding whether a historical document could be accepted as reliable evidence, what advice would you give him or her? Would your advice work equally well to assess the reliability of information on the Internet, in advertisements, political speeches, and news articles as well? Why or why not? If you think additional or different ways of assessing the reliability of these would be needed, what might such ways be?

Activities and Discussion Questions

Ask students to respond to the following:

1. Check the answers to the first Introductory Activity in your notes. For which of the environmental and human problems you had expected as a long-distance mariner in the fifteenth century was there evidence in Student Handout 1.1? Which problems described had you not anticipated? For what problems that you had expected was there no evidence in Student Handout 1.1? If you had been a long-distance mariner at that time, which of the problems would have troubled you most? Why?

2. Brainstorm the personality traits you think would have been helpful to the long-distance mariners of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and explain in what way(s) they would have been helpful. Why might "guts" (courage, determination) be singled out as something needed to make successful long-distance sea voyages at that time? How, if at all, do the personality traits that would be helpful to today's long-distance traveler by airplane or by car differ from those you have just brainstormed for mariners of the earlier time?

3. If you could have constructed the ideal ship in which to cross the Atlantic in the late fifteenth century, and knew the information from Student Handout 1.1, what features from those of European, Muslim, and Chinese designs at the time would you have included in the design of your ship? Explain your reasons for doing so. Which of the features you would have included were missing from the ships actually in use in Europe at the time? What might account for this?

4. On each of the seven maps of Student Handout 1.2, find places you know. Note their size, shape, location relative to other places, and the ways they differ from, or are approximately the same as, the maps you are used to seeing. (A comparison with the modern maps in the Appendix will help with this.)

- What would you infer, and how, about the purpose or intended use(s) of each map in Student Handout 1.2?
- Arrange the maps in Student Handout 1.2, regardless of their date, into two groups based on what you consider to be their common characteristics. What reason(s) could you come up with for the difference(s) between your two groups?
- What influence did the historical context at the time, and the background of the map's creator, have on the maps? Give examples. (Contemporary examples might be a map produced by an Internet search engine that shows the location of Internet cafes, or a city map by an oil company showing gas stations.)
- What, if anything, surprised you about your findings? Why?

5. Judging by the maps in Student Handout 1.2, what do you consider the most important changes in European ideas of what the world was like? Why? On what did you base your assessment of importance? Which map features, during any period, could have influenced, either favorably or unfavorably, the undertaking or success of long-distance maritime voyages? Explain your argument.

6. Debate the accuracy of this statement: "It was adopting and adapting the ideas and technologies of earlier times and other peoples, rather than anything they came up with on their own, that made possible the long distance voyages of Iberian mariners in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries." Support your arguments, for and against, with evidence from Lesson 1. How, if at all, would you want to change the statement in light of the evidence?

7. **This activity may serve as an assessment**. What knowledge available to Western Europeans in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries would have encouraged them, and what discouraged them, in trying to find an all-sea route to the eastern sources of spices during the 1400-1550 period? Explain your argument, and support it with evidence from the Student Handouts.

8. **This activity may serve as assessment.** Rank the following in order of importance as enablers of Columbus's crossing the Atlantic and returning, and da Gama's reaching India from Portugal by an all-sea route around Africa's tip and returning. Give reasons for your ranking.

- Technological changes in European ship-design after about 1400.
- The existence of reasonably reliable mostly east-west and west-east wind systems.

- Changes in the representation of the world on European maps after about 1400.
- Europeans' learning to use heavenly bodies to locate themselves accurately in terms of their distance from the equator by establishing their latitude.
- Having guns available on shipboard.
- Personal characteristics of those undertaking the voyages.
- Other—if you think of something else.

Lesson 1

Student Handout 1.1—Needed: Ships, Winds, Maps, Stars, Guns—and Guts?

Ships: Keeping afloat, carrying cargo, and moving across seas

In the twentieth century, the Atlantic was crossed on an open balsa raft and in a rowboat. But both were unsuitable for reliable, regular crossings, especially with cargo.

In the fifteenth century, Europe had two main kinds of ships in general use. The northern tradition developed in the countries bordering the Baltic and the North seas, the southern in countries bordering the Mediterranean. Within these two traditions, there were many different designs tailored for particular purposes.

- The northern design's hull (the body of the ship) was clinker built. That meant the planks making up the outer "skin" of the ship overlapped each other, and they were nailed so that each nail passed through both planks and into the internal frame as well. This made for strength and reasonable water tightness without much caulking. The narrow Viking ships with side-mounted steering oars, no decks, and little cargo-capacity that occasionally crossed the Atlantic to America around 1000 CE were clinker-built. In the early thirteenth century, the more efficient rudder, mounted at the center of the stern, replaced the steering oar.

- One version of clinker-built ships developed in the north by the early fourteenth century was broad-beamed (wide from one side to the other at the mid-point of the ship), stable, and equipped with a massive keel. (The keel is a structural part of a ship in the center of the hull bottom and extending from stem to stern, sometimes protruding from the hull to provide stability.) It could carry heavy cargos. When used in warfare, temporary "castles" were raised on this type of ship front and back to make boarding enemy ships easier and to give archers and musketeers an elevated position to shoot from. But the design limited the ship's size, since planks had to be rounded at front and back, and joining them became too difficult over 100 feet. Their rigidity was a disadvantage if the ship ran aground.

- Northern ships' sails were square and fixed to horizontal yards mounted on each of the masts. This allowed a large area of canvas to be carried safely and with ease of handling. But unless the wind came from dead astern (from behind the ship), or nearly so, these ships made excess leeway, that is, a sideways movement that resulted in getting off course. A headwind simply kept them in harbor.

- The southern design's hull was carvel-built. Its planks were fitted edge to edge rather than overlapping, each plank fastened with pegs of nails only to the permanent skeleton or frame, which was built first. It took considerable caulking of the joins, regularly repeated, to keep the ship watertight. But these ships could be built to any length and had more flexibility than clinker-built vessels. Early examples, carvel-built ships called

caravels, had low sides and a shallow draft so that they could be used close inshore. At the start of the fourteenth century, they adopted the center-mounted stern rudder of the northern design. By the late fourteenth century, sides and stern were raised to prevent swamping, the beam was broadened, and the hull often covered with a deck. By the mid-fifteenth century, caravels usually had a quarterdeck (an additional deck, like a second story, raised over that part of the deck behind the mainmast), and a small permanent stern castle. Sometime in that century, the tiller that moved the rudder was made to project inboard, giving better leverage.

A European caravel

Picture source unknown

The caravels built to this design carried sails influenced by the lateen sails of the dhows, which Muslim mariners sailed across the Indian Ocean as far as China. These vessels were carvel-built, their planks fastened together with coir ropes passed through holes drilled at close intervals. Spun from coconut fibers, coir was highly durable, unaffected by seawater and rot. Its use made the dhow flexible, resistant to break-up on reefs or shoals, and easy to repair. Dhows were typically without decks.

A model of a two-masted dhow of a type that sailed in the Persian Gulf

Photo by R. Dunn

Lateen sails appeared in the Mediterranean about the thirteenth century. They were triangular, or nearly so, and the wooden yards that held them stiff to the wind were fixed more or less vertically to the longest edge of the triangle. They allowed sailing with maximum efficiency against a headwind, and they were simple to adjust to various wind conditions. However, the length of the main yard was tailored to the length of the ship. This limited the ship's size, since with increased length the yard became too heavy and hard to handle. By the fourteenth century, lateen and square sails were combined on caravels in the Mediterranean.

Around the start of the sixteenth century, carracks developed from the caravels. They were bigger, bulkier, more rounded, and had more complicated rigging. Some had four masts and carried two or three square sails above each other on the foremast. They had lateen sails on the main and mizzen masts, though the distribution of sails on them varied. The result was increased speed, the ability to sail under different wind conditions, and easier steering. Late in the century, a topsail was added above the main sail. Carracks had permanent castles both fore and after that had room for a large crew and lots of provisions. That structure, however, made them prone to topple in strong winds. Their decks were stable and served as gun platforms.

A European carrack

Picture source unknown

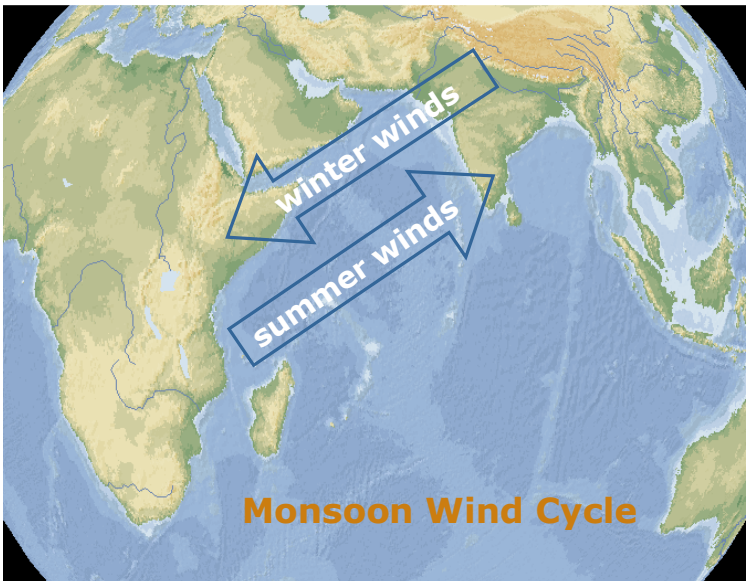
The Chinese voyages in the fifteenth century took place in ships, or "junks" that represented an altogether different design tradition, some of which were adapted to European ships. The most outstanding among these vessels were the "treasure ships," which were some 300 to 400 feet long and plied the Indian Ocean in the fifteenth century and earlier. They had multiple decks, a hull with watertight compartments to minimize flooding in case of damage, and pumps to get rid of any water or to fight fires. They also had a stern-mounted rudder that could be adjusted to the depth of the water. They were mounted with multiple masts spread with slightly curved sails with horizontal bamboo battens to stiffen and strengthen them. These sails were easy to handle,

needed few ropes, and could be adjusted to winds from different directions. The crew of a large Chinese "junk" ran to the hundreds, and naval artillery was sometimes placed on the decks.

A seventeenth-century Chinese woodblock print
that may represent fifteenth-century Chinese treasure ships
Wikipedia
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zheng_he

Winds: Getting from here to there

- Sailing ships depended on wind to make them move.
- Fastest and easiest to handle on ships with square sails were winds that blew from directly behind when the vessel pointed in the direction it needed to go. But for a return trip, those winds could pose problems because a square sail might be "taken aback." That is, the wind might push the sail back against the mast. If the ship had one or more fore-and-aft sails, it could sail closer to the wind. That is, the ship could advance even if the wind were coming across the beam (the side of the vessel). By tacking, or following a zigzag steering pattern, along with proper adjustment of sails, the ship could progress against a contrary wind.
- Knowledge of the global wind systems gave mariners greater confidence to sail out of sight of land. The **monsoon** blows in the Indian Ocean and China Seas region. In the Atlantic and Pacific oceans the trade winds, westerlies, and easterlies blow.
- Monsoons are winds that reverse direction seasonally. In Asia, the winter monsoon blows reliably (though the exact dates on which it starts and ends vary year to year and in different locations) from the southwest from April to October, and from the northeast from November to March. In summer, monsoons bring torrential rains; in winter they bring sunny and dry weather.



- The trade winds blow very steadily, almost continuously at about 11 to 13 miles per hour in both the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. They occur in two wide bands: one from about 5 to 30 degrees north of the equator, and the other from 5 to 30 south of it. The trade winds have a tendency to curl in towards the equator, blowing from the east to the west/southwest in the northern hemisphere and to the west/northwest in the southern hemisphere.
- Winds called the westerlies blow from the southwest in the northern hemisphere and from the northwest in the southern hemisphere towards the east, between the latitudes of about 35 and 60 degrees. These have bursts of especially strong winds and storms, particularly in the latitudes called "the roaring forties." Their speed is quite variable in both the north Atlantic and the north Pacific and less so in the southern hemisphere.
- In the region of about 30 degrees both north and south of the equator, often called the horse latitudes, there are generally weak winds, with hot and dry weather.
- Close to and slightly north of the equator, between the two bands of the trades, is the region of the dreaded doldrums. Sailing ships can get becalmed here for days or weeks. Any winds there are variable and include thunderstorms and sudden squalls.
- A band of weak and irregular winds blow from the poles east to southwest in the northern hemisphere and east to northwest in the southern hemisphere, curling towards latitude 60 degrees.

Maps: Knowing where you are relative to the rest of the world

- In the fifteenth century, educated people regarded a round earth as common knowledge, despite popular tales about a flat earth.
- Venetian, Florentine, and Genoese mariners had since the Middle Ages sailed regularly across the Mediterranean, Black, and Baltic seas, as well as the coastal waters of the northeastern Atlantic. The most frequented coastlines of these seas, including natural features and ports, were mapped in detail and quite accurately on charts, each one

showing a limited area. These portolan charts, as they were known, represented the cumulative experience of mariners, summarized for the benefit of other seafarers. They could be relied on for navigating fairly short passages but were no use for fixing the position of a ship out of sight of land.

- From the Mediterranean region, many Muslims and some Christian Europeans (mostly Italians) made their way in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries overland to Inner Eurasia, India, Indonesia, and China. Many were merchants in search of products such as spices and silk unavailable at home. Other travelers included diplomats, scholars, and missionaries. Ibn Battuta and Marco Polo were only the best known among many other journeyers. The Mongol empires ensured safe routes. Some travelers left descriptions, not always accurate or full, of their routes and the places they visited.
- European world maps at this time began to pay attention to contemporary experience but often relied at least partly on the Bible to depict the earth's geographical features. They were far less accurate than the map of the Muslim Arab geographer Idrisi, who had worked at the court of a Christian Norman king in Sicily in the twelfth century.
- In about 1410, two geographical works appeared that heavily influenced European views of the world. One, called *Image of the World*, was written by a cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church. It drew on the Bible, legends, travelers' accounts, and classical writers, on whose authority the cardinal affirmed the possibility of reaching the Indies by sailing west. He exaggerated the east-west stretch of Asia and the proportion of land to sea in the area of the globe. Columbus is known to have studied this book. His own calculations made the distance from Europe to Japan less than 3,000 nautical miles. The actual great circle distance is 10,600.

  The other work was a Latin translation of the *Geography* by the second-century CE author Ptolemy. It described the world of Ptolemy's time. It gave a fairly accurate picture of the Roman empire and its neighboring countries. But beyond the area of his knowledge, Ptolemy used guesswork instead of evidence. He described a huge southern continent, attached at one end to Africa and the other to China, making the Indian Ocean a land-locked sea. He stated that navigation was impossible anywhere in the southern hemisphere because of the excessive heat there. And he contradicted the near-to-accurate estimate of the earth's circumference by an earlier classical author, his own being an underestimate by as much as one-sixth, thus shrinking the size of oceans. Ptolemy continued to have influence on geographical writing into early modern times.
- European **cartographers** from about 1400 to 1550 usually underestimated the circumference of the earth by about 6,000 miles. Until the late sixteenth century, some of them continued to believe that America was just an extension of Asia. Others thought that Asia lay just barely beyond the lands they had so newly found and that the westward route was therefore much shorter than the one around Africa.
- By the fourteenth century, Chinese maps gave a generally accurate view of the relationships and main features, though not the relative sizes, of the entire area from Korea to the Atlantic edge of Europe. At least two Chinese world maps from the 1300s are known but have not survived except as sources for the Korean world map of 1402. The Kangnido Korean map, drawing on two earlier Chinese maps, shows India at the center combined with a heavily swollen China. Correctly positioned are Korea, Arabia, and the Red Sea. Korea is depicted as about the same size as Africa with an open sea at

its tip. Europe is somewhat squashed on the left but shows the Mediterranean and Black seas and names many European countries, including "Alumangia," an attempt at Alemania, the Latin name for Germany. To view the Kangnido map, go to the Parliamentary Millennium Project (Parliament of South Africa), http://www.pmpsa.gov.za/kangnido.html.

- Pilot guides and navigational literature by Muslim writers describing features of seas and shores from the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea to the Asian edges of the Pacific circulated in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.
- A Javanese chart of 1512 delineated Portugal, Brazil, the southern tip of Africa, the Red Sea and Persian Gulf, Sumatra, Siam, Java, and the Spice Islands. The first European sailing directions for the region east of India to the Spice Islands, compiled in 1514, were based on Javanese charts.
- European seafarers both East and West in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries tried hard to find and persuade local pilots to help them navigate.

Navigation: Finding your way from here to there

- A map showed the location of starting place and intended destination. Knowing the location of one's ship when between the two and out of sight of land could be a big problem. Two methods helped:
    - Experience, based on knowledge by observation of wind and wave patterns, currents, depth of water, color of the sea, kinds of seaweeds, types of fish, clouds, the flight and kinds of birds, and, as often as possible, sightings of known landmarks. In unknown waters and very far from land, these methods were less than satisfactory.
    - Fixing location by finding the latitude (the east-west line giving the distance north or south of the equator) based on measuring the altitude (height above the horizon) of the Pole Star, or North Star. At the North Pole, the star is directly overhead at an altitude of 90 degrees, and the location on earth is at ninety degrees latitude. At the equator, the star is right at the horizon, at 0 degrees latitude. In between, the angle of the star above the horizon gives altitude and latitude. For navigation, a pilot would measure the star's angle before leaving the home port. On the return voyage, the ship would sail north or south until the Pole Star appeared at the same angle as at the home port, then "sail down the latitude" keeping the star at a constant angle. Other stars could be used similarly.
- In the 1480s, when Portuguese mariners first approached and then crossed the equator, they found that the Pole Star disappeared below the horizon. A conference called by the king recommended using the sun's altitude as replacement, and scholars translated from the Hebrew information about the sun's seasonal movements that made this possible.
- Arab mariners had long sailed open seas by the stars and knew how to observe heavenly bodies to help fix their position. Their knowledge and instruments of observation had filtered into Western Europe, often through Jewish intermediaries. The compass, invented in China and passed westward through the Muslim lands, was also quickly adopted. By the mid-fifteenth century, celestial observation was still not commonplace, though fairly widely known.

- The problem of how to reckon longitude was not solved until the later eighteenth century.

Guns: Protection and aggression

- With its shot weighing ounces rather than pounds, the cannons mounted on Iberian ships in the fifteenth-century were more useful for killing people than sinking vessels. Placed on deck along the railing or on the castles, ships' guns could be mounted without major design changes. They had efficient uses against unarmed craft that Iberian mariners met in African and South Asian waters.

  Large, heavy cannons were already used on land. By the end of the 1400s, naval technicians attempted to adapt these to ships and use them to breach fortifications on shore. These experts solved several problems. They cut down cannon length, tapering the barrels, and casting them from bronze or brass instead of forging them from separate pieces of iron. This saved weight, but the guns retained enough strength to throw stone, iron, or lead balls weighing from five to sixty pounds. Because of their formidable recoil, these guns could not be perched on ship castles. Therefore, they were moved down to the waist of the ship and fired through round holes cut in the gunwales, their recoil controlled with ropes.
- Europeans who went overseas often had to fight. The Portuguese set up fortified commercial bases protected with cannon. In the Indian Ocean region, trained soldiers transported from Portugal served alongside men who were recruited locally. Auxiliaries from the armies of friendly rulers were also used. In preparing for his third expedition to America, Columbus asked the Spanish government for 100 muskets and 100 crossbows for 1200 soldiers, sailors, and settlers, whom he hoped to take with him. Cortés took a few light ship cannons with him when he invaded Mexico. He had thirteen muskets for his several hundred men, and he found swords, dogs, and horses the most effective weapons. He and other conquistadors also relied heavily on native allies.
- In both the Americas and the Indian Ocean, the Iberians had a chronic problem of maintaining sufficient numbers of troops. Their own populations were small: about a million in Portugal, and eight times that in Spain. In Asia and America, Iberian forces were almost always overwhelmingly outnumbered. In addition, mortality among Europeans who went overseas was consistently high. During long voyages, they died from hunger, cold, unsanitary conditions, shipwreck, and deficiency diseases like scurvy. On shore, they faced fighting and tropical diseases.

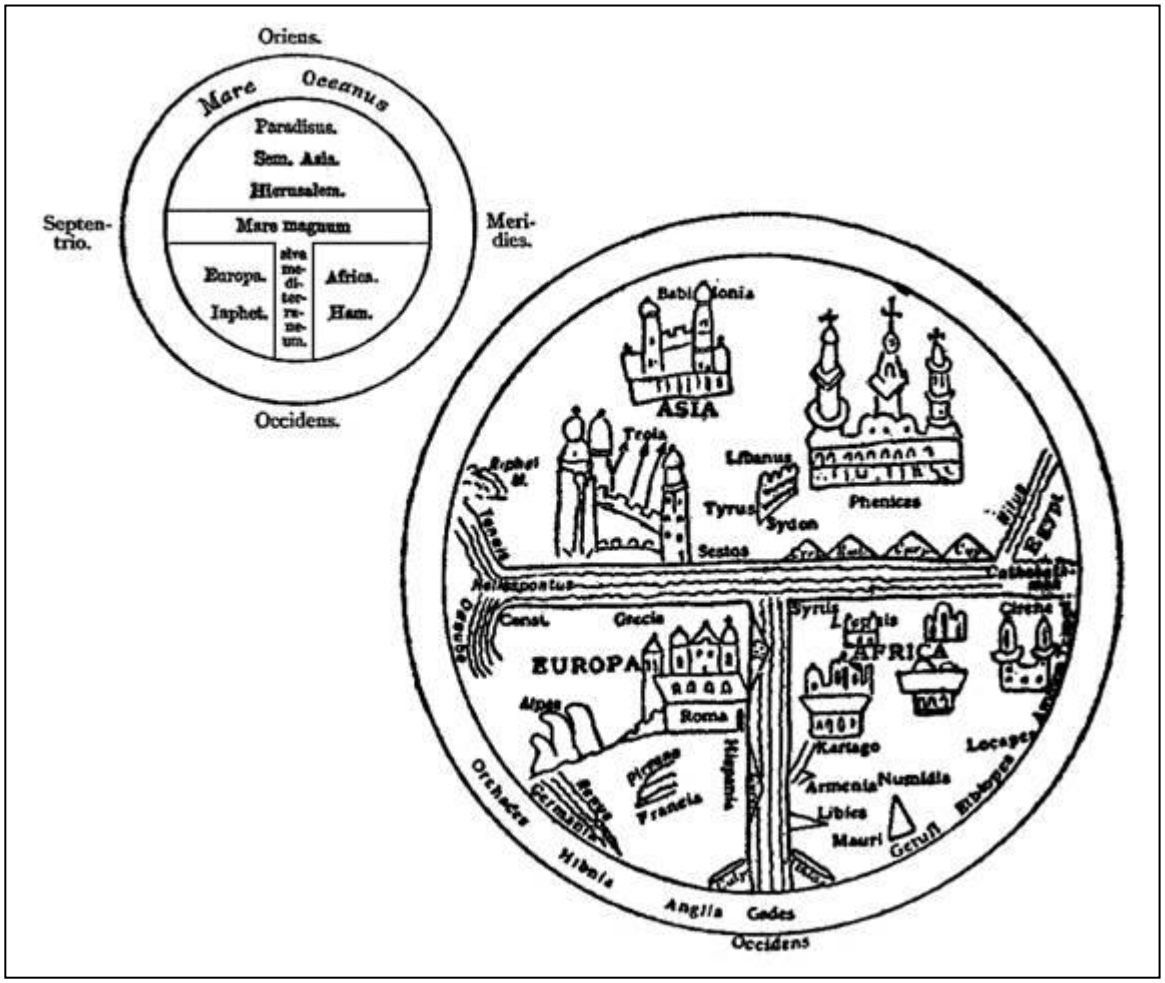
Lesson 1

Student Handout 1.2—How Did Ideas about What the World Looked Like Change?

Document A

Early Medieval European world maps

The T/O pattern



A common arrangement on medieval world maps, the T within the O of the Ocean Sea divides Asia at the top with the horizontal spread of the rivers Don on the left and Nile on the right from Europe and Africa at the bottom. Europe and Africa are divided from each other by the vertical line representing the Mediterranean Sea. At top left is a 630 CE world map from one of the works of Isidore de Seville, a Spanish archbishop and author of an encyclopedia intended to summarize all knowledge. The sons of Noah, who, according to the Bible, peopled each of the three continents, are named (Sem, Iaphet, and Ham). At the bottom is an eleventh-century German world map illustrating a classical author's book. On both maps, east is at the top.

Source: E. G. Ravenstein, "Map," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th ed., vol. 17 (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1911), 638.

Document B

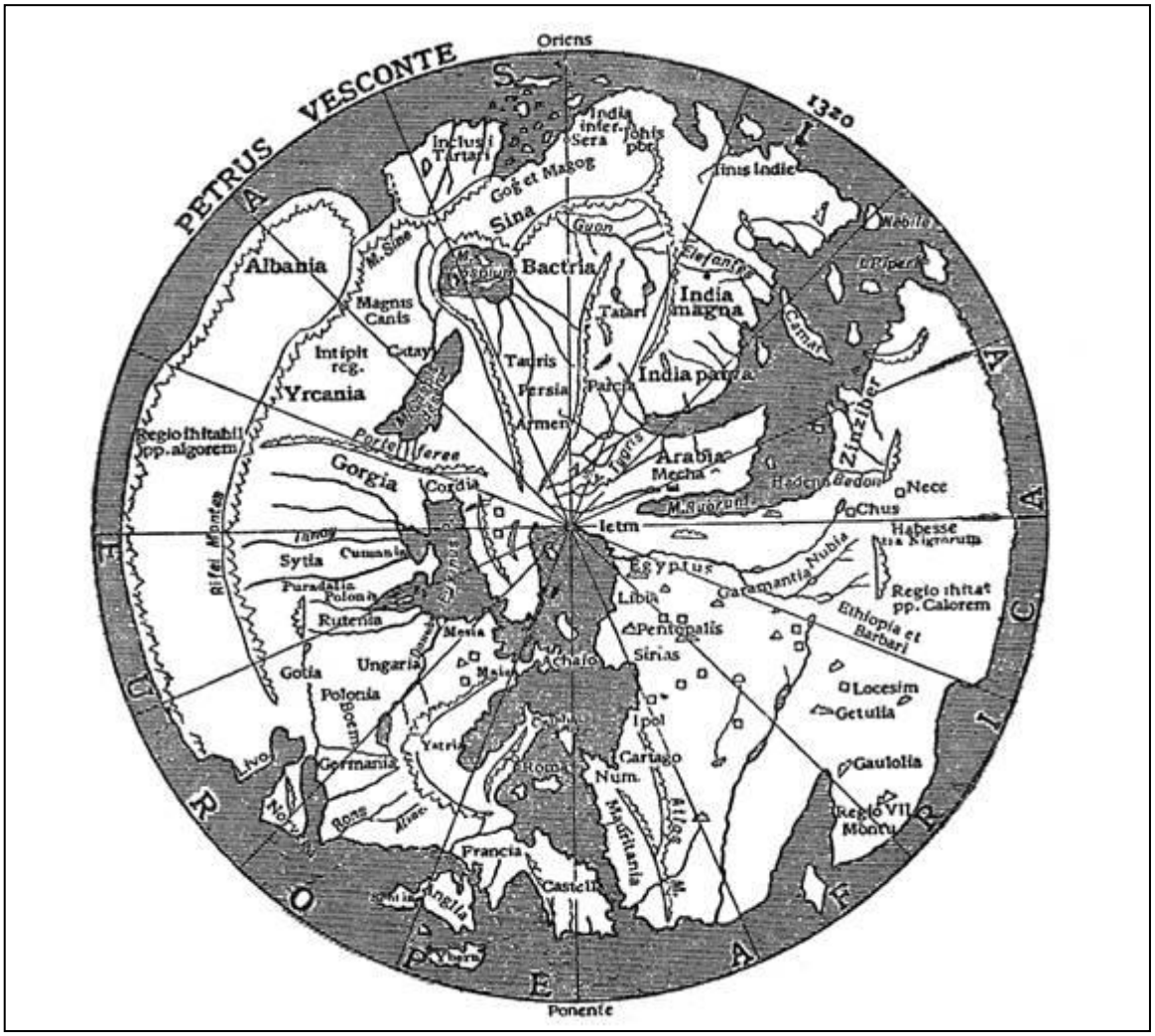
"The going out of a curious man to explore the regions of the globe"

World map by Muslim scholar and geographer Abu Abdallah al-Idrisi, 1154

In the twelfth century, Roger II, the Christian Norman king of Sicily, showed tolerance of people of all faiths and ethnicities, and he attracted scholars of diverse backgrounds to his court. He invited Abu Abdallah al-Idrisi, an Arab Muslim scholar of wide interests, to produce an atlas of the "inhabited earth" that would be based on observation, not just on other maps and books. Al-Idrisi had traveled widely himself, certainly in Asia Minor, North Africa, and Iberia, perhaps as well as in France and England. Al-Idrisi then used travel information, as well as the works of earlier Muslim and classical scholars, to put together his atlas named *The Book of Roger*. His map is purely geographical, with no cultural or religious features, and no pictures of humans, animals, or architecture. The atlas continued to be used and adapted for some 200 years. The version of his world map shown here has been modified to change the Arabic writing on the original into English. The title of the document is a quotation from al-Idrisi's text. South is at the top of the map.

Source: E. G. Ravenstein, "Map," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th ed., vol. 17 (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1911), 640.

Document C
World map of 1320
Rhumb lines, Prester John, Gog, and Magog



Petrus Vesconte of Genoa produced many sea-charts, among them the earliest signed and dated navigational chart in 1311. His map of the Holy Land was used in an appeal to European kings to mount a new crusade against the Ottoman Turks. He was one of the first to use the rhumb lines radiating from a center that show the compass-bearings along which to move from place to place on the coastal maps known as portolans. His world map shows their influence. The Biblical nations Gog and Magog were considered by many in Europe at that time to be a current threat and their invasion dreaded. Prester John (Johis pbr, for Johannes Presbiter in shorthand on the map, top center) was thought to be ruler of a legendary Christian kingdom full of riches and wonders, variously located in Asia or Africa. The editors of the source have omitted from this version of the map the crowns and buildings at sites of cities that decorate the original. East is at the top of the map.

Source: E. G. Ravenstein, "Map," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th ed., vol. 17 (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1911), 642.

Document D

Ancient innovations

Fifteenth-century world maps backed by a second-century CE authority

Ptolemy's innovative grid system of latitudes running east-west and longitudes north-south, his instructions on how to project a globe onto a flat surface, and his establishment of the convention of placing north at the top of maps were among the roots of modern cartography. A Hellenized Egyptian scholar, he wrote his eight-volume *Guide to Geography* in the mid-second century CE. Neglected for over a millennium, it came into use by Byzantine and Arab scholars in the early fourteenth century. Translated into Latin in 1410, the *Geography* circulated in hundreds of manuscript copies in Europe, went through over forty printed editions before the end of the sixteenth century, and remained immensely influential for some 200 years. No maps from Ptolemy's original work have survived, but various scholars in the fifteenth century used his text to recreate his world map. Their many versions were alike in major features, such as the land-locked Indian Ocean, but they differed considerably in the shape of landmasses and details of coasts. Also, not all of them show the latitudes and longitudes. The above example, printed in Germany in 1493, does not. For one that does, www.newberry.org/k12maps/module_01/map/core.html.

Adapted from Margaret Aston, *The Fifteenth Century: The Prospect of Europe* (New York: Norton, 1968), 8.

Document E

"Our knowledge of the world is now [1457] so much greater than was Ptolemy's…"

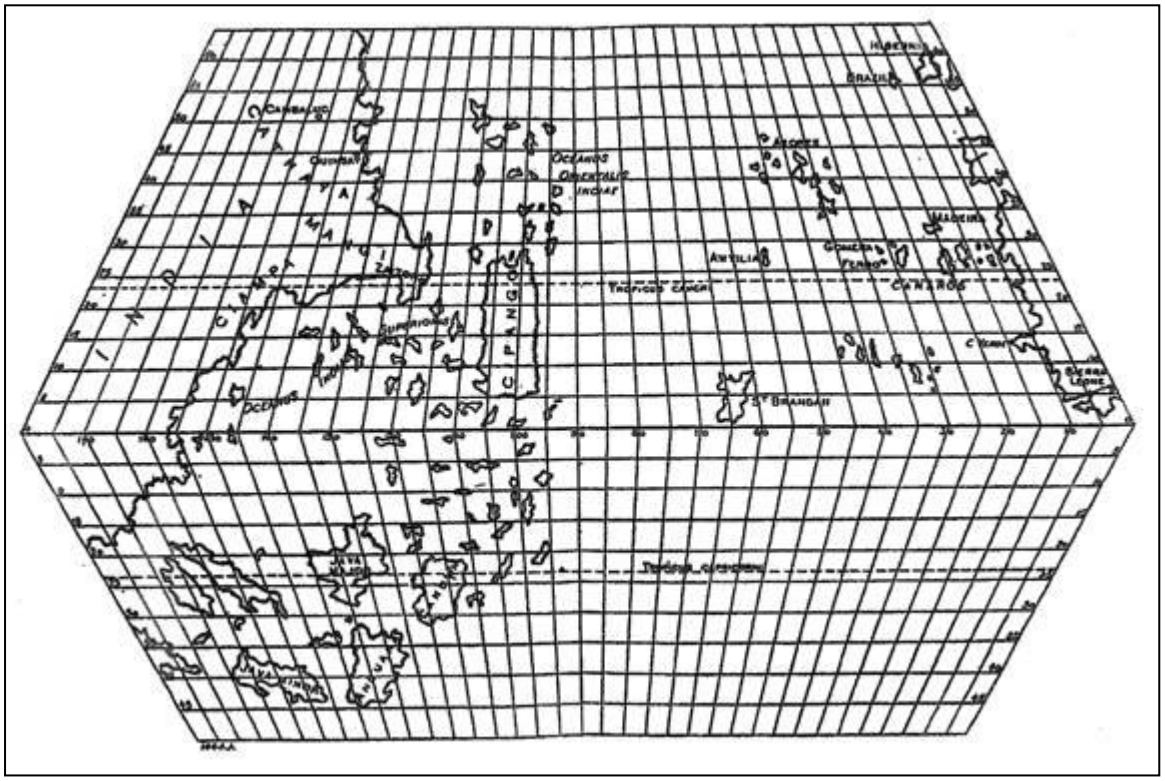
Fra Mauro, a Venetian monk and well-known cartographer, was commissioned by the Portuguese king to draw the world map above. He explicitly discussed his sources: the latest available Portuguese sea-charts from the king, the book of Marco Polo, and the Ptolemaic model, which he chose not to follow fully because new information allowed him to correct Ptolemy. He also seems to have drawn on Arab and Indian sources. His map has south on the top—standard on Muslim maps, but unknown on any other western one. It shows (if somewhat inaccurately-spaced) Indian locations significant for regional trade: Diu, Chalecut (Calicut), Goga (Goa), and Guzirai (Gujarat). There is no Biblical history depicted, excepting "Acha Noe," that is, Noah's Ark, located at the head of the Tigris river. South is at the top of the map.

Source: E. G. Ravenstein, "Map," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th ed., vol. 17 (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1911), 642.

Document F

The proposed western route to the East pictured

Reconstruction of Toscanelli's 1474 map showing the Atlantic Ocean



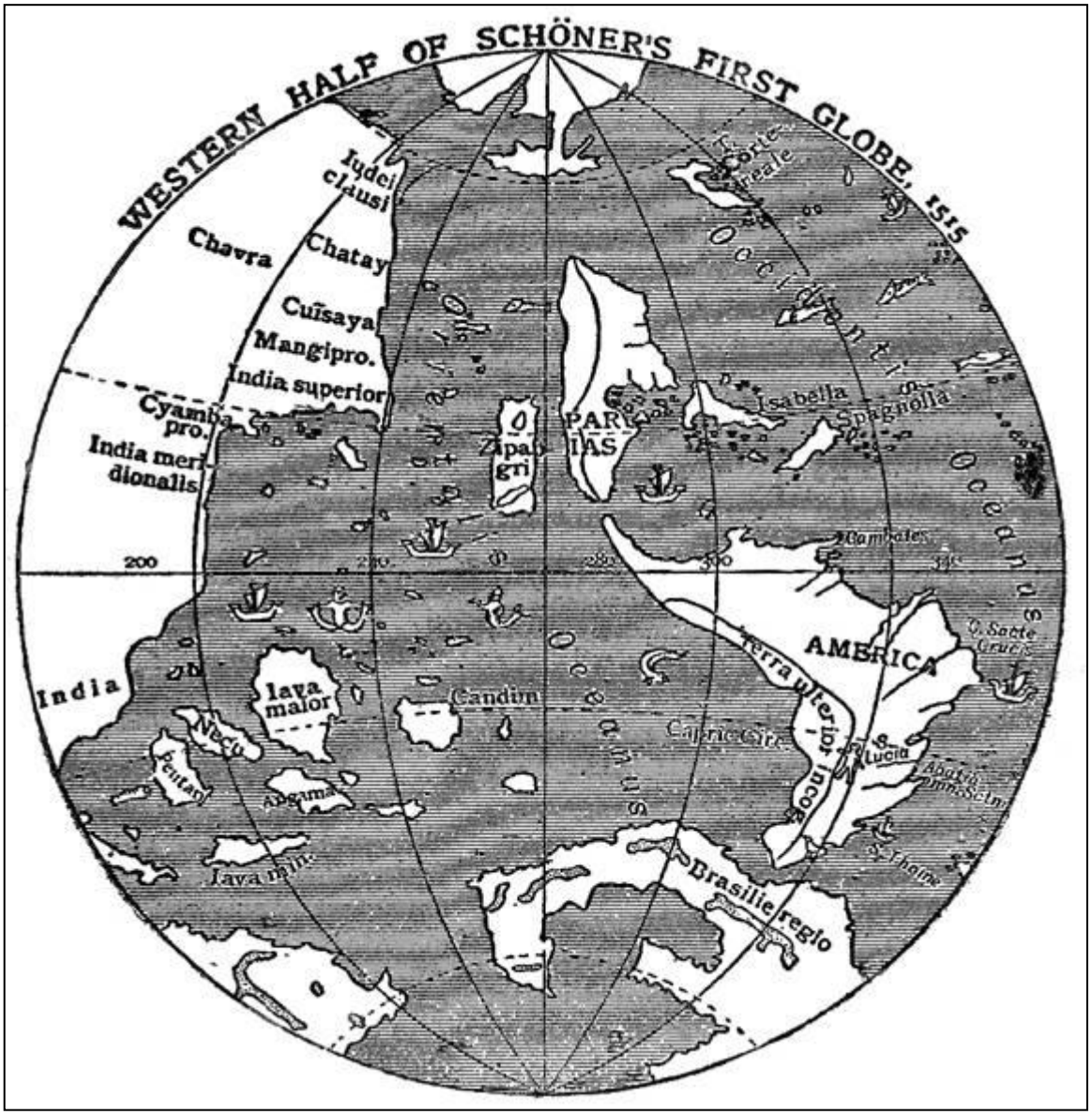
Florentine physician, mathematician, astronomer, and geographer Paulo Toscanelli (1397-1482) studied the writings of Marco Polo and of Ptolemy. He also collected personal information from merchants, mariners, and travelers such as Conti. He concluded that the East to West stretch of Europe and Asia covered nearly two-thirds of the entire earth. In 1474, Toscanelli proposed a way of reaching the Spice Islands by sailing west, thereby avoiding the long voyage around the tip of Africa. He wrote the Portuguese king a letter giving directions for doing so, and he enclosed a map. Copies of both were sent to Columbus, who took them with him on his first voyage. The map no longer exists, but it has been reconstructed based on the letter and on two other maps of Toscanelli's time that embodied his ideas.

Source: Clements R. Markham, trans. and ed., *The Journal of Christopher Columbus (During His First Voyage, 1492-93)* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1893), after liv.

Document G

The results of sailing the western route to the East pictured

Changes in the view of the world in 1515.



Johannes Schöner (1477-1547) produced the globe above. He was a German astronomer, mathematician, and noted cartographer. He patterned it on a map published in 1507, the first printed map to show any part of the new world and the first to name it "America." That map gave the Western Hemisphere its name only four years after the publication of an account of the voyage of Amerigo Vespucci, from whom the word "America" derives. The map here shows ocean on the far side of the American continent before Magellan's voyage of 1519. Also, the size of Japan [Zipagri] and its distance from the Asian mainland are exaggerated.

Source: Clements R. Markham, trans. and ed., *The Journal of Christopher Columbus (During His First Voyage, 1492-93)* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1893), 646.

Lesson 2
Conquest of the Oceans: Where, How, and Why?

Activities

Teachers should note that sharing with students the questions they will be asked to answer and the activities they will be asked to do *before* they begin to work with the Student Handouts may serve their historical knowledge and understanding.

Ask students to respond to the following:

1. Find answers to the questions below concerning the five documents in Student Handout 2.2. Students should record their answers as short notes. For easy comparison,construct a grid with the five documents along one axis, and the eight questions along the other works well.

Note that:

- Answers may be found in the head notes as well as in the original sources.
- Some documents deal with more than one voyage.
- In some documents no answer can be found to one of the questions.

- Who ordered or authorized the voyage? "Who" refers to their position, not their name, for example, "principal," not "Affonso Gonzales".
- What reasons were given for making the voyage?
- How was the voyage paid for?
- What human and material resources did the voyagers have? Consider such things as qualifications of leaders, size of crews and ships, number of vessels and guns.
- What were the voyagers' attitudes towards the people they met? Consider that some voyagers had different attitudes in different places or circumstances.
- What evidence is there of trade with the people they met during landings?
- What human and other problems did they meet? Consider such things as behavior of those they met and of their own associates, and their experiences with their environment.
- Who benefited from the voyage and in what ways?

2. If students had to choose the two voyages that were most similar, and the two most different, which would they choose? Have them explain on what basis they made their choices. What hypotheses might students come up with about reasons for the differences and similarities they have identified, and what evidence can they give to support them? What questions might students ask that would either further support or cast doubt on their hypotheses?

3. To investigate change over time, compare the Portuguese voyages of 1415 to 1460 on the one hand with those of Columbus and da Gama between 1492 and 1502 on the other. What

conditions and circumstances changed between these two periods? Consider any differences in motives for the voyages, in authorization, in leadership, in financing, in resources, and in benefits. What reasons might students give for the differences?

4. Did the thirty-year Chinese long-distance maritime expeditions of the 1400s leave any lasting influence in the Indian Ocean region. What kind of influences might the Chinese expeditions have had? If no lasting influence, why not? Students should support their analysis with information from Student Handout 2.2, Document A.

5. What kinds of influence did the thirty-year Iberian long-distance maritime expeditions starting in 1492 have on the Indian Ocean region, Africa, and the Americas. What do students consider the two most important influences? Why? How might they decide on the relative importance of various influences? Student should support their analysis with information from Student Handout 2.2, Documents C, D, and E.

6. Construct a conversation between one of the following pairs of individuals as it might have taken place about 1505:

- A Muslim merchant from an East African coastal city planning to join a Portuguese spice-buying fleet going from India to the Moluccas, and his senior wife, who tries to talk him out of going.
- A would-be leader of a sea-faring expedition from Europe to India in search of spices, who is looking for royal financing, and the king he is trying to talk into awarding the funding. The king presents doubts and objections. In creating the arguments the merchant and the king make for sponsoring the expedition, students should use information from Student Handouts 2.1 and 2.2.

7. Students are serving on a panel charged with choosing a "hero of the long-distance maritime voyages between 1400 and 1550" to be featured in a *Time* magazine cover article. If students' only choices were the people in the documents of Student Handout 2.2, whom would they nominate? Students should justify the nomination to *Time*'s editors by explaining their reasons for their choice with supporting evidence from the documents and by explaining their definition of "hero." Alternatively, they might explain why they would not choose anyone from the Student Handout documents.

8. Compare and contrast the responses of 1) natives of the West Indies to Columbus and his crew on their first trans-Atlantic voyage, and 2) East African coastal city-dwellers to Vasco da Gama and his crew on their first voyage to the Indian Ocean. Remind students that the responses may vary from one person to another. Give evidence for your arguments by reference to the documents.

- What might help explain different reactions?

- What might cause us to wonder about the reliability of the Europeans' reporting about how the natives reacted?
- In what ways, if any, did native responses influence the voyagers' actions?

9. **This activity might serve as an assessment.** Ask students to consider:

If all students have to go on are the five primary source documents (without the head notes) in Student Handout 2.2, what evidence might they present to defend, and what evidence to oppose, the following statement: "The best answer to the question of why long-distance sea voyages were undertaken in the 1400 to 1550 period is: *for God, gold, and glory*." Given the evidence presented, how might this statement be revised?

10. **This activity might serve as an assessment.** Ask students to consider:

Students are in charge of putting together a "Handbook of First Contact" for Iberian mariners who led expeditions to parts of the world little known or unknown to them during the period 1490 to 1525. Outline the advice to be given about what should be done and why, and what should be avoided and why, drawing on the experiences described in Student Handout 2.2. Explain why this advice would have positive results and avoid negative consequences.

11. Ask students to consider on what basis they would question, on what basis defend, the reliability of the documents in Student Handout 2.2 for making judgments about what motives people really had for making the 1400 to 1550 long-distance oceanic voyages?

Lesson 2

Student Handout 2.1—The Flow of Maritime Trade and Travel, 1400-1550.

- Before America became linked to the rest of the world, Europe held a geographical position on the western edge of a complex maritime shipping network carrying people, goods, information, and ideas throughout Afroeurasia.
- The network connected most sea-bordered parts of Afroeurasia from the Asian rim of the Pacific Ocean to the shores of the Indian Ocean, East Africa, the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf, and then overland to the eastern and southern coasts of the Mediterranean. From there, it took additional travel by sea or by land to reach the various countries of Europe.
- China and India dominated Asian commerce in the fifteenth century and well beyond. They had the biggest populations, generated the most economic wealth, offered the largest markets, and had the largest volume of exchanges.
- Much of the trade in the network was local, carrying everyday bulk commodities like grain, salt, fish, textiles, and timber. Long-distance maritime trade focused on high value and luxury items, such as gold and silver, cowrie shells (used as currency in parts of India and Africa), precious stones, ivory, pearls, porcelain, silk, and spices.
- Chinese ships mostly serviced the routes between Japan, China, and Southeast Asia. Those between Southeast Asia, Sri Lanka (Ceylon), and India were mostly in Indian and Malay hands. People of many belief systems took part—Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, Jews, Christians, animists, and ancestor-worshippers. Muslim traders from Egypt, Turkey, Persia, and East Africa at times joined the annual spice-buying voyages setting out from India. These brought back to India nutmeg and cloves from the Spice Islands (Moluccas), pepper from Sumatra and Thailand, cinnamon from Sri Lanka, and porcelain and silk from China, along with other merchandise.
- From Indian ports to the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf, and East Africa, mostly Indian, Arab, Persian, and East African shippers transported spices and other cargoes that had already arrived in India from elsewhere, along with pepper from Malabar (southwest India), textiles, and other Indian products. In return they picked up horses, pearls, ivory, slaves, and local specialties.
- Muslim Arab, Persian, Jewish, and Armenian traders moved goods overland and by sea across Southwest Asia (Persia and Syria) to distribution ports in Egypt and other areas of the eastern Mediterranean coast.
- From there, Venetian, Genoese, Florentine, Catalan and other European merchants carried goods on to consumers in western and northern Europe.
- The average sailing time in the fifteenth century from Canton (China) to the Persian Gulf was about three-and-a-half months. With stops for provisioning, waiting for favorable winds, and trading, the actual trip took almost double that time. Added was the time taken for overland caravan trips across Southwest Asia to the Mediterranean, plus three more months for the trip by sea from there to northern Europe. Merchants typically specialized in one segment, or circuit of the trade, relaying goods from one trading group to another.

- About 1500, sailing time from Portugal to the west coast of India around Africa took an average of 180 days. The return took about 200 days. Including time in ports, the roundtrip took a total of 500 days.
- In comparison, sailing time from Spain to America in the sixteenth century varied between 39 and 175 days and the return trip from 70 to 298 days.
- Regular crossings of the Pacific did not begin until after 1550, when European mariners better understood the wind patterns.

Lesson 2

Student Handout 2.2—What Did Mariners Find on Long-Distance Voyages in the Fifteenth and Early Sixteenth Centuries?

Document A

Treasure fleets of the Dragon Throne

The Middle Kingdom reaches out

Zheng He, Muslim eunuch and confidant of the Chinese emperor, organized six long-distance naval expeditions to the south and west of China from 1403 to 1433. Each involved thousands of men, including professional negotiators, diplomats, interpreters, scribes, signalers, doctors, soldiers, mechanics, and other specialists. The fleet consisted of over one hundred auxiliary ships, including troop and supply carriers and forty to sixty "treasure ships." These were estimated to weigh some 1,500 tons and range up to 400 feet in length, with three decks, nine masts, twelve sails, and watertight compartments to keep them afloat even when damaged. Besides ample supplies, they carried Chinese trade goods.

Their destinations, ports in India, Arabia, and East Africa, were not unknown. There is evidence that Chinese in earlier centuries sailed regularly to India and occasionally to the Persian Gulf, and they knew about East Africa at least from hearsay. Zheng He himself had made the pilgrimage to Mecca.

Having generally followed a contemporary's advice to "treat the barbarian kings like harmless seagulls," the expeditions traveled over 30,000 miles and returned with "wonderful precious things," among them a giraffe. With no need for ongoing supplies from abroad, no desire for conquest at a distance, and no cultural tradition of proselytizing, they built no forts and left neither garrisons nor naval patrols.

Some Confucian government officials opposed the long-distance voyages as a waste of money, especially since deforestation at this time raised the costs of shipbuilding. They felt the government would do better to invest in containment of belligerent Mongols and other pastoral peoples who lived along China's northwestern frontier. In fact, nomad raids were not uncommon, so these officials had good reason for concern. Confucian bureaucrats also feared that the court eunuchs, a powerful political faction, were threatening their power and influence. Consequently, the Ming government banned further large-scale maritime expeditions to the Indian Ocean after 1433, though Chinese trade in the East and South China seas continued.

The following account of Zheng He's voyages is from an inscription on a stone he ordered erected in the winter of 1431-32. The last paragraph is from a different inscription.

The Imperial Ming Dynasty, in unifying seas and continents, surpasses [earlier] dynasties. The countries beyond the horizon and at the ends of the earth have all become subjects and to the most western of the western, or the most northern of the northern countries, however far they may be, the distances and the routes may [now] be calculated. Thus the barbarians from beyond the seas, though their countries are truly distant … have come to audience bearing precious objects and presents.

The Emperor, approving their loyalty and sincerity, has ordered us [Zheng He] and others at the head of several thousands of officers and troops to [board] more than a hundred large ships to go and confer presents on them, in order to [make clear] the transforming power of the imperial virtue, and to treat distant people with kindness. From [1405] until now, we have several times been appointed ambassadors to the Western Ocean. The barbarian countries we have visited are [among others, Java, Siam, Ceylon, Calicut in India, Aden on the Red Sea, and Mogadishu in East Africa], all together more than thirty countries large and small.

We have crossed more than one hundred thousand *li* of immense water spaces, and have seen in the ocean huge waves like mountains rising sky-high, and we have set eyes on barbarian regions far away hidden in the blue transparency of light vapors, while our sails, loftily unfurled like clouds, day and night continued their course, crossing those savage waves as if we were treading a public thoroughfare.

Those among foreigners who were resisting the transforming influence of Chinese culture and were disrespectful, we captured alive, and brigands who indulged in violence and plunder, we exterminated. Consequently the sea route was purified and tranquillized and the natives were enabled to pursue their vocations.

Source: Qtd. in Joseph R. Levenson, *European Expansion and the Counter-Example of Asia, 1300-1600* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1967), 14-5; last paragraph qtd. in Michael Pearson, *The Indian Ocean* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 90.

Document B

Sailing, raiding, and trading on the Guinea Coast

Portugal's Prince Henry orders ships to explore the African shore

Starting about 1415, Prince Henry, often called The Navigator, consistently sent out two or three ships a year to sail as far south along the western shore of Africa as they could. Captained typically by courtier "gentlemen of his household**,**" they averaged about fifty tons, and needed crews of only twenty-five sailors. He financed the enterprise from the king's grant to him of a 20 percent share in all profits from any voyages to West Africa, from the sale of licenses to do so, and from his income from sugar plantations on the island of Madeira. In spite of these resources, he was in debt, owing his bastard half-brother 35,478 crowns of gold, an obligation not paid off until after his death in 1460.

By this time, some fifty ships had passed south of Cape Bojador on the coast of the western Sahara Desert. Twenty years later, a dozen or so Portuguese ships a year made the voyage to West Africa's Gold Coast, cutting into the profits of the Muslim merchants who had monopolized the traditional trans-Saharan gold routes to the Mediterranean coast. Each ship carried some 700 kilos of gold to Portugal, as well as slaves, ivory, a spice similar to pepper, and other merchandise. For these, the Portuguese traded textiles, iron, brass, glass, and hardware**.**

The gold was sorely needed in Europe to pay for Asian luxuries in high demand there. By contrast, demand in India and China for European goods was sluggish at best, so payment had mostly to be made in gold.

From about 1460 on, the Portuguese cultivated friendly relations with the powerful rulers of West African kingdoms as a matter of policy. Their lively trade with the locals, which during the second half of the fifteenth century seemed to have been satisfactory to both parties, centered on the forts of Arguin and Elmina that they had built on the coast. To protect the West African trade and its profits, the king decreed in 1481 that any foreign ship visiting the Guinea coast without his license could be sunk or captured, no questions asked, and the crew thrown to the sharks.

The Portuguese historian Azuarara was charged by his king to write a record of the discovery and conquest of Guinea (West Africa). The events he describes all took place before 1450, when he finished the account from which the following excerpts are taken. Note that the Portuguese called all Muslims "Moors."

After the taking of Ceuta [in Muslim North Africa, 1415] he always kept ships well armed against the Infidel, both for war, and because he had a wish to know the land that lay beyond Cape Bojador, for up to his time [nothing] was known with any certainty about the land beyond that Cape. [Muslim knowledge extended little further, nowhere near Africa's southern tip.] … Since it seemed to him that without knowledge no mariners or merchants would ever. . . sail to a place where there is not a sure … hope of profit, he sent out his own ships.

If there chanced … to be havens into which it would be possible to sail without peril … the products of this realm might be taken there, which traffic would bring great profit to our countrymen.

[Also] he sought to know if there were in those parts any Christian princes, [who] would aid him against the enemies of the faith. [Moreover, it] was his great desire to make increase in the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ and to bring to him all the souls that should be saved.

But over and above these reasons [is] the root from which all others proceeded: … the inclination of the heavenly bodies. … Because his ascendant was Aries, which is in the house of Mars … [which] was in Aquarius … and in the mansion of hope, it signified that this Lord should toil at high and mighty conquests.

So the Prince began to make ready his ships and his people … but although he sent out many times … there was not one who dared to pass that Cape of Bojador and learn about the land beyond it. … [They believed] hindrance to the passage into these lands consisted of very strong currents … on account of which it was impossible for any ship to navigate those seas; … that the lands were all sandy and without any inhabitants … [and] that the shores were so shallow that [ships would not] have sufficient depth for their management. … Being satisfied of the peril, and seeing no hope of honor or profit, they left off the attempt.

[It was not until 1434 that, having gradually crept south along the West African coast by sending out yearly regular exploring ventures of two or three ships of 20 to 50 feet in length, a Portuguese ship managed to get past Cape Bojador into territory until then unknown to Europeans].

All the land from the Mediterranean Sea as far as the land of the Negroes [is] peopled by shepherd folk. … They make war with the Negroes more by thieving than by force, for they have not so great strength as these last. And to their land come some Moors and they sell them of those Negroes whom they have kidnapped, or else they take them … beyond the kingdom of Tunis [in North Africa] to sell to the Christian merchants who go there … in exchange for bread and some other things. … The men of rank possess abundant gold which they bring from the land where the Negroes live. … [Their wives] wear rings of gold in their nostrils and ears, as well as other jewels.

[In 1441, one of Prince Henry's nobles] armed a very fine caravel [to sail past Cape Bojador. The Prince] ordered him to have regard to no other profit, save only to see and know any new thing that he could. And he was not to [make] raids in the land of the Moors, but to take his way straight to the land of the Negroes and thenceforward to lengthen his voyage as much as he could. [Another purpose of the voyage was] to ship a cargo of the skins and oil of sea-wolves [seals]. [When they had loaded this, the captain called together the 21 men on the ship, and said:] "We have already got our cargo … and may well turn back, … but O how fair a thing it would be if we, come to this land for a cargo of such petty merchandise, were … to bring the first captives before the face of our Prince … getting knowledge by that means. And as to our reward, you can

estimate what that will be by the great expense and toil he has undertaken in years past, only for this end. [This captain made several voyages to the "land of the Negroes," also known to the Portuguese as "Guinea," and was the first to bring back both captives and gold dust from West Africa to Portugal. Traffic in slaves accelerated from then on.]

[In 1446, having been granted a license by Prince Henry to travel to West Africa, a Portuguese] made him ready two caravels, one decked and the other a fishing-boat, in which were twenty men. "Let us go" [he said] "to the … river where I promised the Moors the year before that I would come and traffic." … After three days were passed, the Moors began to arrive, and [he] began to speak with them by means of his interpreters, asking them to have some Guineans brought there, in exchange for whom he would give them cloth.

[The same year, pitched battles were fought between the natives and Portuguese seamen. The latter's captains addressed their men before the battle.] "It is for war, and war alone, that we are come to this land; and this being so, we must not be timid, for if we fight our battle by day it will be much more to our honor than if we fight by night, attacking the Moors … and expelling them by sheer force of arms rather than by any cunning or stratagem." … The Christians, besides the desire they had to get at them, when they saw their behavior, which was that of enemies who despised them, felt doubly eager to fight. … The enemy … boldly trusting in their multitude, [thought] that victory would hasten to them as it had come the other day when they slew the seven men from the other [Portuguese] caravels. … The Christians, in order to gain the land, and the Moors in order to prevent them, began their fight, plying their lances, by which there could well be seen the hatred there was between them. But the fight on the part of the Moors was not so much from enmity as in defense of their women and children, and still more for the salvation of their own lives. Our men wondered greatly at the courage they perceived in their enemies. . . Yet, God being willing to aid His own, they slew out of hand sixteen and the others were routed. … [We] took fifty-seven of them, and with them returned to the caravels.

[It remains for me to fix the certain number of souls of infidels who have come from those lands to this, through the virtues and talents of our glorious Prince. And I counted these souls and found they were nine hundred twenty and seven, of whom … the greater part were turned into the true path of salvation. … After this year [1448] the affairs of these parts [West Africa] were henceforth treated more by trafficking and bargaining of merchants than by bravery and toil in arms.

Source: Charles Raymond Beazley and Edgar Prestage, trans. and eds., *The Chronicle of the Discovery and Conquest of Guinea*, by Gomes Eannes de Azuarara (London: Hakluyt Society, vol. 1, 1896, vol. 2, 1899), Vol. 1: 27-30, 40-1, 109; Vol. 2: 163-70, 225, 230-5, 267-8, 288-9.

Document C

"This is the first voyage and the routes taken by the Admiral Don Cristóbal Colón when he discovered the Indies"

Before his voyages across the North Atlantic, Columbus had lived in port cities in Italy, Spain, and Portugal. He had sailed with at least one of the Portuguese voyages to Guinea, and he married into a family of cartographers. He spent nearly a decade seeking royal funding for his own plan to access Asia by sailing west. His conviction that he could get there by his novel way was based on a miscalculation of the earth's circumference and on authorities of the time that assumed a narrow and island-studded Atlantic. He did not figure on stumbling across a whole continent between Europe and Asia.

Spain's monarchs financed his enterprise with funds freed up by the victorious outcome of their war against Moorish Granada, and with loans from a Genoese banker. In addition, the town of Palos, from where he departed, had to provide him (as a penalty for some crime against the crown) with a crew of ninety, which included two pilots, two physicians, a surgeon, and an interpreter who spoke Arabic and Hebrew. He had three ships, estimated to have been between 50 and 100 tons and 50 to 60 feet long. One of these ships was lost during the first voyage. During his following three voyages, Columbus was to lose eight more ships. His contract with the crown, however, assured him "one-tenth of any merchandise bought, found, or acquired in any mainland and islands he may discover in the sea," after deducting expenses. Nine-tenths went to the crown.

Crossing the Atlantic, he was out of sight of land for thirty-three days, amazing in a time when mariners were used to navigating largely by observing landmarks.

After the first voyage, Columbus's mandate from Spain's rulers changed from seeking converts, alliances, and trade to settlement and exploitation. For instance, from 1495 on, every native Hispaniolan over fourteen years old had to pay tribute money to the Spanish king and owed compulsory labor services in mines or on plantations to individual Spaniards.

The excerpts below from Columbus' Journal were condensed by its sixteenth-century editor. Those in quotation marks were claimed to be words that Columbus spoke or wrote.

"In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Acting on the information that I had given to your Highnesses [the King and Queen of Spain] touching the lands of India, and respecting Gran Can [Great Khan, title of Mongol rulers in China] … your Highnesses as … Princes who love the holy Christian faith, and the propagation of it, and who are enemies to the sect of Mahoma … resolved to send me, Cristóbal Colón, to … India to see the said [ruler], and the cities and lands, and their disposition, with a view that they might be converted to our holy faith … and that I should go by way of the west, whither up to this day, we do not know for certain that any one has gone."

Tuesday, 25th of September [1492]

[Having been under way since August 3rd, this day] the Admiral [Columbus] conversed with … the captain of the *Pinta*, [about a map, Document H, which showed islands in that area of the sea they were currently in. Though they not only thought their ships ought to be where islands were shown, but even thought they saw land, it was not so.] That day they made 4 leagues [at the time a league was usually counted as four miles] … and 17 during the night. … But the people were told that 13 was the distance … for it was always feigned to them that the distances were less, so that the voyage might not appear so long.

Wednesday, 3rd of October

They saw no birds. The Admiral therefore thought that they had left the islands behind them which were depicted on the charts.

Sunday, 7th of October

They passed a great number of birds flying from N. to S.W. This gave rise to the belief that the birds were … going to sleep on land. … The Admiral was aware that most of the islands held by the Portuguese were discovered by the flight of birds.

Wednesday, 10th of October

They made 59 leagues, counted as no more than 44. Here the people could endure no longer. They complained of the length of the voyage. But the Admiral cheered them up … giving them good hope of the advantages they might gain from it. He added that however much they might complain, he had to go to the Indies, and that he would go on until he found them, with the help of our Lord.

Thursday, 11th of October

They saw sandpipers, and … a bit of cane, a land plant … and a small branch covered with berries. … At two hours after midnight the land was sighted. … Presently they saw naked people. The Admiral went on shore in the armed boat … took the royal standard, and the captains … and said that they should bear faithful testimony that he … now took possession of the said island for the King and for the Queen. … Presently many inhabitants of the island assembled. … "I," [said the Admiral] "that we might form great friendship, for I knew that they were a people who would be more easily … converted to our holy faith by love than by force, gave to some of them red caps, and glass beads to put around their necks, and many other things of little value, which gave them great pleasure. … They should be good servants and intelligent, for I observed that they quickly took in what was said to them, and I believe that they would easily be made Christians. I … will take hence, at the time of our departure, six natives for your Highnesses, that they may learn to speak."

Saturday, 13th of October

"The people are very docile. … They give away all they have got, for whatever may be given to them, down to broken bits of crockery and glass."

Sunday, 14th of October

"These people are very simple as regards the use of arms, as you Highnesses will see from the seven that I caused to be taken, to bring home and learn our language and return; unless your Highnesses should order them all to be brought to Castile, or to be kept captives on the same island; for with fifty men they can all be subjugated and made to do what is required of them."

Friday, 19th of October

"There are villages in the interior, where, the Indians I bring with me say, there is a king who has much gold. … I do not give much faith to what they say, as well because I do not understand them as because they are so poor in gold that even a little … would appear much to them."

Sunday, 21st of October

"I shall … shape a course for another much larger island, which I believe to be Cipango [Japan], judging from the signs made by the Indians I bring with me. … According as I obtain tidings of gold or spices. … I am still resolved to go to the mainland and … deliver the letters of your Highnesses to the Gran Can requesting a reply."

Wednesday, 24th of October

"I intended to go to the island of Cuba, where I heard of the people who … had gold, spices, merchandise, and large ships. … I believe that it is so, as all the Indians … told me by signs. I cannot understand their language, but … on the map of the world [see Toscanelli's map, Document H]**,** Cipango [Japan] is in this region."

Monday, 12th of November

"I … seized seven women, old and young, and three children. I did this because the men would behave better in Spain if they had women of their own land. … For on many occasions the men of Guinea have been brought to learn the language in Portugal, and afterwards, when they returned, and it was expected that they would be useful in their land, owing to … the gifts they had received, they never appeared after arriving."

Tuesday, 25th December

It pleased our Lord that, at twelve o'clock at night, when the Admiral had retired to rest, and when all had fallen asleep, seeing that it was dead calm and the sea like glass, the tiller being in the hands of a boy [though the Admiral had forbidden this], the current carried the ship on one of the sand-banks. … Then the timbers opened and the ship was lost.

Wednesday, 26th of December

The Admiral … knew our Lord had caused the ship to stop here, that a settlement might be formed. … "For it is certain that, if I had not lost the ship. … I should not have left people in the country during this voyage, [though] many people had asked me to give them leave to remain. Now I have given orders for a tower and a fort … with provision of bread and wine for more than a year, with seeds for sowing, the ship's boat, a … carpenter, gunner and cooper [and forty-four men]." He trusted in God that, when he returned from Spain … he would find a ton of gold collected by barter by those he was to leave behind, and that they would have found the mine,

and spices in such quantities that the Sovereigns would … be able to … fit out an expedition to go and conquer the Holy Sepulcher.

Wednesday, 16th of January [1493]

The wind freshened from a quarter which was very favorable for the voyage to Spain. The Admiral had noticed that the crew were downhearted when he deviated from the direct route home, reflecting that both caravels were leaking badly, and that there was no help but in God. He therefore … shaped a direct course for Spain.

Friday, 15th of March

At noon, with the tide rising … they reached the port [in Spain] which they had left on the 3rd of August of the year before [having been absent 225 days].

Source: Clements R. Markham, trans. and eds, *The Journal of Christopher Columbus, During His First Voyage, 1492-9* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1893), 15, 16, 28-9, 32-8, 40-1, 52-3, 55, 57, 75, 119, 133-4, 137-9, 165, 192.

Document D

Breaking into the Eastern spice trade: an all-sea route to India becomes possible

That India was on the other side of Africa and washed by a sea was known. That this sea connected to the Atlantic was in doubt until 1488. That year, the Portuguese mariner Dias, with his two fifty-ton ships, was unknowingly blown past the Cape to the east coast of Africa by a storm. A near-mutiny of his crew caused him to turn back soon after, but he had proved that the eastern end of the Atlantic was not land-locked. Leaving Portugal nearly ten years later, Vasco da Gama dealt with a mutiny near the same place by putting the ringleaders in chains and continued on to sail all the way to India.

Da Gama had learned navigation serving in the navy, and he was an experienced seaman. His voyage was financed in part with the confiscated property of the Jews and Moors expelled by the king in 1495. At first, his mandate from the king was to find direct access to spice suppliers. He had four ships, the largest 300 tons with twenty cannon, and 170 men, Dias among them. Of these, only two ships and fifty-five men returned in 1499.

In 1502, the Portuguese king named da Gama "Admiral of India … throughout the territories which shall be placed under [our] rule." On his voyage that year, two Franciscan friars accompanied him as missionaries. His mandate this time was to "show the flag" in the East with a display of military might, strike against Muslim fleets and centers of trade, and gain a monopoly of Indian Ocean trade. This led him to attack Muslim ships whenever he could and to intimidate rulers around the Indian Ocean with threats and violence. He raided and killed inhabitants of fishing villages, locked pilgrim passengers into the hold before setting their ship on fire, and bombarded the towns of those resisting his demands.

Of his twenty-three ships, ten belonged to the king, and thirteen to wealthy merchant investors. By a royal decree of 1500, the latter owed the crown one-fourth of the value of the cargo they brought back, but they could still more than double their investment. Soon, the spice trade became a royal monopoly. Da Gama's share of profits on this voyage was ten hundredweights of pepper worth 800 ducats (a ducat was worth about sixty grams of gold) and each sailor's, half a hundredweight. He left half his fleet in India to protect the coastal trading posts he had set up, and to patrol Indian waters. The intent was to enforce a policy whereby any non-Portuguese ships in the Indian Ocean had to buy a Portuguese license to operate there, or be liable to losing their cargo, ship, and lives.

The following selections are from the journal of a crewmember, who described da Gama's first Europe-to-India all-sea voyage. It involved sailing about 27,000 miles, some ninety days and 4,000 miles of it out of sight of land.

We left [Portugal] on Saturday, 8th July 1497. May God our Lord permit us to accomplish this voyage in his service. Amen!

On Thursday, 3rd August [1497] we left [the Cape Verde islands. On November 4th] we tacked so as to come close to land, but as we failed to identify it, we again stood out to sea. [Some days later] we landed with the captain-major, and made captive one of the natives, [then] had him well dressed and sent ashore. On the following day fourteen or fifteen natives came to where our ships lay. … [We] showed them a variety of merchandise, with a view of finding out whether such things were to be found in their country. This merchandise included cinnamon, cloves, seed-pearls, gold, and many other things, but it was evident that they had no knowledge whatever of such articles. … Having careened our ships and taken in wood, we set sail.

At that time we did not know how far we might be [from] the Cape of Good Hope. … We therefore stood out towards the south-south-west, and late on Saturday [18th November] we beheld the Cape. [Contrary winds prevented their rounding the Cape until the 22nd November]. … By Christmas Day … we had discovered seventy leagues of coast [beyond the furthest northeast that Dias had got to in 1488]. … Drinking water began to fail us, and our food had to be cooked with salt water. Our daily ration of water was reduced to [a cup-and-a-half].

11th January [1498] … we went close to shore, and saw a crowd of negroes. … The Captain-major [da Gama] ordered Martin Afonso, who had been a long time in Manicongo [kingdom about 1000 miles by sea south of Guinea] to land. … The chief [there] said that we were welcome to anything in his country of which we stood in need: at least, this is how Martin Afonso understood him. … Two gentlemen of the country came to see us. They were very haughty, and valued nothing which we gave them. … A young man in their company—so we understood from their signs—came from a distant country, and had already seen ships like ours.

The people of this country [near Mozambique] are Mohammedans. … They are merchants, and have transactions with white Moors [Arabs] four of whose vessels were at this time in port, laden with gold, silver, cloves, pepper, ginger [and precious stones]. … We understood them to say that … where we were going … there was no need to purchase them as they could be collected in baskets. All this we learned through a sailor … who, having formerly been a prisoner among the Moors, understood their language.

The captain-general [presented the Sultan of Mozambique with] hats, [gowns], corals, and many other articles. He was, however, so proud that he treated all we gave him with contempt, and asked for scarlet cloth, of which we had none. … The captain-major … begged him for two pilots to go with us. He at once granted this request.

The lord of the place [a close-by port] sent many things to the captain-major. All this happened at the time when he took us for Turks or Moors from some foreign land. … But when they learnt that we were Christians they arranged to seize and kill us by treachery. … We forthwith armed our boats, placing bombards in their poops, and started for the village. … Our bombards soon made it so hot for them that they fled. … On 29th March we left.

[On April 7th] … we cast anchor off Mombasa. … [The pilots from Mozambique had misled the Portuguese, promising them a friendly welcome in Mombasa.] At midnight there approached us a [boat] with about a hundred men, all armed with cutlasses. … They attempted to board … but this was not permitted. … It seemed to us [they just wanted] to find out whether they might not capture one or the other of our vessels. [The two pilots jumped into the water, and were picked up by the native boat.] At night the captain-major 'questioned' two Moors whom we had on board, by dropping boiling oil upon their skin, so that they might confess any treachery intended against us. They said that orders had been given to capture us … to avenge what we had done at Mozambique. And when this torture was applied the second time, one of the Moors, although his hands were tied, threw himself into the sea whilst the other did so during the morning watch. About midnight two [boats] with many men in them approached. [Some swam to our ships and] began to cut the cable, [and] got hold of the rigging. [Being discovered,] they fled.

[After we left,] we saw two boats … in the open sea, and at once gave chase, with the intention of capturing them, for we wanted to secure a pilot who would guide us to where we wanted to go. [They captured seventeen men, gold, silver, provisions, and the young wife of "an old Moor of distinction." All tried to escape by jumping into the water but were recaptured. Thirty leagues from Mombasa, they anchored in Malindi.]

The Moors whom we had taken in the boat told us that there were at this city … four vessels belonging to Christians from India, and if it pleased us to take them there, they would provide us, instead of them, Christian pilots. … The captain-major … having discussed the matter with his Moorish prisoners, cast anchor off the town. … [In return for freeing the Moorish prisoners, the text says that Malindi's king provided a Christian pilot with whom the Portuguese were "much pleased." Use by Portuguese mariners of Muslim and later Hindu and Malay pilots is well documented, as is their frequent confusion about others' religion. They long persisted in mistaking Hindus for a kind of Christian.] We remained in front of this town during nine days, and all this time we had [feasts], sham fights, and musical performances.

We left Malindi on the 24th [of April], for a city called [Calicut, in India] with the pilot whom the king had given us. … After having seen no land for twenty-three days, we sighted lofty mountains … and when we were near enough for the pilot to recognize them he told us they were above Calecut, and that this was the country we desired to go to.

The captain-major sent [a messenger] to Calecut, and those with whom he went took him to two Moors from Tunis who could speak Castilian and Genoese. The first greeting that he received was in these words: "May the devil take thee! What brought you hither?" They asked what he sought so far away from home, and he told them he came in search of Christians and of spices.

Source: E. G. Ravenstein, trans. and ed., *A Journal of the First Voyage of Vasco da Gama, 1497-1499*. (London: Hakluyt Society, 1898), 1, 3, 5-9, 16-7, 20-1, 23-5, 28, 30-1, 35-7, 39-40, 45-8.

Document E

All the seas are one sea

Magellan and the first voyage around the world

Before his famous voyage, Magellan had studied astronomy and nautical sciences. He took part in several Portuguese sailings to India between 1505 and 1512 and in several battles in the Indian Ocean. From there, he was sent to explore the Spice Islands [Moluccas, off western New Guinea] where a Portuguese mercenary captain serving a local sultan gave him information that badly understated the width of the Pacific.

After returning home, Magellan fought against Muslims in Morocco, but on a false accusation he was dismissed by his king. Hence, he turned to Spain, selling its king on his project to reach the Moluccas by sailing west and finding a sea-borne passage across the southernmost part of South America.

The king covered three-quarters of the cost of this expedition, borrowing from German bankers to do so. A Flemish commercial firm funded the rest. Five ships were outfitted, between 120 and 60 tons each, crewed by 270 men. About a third were Portuguese, Spanish, and Italian. Among the rest were "French, Flemings, Germans, Sicilians, English, Malays, Negroes, Moors," and others. Only one ship and eighteen men returned after completing the voyage under the command of Elcano, who took over leadership of the expedition after Magellan's death in the Philippines. The few survivors arrived home in poor shape, with a load of fifty tons of spices.

The Pacific crossing did not contribute to the Spanish empire until after 1550, when mariners finally figured out how to use the winds that made a return trip from Asia to America possible. Soon after, regular round-trip crossings of the Manila galleons between Mexico and the Philippines made the Pacific a communications highway.

Pigafetta, an Italian gentleman-volunteer, had studied astronomy, geography, and cartography before becoming a member of Magellan's crew. The excerpt below was taken from the account he wrote of his voyage.

Having heard [in 1519] that a fleet composed of five vessels had been fitted out for the purpose of going to discover the spicery in the islands of Maluco [the Moluccas], I determined to go to see those things for myself. … The captain-general having resolved to make so long a voyage through the Ocean Sea, where furious winds and great storms are always reigning, [did] not make known to any of his men the voyage he was about to make, so that they might not be cast down at the thought of doing so great and extraordinary deed.

Many days did we sail along the coast of Ghinea [West Africa] … with contrary winds, calms, and … sixty days of continual rain. … Many furious squalls of wind and currents of water struck us head on. … That the ships might not be wrecked, all the sails were struck.

That land of Verzin [Brazil, where we landed,] is wealthier and larger than Spagnia, Fransa, and Italia put together, and belongs to the king of Portugalo. The people of that land … go naked. … They are as well-proportioned as we. … The men gave us one or two of their young daughters as slaves for one hatchet or one large knife, but they would not give us their wives in exchange for anything at all. … These people could be converted easily to the faith of Jesus Christ.

[In the port we called St. Julian] we remained about five months. [Here] the captains of the other four ships plotted treason in order that they might kill the captain-general. [Some of the crew supported the mutineers, for their food was being rationed and they wanted to turn back and go home. However, the plot was discovered; one of the plotters was knifed, two were executed and another two left behind, marooned. Forty men were pardoned, because they were needed to work the ships, one of which had deserted and returned to Spain. After this] one of the [remaining] ships was wrecked in an expedition made to explore the coast.

Leaving that place, we found … towards the Antarctic Pole, a river of fresh water. There the ships almost perished because of the furious winds. … We stayed about two months … to supply the ships with water, wood, and fish. … Then, going … toward the same pole, we found a strait … [440 miles long]. … It leads to another sea called the Pacific Sea. … Had it not been for the captain-general, we would not have found that strait for we all thought and said that it was closed on all sides. But the captain-general … knew where to find a well-hidden strait, which he saw depicted on a map in the treasury of the king of Portugal. … A great storm struck us that night. … Two ships suffered a headwind … [and on] approaching the end of the bay, and thinking that they were lost, they saw a small opening. … Like desperate men they hauled into it, and thus they discovered the strait by chance. … The captain-general [sent two ships to find out whether the opening had an exit into the Pacific Sea. Returning], they reported that they had seen … the open sea. The captain-general wept for joy.

[Eventually we left] that strait, engulfing ourselves in the Pacific Sea. We were three months and twenty days without getting any kind of fresh food. We ate biscuit, which was no longer a biscuit, but powder of biscuit swarming with worms. … We drank yellow water that had been putrid for many days. We also ate some ox-hides that covered the top of the mainyard. … and which had become exceedingly hard. … We left them in the sea for four or five days, and then placed them for a few moments on top of the embers, and so ate them; and often we ate sawdust from boards. … But above all other misfortunes the following was the worst. The gums of both the lower and upper teeth of some of our men swelled, so they could not eat under any circumstances and therefore died. Nineteen men died from that sickness, and … twenty-five or thirty men fell sick. … We sailed about four thousand leguas [16,000 miles] during those three months and twenty days through an open stretch in the Pacific Sea. … We saw no land except two desert isles [with no anchorage]. … Had not God and His blessed mother given us good weather we would all have died of hunger in that exceedingly vast sea. Of a verity I believe no such voyage will ever be made [again].

[They made landfall in Guam, stocked up on provisions, and landed on various islands after. On entering the port of Cebu, all the artillery was fired, frightening the inhabitants badly. On being asked what they wanted, the] interpreter replied that his master was a captain of the greatest king

in the world, and that he was going to discover Malucho [the Moluccas or Spice Islands]. … The king told him he was welcome, but it was their custom for all ships that entered their ports to pay tribute. … [The interpreter replied that the] captain did not pay tribute to any … and that if the king wished peace he would have peace, but if war instead, war. … [After a while, peace was established and Magellan spoke to the king and his followers about Christianity, telling] them that they should not become Christians for fear or to please us, but of their own free will; and that he would not cause any displeasure to those who wished to live according to their own law, but that the Christians would be better regarded and treated than the others.

[The king and his following were baptized. After a while, a chief of an island near Cebu] requested the captain to send him only one boatload of men on the next night, so that they might help him fight against [another chief]. … The captain-general decided to go thither with three boatloads. We begged him repeatedly not to go [but he did not listen]. At midnight, sixty men of us set out armed with corselets and helmets, together with the Christian king [and some of his following, who were asked to just watch the fight. When we reached the island of the chief we were to help against, the captain] sent a message to the natives by the [interpreter] to the effect that if they would obey the king of Spagnia, recognize the Christian king as their sovereign, and pay us our tribute, he would be their friend; but that if they wished otherwise, they should wait to see how our lances wounded. [Receiving a challenge as reply, Magellan and forty-eight others went ashore to face] more than one thousand five hundred persons. … The musketeers and crossbowmen shot from a distance for about half an hour, but uselessly. … the natives would never stand still, but leaped hither and thither. … They shot so many arrows at us and hurled so many bamboo spears … at the captain-general, besides pointed stakes hardened with fire, stones, and mud, that we could scarcely defend ourselves. … They shot the captain through the right leg with a poisoned arrow. On that account, he ordered us to retire slowly, but the men took to flight. … The natives continued to pursue us. … [Magellan was wounded several more times.] That caused the captain to fall face downward, when immediately they rushed upon him with iron and bamboo spears and with their cutlasses, until they killed our mirror, our light, our comfort, and our true guide.

[Those who took over the leadership alienated their ally the baptized king of Cebu; they and over a dozen of their men were murdered. The rest escaped but had to abandon one of their ships, which was in too poor a condition to sail. The remaining two ships, with the crew of the sunken third on board, continued on to the Moluccas, capturing pilots by violence to show them how to get there. On the way, they entered the port of Brunei.]

The king of that island sent a very beautiful prau [boat] to us, whose bow and stern were worked in gold. … When we reached the city, we [waited] until the arrival of two elephants with silk trappings, and twelve men each of whom carried a porcelain jar for our presents. … Accompanied by the governor and other chiefs, [we] entered a large hall full of many nobles. … [The hall] was all adorned with silk hangings, and … brocade curtains. … Then a chief told us that we could not speak to the king, and that if we wished anything, we were to tell it to him, so that he could communicate it to one of higher rank. The latter would communicate it to a brother of the governor … and this man would communicate it by means of a speaking tube through a

hole in the wall to one who was inside with the king. The chief taught us the manner of making three obeisances to the king.

The men in the palace were all attired in cloth of gold and silk … and carried daggers with gold hafts adorned with pearls and precious gems, and they had many rings on their hands. … We supped on the ground upon a palm mat from thirty or thirty-two different kinds of meat besides the fish and other things. … We ate with gold spoons. … In our sleeping quarters there during those two nights, two torches of white wax were kept constantly alight in two rather tall silver candlesticks. … [The third day they returned elephant-back to their ships].

[Finally reaching the Moluccas, they bartered for cloves]. For four brazas [about twenty feet] of ribbon, they gave us one bahar [448 pounds] of cloves; for two brass chains, worth one marcello [a coin of sixty-three grams of silver] they gave us one hundred libras [pounds] of cloves. Finally, when we had no more merchandise, one man gave his cloak, another his doublet, and another his shirt, besides other articles of clothing, in order that they might have their share in the cargo. [Next day] three of the sons of the king … came to the ships. We gave each of the three brothers a gilt glass drinking cup. … Several days later our king told us that he was … disconsolate [that we planned to leave] because now he had become acquainted with us and enjoyed some of the products of Spagnia. Inasmuch as our return would be far in the future, he earnestly entreated us to leave him some of our culverins [heavy cannon] for his defense. … We gave our king certain pieces of artillery … which we had captured among those India [islands], and some of our culverins, together with four barrels of powder.

[About to leave, they found one of their two ships had sprung a leak they could not fix. They had to unload it, lighten the one ship remaining also of part of its cargo of cloves, and leave it and fifty-four men behind. The one ship leaving for home did so with forty-seven crew and thirteen Indians, avoiding Portuguese-patrolled coasts and sea-lanes in the Indian Ocean.]

In order that we might double the cape of Bonna Speranza [the tip of Africa]. … We were nine weeks near that cape with our sails hauled down because of [contrary winds and] a most furious storm. … Some of our men wished to go to a Portuguese settlement called Mozanbich, because the ship was leaking badly, because of the severe cold, and especially because we had no other food than rice and water; for as we had no salt, our provisions of meat had putrefied. Some of the others however, more desirous of their honor than their own life, determined to go to Spagnia living or dead. Finally by God's help we doubled that cape. … Then we sailed northwest for two months continually without taking on fresh food or water. Twenty-one men died during that short time. [Another thirteen men were detained by the Portuguese when the ship was forced to stop at the Cape Verde Islands for provisions.]

On Saturday, September six, 1522, we entered the bay [near Seville, Spain, where they had left from] with only eighteen men and the majority of them sick, all that were left of the sixty men who left Malucho. Some died of hunger; some deserted at the island of Timor; and some were put to death for crimes. From the time we left that bay until the present day we had sailed

fourteen thousand four hundred and sixty leguas [57,840 miles] and furthermore had completed the circumnavigation of the world from east to west.

Source: James Alexander Robertson, trans. and ed., *Magellan's Voyage Around the World*, by Antonio Pigafetta, 2 Vols. (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark, 1906), Vol. 1: 23, 27, 35, 39, 43, 45, 61, 65, 67, 133, 135, 141, 171, 173, 175, 177; Vol. 2: 27, 29, 31, 97, 99, 103, 183, 185, 189.

Lesson 3
Routes to Empire

Teachers should note that sharing with students the questions they will be asked to answer and the activities they will be asked to do *before* they begin to work with the Student Handouts may serve their historical knowledge and understanding.

Activities

Ask students to respond to the following:

1. Ask students to compare what Armstrong said in 1969 when he took his first step on to the moon: "That's one small step for a man, a giant leap for mankind," with what Balboa said when he took his first step into the Pacific Ocean (see Student Handout 3.2, Document L.) In what ways does each statement reflect the values of the time when it was spoken, and the values of the cultures the speakers came from? Were the values identified for Balboa's time and culture helpful to the achievement of Iberian aims East and West at that time? Why or why not? Have those values died out, or are they still alive and well today?

2. Ask students to consider whether they think guns (cannon, muskets) made the decisive difference allowing Europeans to defeat and dominate peoples they met in the Indies and in the Americas between the 1490s and 1550? Why or why not? Students should support their arguments with reference to Documents B, D, I, and N.

3. Pose these questions to students: If there had been a United Nations in 1520, and you had been one of its observers, what would you put into an unbiased report to a concerned Security Council about the situation in the Indian Ocean, based on the information in Student Handout 3.1? If there had been a Human Rights organization in 1550, and you had been one of its observers, what would you put into an unbiased report to it about favorable and unfavorable aspects of human rights in the Americas since 1500, based on the information in Student Handout 3.2?

4. Ask students to compare the measures taken by the Portuguese in their attempt to monopolize the maritime trade of the Indian Ocean area with the measures taken by the Spaniards to benefit from the wealth, labor, and resources they found in the Americas. Have students use information from Student Handouts 3.1 and 3.2. Which were more successful? Why?

5. Ask students if they agree that from about 1500 CE both the Portuguese in the East and the Spanish in the West were building empires. Why or why not? What question(s) might be asked, the answers to which would help confirm, modify, or contradict student views about whether the Portuguese and the Spanish were empire-building?

6. Pose this question: Does the definition of empire you have come up with in the fourth Introductory Activity need changing in view of what the Portuguese were doing in Africa and

Asia and the Spanish in the Americas between 1490 and 1550? Why or why not? If yes, then how?

7. Ask students to compare the reaction of Montezuma's messengers to Cortés and his Spaniards (Document N) with that of Malacca's inhabitants to the Portuguese (Document D). What reasons might be given for the differences? What reasons for the similarities?

8. Ask students to summarize the various ways in which native populations reacted to Portuguese activities in the Indian Ocean and Spanish activities in the Americas between about 1500 and 1550, as shown in Documents I, K, M, and O. What other ways of reacting to attempted foreign domination might students suggest for which there is no evidence in Lesson 3? Would such reactions have been possible for the populations involved at the time?

9. What justifications do students think the Portuguese and the Spanish gave for their actions in the Indian Ocean area and in the Americas? (Information about this can be found in Documents E, J, K, L, P, Q, and R.) Might any of their justifications be used in the contemporary world? Why or why not? If any, then which? Under what circumstances?

10. Ask students: What ethical and moral standards should be used to judge the actions of people in past historical periods, and in different cultures—those of their own times and cultures, or those of ours? Why? As a case study, have students debate the proposition that Cortés had a moral duty to make war on the Aztecs, both to convert as many as possible in order to save their souls, and to save from death those they would have killed in their practice of human sacrifice.

11. **This activity may serve as assessment.** Ask students: Taking everything you have learned into consideration, how would you explain the success of the Portuguese and the Spanish in dominating peoples they met as a result of their maritime enterprises in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries? Support your reasoning with evidence from this Teaching Unit.

12. **This activity may serve as assessment.** Compare and contrast the empires created by Portugal in Africa and Asia and by Spain in the Americas by about 1550. Take into account both the earlier definition of "empire" (in the answer to the fourth of the Introductory Activities) and the political, economic, military, and other aspects of the Iberian impact on the lands and peoples they dominated.

13. Ask students to consider the reliability as historical evidence of the original source parts of Documents D, F, L, and N. Students should take into account whatever information they have about the subject matter and the author, from head notes and from any other part(s) of the Lessons in this unit. Note that it would be possible to have reasons for both questioning and accepting the same text.

- For each, what reasons might you have for questioning its reliability?
- For each, what reasons might you have for accepting its reliability?

14. Ask students to consider what the words “demonizing,” and “a,” in the title “Demonizing the enemy: a Chinese view” (Document G) suggest about the quoted source statement that follows. What knowledge about the statement’s author might affect students’ judgment about the statement’s reliability?

15. The original source parts of Documents C, G, H, I, and O are all descriptions of the “other”—peoples alien to the author. Ask students to rank them according to their judgment of their reliability, and give reasons for the ranking. Students should make use of whatever information they have about the subject matter and the author, from head notes and from any other part(s) of the lessons in this unit. What evidence, if any, can students think of which could convince them that the description at the bottom of the ranking was, in fact, accurate, reliable reporting?

Lesson 3

Student Handout 3.1— How, and With What Success, Did Portugal Shift from Finding Sea Routes to Controlling Them, and to Building a Maritime Empire in Asia?

Document A

Choking off the competition: Venetian reaction to the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean

Venice had for a long time been the unquestioned maritime leader in the Mediterranean. The wealth and the prestige of the Venetians were seriously threatened by Portuguese activities in Africa and Asia. Venice had a lot at stake: pepper bought at three ducats a hundredweight in India sold for eighty in the great city. Even allowing for the costs of middlemen's charges, Venetian profits on it could amount to 40 per cent. Moreover, the demand for spices both as a preservative and as a flavoring had grown in Europe, following growth of both population and incomes after the fading out of plague epidemics.

The following excerpt from the diary of a Venetian gives an account of the feelings in Venice in 1501.

> It is learned that the caravels which were expected, loaded with spices, are in Portugal. Three of the said caravels came from Calicut and one from the gold-mine which had a large quantity of gold. . . This news. . . was considered very bad news for the city of Venice. . . The spices which should come from Calicut, Cochin, and other places in India to Alexandria or Beyrout [Beirut], and later come to Venice, and in this place become monopolized, [so that] all the world comes [here] to buy such spicery and. . . gold, silver, and every other merchandise, [which allows us to fund our war against the Turks]; today, with this new voyage by the King of Portugal, all the spices which came by way of Cairo will be controlled in Portugal, because of the caravels which will go to India. . . to take them. . . And truly the Venetian merchants are in a bad way, believing that the voyages should make them very poor.

Source: Qtd. in K. N. Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilization in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985), 64-5.

Document B

Becoming top dog: Portuguese victory at the battle of Diu

The Venetians and the Muslim Mamluk regime in Egypt had between them dominated the flow of spices from India to Europe by way of the Red Sea. The Portuguese in the early sixteenth century became a serious threat to this Egypt/Venice monopoly and its profits. The sultans of Egypt and the rulers of Gujarat and Calicut in western India allied to break Portuguese power in the Indian Ocean. The Ottoman sultan from Istanbul supplied Egypt with war-galleys in the Mediterranean. These were taken apart, carried overland, and reassembled in the Red Sea with Venetian technical help. Together with the contributions of Calicut and Gujarat, the allied fleet consisted of twelve ships of which only four were major vessels, and perhaps as many as eighty small boats. The fleet was weaker than had been planned. A Christian military order from Rhodes, an island in the eastern Mediterranean, had taken or destroyed more than half the ships bringing timber for constructing Egypt's contribution to the allied force. In 1509, near Diu on the western coast of India, the allied fleet met the Portuguese, who won the battle. Afterwards, the Portuguese extracted a payment of 300,000 gold coins, built a fortress at Diu, and left a garrison.

The following account comes from a book, finished in 1518, describing the countries bordering the Indian Ocean. Its author was a trader and official in India for fourteen years. He learned the western Indian language Malayalam, and he acted as interpreter between the Portuguese and Indian rulers. Later, he traveled with Magellan, who had become his son-in-law, on the latter's round-the-world voyage.

The King of Cambaya has here [at Diu] a Governor who is an old man, a very good rider, judicious, industrious, and learned. … He possesses a very strong artillery. … He also has many rowing galleys, well designed and equipped … [and] has built a very strong boom across the harbor, furnished with heavy artillery and many gunners always present, with numbers of men-at-arms well trained and equipped, whom he pays right well. [Born a Christian and suspecting Portugal would win, he carefully kept his ships out of the way and fired not a shot.]

To this port came a fleet of the Great Soldam [Sultan] with a fine and powerful force well trained and armed, with many sailing ships and rowing galleys. … He came to this port in order to refit with the help of the King of Cambaya and … the Governor … [and] to go thence to India, to the city of Calecut, where also they were to help in an attack on our people, and to drive them out of India. [The Portuguese] Viceroy … prepared his fleet. … The Moors sallied forth to encounter him at sea and at the entrance of the bar both fleets fought … stoutly. … Men were slain and wounded; and at last the dogs were overcome, many being slain and many others taken. [Their captain] fled, leaving his whole fleet to destruction. The Governor of Diu … beholding this crushing defeat, sent in haste a message to the Viceroy begging for complete peace and friendship, and in token thereof he sent many presents and supplies.

Source: Mansel Longworth Dames, trans. and ed., *The Book of Duarte Barbosa*, Vol. 1 (London: Hakluyt Society, 1918), 130-4.

Document C

Respecting the enemy

A European view of Muslim merchants they met in Gujarat

Gujaratis from northwest India were among the most prominent of the merchants sailing the Indian Ocean. Their ships were variations of the Arab dhow, averaging 300 to 800 tons. According to a Portuguese writing in the 1520s, "These ships are so powerful and well armed and have so many men that they dare to sail this route [Malacca to the Red Sea] without fear of our ships." A merchant from Florence in 1510 had the following to say about his Gujarati fellow-traders.

> We believe ourselves to be the most astute men that one can encounter, and [yet] the people here surpass us in everything. And there are Muslim merchants worth 400,000 to 500,000 ducats. And they mock us, and it seems to me that they are superior to us in countless things, save with sword in hand, which they cannot resist.

Source: Qtd. in Michael Pearson, *The Indian Ocean* (London: Routledge, 2003), 95.

Document D

The conquest of Malacca: the Malay view

Through the prosperous city of Malacca in the early 1500s flowed the trade from and to China, Southeast Asia, India, and Southwest Asia. A thousand Gujarati merchants a year visited there. Other Indians came also, as well as Malays from the Spice Islands and Philippinos, South Chinese, Japanese, and Okinawans. According to the Portuguese author Tomé Pires, products from Western Europe, the Mediterranean, East Africa, Inner Eurasia, South, Southeast, and East Asia were traded Malacca in the early sixteenth century, and you could hear eighty-four languages spoken.

Afonso de Albuquerque, Malacca's conqueror, claimed to have taken as part of the loot 3,000 guns. According to him, the gun founders there "were as good as those of Germany." The account of an Italian author gave no numbers but confirmed that Malaccans did use guns in their defense, probably light, highly-decorated bronze cannon imported from both Gujarat and China. Cannon were certainly used by the invaders. Letters from two Italians in Albuquerque's fleet describe the very heavy bombardment of the city from very close quarters, "day and night," for twenty days before the final assault. The Portuguese anchored their ships in the river near Malacca's central bridge to bring their 400 shipboard cannon to bear, some mounted on a specially-fortified junk.

Malacca's history, including its fall to Portuguese attack, was described in the mid-sixteenth century by an anonymous Malay author, probably a noble courtier. The description below is from his *Malay Annals*. The author spells the name of the city "Malaka."

Now the city of Malaka at that time [about 1500] flourished exceedingly and many foreigners resorted thither … in the city alone there were a hundred and ninety thousand people [modern scholars' estimate is about 50,000, the same as the Portuguese capital of Lisbon].

After a time there came a ship of the Franks from Goa trading to Malaka; and … the people of Malaka … came crowding to see what the Franks looked like. And they were all astonished and said: "These are white Bengalis!" [Bengal is on the west coast of India]. Around each Frank there would be a crowd of Malays, some of them twisting his beard, some of them fingering his head, some taking off his hat, some grasping his hand.

[When the Frankish] commander went back to Goa, … he described to the [Portuguese] Viceroy the greatness of the city of Malaka, the prosperity of the port, and the number of the inhabitants. … The Viceroy was seized with desire to possess it, and he ordered a fleet to be made ready consisting of seven carracks, ten long galleys and thirteen foists [like galleys but smaller]. When the fleet was ready, he ordered it to attack Malaka … with cannon. And the people of Malaka were bewildered and filled with fear at the sound of the cannon, and they said: "What sound is this like thunder?" … Presently the cannon balls began to arrive and struck the people of Malaka, so that some had their heads shot away, some their arms, and some their legs. … The next day the Franks landed two thousand men armed with matchlocks apart from a vast horde of sailors

and sepoys [Indian auxiliary troops]; and the men of Malaka … went out to repel them. … The line of the Franks was broken and they gave ground. … they were routed and fled to the waterside, pursued by the men of Malaka. They then embarked and sailed for Goa.

[The Viceroy] proceeded to Pertugal [Portugal] and presenting himself before the Rajah of Pertugal asked for an armada. The Rajah of Pertugal gave him [nine ships. He then returned to Goa and fitted out thirty more vessels]. With this fleet he sailed for Malaka. … And the Franks engaged the men of Malaka in battle, and they fired their cannon from their ships so that the cannon balls came like rain … and the noise of their matchlocks was like that of ground-nuts popping in the frying-pan. … When day dawned, the Franks landed and attacked. … So vehement was their onslaught that the Malaka line was broken, leaving the king on his elephant isolated. … And Malaka fell.

Source: Qtd. in Donald F. Lach and Carol Flaumenhaft, eds., *Asia on the Eve of Europe's Expansion* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1965), 90-2.

Document E

The conquest of Malacca

The Portuguese view

A veteran of North African wars against the Moors, Afonso de Albuquerque was appointed viceroy of India by the Portuguese king, who styled himself "Lord of Guinea and of the conquest, navigation, and commerce of Ethiopia, Arabia, Persia, and India." At the height of their power in the mid-sixteenth century, the Portuguese had a total of some 300 ships spread over a wide area. To encourage and protect Portuguese trade and to control that of others (any ship caught sailing without a paid-up Portuguese license had its cargo confiscated and its crew executed), Albuquerque conquered and held a series of fortified ports. Goa on the western Indian coast fell to him in 1510, Malaysian Malacca in 1511, Persian Hormuz in 1515, and Chinese Macao in 1557. The Portuguese system of control by violence was justified on the basis that although by common law the seas were open to all, this law applied only in Europe and only to Christians. Albuquerque claimed that an empire could be built with "four good fortresses and a large well-armed fleet manned by 3000 European-born Portuguese." It took him at least eighteen ships, 1,400 enlisted men, several hundred Javanese and Indian allies, and two tries to take Malacca. However, he never managed to take Aden on the Red Sea, in spite of determined attempts to do so. Moreover, after Malacca's conquest, the rising Muslim Sultanate of Aceh in Sumatra began to compete successfully with the Portuguese for the area's spice trade.

Albuquerque was reported to have spoken to the crews of his ships before his second and successful attack on Malacca as follows.

Although there be many reasons … in favor of our taking this city and building a fortress therein to maintain possession of it, two only will I mention.

The first is the great service which we shall perform to Our Lord in casting the Moors [Muslims]out of this country and quenching the fire of this sect of Mafamede [Muhammad] so that it may never burst out again hereafter; [and I hope doing so] will result in the Moors resigning India altogether to our rule. … Our Lord for his service thought right to lead us hither, for when Malacca is taken the places on the Straits [through which the Muslim merchants carried spices to India and on to the Mediterranean] must be shut up, and they will never more be able to introduce their spiceries into those places.

For after we were in possession of the pepper of Malabar [southwest India], never more did any reach Cairo [and from there, western Europe] except that which the Moors carried thither from [Malacca]. And [their] forty or fifty ships, which sail hence every year laden with all sorts of spiceries bound for [north Africa], cannot be stopped [by us] without great expense and large fleets. … If we take this trade of Malacca out of their hands, Cairo and Mecca are entirely ruined, and to Venice no spiceries will be conveyed except that which her merchants go and buy in Portugal.

Source: Qtd. in Harry J. Benda and John A. Larkin, *The World of Southeast Asia: Selected Historical Readings* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), 78-9.

Document F

"With ten ships we could take the whole of China"

Tomé Pires was apothecary to a prince of Portugal and royal agent for the supply of drugs sent to India yearly. He sailed to India in 1511 and, after nearly a year there, to Malacca where he was accountant of the business office. After some travel in Indonesia as an official, he went with the fleet of seven ships sent by the King of Portugal in 1517 "to discover China." He was to be the first European ambassador there. Having landed in Canton, he waited more than two years in vain to present his credentials to the emperor. Translators' errors, Portuguese arrogance, and complaints from several Indonesian kings to their Chinese overlord about the Portuguese, embroiled the latter in marine battles with the Chinese, in which the Portuguese were severely mauled. Pires and the rest of his embassy were imprisoned in chains, several were executed, and Pires eventually died of an illness.

He wrote the following account of the established sea-borne trade east of the Mediterranean in 1512-15, soon after the Portuguese began building an empire from East Africa to the Spice Islands, trying to monopolize maritime trade throughout that area.

All the trade in Cambay [on the west coast of India] is in the hands of the heathen. Their general designation is Gujaratees. … They are men who understand merchandise. … They do their accounts with figures like ours. … Those of our people who want to be clerks and factors [business agents] ought to go there and learn. … Both the Gujaratees and the merchants [from elsewhere] who have settled there sail many ships to all parts [to the Persian Gulf, Red Sea, Goa, Ceylon (Sri Lanka), Bengal, Siam, and Malacca among others] where they take quantities of merchandise, bringing other kinds back, thus making Cambay rich and important.

The [Muslim] merchants from Cairo [Egypt] bring the merchandise which comes from Italy and Greece and Damascus to Aden. … [Those from Aden bring those goods and some from Arabia to Cambay, and take back from there products of Malacca, mostly spices] and all kinds of cloth for trading in … Kilwa, Malindi, Mogadishu [all three in East Africa] and other places.

The Gujaratees were better seamen and did more navigating than the other people of these parts, and so they have larger ships and more men to man them. They have great pilots and do a great deal of navigation. The heathen of Cambay—and in older times the Gujaratees—held that they must never kill anyone, nor must they have armed men in their company. If any were captured and [their captors] wanted to kill them all, they did not resist. … Now [1515] they have many men-at-arms to defend their ships.

As the kingdom of Cambay had this trade with Malacca, merchants of the following nations used to accompany the Gujaratees there in their ships, and some of them used to settle [in Malacca], to wit, people from Cairo, many Arabs … Abyssinians, and people from Ormuz [and from East Africa], Persians … Turkomans [from Inner Eurasia], Armenians [and others.].

According to what the nations here in the East say … China [is great in] riches, pomp, and state in both the land and people, and other tales which it would be easier to believe as true of our Portugal than of China.

The people of China are white, as white as we are. … It certainly seems that China is an important, good, and very wealthy country, and the [Portuguese] Governor of Malacca would not need as much force as they say in order to bring it under our rule, because the people are weak and easy to overcome. And the principal people who have been there affirm that with ten ships the Governor of India who took Malacca could take the whole of China along the sea-coast.

Source: Armando Cortesao, trans. and ed., *The Suma Oriental of Tome Pires*, Vol. 1 (London: Hakluyt Society, 1944), 41-6.

Document G

Demonizing the enemy

A Chinese view of the Portuguese

Information by Portuguese writers about Portuguese atrocities is not lacking. In 1503, for instance, a Portuguese captain had the hands, ears, and noses of the 800 men from captured ships hacked off, then had their still living bodies piled into a ship which was set on fire. The local ruler was sent the butchered body-parts, with a message that he could make curry with them. Note, however, that others also, from both European and Asian countries, committed comparable atrocities in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

The following description of Portuguese behavior is from a Chinese account in the second half of the sixteenth century.

> So they [the Portuguese] secretly sought to purchase children of above ten years old to eat. … The method [of preparing the child] was to first boil up some soup in a large iron pan and place the child, who was locked up in an iron cage, into the pan. After being steamed to sweat, the child was then taken out and his skin peeled with an iron scrubbing brush. The child, still alive, would now be killed and having been disemboweled, steamed to eat.

Source: Qtd. in Michael Pearson, *The Indian Ocean* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 119.

Document H

Denouncing the enemy

An Arab view of the Portuguese

In his sixteenth-century account of the Portuguese in Malabar (southwest India), Arab historian Zayn al-Din blames them for many anti-Muslim acts. In addition to outright and unprovoked attacks, Portuguese unwelcome attempts to convert Muslims to Christianity evidently played a part in local attitudes towards the newcomers. Given that both Muslims and Hindus in the Malabar region had been trading peacefully with local Christians before the Portuguese arrival, ingrained religious enmity towards Christians does not seem to have been universal. In Europe, too, Muslims and Christians had been intermittent trading partners, collaborators in scholarship, and even allies against their own co-religionists.

Religious polarization between Islam and Christianity grew in Southeast Asia after the 1540s. Conversion then became a major goal of the Portuguese there, and the Inquisition was imported. In the 1560s, the Catholic Reformation, a response to the Protestant Reformation, further reinforced the Christian emphasis. On the other side, activist Muslim preachers from Southwest Asia became regular visitors in the region, and strict Sunni Islam became the state religion of many countries.

> They tyrannized and corrupted the Muslims and committed all kinds of ignoble and infamous acts. Their acts of violence were countless. … They hindered the Muslims in their trade. … They robbed them, burnt their cities and mosques, seized their ships and dishonored the Sacred Book [Qur'an] … and incited the Muslims [to give up their religion]. … They tortured the Muslims with fire, sold some and enslaved others, and against others, practiced deeds of cruelty which indicated a lack of all humanitarian sentiment.

Source: Qtd. in Chandra Richard de Silva, "Beyond the Cape: The Portuguese Encounter with the Peoples of South Asia," in Stuart B. Schwartz, ed., *Implicit Understandings: Observing, Reporting, and Reflecting on the Encounters between Europeans and Other Peoples in the Early Modern Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994), 303.

Document I

Disrespecting the enemy earlier feared

A Portuguese report of Moluccan views of the Portuguese

People on two of the main islands of the Moluccas were friendly towards Portugal. These wanted Portuguese help in their disputes with the other islands with which they were "always waging war." Enlisting as allies rulers who had conflicts with neighbors was a deliberate Portuguese strategy.

The following account is from a Portuguese historian's account of the Moluccas in the mid-sixteenth century.

> Formerly, upon seeing a man with a helmet, they said, "Here comes an iron head," and all of them ran away presuming that we were invincible and not subject to death. But at present [1544] they know that under that helmet is a head that can be cut off, and a body that is not immortal. And seeing us fire muskets, they imagined that our mouths breathed out a deadly fire; and at hearing bombards shooting and the Portuguese being mentioned, pregnant women had a miscarriage because among them artillery was unknown nor had they any inkling of it. But for a long time now they make war with us and do not hold us in much esteem. … They are men expert at arms.

Source: Qtd. in Anthony Reed, "Southeast Asian Categorizations of Europeans," in Stuart B. Schwartz, ed., *Implicit Understandings: Observing, Reporting, and Reflecting on the Encounters between Europeans and Other Peoples in the Early Modern Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994), 278.

Lesson 3

Student Handout 3.2—How Did Spain Shift from Finding a Continent to Controlling It and to Building a Land Empire in the Americas?

Document J

Get them to become civilized

The following is an excerpt from the Spanish King and Queen's 1501 "Instructions for the government of the Indians." This is one of a series of royal decrees to governors and other royal officials in the first decade or so of Spain's claim to dominion over new-found territories in the Americas. From the beginning, it was common for Spaniards to co-habit with Indian women, though without marrying them. This resulted in the women becoming "culture-brokers," mediating the exchange of ideas and information in both directions. By the mid-sixteenth century, there were twenty-two bishoprics, a printing press, and two universities in Spanish America.

For the salvation of the souls of the Indians … it is necessary [for them] to be divided into towns in which they may live together and not live separated one from another in the forests … and in each of the towns. … There is to be a church and a chaplain entrusted with indoctrinating and teaching them Our Holy Catholic Faith.

Therefore … We order that Our Governor in the Indies arrange immediately … for towns to be established where the Indians can live together in the same manner as the people who live in these Kingdoms of Ours … [also not to allow] the Christians living in the Indies to take the wives or sons or daughters of the Indians … [or] to make [Indians] work for them as they have done until now, unless the Indians agree to do this of their own free will, being paid a just wage. … [And] not to allow the Indians to sell or exchange their possessions … with the Christians for beads or other such things of little value, as has happened before … and in everything the Indians are to be treated well and looked after**,** so that they can … build their houses, cultivate their fields and raise cattle for their subsistence. . .

Also … order the Indians to cease doing the things they have customarily done, such as bathing themselves, painting their bodies, and purging themselves.

Also, We order Our Governor … to induce some Christians to marry Indian women, and Christian women with Indian men, so that … the Indians will be instructed in the things of Our Holy Catholic Faith … so that they become civilized men and women.

Source: Qtd. in John H. Parry and Robert G. Keith, *New Iberian World: A Documentary History of the Discovery and Settlement of Latin America to the Early 17th Century*, Vol. 2: *The Caribbean* (New York: Times Books, 1984), 260-2.

Document K

As free men and not as slaves

The following is from a 1503 Decree by Queen Isabella on Indian Labor. From the early years of the Spanish West Indian settlement, it was accepted practice soon enshrined in law to allocate a group of Indians as tributary laborers to an individual Spaniard. Slaves were not subject to this system, since they were personal property. As the local population shrank, Indians were brought in from other islands expressly to do forced labor for the Spanish. These were classed as unfree dependents, though not legally slaves.

Laws that made enslaving Indians illegal were passed several times in the next half-century. They were mostly ignored. Large numbers of Indians were taken in various parts of the Americas, enslaved, and carried elsewhere, including to Spain.

In the 1520s, gold mines became exhausted, and the Indian population continued to shrink due to infectious diseases, ill-treatment, and repeated enforced moves to locations with different climates and diets. The large-scale importation of African slaves began, and planting sugar replaced digging for gold as the chief economic activity. Mining revived when in the 1540s the silver mountain of Potosí and other enormous sources of silver were discovered.

I have now been informed that because of the excessive liberty allowed [the Indians of Hispaniola, today's Dominican Republic and Haiti,] they run away from the Christians and … refuse to work, preferring to live as vagrants, and even less can they be found to be taught and persuaded to convert to Our Holy Catholic Faith; and because of this, the Christians who live … [there] can find no one to work [for them].

[Therefore] I order you, Our Governor … to compel the Indians to have dealings with the Christian settlers … to work on their buildings, to mine and collect gold and other metals, and to work on their farms … ordering each cacique [chief] … to come, with the number of Indians you tell him, to the person or persons you name, so that they can do the work he assigns them, being paid the wages you set, which they are to do and carry out as the free men they are and not as slaves; and you are to make sure that the said Indians are well-treated, and that those among them that are Christian are better treated than the others.

Source: Qtd. in John. H. Parry and Robert G. Keith, *New Iberian World: A Documentary History of the Discovery and Settlement of Latin America to the Early 17th Century*, Vol. 2: *The Caribbean* (New York: Times Books, 1984), 263.

Document L

A new sea is added to the new land

Balboa sights the Pacific Ocean

Of noble descent, Spanish explorer, planter, and governor Vasco Núñez de Balboa first traveled to the New World in 1500. He settled in Hispaniola as a planter and pig-farmer. Unsuccessful, he escaped his creditors by stowing away on a ship sent with supplies to a new settlement in South America. He helped found another new town, and he set out to conquer surrounding territory. He also made friends with several local chiefs. One of them told him about a sea on the other side of the mountains. He set out to find it with 190 Spaniards (among them Pizarro, who was later to conquer Peru) and a thousand of the local people. When Balboa ceremonially took possession of the Pacific, no Indians were present.

The excerpt below is from a History of the Indies by a Spaniard who followed in Balboa's footsteps, knew him personally, and took charge of his papers after his death.

On Tuesday the twenty-fifth of September of the year 1513, at ten o'clock in the morning, Captain Vasco Núñez [de Balboa], having gone ahead of his company, climbed a hill with a bare summit, and from the top of this hill saw the South Sea [the Pacific Ocean]. … Then he fell upon his knees on the ground and gave great thanks to God. … And he told all the people with him to kneel also, to give the same thanks to God, and to beg Him fervently to allow them to see and discover the secrets and great riches of that sea and coast, for the greater glory and increase of the Christian faith, for the conversion of the Indians … and the fame and prosperity of the royal throne of Castile [Spain].

[Four days later] he marched [with twenty-six of his men] down to the shore of the South Sea … and emerged on to the beach. … [Then he] held up a banner with a picture of the Blessed Virgin … and below, the royal arms of Castile and Leon. … With his drawn sword in his hand and his shield on his arm, he waded into the salt sea up to his knees, and paced back and forth, reciting "Long live the most high and most mighty monarchs, in whose name, and for the royal crown of Castile, I now take possession, in fact and in law, of these southern seas, lands, coasts, harbors, and islands, with all territories, kingdoms, and provinces which belong to them or may be acquired, in whatever manner, for whatever reason … without let or hindrance. And if any prince, Christian or infidel … should claim any right to these lands or seas, I am ready and armed to defy him and defend them in the name of the Kings of Castile, present and future, who hold authority and dominion over these Indies, both islands and mainland, from Arctic to Antarctic, on both sides of the Equinoctial Line … now and for all time, so long as the world shall endure, until the last day of judgment." And so he performed the ceremony of taking possession … in due form of law. … [Then all those present] scooped up the water in their hands and tasted it, to see if it was salt like the water of the North Sea; and finding it was salt, and remembering where they were, they all gave thanks to God.

Source: Qtd. in J. H. Parry, ed., *The European Reconnaissance: Selected Documents* (New York: Walker and Co., 1968), 233-5.

Document M

They fought most valiantly

A Spanish view of Indians in Yucatán

Early Spanish seaborne exploration of the mainland, seeking to establish settlements and exploit gold, met with high casualties from hazards of seafaring, problems with supplies, and armed resistance. But in their raiding expeditions from Cuba to round up workers for their mines, Spaniards heard of large towns and riches further inland. The governor of Cuba sent official expeditions to investigate. These brought back information about the country and its inhabitants, some gold, and rumors of more.

Cortés commanded the biggest of the fleets sent from Cuba, with instructions to explore and trade. Ordered to return due to officials' jealousies, he defied the governor and sailed for the Yucatán in 1519 with eleven ships, over 500 men, sixteen horses, thirteen muskets, and a few small cannon. His force there found what seemed to them, according to the account of Cortés' secretary, "a rich land, filled with people who were better dressed, more civilized, reasonable, and intelligent, with better homes and farms" than any others they had so far seen in the "Indies." Many welcomed Cortés as a potential ally in their own wars against rivals, and especially against the Aztecs (more properly called Mexica); others did not receive the newcomers so happily.

Then they began to let fly arrows at us, and made signals with their drums, and like valiant men surrounded us with their canoes, and they all attacked us with such a shower of arrows that they kept us in the water in some parts up to our waists. … [We] fell upon the Indians and forced them back, but … they turned on us and met us face to face and fought most valiantly, making the greatest efforts.

With our muskets and crossbows and good sword-play we put up a stout fight, and once they came to feel the edge of our swords they gradually fell back, but only to shoot at us [with arrows] from greater safety. Our artilleryman … killed many of them with his cannon. For since they came in great bands and did not open out, he could fire at them as he pleased. … Most of [them were] killed by sword-thrusts, the rest by cannon, muskets, or crossbows.

We compelled them to retreat, but like brave warriors they kept on shooting arrows … and never turned their backs on us [until we had driven them into the town.]. … There and then Cortés took possession of that land for His Majesty.

First and last paragraphs from Bernal Díaz del Castillo, *The True History of the Conquest of New Spain*, A. P. Maudslay, trans., vol. 1 (London: Hakluyt Society, 1908), 111-2; second and third paragraphs, describing a different battle, from Díaz, qtd. in M. J. Seymour, *The Transformation of the North Atlantic World, 1492-1763* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004), 73-4.

Document N
Marveling at the "god" and his followers
An Aztec view of the Spanish

When Cortés landed near Vera Cruz in 1519, the Aztec ruler Montezuma's interpretation of myth and portents led him to think Cortés was the god Quetzalcóatl. This was a light-skinned, bearded deity who condemned human sacrifice, had vanished over the sea eastward near Vera Cruz, and vowed to return—according to astrologers in the year 1 Reed, which came around only once every 52 years and coincided with 1519. So Montezuma, a former priest, sent messengers to Cortés' flagship with divine regalia and rich gifts, a list of which would take up over two pages.

According to the *History of New Spain* written forty years later by the Franciscan missionary and historian Sahagún, based on accounts by native informants, Cortés, on receiving the gifts, asked the messengers if that was all they had brought. He had them bound with chains and fired a cannon, at which they fainted. Having revived them with food and wine, he asked them if they had more gold, saying, "My men suffer from a disease of the heart which can only be assuaged by gold." He then gave them iron swords and lances and challenged them to combat with the Spaniards: "To test you—how strong you are, how powerful you are." The messengers refused, saying this was not within their mandate from Montezuma. On Cortés' continued insistence on combat, they fled.

According to Bernal Díaz's alternative account of this meeting, Cortés received the gifts "with gracious smiles" and gave in return glass beads, a crimson cap with a gold badge of Saint George, and an armchair. When one of the messengers asked to see an old parade helmet that resembled their war-god's, he was told he could take it but to bring it back filled with gold.

The following description by the messengers of their meeting with Cortés is an excerpt from Sahagún's *History*.

[When the messengers reported back to Montezuma, marveling,] he was exceeding fearful and terror-struck … when he heard how [the shot] discharged, at command, from the gun; how it resounded like thunder when it went off. … And when it discharged … fire went scattered forth; sparks showered forth. And its smoke smelled very foul; it had a fetid odor which, verily, wounded the head. And when [the shot] struck a mountain, it was as if it fell apart and crumbled. And when it struck a tree, it splintered, seeming to vanish as if someone blew it away.

All iron was their war array. They clothed themselves in iron. The covered their heads with iron. Iron were their swords. Iron were their crossbows. Iron were their shields. Iron were their lances.

And their deer, which bore them upon their backs, were as high as roof-tops. Their faces [were] very white; they had yellow hair, although the hair of some was black. … [The Negroes' hair] was kinky and curly.

And their dogs were very large. They had ears doubled over; great, hanging jowls; blazing eyes—flaming yellow … and gaunt stomachs. [They were] very tall and fierce. They were nervous; they went about panting, with tongues hanging.

[After he had listened to the messengers, Montezuma commanded two captives to be slain.] They slashed open their breasts; they sprinkled the messengers with their blood. For this reason did they do so: that they had traveled into very perilous places; that they had gone to see—had looked into the faces and at the heads of, and had verily spoken to—the gods.

Source: Bernardino de Sahagún, *Florentine Codex: General History of the Things of New Spain*, A. J. O. Anderson and C.E. Dibble, trans. and eds., Book 12: *The Conquest of Mexico* (Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research and the University of Utah, 1955), 18-20.

Document O
Marveling at the "barbarians"
A Spanish view of the Aztecs

Cortés held talks that promised alliance with a local kingdom whose leaders saw a chance to be rid of Aztec rule. He put down a revolt by some of his own followers who wanted to go home. To make this impossible, he sank all his ships, claiming they were unseaworthy. Now it was a matter of "do or die." He set out to conquer an Aztec empire vulnerable to defections, since it depended on the food levies, tributes, and prisoners for sacrifice contributed by those the Aztecs had conquered. Aztecs fought their wars by accepted codes, preferably by one-on-one duels and with the aim of capturing prisoners rather than killing enemy warriors. Captives were highly honored before having their still-beating hearts torn out, and a fragment of their flesh ritually eaten. Cortés' estimate that the "most horrid and abominable custom" of sacrifice claimed "three or four thousand souls" a year is not out of line with modern scholars' conclusions.

On his march inland, he deliberately used terror to intimidate potential attackers. Such was the unprovoked "demonstration" massacre of reportedly thousands of Cholulans assembled by a trick. He burned and impaled on stakes over 100 of their chiefs. He also used diplomacy to attract allies, convincing them that he was anti-Aztec while keeping up cordial relations with Montezuma. In this, he had the very substantial and, according to some, indispensable help of Malintzin (La Malinche), his high-born Indian mistress and interpreter. She spoke Mayan and Náhuatl, the Aztec language, and learned Spanish after being baptized.

Received with friendship in the Aztec capital, his initial attack there led to his disastrous defeat and retreat. However, he returned, conquered the city's defenders weakened by epidemic disease, and razed the city, leaving only ruins. The rest of the empire eventually fell to him.

The selection below is part of Cortés' 1520 letter to the king of Spain.

These things [gifts to Cortés from Montezuma], apart from their intrinsic value, are so marvelous in point of novelty and strangeness as to be beyond price. … Of all the things created on land, as well as in the sea, of which Montezuma had ever heard, he had very exact likenesses made of gold, silver, jewels, and featherwork, so perfectly that they seemed almost real. He gave me a large number of these for Your Highness.

Besides these things, Montezuma presented me with a large quantity of articles of cloth, which, though fashioned of cotton and not of silk, could not be equaled by anything else in the world for texture, richness of colors, and workmanship.

The great city of Tenochtitlán is as large as Seville or Córdoba. … One of [its] squares is twice as large as that of Salamanca … where there are daily more than sixty thousand souls buying and selling. … There is … a very large building, like a Court of Justice, where there are always ten or

twelve persons sitting as judges, and delivering their decisions upon all cases which arise in the markets.

This great city contains many mosques, or houses for idols. … The chief of them all is so large that within its enclosure, which is surrounded by a high wall, a town of five hundred houses could easily be built. … There are as many as forty towers very tall and well-built, the largest with fifty steps leading to the top; the tallest one is higher than the tower of the cathedral of Seville.

The markets and public places of this city are daily filled with laborers and masters of all trades, waiting to be hired.

Though I would fain continue, I shall only say that the mode of life of its people was almost the same as in Spain, with just as much harmony and order; and considering that these people were barbarians, so cut off from the knowledge of God, and of other civilized peoples, it is wonderful what they have attained in every respect.

Source: Cortés' second letter to the Emperor Charles V in 1520, qtd. in Alonso de Zorita, *Life and Labor in Ancient Mexico: The Brief and Summary Relation of the Lords of New Spain*, Benjamin Keen, trans. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1963), 155-61.

Document P

Spanish warrant for legal aggression, and for blaming its victims

The document below was known as the Requirement. It was a response to Spanish clerics' claim that it was legitimate to attack or enslave only those who knew of but rejected Christ. This covered Muslims, but not Indians. Refusal to answer affirmatively to the Requirement was taken to be rejection of Christianity. This opened the door to considering it morally and legally justified to make war on and exploit the property and labor of those doing so. Having the Requirement translated into the language of those to whom it was addressed was encouraged but not necessary. Having it read in Spanish, on shipboard when land was first sighted, on an empty beach, or in a village all of whose inhabitants had fled did not invalidate it!

Pizarro had sailed with Balboa. He became mayor of the Spanish-built town of Panama, and having heard rumors of much gold in a land farther south, he set out on a conquering expedition. Several earlier sailing explorations along the South American coast were failures. In 1528, however, Pizarro found the northernmost port of the Inca empire. There an Inca noble on official business came on board to inspect the foreigners. In preparation for the conquest he planned, it was to him that Pizarro read the Requirement. Whether it had been translated is unclear. In any case, the noble gave no reply, though there was an exchange of gifts. Having sailed to Spain and returned with a royal license to conquer Peru, Pizarro did so with about 200 men, after the unprovoked massacre of thousands of the Inca elite. He also killed the ruler in spite of payment of the ransom of gold and silver demanded for his life. More than a decade followed of widespread resistance by Incas and civil war between Spanish factions.

I, Francisco Pizarro, servant of the high and mighty kings of Castile and León, conquerors of barbarian peoples, and being their messenger and Captain, hereby notify and inform you … that God Our Lord, One and Eternal, created Heaven and earth and a man and a woman from whom you and I and all the people of the world are descended. … Because of the great multitude begotten from these over the past five thousand and some years since the world was made, … God placed one called Saint Peter in charge over all these peoples.

And so I request and require you … to recognize the Church as your Mistress and as Governess of the World and the Universe, and the High Priest, called the Pope, in Her name, and His Majesty [king of Spain] in Her place, as Ruler and Lord King.

And if you do not do this … with the help of God I shall come mightily against you, and I shall make war on you everywhere and in every way that I can, and I shall subject you to the yoke and obedience of the Church and His Majesty, and I shall seize your women and children, and I shall make them slaves … and I shall do all the evil and damage to you that I am able. And I insist that the deaths and destruction that result from this will be your fault.

Source: Qtd. in Roland Wright, *Stolen Continents: The Americas through Indian Eyes since 1492* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1992), 65-6.

Document Q

"Is it just for Spaniards to make war on Indians, impose regime changes on them, and take away their possessions? No."

The Spanish Dominican legal scholar Vitoria was interested in the rights and wrongs of war and conquest. In a series of university lectures in 1539, he outlined how these ideas applied to the justice or injustice of Spanish behavior in the Americas. He had much academic prestige, and although his arguments embarrassed the government and got him a scolding from the emperor, they did influence public opinion to some extent and contributed to the foundations of international law.

Even if the Emperor were the lord of the whole world [which he is not], that would not entitle him to seize the provinces of the Indian aborigines and to [name new lords for them] and put down the former lords or to levy taxes.

Although the Christian faith may have been announced to the Indians with adequate demonstration and they have refused to receive it, yet this is not a reason which justifies making war on them and depriving them of their property.

On the arrival of the Spaniards we find them declaring to the aborigines how the King of Spain has sent them for their good, and admonishing them to … accept him as lord and king; and [they] replied they were content to do so. [This would give Spain possession and make them subjects were it a true and voluntary choice. But fear and ignorance invalidate a choice, and it was armed Spaniards before a timid crowd that posed an unexplained choice which the Indians may not have understood. Therefore, it would not serve as justification for the Spaniards.]

The Indians may not be deprived of their goods or power on account of their social backwardness, nor on account of their cultural inferiority or political disorganization.

A non-Christian cacique or king does not lose his dominion or his jurisdiction due to his idolatrous practices, and even Christian subjects are obligated to obey him.

Spaniards may justly defend themselves against belligerent Indians … but may not use victory as an excuse for seizing Indians' towns or for enslaving their inhabitants.

Source: First three paragraphs from Vitoria's writings qtd. in John. H. Parry and Robert G. Keith, *New Iberian World: A Documentary History of the Discovery and Settlement of Latin America to the Early 17th Century*, vol. 1: *The Conquerors and the Conquered* (New York: Times Books, 1984), 300, 313. The rest is a summary of what Vitoria said, from Robert Royal, *1492 And All That* (Washington, D.C.: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1992), *passim*.

Document R

"Is it just to make war on the Indians and subject them to Spanish rule, in order to convert and civilize them? Yes."

In 1547, the humanist and Aristotelian scholar Sepúlveda, who had never been to the Americas, wrote a defense of the Spanish conquests there. He argued that the natives should provide free labor to the Spanish colonists in return for the latter training them in "virtuous and humane customs."

These Indians are so cowardly and timid that … many times thousands upon thousands of them scattered, fleeing like women before a very few Spaniards. … These barbarous, uncultivated, and inhumane little men … worship the Devil as God, to whom they thought of offering no better tribute than human hearts. … They sacrificed human victims by removing the hearts from the chests. … They also ate the flesh of the sacrificed men.

War against these barbarians can be justified not only on the basis of their paganism but even more so because of their abominable licentiousness, their prodigious sacrifice of human victims, the extreme harm they inflicted on innocent persons, their horrible banquets of human flesh, and the impious cult of their idols. … What is more appropriate and beneficial for these barbarians than to become subject to the rule of those whose wisdom, virtue, and religion have converted them from barbarians into civilized men (insofar as they are capable of becoming so) … from being impious servants of the Devil to becoming believers in the true God?

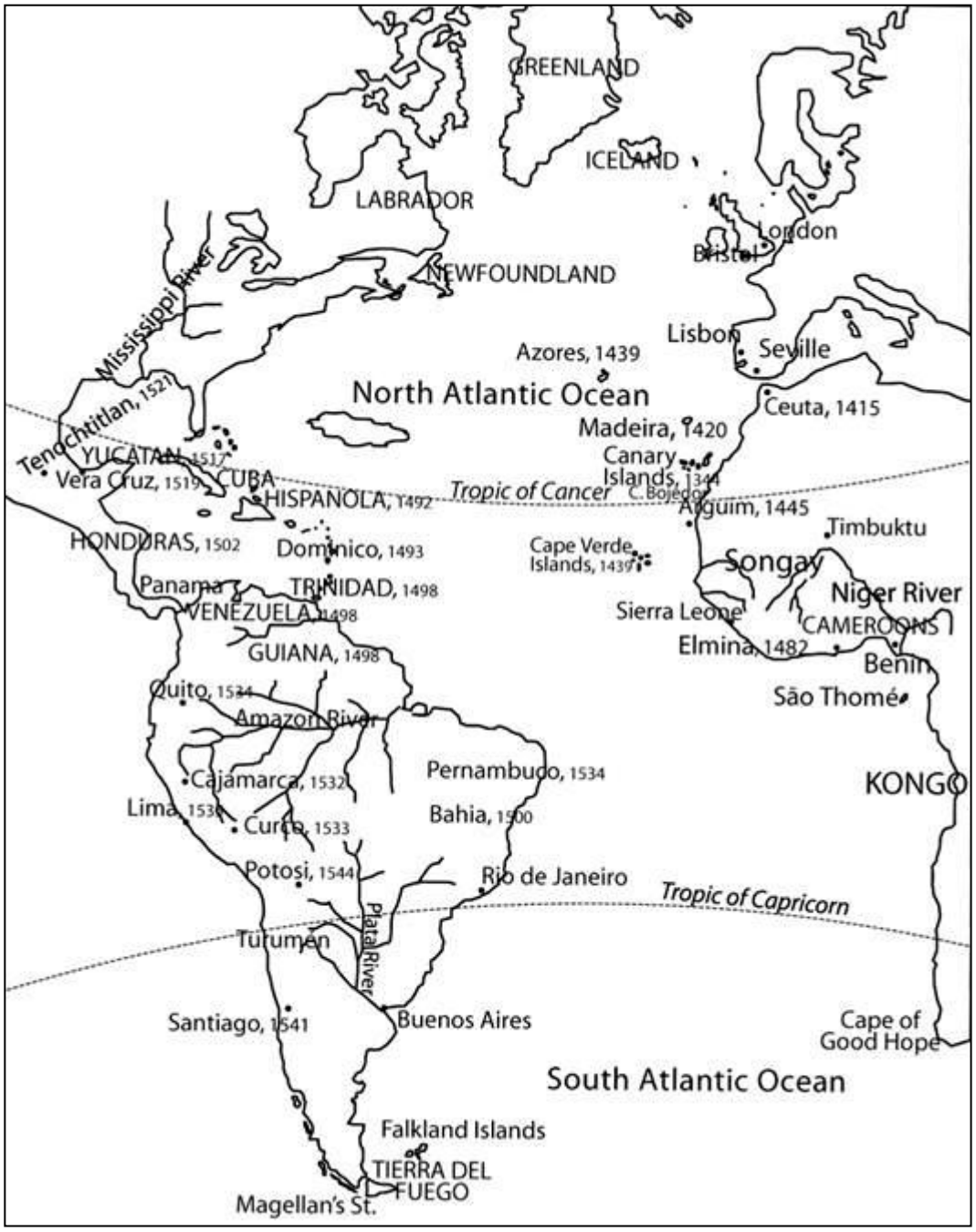
And if they refuse our rule, they may be compelled by force of arms to accept it. Such a war will be just according to natural law.

Source: Qtd. in Marvin Lunenfeld, ed., *1492: Discovery, Invasion, Encounter: Sources and Interpretations* (Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath, 1991), 219-21.

Appendix 1.1

Map of Atlantic Ocean

This map shows places mentioned in this Teaching Unit. Dates indicate when Portugal or Spain claimed, conquered, or settled the named location.

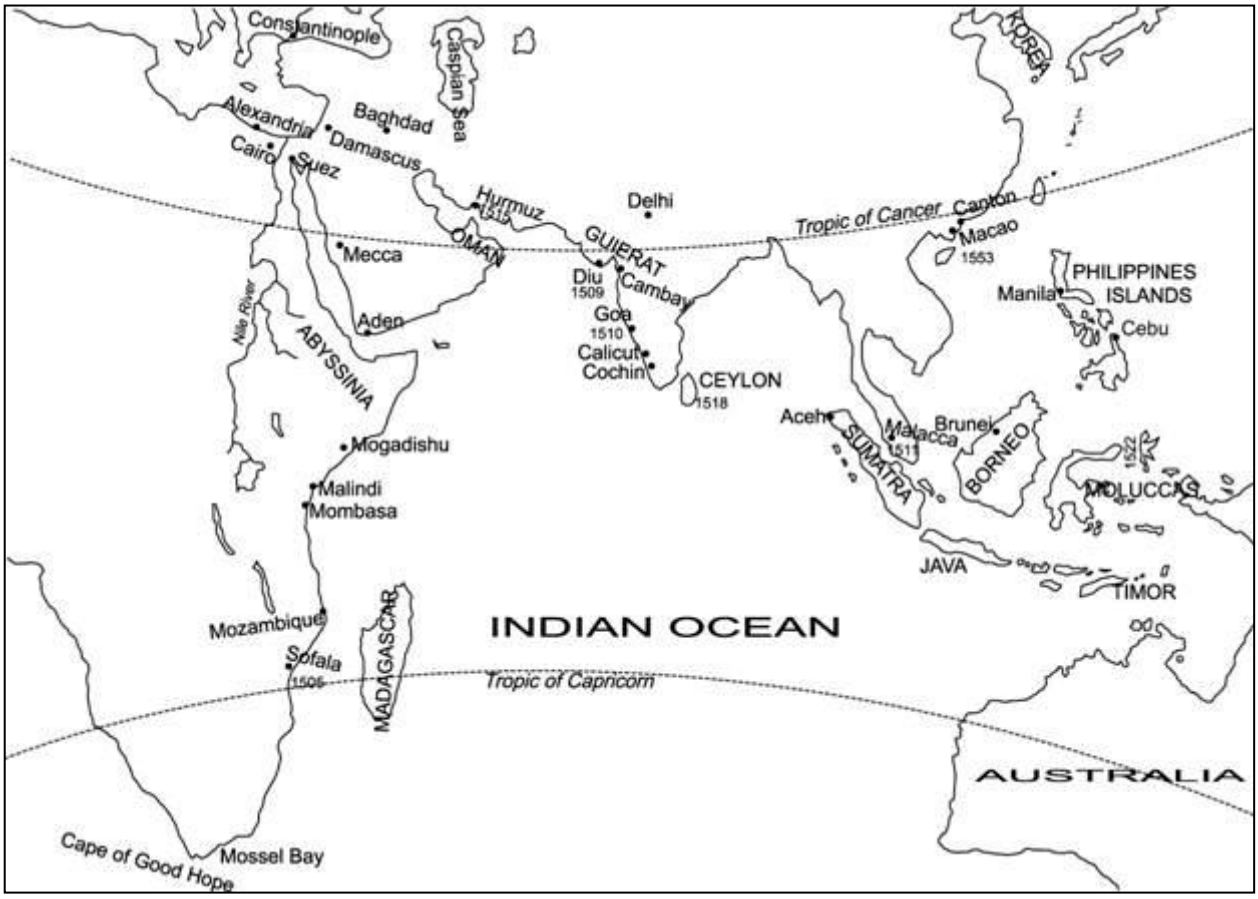


Adapted from J. H. Parry, *The Age of Reconnaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), after 327.

Appendix 1.2

Map of Indian Ocean

This map shows places mentioned in this Teaching Unit. Dates indicate when Portugal or Spain claimed, conquered, or settled the named location.



Adapted from J. H. Parry, *The Age of Reconnaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), after 327.

This unit and the Three Essential Questions

	What features of the natural environment, such as characteristics of seas, winds, climate, mineral deposits, and vegetation, promoted Iberian mariners' exploring and trading activities in various parts of the world in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries?
	Compare and contrast the ways that Spaniards and the peoples they met in the Caribbean, Mexico, and Peru related to each other, with the ways that Portuguese and the peoples they met in Africa and India related to each other. What reasons might there have been for similarities? What reasons for differences?
	How did religious ideas influence the nature and outcomes of encounters between Europeans and peoples native to the territories in Africa, Asia, and the Americas whom they contacted?

This unit and the Seven Key Themes

This unit emphasizes:

Key Theme 2: Economic Networks and Exchange

Key Theme 3: Uses and Abuses of Power

Key Theme 5: Expressing Identity

This Unit and the Standards in Historical Thinking

Historical Thinking Standard 1: Chronological Thinking

> The student is able to (B) Identify the temporal structure of a historical narrative or story: its beginning, middle, and end (the latter defined as the outcome of a particular beginning).

Historical Thinking Standard 2: Historical Comprehension

> The student is able to (F) appreciate historical perspectives—(a) describing the past on its own terms, through the eyes and experiences of those who were there, as revealed in their literature, diaries, letters, debates, art, artifacts, and the like; (b) considering the historical context in which the events unfolded—the values, outlook, options, and contingencies of that time and place; and (c) avoiding "present-mindedness," judging the past solely in terms of present-day norms and values.

Historical Thinking Standard 3: Historical Analysis and Interpretation

The student is able to (D) draw comparisons across eras and regions in order to define enduring issues or long-term developments that transcend regional and temporal boundaries.

Historical Thinking Standard 4: Historical Research Capabilities

The student is able to (C) interrogate historical data by uncovering the social, political, and economic context in which it was created; testing the data source for its credibility, authority, authenticity, internal consistency, and completeness; and detecting and evaluating bias, distortion, and propaganda by omission, suppression, or invention of facts.

Historical Thinking Standard 5: Historical Issues-Analysis and Decision-Making

The student is able to (A) identify issues and problems in the past and analyze the interests, values, perspectives, and points of view of those involved in the situation.

Resources for Teachers and Students

Anderson, A.J.O. and C.E. Dibble, trans. and ed. *Florentine Codex: General History of the Things of New Spain*, by Bernardino de Sahagún, Book 12: *The Conquest of Mexico*.

Santa Fe, N.M.: The School of American Research and the University of Utah, 1955.

Bentley, Jerry H. *Old World Encounters: Cross-Cultural Contacts and Exchanges in Pre-Modern Times*. New York: Oxford UP, 1993. Last chapter gives well-organized, clear account, with intriguing detail, some from original sources, of the expansive ventures mounted by Muslims, Chinese, and Europeans in the early fifteenth century. Good short teacher background.

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Conceptual links to other teaching units

This Teaching Unit pointed out that American Indians died in huge numbers from exposure to infectious diseases, which reached them when Europeans and Africans voyaged across the Atlantic in the late fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries. The next Landscape Teaching Unit (6.2) explores in detail this and other aspects of the "Columbian Exchange," that is, the transfer of humans, animals, plants, and microbes between Afroeurasia and the Americas during the 150 years following the voyages of Columbus. The spread of disease pathogens across the Atlantic from east to west was one of the numerous biological and cultural consequences of what this curriculum calls the Great World Convergence—the linking up of the world's inhabited land masses and thousands of islands with one another.