

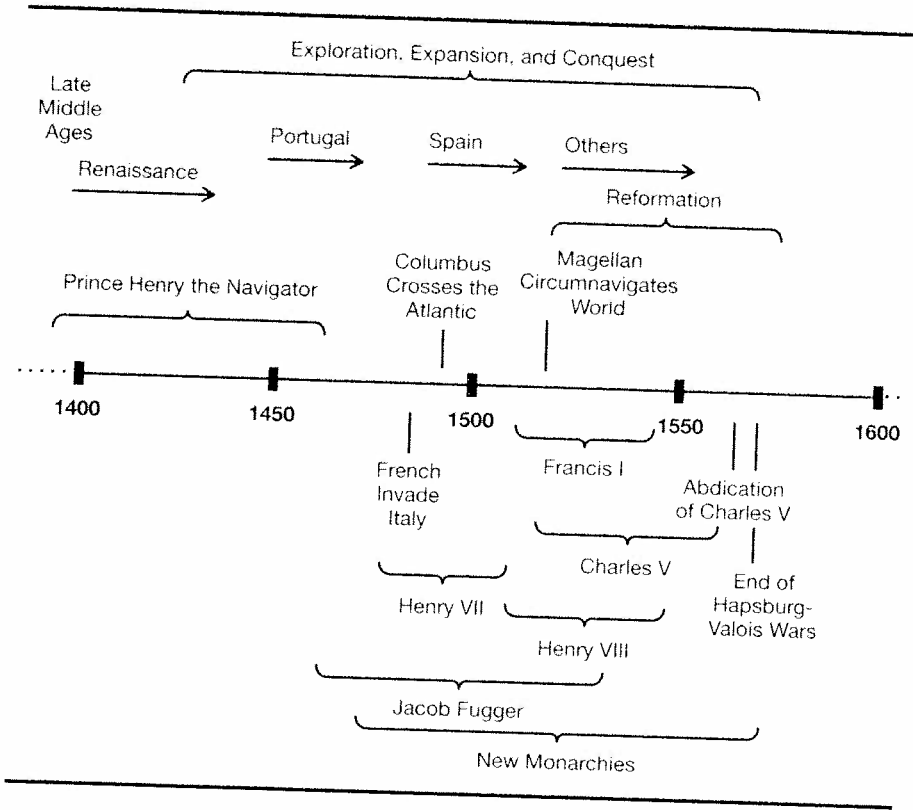
CHAPTER THREE

Overseas Expansion and New Politics

Between the mid-fifteenth and mid-sixteenth centuries much of Europe gained a new political and economic strength, which had been missing during the Late Middle Ages. This was manifested in a number of ways. First, central governments acquired new authority and power under a series of talented monarchs, often referred to by historians as the “new monarchs.” This was particularly so in England, France, and Spain, but even in the Holy Roman Empire, where the emperor was often relatively weak, Emperor Charles V rose in stature and power. Second, European states supported a new wave of expansion into the rest of the world. Led by Portugal and then Spain, these states sent explorers, missionaries, merchants, colonists, and armed forces throughout the world, quickly establishing vast empires. Third, modern diplomacy was developed, enabling states to have recognized representatives with authority and expertise in foreign countries. This reflected and facilitated the new political strength and competitiveness of European states.

Sources in this chapter deal with each of these aspects of the new political and economic strength of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Europe. In particular, questions related to exploration and expansion are addressed. What were the motives for expansion? Why did the expansion occur at this time? What connections were there between expansion and nationalism? What were the consequences of expansion? Some documents concern political developments of the period, particularly the reign of Charles V, the most renowned ruler of the time. What were his role and position? How were they affected by expansion? What were some of the connections between his position and the new commercial and financial prosperity?

In short, the sources in this chapter reveal a new political and economic strength that relates to the religious, cultural, and intellectual developments covered in the two preceding chapters. While this Renaissance civilization did not represent a complete break with the civilization of the Middle Ages, the selections emphasize what is different and more recognizably "modern" about this period. Historical patterns were being established that would characterize Europe for several succeeding generations, as will be seen in the following chapters.



PRIMARY SOURCES

The Chronicle of the Discovery and Conquest of Guinea

Gomes Eannes de Azurara

The great geographic expansion and conquests of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were initiated by Prince Henry (the Navigator) of Portugal (1394–1460). Although he did not personally participate in the explorations, he established a naval school and base of operations on the southwestern tip of Portugal from which he sent expeditions down the west coast of Africa. One of the clearest explanations of the motives for this effort has been provided by Gomes Eannes de Azurara, a friend of Prince Henry (referred to as “the Lord Infant”), who chronicled the voyages of 1452–1453 at the request of King Alfonso V.

Consider: *The explanations that sound more like rationalizations than reasons for explorations; whether economic, military, and religious motives are complementary or contradictory; ways this document reflects the history of a country engaged with Islam.*

We imagine that we know a matter when we are acquainted with the doer of it and the end for which he did it. And since in former chapters we have set forth the Lord Infant as the chief actor in these things, giving as clear an understanding of him as we could, it is meet that in this present chapter we should know his purpose in doing them. And you should note well that the noble spirit of this Prince, by a sort of natural constraint, was ever urging him both to begin and to carry out very great deeds. For which reason, after the taking of Ceuta he always kept ships well armed against the Infidel, both for war, and because he had also a wish to know the land that lay beyond the isles of Canary and that Cape called Bojador, for that up to his time, neither by writings, nor by the memory of man, was known with any certainty the nature of the land beyond that Cape. Some said indeed that Saint Brandan had passed that way; and there was another tale of two galleys rounding the Cape, which never returned. But this doth not appear at all likely to be true, for it is not to be presumed that if the said galleys went there, some other ships would not have endeavoured to learn what voyage they had made. And because the said Lord Infant wished to know the truth of this,—since it seemed to him that if he or some other lord did not endeavour to gain that knowledge, no mariners or merchants would ever dare to attempt it—(for it is clear that none of them ever trouble themselves to sail to a place where there is not a sure and certain hope of profit)—and seeing also that no other prince took any pains in this matter, he sent out his own ships against those parts, to have manifest certainty of them all. And to this he was stirred up by his zeal for the

SOURCE: Gomes Eannes de Azurara, *The Chronicle of the Discovery and Conquest of Guinea*, vol. 1, trans. Charles Raymond Beazley and Edgar Prestage (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1896), pp. 27–29.

service of God and of the King Edward his Lord and brother, who then reigned. And this was the first reason of his action.

The second reason was that if there chanced to be in those lands some population of Christians, or some havens, into which it would be possible to sail without peril, many kinds of merchandise might be brought to this realm, which would find a ready market, and reasonably so, because no other people of these parts traded with them, nor yet people of any other that were known; and also the products of this realm might be taken there, which traffic would bring great profit to our countrymen.

The third reason was that, as it was said that the power of the Moors in that land of Africa was very much greater than was commonly supposed, and that there were no Christians among them, nor any other race of men; and because every wise man is obliged by natural prudence to wish for a knowledge of the power of his enemy; therefore the said Lord Infant exerted himself to cause this to be fully discovered, and to make it known determinately how far the power of those infidels extended.

The fourth reason was because during the one and thirty years that he had warred against the Moors, he had never found a Christian king, nor a lord outside this land, who for the love of our Lord Jesus Christ would aid him in the said war. Therefore he sought to know if there were in those parts any Christian princes, in whom the charity and the love of Christ was so ingrained that they would aid him against those enemies of the faith.

The fifth reason 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,—understanding that all the mystery of the Incarnation, Death, and Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ was for this sole end—namely the salvation of lost souls—whom the said Lord Infant by his travail and spending would fain bring into the true path. For he perceived that no better offering could be made unto the Lord than this; for if God promised to return one hundred goods for one, we may justly believe that for such great benefits, that is to say for so many souls as were saved by the efforts of this Lord, he will have so many hundreds of guerdons in the kingdom of God, by which his spirit may be glorified after this life in the celestial realm. For I that wrote this history saw so many men and women of those parts turned to the holy faith, that even if the Infant had been a heathen, their prayers would have been enough to have obtained his salvation. And not only did I see the first captives, but their children and grandchildren as true Christians as if the Divine grace breathed in them and imparted to them a clear knowledge of itself.

Letter to Lord Sanchez, 1493

Christopher Columbus

The voyages of Christopher Columbus (1451–1506) opened the New World to Europe and marked the entry of Spain into the process of exploration, expansion, and conquest initiated by Portugal. Columbus was a Genoese explorer who, after great difficulties, convinced the Spanish

SOURCE: *Select Letters of Christopher Columbus*, trans. and ed. R. H. Hajor (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1847), pp. 6–10.

monarchs, Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand, to support his voyages across the Atlantic. He expected to discover a western route to Asia and its riches. Instead, he landed on several islands of the Caribbean, which he assumed were part of Asia. The following letter to Lord Raphael Sanchez, treasurer to the Spanish monarchs, was written by Columbus in Lisbon on March 14, 1493, shortly after returning from his first voyage across the Atlantic. In this excerpt, he describes the native people he encountered.

Consider: How Columbus viewed the natives; what Columbus was most concerned with; how this letter reflects Columbus' motives.

The inhabitants of both sexes in this island, and in all the others which I have seen, or of which I have received information, go always naked as they were born, with the exception of some of the women, who use the covering of leaf, or small bough, or an apron of cotton which they prepare for that purpose. None of them, as I have already said, are possessed of any iron, neither have they weapons, being unacquainted with, and indeed incompetent to use them, not from any deformity of body (for they are well-formed), but because they are timid and full of fear. They carry however in lieu of arms, canes dried in the sun, on the ends of which they fix heads of dried wood sharpened to a point, and even these they dare not use habitually; for it has often occurred when I have sent two or three of my men to any of the villages to speak with the natives, that they have come out in a disorderly troop, and have fled in such haste at the approach of our men, that the fathers forsook their children and the children their fathers. This timidity did not arise from any loss or injury that they had received from us; for, on the contrary, I gave to all I approached whatever articles I had about me, such as cloth and many other things, taking nothing of theirs in return; but they are naturally timid and fearful. As soon however as they see that they are safe, and have laid aside all fear, they are very simple and honest, and exceedingly liberal with all they have; none of them refusing any thing he may possess when he is asked for it, but on the contrary inviting us to ask them. They exhibit great love towards all others in preference to themselves; they also give objects of great value for trifles, and content themselves with very little or nothing in return. I however forbid that these trifles and articles of no value (such as pieces of dishes, plates, and glass, keys, and leather straps) should be given to them, although if they could obtain them, they imagined themselves to be possessed of the most beautiful trinkets in the world. It even happened that a sailor received for a leather strap as much gold as was worth three golden nobles, and for things of more trifling value offered by our men, especially newly coined blancas, or any gold coins, the Indians would give whatever the seller required; as, for instance, an ounce and a half or two ounces of gold, or thirty or forty pounds of cotton, with which commodity they were already acquainted. Thus they bartered, like idiots, cotton and gold for fragments of bows, glasses, bottles, and jars; which I forbid as being unjust, and myself gave them many beautiful and acceptable articles which I had brought with me, taking nothing from them in return; I did this in order that I might the more easily conciliate them, that they might be led to become Christians, and be inclined to entertain a regard for the King and Queen, our Princes and all Spaniards, and that I might induce them to take an interest in seeking out, and collecting, and delivering to us such things as they possessed in abundance, but which we greatly needed. They practise no kind of idolatry, but have a firm belief that all strength

and power, and indeed all good things, are in heaven, and that I had descended from thence with these ships and sailors, and under this impression was I received after they had thrown aside their fears. Nor are they slow or stupid, but of very clear understanding; and those men who have crossed to the neighbouring islands give an admirable description of everything they observed; but they never saw any people clothed, nor any ships like ours. On my arrival at that sea, I had taken some Indians by force from the first island that I came to, in order that they might learn our language, and communicate to us what they knew respecting the country; which plan succeeded excellently, and was a great advantage to us, for in a short time, either by gestures and signs, or by words, we were enabled to understand each other. These men are still travelling with me, and although they have been with us now a long time, they continue to entertain the idea that I have descended from heaven; and on our arrival at any new place they published this, crying out immediately with a loud voice to the other Indians, "Come, come and look upon beings of a celestial race": upon which both women and men, children and adults, young men and old, when they got rid of the fear they at first entertained, would come out in throngs, crowding the roads to see us, some bringing food, others drink, with astonishing affection and kindness. . . . In all these islands there is no difference of physiognomy, of manners, or of language, but they all clearly understand each other, a circumstance very propitious for the realization of what I conceive to be the principal wish of our most serene King, namely, the conversion of these people to the holy faith of Christ, to which indeed, as far as I can judge, they are very favourable and well-disposed.

Memoirs: The Aztecs
 Bernal Diaz del Castillo

→ opposite of Columbus

FACINATED BY TRADE

While many Europeans who first came into contact with non-Western peoples viewed them with arrogance, others were quite impressed with what they saw. This was particularly true of some Spanish observers in Mexico. Before Cortez's conquest of Mexico in 1519, the Aztecs dominated much of the "middle American" world. This selection, written a half-century later by Bernal Diaz (1492-1581), a member of Cortez's conquering army, gives a sense of the Aztec's highly developed civilization and the splendor of their capital.

Consider: What most impressed Diaz; why Diaz was astonished at the wealth of this civilization; how this account compares with that of Columbus.

When we gazed upon all this splendour . . . we scarcely knew what to think, and we doubted whether all that we beheld was real. A series of large towns stretched themselves along the banks of the lake, out of which still larger ones rose magnificently above the waters. Innumerable crowds of canoes were plying everywhere around us; at regular distances we continually passed over new bridges, and before us lay the great city of Mexico in all its splendour. . . .

SOURCE: I. I. Lockhart, trans., *The Memoirs of the Conquistador Bernal de Castillo* (London: J. Hatchard and Son, 1844), pp. 220-21, 235-38.

IMPRESSIONED BY LARGE CITIES (POPULATION)
 SYSTEMATIC ORGANIZATION OF MANPOWER - ECONOMY

Motecusuma himself, according to his custom, was sumptuously attired, had on a species of half boot, richly set with jewels, and whose soles were made of solid gold. The four grantees who supported him were also richly attired, which they must have put on somewhere on the road, in order to wait upon Motecusuma; they were not so sumptuously dressed when they first came out to meet us. Besides these distinguished caziques, there were many other grantees around the monarch, some of whom held the canopy over his head, while others again occupied the road before him, and spread cotton cloths on the ground that his feet might not touch the bare earth. No one of his suite ever looked at him full in the face: every one in his presence stood with eyes downcast, and it was only his four nephews and cousins who supported him that durst look up. . . .

Our commander, attended by the greater part of our cavalry and foot, all well armed, as, indeed, we were at all times, had proceeded to the Tlatelulco. . . . The moment we arrived in this immense market, we were perfectly astonished at the vast numbers of people, the profusion of merchandise which was there exposed for sale, and at the good police and order that reigned throughout. The grantees who accompanied us drew our attention to the smallest circumstance, and gave us full explanation of all we saw. Every species of merchandise had a separate spot for its sale. We first of all visited those divisions of the market appropriated for the sale of gold and silver wares, of jewels, of cloths interwoven with feathers, and of other manufactured goods: besides slaves of both sexes. . . . Next to these came the dealers in coarser wares—cotton, twisted thread, and cacao. . . . In one place were sold the stuffs manufactured of nequen: ropes, and sandals; in another place, the sweet maguey root, ready cooked, and various other things made from this plant. In another division of the market were exposed the skins of tigers, lions, jackals, otters, red deer, wild cats, and of other beasts of prey, some of which were tanned. In another place were sold beans and sage, with other herbs and vegetables. A particular market was assigned for the merchants in fowls, turkeys, ducks, rabbits, hares, deer, and dogs; also for fruit-sellers, pastry-cooks, and tripe-sellers. Not far from these were exposed all manner of earthenware, from the large earthen cauldron to the smaller pitchers. Then came the dealers in honey and honey-cakes, and other sweetmeats. Next to these, the timber-merchants, furniture-dealers, with their stores of tables, benches, cradles, and all sorts of wooden implements, all separately arranged. . . .

In this market-place there were also courts of justice, to which three judges and several constables were appointed, who inspected the goods exposed for sale. . . . I wish I had completed the enumeration of all this profusion of merchandise. The variety was so great that it would occupy more space than I can well spare to note them down in; besides which, the market was so crowded with people, and the thronging so excessive in the porticoes, that it was quite impossible to see all in one day. . . .

Indeed, this infernal temple, from its great height, commanded a view of the whole surrounding neighbourhood. From this place we could likewise see the three causeways which led into Mexico. . . . We also observed the aqueduct which ran from Chapultepec, and provided the whole town with sweet water. We could also distinctly see the bridges across the openings, by which these causeways were intersected, and through which the waters of the lake ebbed and flowed. The lake itself was crowded with canoes, which were bringing provisions, manufactures, and other merchandise to the city. From here we also discovered that the only communication of the houses in this city, and of all the other towns built in the lake, was by means of drawbridge or canoes. In all these towns

the beautiful white plastered temples rose above the smaller ones, . . . and this, it may be imagined, was a splendid sight.

After we had sufficiently gazed upon this magnificent picture, we again turned our eyes toward the great market, and beheld the vast numbers of buyers and sellers who thronged them. The bustle and noise occasioned by this multitude of human beings was so great that it could be heard at a distance of more than four miles.

Letter to Charles V: Finance and Politics

Jacob Fugger

The explorations and conquests of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were connected with the commercial expansion occurring in Europe at the same time. Central to this expansion was the rise of great international financial houses, such as the House of Fugger. The House of Fugger originated in Augsburg, Germany, and the Fuggers established branches throughout Europe and became directly tied not only to the growth of commerce but also to political developments as financiers to royal families. The extent of the Fuggers' political influence is suggested by the tone and content of the following letter, written in 1523, by Jacob Fugger, head of the firm, to Charles V, head of the House of Hapsburg, Holy Roman Emperor, King of Spain, and the most powerful ruler in Europe. The letter refers to the financial support provided by the Fuggers that enabled Charles, rather than his competitor Francis I of France, to be elected Holy Roman Emperor in 1519 by the electoral princes of Germany.

Consider: *The tone of this letter; the interests the Fuggers might have in establishing a relationship with Charles V. Jacob Fugger's options had Charles rejected this request for repayment of the loan.*

Your Imperial Majesty doubtless knows how I and my kinsmen have ever hitherto been disposed to serve the House of Austria in all loyalty to the furtherance of its well-being and prosperity; wherefore, in order to be pleasing to Your Majesty's Grandsire, the late Emperor Maximilian, and to gain for Your Majesty the Roman Crown, we have held ourselves bounden to engage ourselves towards divers princes who placed their Trust and Reliance upon myself and perchance on No Man besides. We have, moreover, advanced to Your Majesty's Agents for the same end a Great Sum of Money, of which we ourselves have had to raise a large part from our Friends. It is well known that Your Imperial Majesty could not have gained the Roman Crown save with mine aid, and I can prove the same by the writings of Your Majesty's Agents given by their own hands. In this matter I have not studied mine own Profit. For had I left the House of Austria and had been minded to further France, I had obtained much money and property, such as was then offered to me. How grave a Disadvantage had in this case accrued to Your Majesty and the House of Austria, Your Majesty's Royal Mind well knoweth.

SOURCE: From Richard Ehrenberg, *Capital and Finance in the Age of the Renaissance: A Study of the Fuggers and Their Connections*, trans. H. M. Lucas (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1963), p. 80. Reprinted by permission.

VISUAL SOURCES

The Assets and Liabilities of Empire

Frans Fracken II

This painting by Frans Fracken II (photo 3-1) represents the abdication of Emperor Charles V in 1555. In the center sits Charles V with outstretched hands, symbolically giving Spain and the Netherlands to his son Philip on his left and the Empire to his brother Ferdinand on his right. Next to Philip stand various political figures, and below them are banners representing the provinces. In the foreground is an allegorical scene representing Spain's dominance of the sea and the New World. On the left is the bearded Neptune with a globe and his court; on the right is an Indian and other exotic figures and animals offering homage (in the form of gold treasure). The

Photo 3-1



Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

event occurred in Brussels on October 25, 1555, shortly after Charles assented to the Peace of Augsburg, which has been interpreted as a double defeat for him: a recognition of Lutheranism and a political victory for German princes over imperial authority. There Charles made a speech, which included the following statements:

I had no inordinate ambition to rule a multitude of kingdoms, but merely sought to secure the welfare of Germany, to provide for the defense of Flanders, to consecrate my forces to the safety of Christianity against the Turk, and to labor for the extension of the Christian religion. But although such zeal was mine, I was unable to show so much of it as I might have wished, on account of the troubles raised by the heresies of Luther and other innovators of Germany, and on account of serious war into which the hostility and envy of neighboring princes had driven men, and from which I have safely emerged, thanks to the favor of God. . . . I am determined then to retire to Spain, to yield to my son Philip the possession of all my states, and to my brother, the king of the Romans, the Empire. . . . Above all, beware of infection from the sects of neighboring lands. Extricate at once the germs, if they appear in your midst, for fear lest they may spread abroad and utterly overthrow your state, and lest you may fall into the direst calamities.

Consider: How this picture and speech reflect the position and predicament of the Hapsburgs during this period.

Exploration, Expansion, and Politics

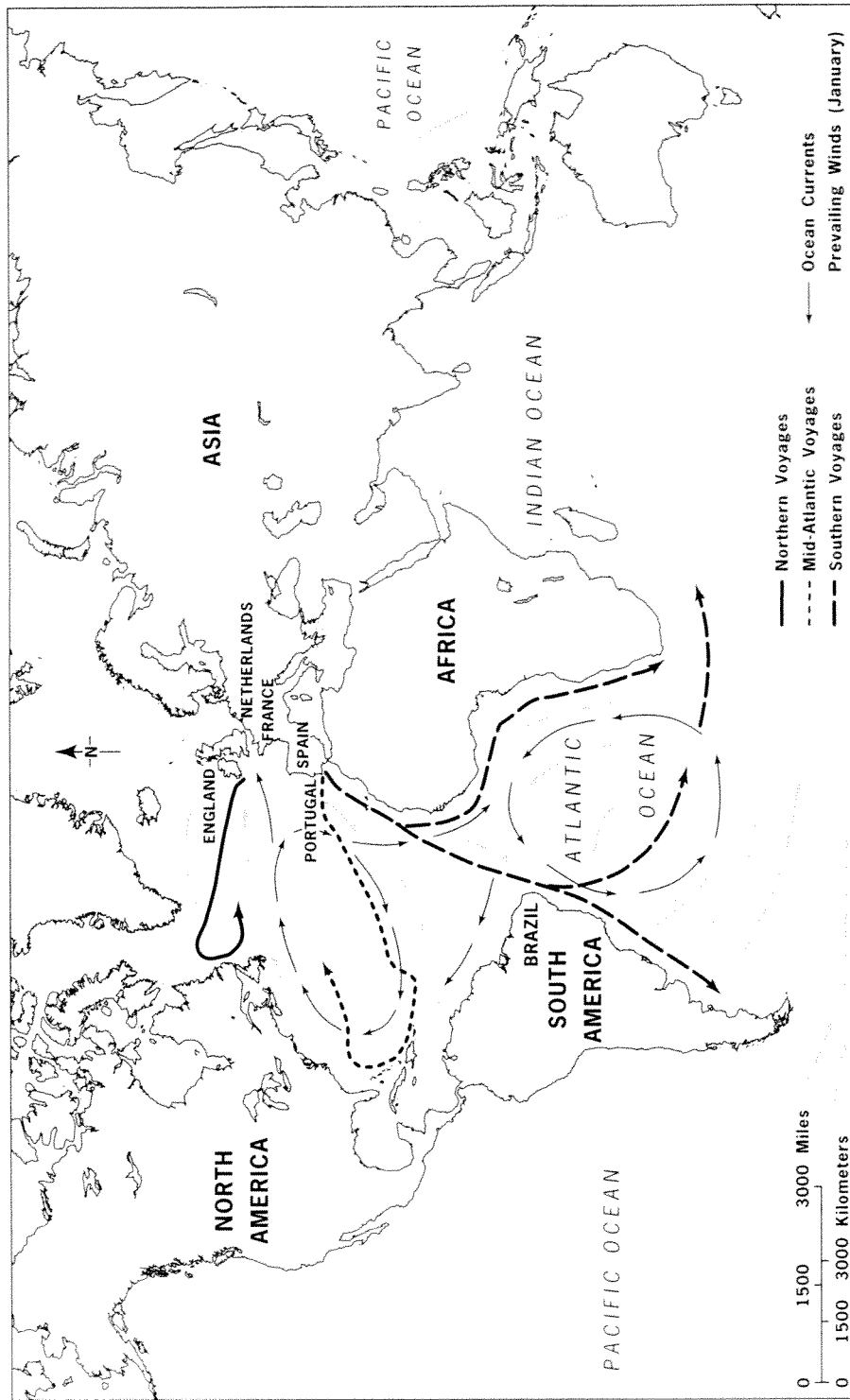
Aside from the various motivations for the voyages of discovery during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, a number of factors combined to make those voyages physically possible when earlier they were not. Technological discoveries significantly improved shipbuilding and navigation. But also important was the understanding and mapping of prevailing ocean currents and winds in relation to land masses. It was much easier to sail with, rather than against, currents and winds, and sailors counted on finding land masses for supplies along the way.

The early voyages tended to take advantage of currents and winds as shown in this map. Thus, for example, early voyages to North America usually took a more southerly route westward across the Atlantic and returned on a more northerly route, while Portuguese ships headed east to the Indian Ocean by following winds and currents to Brazil and then crossed the Atlantic farther south. Prevailing currents and winds also explain the difficulty of westward voyages around the tip of South America. These patterns of voyages also shed light on some of the geopolitical results of expansion. For example, even though Portugal's efforts were directed toward an eastern route to the Far East, she acquired Brazil (her only territory in the New World) to the west since it was on a route favored by winds and currents.

Consider: How map 3-1 helps explain the pattern of exploration and colonization by the various European powers.

Map 3-2 shows some of the geopolitical connections of international finance during the sixteenth century. First, it shows the extent of Fugger agencies throughout Europe, thus indicating how much international finance had grown by this time. Second, it reveals some of the direct connections between industry and finance, for the Fuggers were involved in both and often took mineral

Map 3-1 Overseas Explorations



concessions or rights in mines as security or repayment for loans. Third, it suggests some of the political connections between the Fuggers and the House of Hapsburg; most of the firm's branches and mines were within Hapsburg lands, and not surprisingly the Fuggers became tied to the Hapsburgs by a series of loans.

Consider: How the following map relates to the letter of Jacob Fugger to Charles V.

Map 3-2 Commercial Expansion and Politics



SECONDARY SOURCES

The Expansion of Europe

Richard B. Reed

In analyzing the overseas expansion of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, historians typically emphasize a combination of economic and religious factors to explain the motivation behind expansion while focusing on the establishment of adequate knowledge and technology as key conditions for its occurrence. In the following selection Richard B. Reed argues that European expansion was a nationalistic phenomenon, and because of this Portugal was able to become the early leader.

Consider: *Why Italy and Germany did not participate in overseas expansion; how one might attack Reed's argument that Portugal was in a better position to initiate expansion than any other country; other factors that might help explain why Portugal led in overseas expansion.*

The expansion of Europe was an intensely nationalistic phenomenon. It was an aspect of the trend, most evident in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, toward the establishment of strong centralized authority in the "new monarchies," as they have been called, and the emergence of the nation-state. A policy of overseas expansion required a degree of internal stability and national consciousness that only a powerful central government could command. Portugal achieved this position long before her eventual competitors, and under the leadership of the dynamic house of Avis became a consolidated kingdom comparatively free from feudal divisions before the end of the fifteenth century. While Spain was still divided into a number of conflicting political jurisdictions, England and France were preoccupied with their own and each other's affairs, and the Dutch were still an appendage of the Empire, the Portuguese combined the advantages of their natural geographic situation with their political and economic stability to initiate the age of discovery. Spain in the sixteenth century, and England, France, and the Netherlands in the seventeenth century, became active colonial powers only after each had matured into strong national entities, independent of feudal political and economic restrictions. . . .

The importance of the nation-state in Renaissance expansion is particularly apparent when the Italian city-states are considered. Venice and Genoa, cities that had contributed so many of the medieval travelers and early Renaissance geographers and map-makers, did not participate directly in Europe's overseas expansion. Yet Italian names dominated the rolls of the early voyagers. Prince Henry employed Venetians and Florentines in his naval establishment, while Columbus, Vespucci, Verrazano, the Cabots,

SOURCE: Richard B. Reed, "The Expansion of Europe," in *The Meaning of the Renaissance and Reformation*, ed. Richard L. DeMolen (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974), p. 299. Reprinted by permission.

and many others sailed for Spain, France, and England. Italian cartography was the best in Europe until the second half of the sixteenth century, and a high proportion of the books and pamphlets that chronicled new discoveries emanated from the presses of Vicenza, Venice, Rome, and Florence. Italian bankers and merchants were also very active in the commercial life of the principal Iberian cities. A divided Italy was instrumental in making Renaissance expansion possible, but it could not take full advantage of its own endowments. Germans, too, figured prominently in the expansion of the sixteenth century, as the names of Federmann, Staden, Welser, and Fugger attest. But Germany, like Italy, was not united, and the emergence of these two nations as colonial powers had to wait until their respective consolidations in the nineteenth century.

While every nationality in Western Europe was represented in Renaissance expansion, it was by no means an international venture. On the contrary, it was very much an expression of that nationalistic fervor that characterized political developments in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It was primarily a state enterprise, often financed privately but controlled and protected by the governments of the concerned powers. There was no cooperation between nations, and even after the upheaval of the Protestant Reformation, when political loyalties and alignments were conditioned by religious sympathies, there were no colonial alliances that provided for mutual Protestant or Catholic overseas policies.

The Effects of Expansion on the Non-European World

M. L. Bush

While the expansion of Europe was of great significance for European history, it was of even greater consequence for the non-European world touched by the explorers. However, its effects differed greatly in the New World, where the Spanish dominated, and the East, where the Portuguese were the leaders. In the following selection M. L. Bush analyzes these differences.

Consider: *Internal factors in non-Western societies that help explain these differences; contrasts between Portugal and Spain that help explain the different consequences for non-Western societies.*

The Castilian Empire in the West and the Portuguese Empire in the East had very different effects upon the world outside of Europe. In the first place, the Castilian expansion westwards precipitated a series of overseas migrations which were unparalleled in earlier times. For most of the sixteenth century, 1,000 or 2,000 Spaniards settled in the New World each year. Later this was followed by a large wave of emigrants from northwestern Europe, fleeing from persecution at home to the Atlantic sea-board of North

SOURCE: M. L. Bush, *Renaissance, Reformation and the Outer World* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), pp. 143-145.

America and the Caribbean, and a final wave of Africans forced into slavery in the West Indies and in Brazil. On the other hand, in the East, there was virtually no settlement in the sixteenth century. Europe impressed itself only by fort, factory and church, by colonial official, trader and missionary.

In the second place, the settlement of the New World had a severe effect upon native peoples, whereas in the East, European influence was very slight until much later times.

In the early 1520s, the conquistadors brought with them smallpox and typhoid. Between them these European diseases soon decimated the Indian population, particularly in the great epidemics of the 1520s, 1540s and 1570s. In central Mexico, for example, an Indian population which numbered 11,000,000 in 1519 numbered no more than 2,500,000 by the end of the century. In addition, the Indian was beset by enormous grazing herds of horned cattle which the white settler introduced. He escaped the herds by working for the white settler, but if this led him to the crowded labour settlements, as it quite often did, he stood less chance of escaping infection. Either through falling hopelessly in debt as a result of desiring the goods of the white man, or through entering the labour settlements on a permanent basis to avoid the herds and also the system of obligatory labour introduced by the Spaniard,¹ there was a strong tendency for the Indian to become europeanised. He became a wage-earner, a debtor and a Christian. The Indian was exploited. But in the law he remained free. Enslavement was practised, but it was not officially tolerated. Moreover, the Franciscan order, a powerful missionary force in the New World, did its best to save the Indian from the evil ways of the white man. In Bartholomew de Las Casas and Francisco de Vitoria, the Indian found influential defenders; and through their schemes for separate Indian Christian communities, he found a partial escape from the white man. But the Indian mission towns, which were permitted by Charles V, were objected to by his successor, Philip II, and they only survived in remote areas.

With few exceptions, the way of life of the surviving Indians was basically changed by the coming of the white man. The outstanding exception was in Portuguese Brazil where the more primitive, nomadic Indians had a greater opportunity to retreat into the bush. There was also less settlement in Brazil, and generally less impression was made because of Portuguese preoccupations elsewhere, and also because of their lack of resources for empire-building on the Spanish scale. Furthermore, within the Spanish Empire, the European impressed himself less on the Incas in Peru than upon the Aztecs in Mexico. Because of the slow subjection of Peru, several Inca risings, the nature of the terrain, the smallness of the Spanish community, the process of europeanisation was much slower, and in the long run much less complete. The remnants of the Inca aristocracy became Spanish in their habits and Catholic in their religion, but the peasantry tended to remain pagan. In contrast to these developments, the westernisation of the East was a development of more modern times.

The West impinged upon the East in the sixteenth century mainly through the missionary. With the arrival of St. Francis Xavier in 1542 in India, an impressive process of conversion was begun. Concentrating upon the poor fishermen of the Cape Comorin

¹This system depended upon every Indian village offering a proportion of its menfolk or labour service for a limited amount of time throughout the year.

coast, within ten years he had secured, it was said, 60,000 converts. The Jesuits fixed their attention on the East, choosing Goa as their main headquarters outside of Rome. Little was accomplished in Malaya, Sumatra and China in the sixteenth century, and Christianity soon suffered setbacks in the Moluccas after a promising start; but in Ceylon the conversion of the young king of Kotte in 1557 was a signal triumph, and so were the conversions in Japan. In the 1580s Jesuit missionaries in Japan claimed to have converted 150,000, most of whom, however, were inhabitants of the island of Kyushu.

Christianity was not a new religion in the East. There were extensive communities of Nestorian Christians, but they were regarded as alien as the Muslim by the Europeans. The new Christians by 1583 were supposed to number 600,000. But compared with the expansion of Islam in the East—a process which was taking place at the same time—the expansion of Christianity was a minute achievement.

Finally, the Portuguese sea empire did little to transport Portuguese habits abroad. Their empire was essentially formed in response to local conditions. On the other hand, the Spanish land empire was to a much greater extent reflective of Castilian ways.

In the New World a carefully developed and regulated system of government was established in which it was seen that the care taken to limit the independent power of feudal aristocrats in the Old World should also be applied to the New. There was a firm insistence upon government officials being royal servants. However, the government of the New World became much more regulated from the centre than that of the old. There was less respect for aristocratic privilege. Less power was unreservedly placed in the hands of the nobility. In the New World, in fact, the weaknesses of government, at first, did not lie in the powers and privileges of the nobility but rather in the cumbersome nature of the government machinery. Nevertheless, in spite of these precautions, the New World, by the early seventeenth century, had become a land of great feudal magnates enjoying, in practice, untrammelled power.

Red, White, and Black: The Peoples of Early America

Gary Nash

notes
clash
between
values

Europeans often came into conflict with the peoples they encountered overseas. In the Americas, diverging understanding of the meaning of land ownership and, more broadly, private property, would lead to continual conflict. Europeans took for granted that people had the right to buy and sell land. Yet, this was not the case for Native Americans. In North America, European settlers would fence in land and hunt for private profit. This would undermine the entire livelihood of nomadic tribes that depended on freedom to move, hunt, and establish temporary communities. In the following selection, Gary Nash, a historian of early American history at UCLA, describes the clash of cultures and economic systems between white settlers and the native inhabitants of North America.

SOURCE: Gary B. Nash, *Red, White and Black: The Peoples of Early America*, 3d ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1982), pp. 25–27. Copyright © 1982, 1992. Reprinted by permission of Prentice-Hall.

Consider: *The differences between the Native American and European world views concerning land and personal identity; in light of what we now know regarding ecological destruction, how you might evaluate the Native American view of the symmetry of nature.*

While Native American and European cultures were not nearly so different as the concepts of "savagery" and "civilization" imply, societies on the eastern and western sides of the Atlantic had developed different systems of values in the centuries that preceded contact. Underlying the physical confrontations that would take place when European and Native American met were incompatible ways of looking at the world. These latent conflicts can be seen in contrasting European and Indian views of man's relationship to his environment, the concept of property, and personal identity.

In the European view the natural world was a resource for man to use. "Subdue the earth," it was said in Genesis, "and have dominion over every living thing that moves on the earth." The cosmos was still ruled by God, of course, and supernatural forces, manifesting themselves in earthquakes, hurricanes, drought, and flood, could not be controlled by man. But a scientific revolution was under way in the early modern period, which gave humans more confidence that they could comprehend the natural world—and thus eventually control it. For Europeans the secular and the sacred were distinct, and man's relationship to his natural environment fell into the secular sphere.

In the Indian ethos no such separation of secular and sacred existed. Every part of the natural world was sacred, for Native Americans believed the world was inhabited by a great variety of "beings," each possessing spiritual power and all linked together to form a sacred whole. "Plants, animals, rocks, and stars," explains Murray Wax, "are thus seen not as objects governed by laws of nature but as 'fellows' with whom the individual or band may have a more or less advantageous relationship." Consequently, if one offended the land by stripping it of its cover, the spiritual power in the land—called *manitou* by some woodlands tribes—would strike back. If one overfished or destroyed game beyond one's needs, the spiritual power inhering in fish and animals would take revenge because humans had broken the mutual trust and reciprocity that governed relations between all beings—human and nonhuman. To exploit the land or to treat with disrespect any part of the natural world was to cut oneself off from the spiritual power dwelling in all things and "was thus equivalent to repudiating the vital force in Nature."

Because Europeans regarded the land as a resource to be exploited for man's gain it was easier to regard it as a commodity to be privately held. Private ownership of property became one of the fundamental bases upon which European culture rested. Fences became the symbols of exclusively held property, inheritance became the mechanism for transmitting these "assets" from one generation to another within the same family, and courts provided the institutional apparatus for settling property disputes. In a largely agricultural society property became the basis of political power. In fact, political rights in England derived from the ownership of a specified quantity of land. In addition, the social structure was largely defined by the distribution of property, with those possessing great quantities of it standing at the apex of the social pyramid and the mass of propertyless individuals forming the broad base.

In the Indian world this view of land as a privately held asset was incomprehensible. Tribes recognized territorial boundaries, but within these limits the land was held in

common. Land was not a commodity but a part of nature that was entrusted to the living by the Creator. . . . Thus, land was a gift of the Creator, to be used with care, and was not for the exclusive possession of particular human beings.

In the area of personal identity Indian and European values also differed sharply. Europeans were acquisitive, competitive, and over a long period of time had been enhancing the role of the individual. Wider choices and greater opportunities for the individual to improve his status—by industriousness, valor, or even personal sacrifice leading to martyrdom—were regarded as desirable. Personal ambition, in fact, played a large role in the migration of Europeans across the Atlantic in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In contrast, the cultural traditions of Native Americans emphasized the collectivity rather than the individual. Because land and other natural resources were held in common and society was far less hierarchical than in Europe, the accumulative spirit and personal ambition were inappropriate. . . . Hence, individualism was more likely to lead to ostracism than admiration in Indian communities.

Charles V

G. R. Elton

Politically, much of the period between 1516 and 1556 swirls around Charles V. As head of the Hapsburg dynasty, he was King of Spain, Holy Roman Emperor, and ruler of numerous areas within Europe in addition to having control over expanding Spanish holdings overseas. He is best known for his competition with the dynamic Francis I of France and for his leadership of the Catholic cause against the Protestant Reformation. In the following selection from the authoritative The New Cambridge Modern History, G. R. Elton, a prominent historian from Cambridge University, evaluates Charles V's rule and his significance.

Consider: *The ways in which Charles V was in his own times a figure more of the fading past; why the imperial title and authority may have been more of a liability than an asset; how this analysis fits with the painting of Charles V and his speech.*

The emperor ascended the throne of Spain a year before Luther's first public appearance as a danger to the papal government of the Church; he abdicated his many dominions shortly after the Peace of Augsburg. His empire was the last attempt at something like universal secular rule in the medieval manner; for, 'modern' as many parts of his territories were in their organisation and attitude, Charles himself looked upon his position in something of the spirit of Charlemagne—a Charlemagne whose stature is less manifestly heroic and whose dynastic preoccupations stand out rather more clearly. But the comparison is not totally absurd, for the virtue and ability of this greatest of the Habsburgs are becoming increasingly evident; nor is it unhistorical, because it describes a real

SOURCE: G. R. Elton, "Introduction: The Age of Reformation," in *The New Cambridge Modern History*, vol. II, ed. G. R. Elton (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1958), pp. 6–7, 11. Reprinted by permission.

element in Charles's own thinking. If Germany and the imperial title defeated him, it is also worth notice that he preserved the ostensible existence of that massive anachronism at a critical time. If he was out of date in regarding himself as the champion of the Church, it must yet be conceded that his championship (readily reconciled with a high-handed attitude to popes as such) prevented the total lapse of central Europe to Protestantism and in Spain and elsewhere prepared for the revival of Roman Catholicism. Charles's reign was by no means all failure. He failed in his chief ambitions because they were extravagant: there was no prospect of making a reality out of those shadows of power and purpose which clung to the title of Holy Roman Emperor. But he gave some coherence to his vast conglomerate of lands and peoples: he assisted the economic heyday of his Burgundian homeland; he saved the Papacy; and if he was the last of the medieval emperors, he was also the first king of Spain's golden age. . . .

Charles V did believe in his imperial mission. The fight with Protestantism was to him more than a struggle for dynastic ascendancy against disruption: it was a battle for the unity of Catholic Europe. The unity had long ceased to exist—if ever it had existed—and the centre of Charles's physical power, Spain, was the Catholic country least inclined to grant anything to the Papacy; but the emperor still envisaged his task in this grandiose, respectable and impossible light. Of all the many politicians who talked about the Turkish danger and vaguely appealed to Christendom to unite against it, he was the only one willing to translate words into action. Naturally, it may be said that he was also the only one likely to profit by such united action, but this is not altogether true—all Europe would have done well to push the Turk back into Asia—nor does it diminish the element of genuine idealism in Charles's attitude.

However, the days of his ascendancy saw the end of the dream. His imperial title and authority, so far from being an asset, proved an obstacle to the achievement of his more realistic ambitions. Instead of uniting Europe behind himself, he witnessed and in part caused the final disintegration of Germany and maintained a state of almost constant war among the powers. Worst of all, Francis I, by calling in the sultan to assist him, proved the utter emptiness of all that talk of crusades and Christendom. International politics had long (perhaps always) been at heart a matter of power and ambition; now their true character was revealed to the naked eye. But myths have a power to bind, and the myth of Christian unity had exercised a restraining influence which now vanished for good. The assertion of the national state, the rise of national armies, ended the legends of Christendom and chivalry.

Chapter Questions

1. What factors best explain the West's overseas expansion?
2. In what ways was overseas expansion tied to the political and economic developments of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries?
3. What consequences flowed from this interaction of Western and non-Western civilizations?