

Chapter 1: Colliding Worlds, 1450-1600

I. The Native American Experience

A. The First Americans

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

B. The Mayas and the Aztecs

1. The flowering of civilization in Mesoamerica began among the Olmec people, who lived along the Gulf Coast of Mexico around 700 B.C. Subsequently the Mayan peoples of the Yucatán Peninsula and Guatemala built large urban religious centers.
2. An elite class claiming descent from the gods ruled Mayan society and lived off the goods and taxes extracted from peasant families.
3. Mayan astronomers created a calendar that recorded historical events and predicted eclipses of the sun and the moon. The Mayas also developed hieroglyphic writing.
4. Mayan skills in astronomy and writing increased the authority and power of the class of warriors and priests that ruled Mayan society, and provided the people with a sense of history and identity.
5. Beginning around A.D. 800, Mayan civilization declined, perhaps caused by a two-century-long dry period that produced an economic crisis, social unrest, and population dispersal.
6. By A.D. 900 many Mayan religious centers were abandoned. The few remaining city-states would resist the Spanish invasion during the 1520s.
7. A second major Mesoamerican civilization developed around the city of Teotihuacán (pop. 100,000) in central Mexico. By A.D. 800 Teotihuacán had also declined, probably because of a long-term drought and recurrent invasions by seminomadic warrior peoples.
8. In A.D. 1325 the Aztecs built the lake city of Tenochtitlán (Mexico City), a base from where they learned the settled ways of resident peoples, and established a complex hierarchical social order that subjugated most of central Mexico through invasion, economic tribute, and human sacrifice.
9. Aztec priests and warrior-nobles ruled over twenty clans of free Aztec commoners who farmed communally owned land. Aztec slaves and serfs also labored on elite private estates.
10. By A.D. 1500 Tenochtitlán had grown into a metropolis of over 200,000 inhabitants, and the Aztecs' wealth, strong institutions, and military power posed a formidable challenge to any adversary.

C. The Indians of the North

1. The Indians north of the Rio Grande had less complex and coercive societies, and lacked occupational diversity, social hierarchy, and strong state institutions.
2. Most of these societies were self-governing tribes composed of clans, groups of related families that traced their lineage to a real or legendary common ancestor.
3. By A.D. 100 the Hopewells in present-day Ohio had spread their influence from Louisiana to Wisconsin by organizing themselves in large villages, establishing extensive trade networks, and increasing their food supply through domesticating plants.
4. Hopewell trade networks were impressive. They imported obsidian from the Rocky Mountains, copper from the Great Lakes, and pottery and marine shells from the Gulf of Mexico.
5. The Hopewells built large burial mounds and surrounded them with extensive circular, rectangular, or

octagonal earthworks that in some cases still survive. Skilled Hopewell artisans fashioned striking ornaments to bury with the dead.

6. A second series of complex cultures developed in the Southwest. The Hohokam and Mogollon cultures developed by A.D. 600, and the Anasazi by 900. Master architects, the Anasazi built residential-ceremonial villages in steep cliffs, a pueblo in Chaco Canyon that housed one thousand people, and 400 miles of straight roads.
7. The Hohokam people along the border of present-day Arizona and New Mexico used irrigation to grow crops, fashioned fine pottery, and worshiped their gods on Mesoamerican-like platform mounds; by the year 1000 they were living in elaborate multiroom stone structures called **pueblos**.
8. Drought brought on soil exhaustion and the collapse of all of these cultures after 1150. Cities like Chaco Canyon were abandoned, and the population dispersed to smaller settlements. The descendants of these peoples – including the Acomas, Zunis, and Hopis – later built strong but smaller village societies better suited to the dry and unpredictable climate of the American Southwest.
9. The advanced farming technology of Mesoamerica spread into the Mississippi River Valley around A.D. 800; the Mississippian civilization was the last large-scale culture to emerge north of the Rio Grande.
10. By 1150 the largest city, Cahokia, near present-day St. Louis, boasted a population of 15,000 to 20,000 and more than one hundred temple mounds, one of them as large as the great Egyptian pyramids. As in Mesoamerica, the tribute paid by peasant farmers supported a privileged class of nobles and priests who waged war against neighboring chiefdoms, patronized artisans, and claimed descent from the sun god.
11. By 1350 overpopulation, urban disease, and warfare led to the decline of the Mississippian civilization. The large population had overburdened the environment, depleting nearby forests and herds of deer. Still, Mississippian institutions and practices endured for centuries.
12. In the Muskogean-speaking societies – and among the Algonquian-speaking peoples who lived farther north and to the east, in present-day Virginia – farming became the work of women. While the men hunted and fished, the women used flint hoes to raise corn, squash, and beans.
13. Because of the importance of farming, a **matrilineal** inheritance system developed among many eastern Indian peoples. Women cultivated the fields around semipermanent settlements and passed the use rights to the fields to their daughters.

II. Tradition-Bound Europe

A. European Peasant Society

1. In 1450, most Europeans were **peasants** living in small rural communities of compact agricultural villages surrounded by open fields.
2. Cooperative farming was a necessity because of the lack of available land; most farm families exchanged their surplus farm products with their neighbors or bartered it for local services due to poor roads and transportation systems.
3. Most peasants yearned to be **yeomen**, owners of small farms that provided a marginally comfortable living, but few achieved that goal due to exploitation by landlords.
4. As with the Native American cultures, many aspects of European life followed a seasonal pattern; even European birth and death patterns appear to have been seasonal, indicating the profoundly rural nature of peasant existence.
5. Mortality rates among the peasants were high, primarily from disease. Hunger, disease, and violence were part of the fabric of daily life. Although most peasants accepted their difficult circumstances, others hoped for a better life. The deprived rural classes of Britain, Spain, and Germany would supply the majority of white migrants to the Western Hemisphere during the colonial period.

B. Hierarchy and Authority

1. In the traditional European social order, authority came from above; kings and princes owned vast tracts of land, conscripted men for military service, and lived in splendor off the labor of the peasantry.
2. Collectively, noblemen who possessed large landed estates had the power to challenge royal authority through control of the local military and legislative institutions.
3. The man ruled his women and children; his power was codified in laws, sanctioned by social custom, and justified by the teachings of the Christian Church.
4. On marriage, an English woman assumed her husband's surname and was required to submit to his orders. She also surrendered to her husband her legal right to all her property. When he died, she received a **dower**,

one-third of the family's property for her use during her lifetime.

5. The inheritance practice of **primogeniture**, which bestowed all land on the eldest son, forced many younger children to join the ranks of the roaming poor; few men – and even fewer women – had much personal freedom or individual identity. Fathers often demanded that children work for them until their mid-twenties.
6. Hierarchy and authority through family, church, and village prevailed because they offered a measure of social order and security; these values shaped the violent and unpredictable American social order well into the eighteenth century.

C. The Power of Religion

1. The Roman Catholic Church served as one of the great unifying forces in Western European society; the Church provided a pervasive authority and discipline through Christian dogma, a church staffed by priests in every village, and the unifying language of Latin.
2. Like the Indians of North America, European peasants originally were **pagans** and animists: They believed that unpredictable spiritual forces governed the natural world and that those spirits had to be paid ritual honor. The Church attacked paganism by devising a religious calendar that transformed pagan agricultural festivals into Christian holy days. Christian doctrine penetrated the lives of peasants; to avert famine and plague, Christians offered prayers to Christ and the saints.
3. Crushing other religions and suppressing heresies among Christians was an obligation of rulers and a task of the new orders of Christian knights.
4. Between 1096 and 1291 successive armies of Christians embarked on Crusades; Muslims were a prime target of the crusaders. Christians also persecuted **pagans**, those who believed in polytheism, for **heresy**.
5. The Crusades strengthened the Christian identity of the European population and helped broaden the intellectual and economic horizons of the European privileged class.
6. Military successes against Islamic peoples and the absorption of Arab knowledge also enabled European elites to set out to capture the Arab-dominated trade routes that stretched from Constantinople to Beijing and from the Mediterranean to the East Indian seas.

III. Europeans Create a Global World, 1450–1600

A. The Renaissance Changes Europe, 1300–1500

1. Stimulated by the wealth and learning of the Arab and Chinese world and the re-introduction of Greek and Roman texts following the Black Death that destroyed one-third of the population, Europe experienced a "rebirth" of learning, economic development, and cultural life. The Renaissance had the most impact on the upper classes.
2. A new ruling class of moneyed elite – merchants, bankers, and textile manufacturers – created the concept of **civic humanism**. This ideology celebrated public virtue and service to the state and would profoundly influence European and American conceptions of government and national expansion. In Italy this movement led to the establishment of city-states as **republics** without princes or kings.
3. Works by artists such as Michelangelo, Palladio, and da Vinci were part of a flowering of artistic genius that set standards that still influence the modern era.
4. Following Niccolò Machiavelli's advice in *The Prince* (1513), an alliance of monarchs, merchants, and royal bureaucrats challenged the power of the agrarian nobility by creating royal law courts and bureaucracies.
5. Monarchs allowed merchants to trade throughout their realms, granted privileges to the artisan organizations called **guilds**, and safeguarded commercial transactions, thereby encouraging domestic manufacturing and foreign trade. In return, kings and princes extracted taxes from towns and loans from merchants to support their armies and officials.
6. This mutually enriching alliance of monarchs, merchants, and royal bureaucrats (which eventually became known as mercantilism) propelled Europe into its first age of overseas expansion under Spain and Portugal.
7. Because Arabs and Italians dominated trade in the Mediterranean, Prince Henry of Portugal sought an alternate oceanic route to Asia; under Henry's direction, Portugal led European expansion overseas. Arab learning and innovations in sail and ship design facilitated Henry's success.
8. Eventually Henry's mariners sailed far into the Atlantic, where they discovered and colonized the Azores and Madeira Islands; from there they explored the sub-Saharan African coast.

B. West African Society and Slavery

1. Vast and diverse, West Africa stretches along the coast from present-day Senegal to the Democratic Republic

of Congo.

2. In the 1400s tropical rain forest covered much of the coast, but a series of great rivers – the Senegal, Gambia, Volta, Niger, and Congo – provided access to the interior, where most people lived. There were few coastal cities because there was little seaborne trade.
3. Most West Africans farmed small plots and lived with extended families in small villages that specialized in certain crops, ranging from millet and cotton to livestock, yams, and oil-rich palm nuts. They traded both raw and manufactured goods with one another, including rare items such as salt, iron, gold, textiles, and ivory.
4. The majority of the population lived in hierarchical societies ruled by princes, similar to the Aztec and Maya peoples in Mesoamerica. Some Africans inhabited smaller-scale stateless societies based on household and lineage.
5. Among West Atlantic-speakers, the Fulani and Wolof peoples were most numerous. Mande-speakers in the upper Niger region included the Malinke and Bambara peoples; the Yorubas and the Ibos of southern Nigeria spoke varieties of the Kwa language. Finally, the Mossis and other Voltaic-speakers inhabited the area along the upper Volta River.
6. Spiritual beliefs varied greatly, with most West Africans recognizing a variety of deities. West Africans who lived immediately south of the Sahara – the Fulanis in Senegal, Mande-speakers in Mali, and the Hausas in northern Nigeria – learned about Islam from Arab merchants and missionaries.
7. At first, European traders had a positive impact on the West African peoples by introducing new plants (coconuts and lemons), animals (pigs), and metal products (iron) and by expanding the African trade networks.
8. From small, fortified trading posts on the coast, Europeans shipped metal products, manufactures, and slaves along the coast and to inland regions, and took gold, ivory, and pepper in return.
9. In 1502 Vasco da Gama's ships outgunned Arab fleets; the Portuguese government soon built fortified trading posts on the coast and opened trade routes from Africa to Indonesia and up the coast of Asia to China and Japan.
10. Portuguese traders joined African states and Arab merchants in the slave trade. Bonded labor – slavery, serfdom, indentured servitude – was the norm in most premodern societies, and in Africa it took the form of slavery.
11. A small portion of West Africans were trade slaves, mostly war captives and criminals sold from one kingdom to another as agricultural workers. Some African slaves were carried overland in caravans by Arab traders to the Mediterranean region.
12. To exploit this trade, Portuguese merchants established forts at small port cities – first at Elmina in 1482 and later at Gorée, Mpinda, and Loango – where they bought gold and slaves from African princes and warlords.
13. Initially the Portuguese carried a few thousand African slaves each year to work on sugar plantations in the Cape Verde Islands, the Azores, and the Madeira Islands; they also sold slaves in Lisbon, which soon had a black population of 9,000.
14. After 1550 other Europeans soon joined West Africa's long-established trade in humans; by 1700 Europeans shipped hundreds of thousands of slaves to new American sugar plantations in Brazil and West Indies.

C. Europeans Explore America

1. Explorers financed by the Spanish monarchs, King Ferdinand of Aragon and Queen Isabel of Castile, discovered the Western Hemisphere for Europeans.
2. Married in an arranged match to combine their Christian kingdoms, the young rulers completed the centuries-long *reconquista*. In 1492 their armies captured Granada, the last Islamic state in Western Europe.
3. Simultaneously, Ferdinand and Isabel sought trade and empire, and enlisted the services of Christopher Columbus, a Christian mariner from Genoa.
4. Misinterpreting the findings of Italian geographers, Columbus believed that the Atlantic Ocean, long feared by Arab merchants as a 10,000-mile-wide “green sea of darkness,” was a much narrower channel of water separating Europe from Asia. Although dubious about Columbus's theory, Ferdinand and Isabel arranged financial backing from Spanish merchants and charged Columbus with finding a western route to Asia and carrying Christianity to its peoples.
5. Christopher Columbus set sail in three small ships in August 1492. After a perilous voyage of 3,000 miles, he disembarked on October 12 on an island in the present-day Bahamas, believing he had reached Asia – “the

Indies,” in fifteenth-century parlance.

6. Columbus called the native inhabitants (the Taino, Arawak, and Carib) Indians and the islands the West Indies.
7. Although Columbus found no gold, the monarchs sent three more expeditions over the next twelve years; they wanted to make the new land they called Las Indias (the Indies) a Spanish empire.
8. During those expeditions, Columbus began the colonization of the West Indies, transporting more than a thousand Spanish settlers – all men – and hundreds of domestic animals.
9. A German geographer soon labeled the “new” continents “America” in honor of a Genoese explorer, Amerigo Vespucci. Vespucci, who had explored the region around 1500, believed that the land was *not* Asia and called it a *nuevo mundo*, a new world.
10. The Spanish disregarded Vespucci’s term, and continued to consider all new lands as part of the Indies.

D. The Spanish Conquest

1. Spanish adventurers ruled the peoples of the Indies with an iron hand. After subduing the Arawaks and Tainos on Hispaniola, the Spanish probed the mainland for gold and slaves.
2. Rumors of rich Indian kingdoms in the interior encouraged other Spaniards, including hardened veterans of the *reconquista*, to launch an invasion.
3. In 1519 Hernán Cortés, a member of the Spanish gentry class, and his fellow Spanish conquistadors landed on the Mexican coast and began a conquest of the Aztec empire. Luck, Indian allies, and superb negotiation strategies enabled the Spanish to emerge victorious.
4. Moctezuma, the Aztec ruler, believed that Cortés might be a returning god and allowed him to enter the empire without challenge.
5. Superior European military technology, internal divisions within the Aztec empire, and the assistance of a female native interpreter named Malinali (Malinche) also contributed to Spanish victory.
6. The Spanish also had a silent ally, disease. A smallpox outbreak of 70 days decimated the population of Tenochtitlán, enabling Cortés and his crew to infiltrate the city. Subsequent outbreaks of measles, influenza, and smallpox facilitated Aztec collapse.
7. In the 1520s the Spanish conquest entered a new phase when Francisco Pizarro overthrew the Inca empire in Peru; the Incas were also easy prey because of internal fighting over the throne and disease brought by the Spanish.
8. The Spanish invasion changed life forever in the Americas. Disease and warfare wiped out virtually all of the Indians of Hispaniola – at least 300,000 people.
9. The conquistadors remained powerful because they held royal grants (*encomiendas*) giving them legal control of the native population, principally on plantations and livestock ranches that exported goods to Europe.
10. The Spanish invasion of the Americas had a significant impact on life in Europe, the Americas, and Africa due to a process of transfer known as the **Columbian Exchange**.
11. The gold and silver that had formerly honored Aztec gods now gilded the Catholic churches of Europe and flowed into the counting houses of Spain, making that nation the richest and most powerful in Europe.
12. Between 1500 and 1650 no fewer than 350,000 Spaniards migrated to Mesoamerica and western South America. More than 75 percent of the Spanish settlers were men, and many of them took Indian women as wives or mistresses.
13. Consequently, a substantial mixed-race population, called **mestizos**, quickly appeared, along with an elaborate, race-based **caste system**.
14. The empire contained about 16 million people: a dominant caste of 3.2 million Spaniards; 5.5 million people of mixed Indian and European heritage; 1.0 million African slaves; and 6.5 million Indians, who lived mostly on marginal lands.

IV. The Rise of Protestant England, 1500–1620

A. The Protestant Movement

1. Christianity ceased to be a unifying force in European society as new religious doctrines divided Christians into armed ideological camps of Catholics and Protestants and created centuries of religious wars.
2. During these conflicts, France replaced Spain as the most powerful European state, and Holland and England emerged as Protestant nations determined to colonize the Western Hemisphere.
3. Over the centuries the Catholic Church became a large and wealthy institution, controlling vast resources and political power throughout Europe. Critics of church wealth began to voice their concerns following the

Renaissance.

4. In 1517 a Catholic priest named Martin Luther publicly challenged Roman Catholic practices and doctrine with his *Ninety-five Theses*; the document condemned the sale of **indulgences** by the Church.
5. Luther argued three main points: He believed that people could be saved only by grace, not good works; he dismissed the need for priests to act as intermediaries between Christians and God; and he downplayed the role of high-ranking clergymen and popes by naming the Bible the ultimate authority in matters of faith.
6. As peasants mounted violent social protests of their own, Luther urged obedience to established political institutions and condemned the teachings of religious dissidents more radical than him.
7. Eventually, the Peace of Augsburg (1555) divided Germany into Lutheran states in the north and Catholic principalities in the south. It allowed princes to decide the religion of their subjects; southern German rulers installed Catholicism, and Northern German rulers chose Lutheranism.
8. In his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1536), Protestant John Calvin preached **predestination** – the idea that God determines who will be saved before they are born.
9. When the pope denied his request for a marriage annulment, King Henry VIII broke with the Roman Catholic Church and created a national Church of England.
10. Henry's daughter, Elizabeth I, combined Lutheran and Calvinist beliefs but retained the Catholic ritual of Holy Communion in her religious reforms. This compromise angered some radical Protestants who took inspiration from the Presbyterian system in which male church elders guided the church.
11. Other radical Protestants called themselves Puritans; they wanted to purify the church of "false" Catholic teachings and practices.

B. The Dutch and English Challenge Spain

1. King Philip II wanted to root Protestantism out of the Netherlands and England, as well as Islam from North Africa. He failed in both efforts.
2. To protect their Calvinism and political liberties, the seven northern provinces of the Spanish Netherlands declared their independence in 1581 and became the Dutch Republic (or Holland).
3. To assist the Dutch independence movement, Queen Elizabeth I dispatched 6,000 troops to the Netherlands.
4. She also supported military expeditions to extend direct English rule over Gaelic-speaking Catholic regions of Ireland. Calling the Irish "wild savages," English troops brutally massacred thousands, prefiguring the treatment of Indians in America.
5. Through her actions Elizabeth immediately became the enemy of King Phillip of Spain.
6. In 1588 the Spanish Armada sailed out to reimpose Catholic rule in England and Holland but was defeated when a storm allowed the English to claim victory.
7. Shrugging off this defeat, Philip continued to spend his American gold on religious wars. This ill-advised policy diverted resources from industrial investment in Spain and weakened its economy.
8. Oppressed by high taxes on agriculture and fearful of military service, more than 200,000 residents of Castile, the richest region of Spain, migrated to America.
9. As the Spanish government and economy struggled, the Dutch Republic became the leading commercial power of Europe.
10. Amsterdam emerged as the financial capital of northern Europe, and the Dutch Republic replaced Portugal as the dominant trader in Indonesia and West Africa.
11. Dutch merchants also looked across the Atlantic: They created the West India Company, which invested in sugar plantations in Brazil and established the fur-trading colony of New Netherland along the Hudson River in North America.
12. England's economy was stimulated by a rise in population (from 3 million in 1500 to 5 million in 1630) and by **mercantilism**, a system of state-supported manufacturing and trade.
13. Mercantilist-minded monarchs like Queen Elizabeth encouraged merchants to invest in domestic manufacturing, thereby increasing exports and decreasing imports.
14. The domestic English textile industry relied on **outwork**: Merchants bought wool from the owners of great estates and then hired landless peasants to spin and weave the wool into cloth. The government further helped textile entrepreneurs by setting low rates for wages.
15. By 1600 the success of merchant-oriented policies helped to give the English and the Dutch the ability to challenge Spain's control of the Western Hemisphere.

C. The Social Causes of English Expansion

1. England sent more than merchant fleets and manufactures to America. Economic changes would bring thousands of poor, landless English peasants to search for prosperity in the Americas.
2. The **Price Revolution**, major inflation as a result of Spanish dumping of gold and silver on the European market, caused social changes in England; the nobility were its first casualties largely because they had rented their lands on long-term leases at low rents. In contrast, the **gentry**, or nonnoble landowners, prospered by offering short-term leases at high rates.
3. As the influence of the House of Commons increased, rich commoners and small property owners gained a voice in government; this process of creating representative government had profound consequences for English and American political history.
4. The Price Revolution likewise transformed the lives of peasants. The economic stimulus of Spanish gold spurred the expansion of the textile industry. To increase the supply of wool, profit-minded landlords and wool merchants persuaded Parliament to pass **enclosure acts**, laws that allowed owners to fence in the open fields that surrounded many peasant villages and put sheep to graze on them.
5. Because of the Enclosure acts, the Price Revolution, and crop failure, many peasants lost the means to earn a living and were willing to go to America as indentured servants, signing a contract in which the individual agreed to work without wages for four or five years in exchange for passage to America and room and board for the term of the contract.
6. This massive migration to America brought about a new collision between European and Native American worlds.