1. Caravel

The ships used in the early period of European exploration had square sails and were clumsy, and the ships were slow to respond. One reason for this was that in order to fill their sails properly these ships had to travel into the wind at a minimum angle of 67 degrees. Thus, once the ships were caught sailing into the wind, it was difficult, if not impossible, for them to turn around. The Portuguese quickly realized that a new type of ship and new sails were needed. The Portuguese modeled their new ships on this principle and the result was the caravel, which had an axle rudder and earlier models had two to three masts all using lateen sails. Future versions of the ship would have four masts, with the fourth mast forward (the mast closest to the bow) being square-rigged. Two of the three ships in which Christopher Columbus made his voyage in 1492 were caravels, the Niña and the Pinta.

By the end of the fifteenth century, another sail, the sprit sail, was fixed on the bowsprit to help better control the caravel. Furthermore, improvements in both the durability and strength of ropes, a result of newer materials, meant that handling square sails became much easier for sailors. The number of crew members required to handle the ship decreased as a result. Ship builders also adopted the best sailcloth - either cotton or linen canvas - from merchants in Genoa and Marseilles, and this newer fabric had the advantage of being more durable. Beyond the changes to the basic sail structure of Portuguese vessels, builders realized that the stability of the ship's hull must be improved as well. When sailing in storms or high seas, it is essential that the vessel remain waterproof. The deck planks on caravels were placed edge-to-edge (no gap between planks) and were sealed with oakum (shredded hemp) and covered with a layer of tar or pitch. Hatches (that allowed sailors to go below deck) and companionways (stairways from one deck to another) were minimized to help make the ship watertight. Structurally, the hull was reinforced with the use of skids (larger planks fixed to the side of the ship that function much like a bumper on a car) to cushion collisions with the dock when the ship was loading and unloading in port.

Whereas the yard of a square sail pivots on the mast and can turn easily to the required angle with the use of ropes, to swing the foot of a lateen yard behind the mast and rest the sail in another direction when the ship was already beating to windward required a great deal of strength and a large crew. If the sail should happen to break loose during the maneuver, there was the danger that the ship could be turned on its side.
2. Christopher Columbus

Navigator of the first recorded European expedition to cross the Atlantic Ocean in search of the elusive route to Asia, Christopher Columbus landed instead on islands in the Caribbean Sea. His voyage, which was well publicized in Europe, stimulated exploration of what was for 15th-century Europeans an undiscovered world, the Americas. Although Columbus' discovery of the Americas presented undreamed of opportunities for Europeans, it also marked the beginning of several centuries of famine, disease, dislocation, and violence for the Native American peoples already living in the Western Hemisphere.

Columbus was born Cristoforo Columbo in Genoa, Italy in 1451. He received little or no formal education in his youth. He never wrote in Italian but did learn to read and write in Spanish and Portuguese. Columbus took to the sea at a "tender age." His earliest trading voyages were likely to have been to collect supplies of wool or wine. Columbus' idea of sailing west to the Indies seems to have been inspired by three sources: Florentine cosmographer Paolo Toscanelli, Cardinal Pierre d'Ailly's *Image of the World*, and Marco Polo's account of the Far East. Columbus theorized that the world was predominately covered in land and that the distance to Asia was much shorter than previously thought. Although he clearly sought adventure, his primary motivations were most likely the pursuit of honor and wealth. When the king of Portugal rejected Columbus' proposal to finance the voyage, he turned to Spain, where he received high praise and royal patronage for his proposed adventure.

In April 1492, King Ferdinand V and Queen Isabella I of Spain agreed to sponsor the expedition. On the first voyage, Columbus commanded three ships: the *Santa Maria*, the *Pinta*, and the *Niña*. The fleet departed on August 3, 1492 from Palos, Spain. The length of the voyage tested the will of the new explorers, but on October 12, the expedition sighted Guanahani, an island in the Bahamas. Columbus renamed the island San Salvador and claimed it for Spain. The expedition also landed on Cuba and Española (later called Hispaniola, which is now the Dominican Republic and Haiti), where Columbus left 40 men before returning to Spain to an enthusiastic welcome in 1493.

On his return, Isabella commanded Columbus to sail again immediately. Columbus embarked on a second expedition with 17 ships and 1,000 colonists in September 1493. Upon returning to Española, he discovered that the men he had left behind had been killed by the natives. On that second voyage, Columbus landed on the islands of Dominica, Guadeloupe, and Antigua and established the first European settlement in the Americas—the colony of Isabella, near what is now Cape Isabella, in the Dominican Republic. He explored the coast of Cuba in the spring of 1494 and before returning to Spain in June 1496, established a new capital on Española that he called Santo Domingo. It was at the end of that second voyage that many colonists who had sailed with him and then returned to Spain began to express criticism of Columbus and his ventures, but the queen continued to support him.

Columbus was not the first European to land in the Americas.Navigators from Norway, Iceland, or Greenland had settled briefly in Newfoundland in the late 10th or early 11th century. Evidence also exists to suggest that English fishermen may have sighted some part of North America prior to Columbus' first voyage. Columbus' discovery, however, is distinguished from that of other adventurers by its consequences, mainly that Columbus' discoveries in the Western Hemisphere were followed by rapid, widespread, and permanent European settlement.

3. Ferdinand Magellan

Ferdinand Magellan was a Portuguese explorer who, while in the service of Spain, led the first European voyage to circumnavigate the globe.

In 1494, the Treaty of Tordesillas separated the world into two spheres. Everything from Brazil east to the East Indies belonged to Portugal; Spain was open to discover and conquer everything from Brazil westward. Magellan believed that some of the Spice Islands lay within the Spanish sphere of influence, and he proposed an expedition to Charles V, King of Spain, to discover if his belief was true. After much negotiation, Magellan was granted command of an expedition of 560 men and five ships: San Antonio, Trinidad, Concepción, Victoria, and Santiago. Faleiro intended to go along as co-commander but withdrew from the expedition. In his place, Juan de Cartagena was appointed.

Magellan’s fleet left Spain on September 20, 1519 and reached Rio de Janeiro in Brazil on December 13. It explored the South American coastline extensively, hoping to find a river that would connect with the western ocean. The fleet finally decided to winter in the bay of San Julián from March to August 1520. During this stay, the sailors encountered a group of natives they called patagoes, meaning “big feet,” from which the region got the name Patagonia. Also during this stay, the captains of the four other ships quarreled with Magellan because he refused to consult with them on any decisions. A mutiny ensued, and Magellan and his crew killed three of the captains in defense. The Santiago was wrecked, and the crew was taken aboard the four remaining ships.

In August 1520, the fleet left San Julián, heading south. In October, the fleet entered the island-strewn waterway between the tip of South America and Antarctica, presently known as the Strait of Magellan. On November 28, after a stormy, month-long passage through the strait, Magellan reached the western ocean with three ships, as the San Antonio had independently decided to turn back to Spain. In contrast to the choppy seas they left behind, this western ocean seemed calm and peaceful, and so the explorers named it the Pacific. The fleet sailed north through the Pacific until it reached present-day Guam on March 6, 1521. Many members of the crew became ill, particularly from scurvy, a disease caused by a lack of vitamin C. Many sailors died from hunger and thirst before the fleet could resupply in Guam. Sailing farther west, Magellan reached the present-day Philippines and claimed them for the Spanish Empire. On the island of Cebu, Magellan befriended a leader who wished to become a vassal of Spain. Taking a force of 60 men, Magellan went to another island to force its ruler to recognize the sovereignty of the chief of Cebu. An army of 1,000 men fought Magellan’s crew and killed Magellan and several of his men on April 27, 1521.

Although Magellan had failed to reach his intended destination of the Spice Islands, his crew intended to complete the voyage. Before they left, their elected captain and 30 more men were killed by the leader of Cebu. The survivors boarded the Trinidad and the Victoria and continued on their journey, finally reaching the Moluccas on November 8, 1521. The ships took on loads of cloves, a very valuable spice, and set sail. The Trinidad was forced to turn back for repairs, and so the Victoria set out alone on December 21, 1521, continuing to sail west and carefully avoiding Portuguese ships, which considered these trade routes their own. The Victoria made its way around the Cape of Good Hope, and the crew arrived in Seville on September 8, 1522, having become the first Europeans to circumnavigate the globe.

Portuguese navigator Vasco da Gama was the first to sail from Portugal to India and opened up major trading routes for spices and gems.

By 1494, Portuguese navigator Bartolomeu Dias had already navigated around the Cape of Good Hope (tip of Africa), and Christopher Columbus had sailed to the New World. King Manuel I of Portugal entered into a treaty with Ferdinand V and Isabella I of Spain to divide up this world the two nations were discovering. Portugal would take Africa and points east; Spain would be free to take the Americas.

Manuel I hoped to send an expedition to India in order to wrest control of the spice trade from Muslim traders and launch a crusade against Islam. He turned to da Gama to lead the first voyage to India. After several months of planning, da Gama set sail on July 8, 1497 with a fleet of four ships: Sao Gabriel, Sao Rafael, the Berrio, and a storeship.

The fleet rounded the Cape of Good Hope on November 22 and began to sail up the eastern coast of Africa. At Mossel Bay on November 25, they bartered with Hottentots for cattle. Although the relations with the Hottentots began in a friendly manner, they turned sour by the time da Gama's fleet left. The fleet divided the store ship's supplies and crew between the other ships, broke up the store ship, and sailed on.

He arrived in Calicut, India's most important trading center. Da Gama and his crew believed that Indians were Christians, and King Manuel I had hoped to make them allies in a future crusade against Islam. When they were taken to a temple to worship Devaki, mother of the god Krishna, da Gama's men realized they were dealing with no ordinary Christians. The relationship took another hit when the zamorin ruler of Calicut saw the gifts his Portuguese friends had brought. They were cheap trinkets compared with the wealth he knew. The products the Portuguese had brought with them met an equally chilly reception in the market. After a chilly standoff and negotiations that included da Gama taking several hostages, da Gama finally sailed from India with ships laden with precious jewels and spices and a letter promising to trade spices and gems for gold, silver, coral, and scarlet cloth. Da Gama's fleet sailed from India in August 1498, enduring a difficult passage back during which many sailors died. Da Gama finally made it back to Lisbon on September 9, 1499.

Upon his return, da Gama was hailed as a hero. King Manuel granted him titles and estates and a healthy pension. Another voyage to exploit the commercial possibilities of India left Portugal in 1500.

Two years later, da Gama returned to Calicut with a fleet of 20 ships. This time, he bombarded Calicut to force the zamorin to sign a treaty with Portugal. The Portuguese fleet easily defeated a Muslim navy, and da Gama continued on to sack and force treaties on other Indian trading centers. In February 1524, King Joao III, son of Manuel, named da Gama viceroy of Portuguese India, and da Gama made one last voyage around the Cape of Good Hope. Just a few months after his arrival, da Gama died, on December 24, 1524. His remains were returned to Portugal.

Prince Henry of Portugal, called “the Navigator” by the English (but not by the Portuguese), is regarded as one of the initiators of the great age of discovery. Though he himself never actually went on any voyages of exploration, he was a great patron of navigators, explorers, and mapmakers. Through his support, Europeans began their cultural domination of the globe.

He was the third son of King John I and Queen Philippa of Lancaster, an Englishwoman. Henry and his older brothers Duarte and Pedro were educated in literature, statecraft, and the art of war. Henry's military career began under his father's supervision in 1415 with the capture of the Moroccan city of Ceuta.

In 1418, Henry began to investigate the possibilities offered by the Portuguese seacoast and the ships at his command, sponsoring expeditions that rediscovered the islands of Madeira and Porto Santo. Henry thereafter spent the rest of his life sending countless expeditions down the west coast of Africa. His intention was to wrest trade routes from the Muslim grasp and to establish Portuguese colonies. He founded a small court in his capital and invited seamen, cartographers, astronomers, and shipbuilders to come ply their trades.

Progress in exploration by sea was slow in those days, partly due to technological limitations and partly due to ignorance and superstition. For example, Henry's mariners believed that the oceans at the equator were boiling hot and that sea monsters lurked in the waters there. One of Henry's key interests was mapmaking, and around 1450, he established a naval observatory to teach navigation, astronomy, and cartography. He was quite influenced by the predictions of his astrologer, who encouraged his interest in exploration.

Henry was also very keen to spread Christianity throughout the world and to convert pagans if he could. All of his ships bore a red cross on their sails, emblematic of his status with the papacy and of their mission of conversion. Slavery seemed to be an easy way to accomplish evangelism, especially after Pope Nicholas V issued a papal bull in 1452 that allowed the enslavement of pagans and infidels. Henry’s Portuguese sailors began trading for slaves along the west coast of Africa, exchanging glass beads and colored cloth for tribal captives.

Henry's early expeditions, launched from the port of Lagos, were primarily concerned with exploring the Moroccan coast. As his mariners sailed further and further south, however, he was seized with the ambition to discover a southerly route to India, a feat that was not accomplished during his lifetime.

Henry's brother Duarte became king of Portugal in 1433; there is some indication that this pair did not get along very well. Henry's brother Pedro traveled through Europe in the late 1420s, getting close enough to Turkey to see firsthand the threat of Muslim encroachment. In Italy, he acquired a copy of Marco Polo's account of his travels in Asia, which he brought home to Henry in 1428.

The last of Henry's voyages concentrated on trade, though two of his captains did discover the Cape Verde Islands. Two years before his death, he defeated the Moroccan town of Alcácer Ceguer and handled the terms of surrender. Henry was heavily in debt when he died on November 13, 1460 in Vila do Infante near Sagres.

6. Conquistadors

Cortés
As conqueror of the Aztec Empire in Mexico, explorer of Guatemala and Honduras, and leader of the first expeditions to California, Spanish conquistador Hernando Cortés contributed significantly to the establishment of European domination in America. His conquests helped shape the history of the southwestern United States and Mexico. Upon arrival on the Mexican coast, the Aztec emperor, Montezuma II, sent emissaries to observe the Spaniards and after discovering that their main concern was gold, gave them many valuable gold gifts. Cortés decided to conquer that wealthy and populous civilization in the name of the king of Spain for its great wealth and to spread Christianity in a new country. A quick and decisive action by Montezuma would have crushed the Spanish force of 400 men. He delayed, however, supposedly due to a belief that Cortés and the Spaniards, with their horses, beards, and white skin, fulfilled omens predicting the return of the god Quetzalcoatl from exile. An alliance with the Tlaxcalans, rebels against their Aztec overlords, brought Cortés information and troops that would help him defeat the Aztecs. On November 18, 1519, the Spaniards entered Tenochtitlan through an eight-mile long causeway that led across Lake Texcoco to the island city. Cortés committed grave errors against the Aztec culture by looking at that godlike ruler directly and attempting to embrace him. They exchanged gifts: Cortés giving glass beads, and the Aztec emperor presenting his conqueror with a necklace with eight solid gold pendants in the shape of large crustaceans. Cortés imprisoned Montezuma in his own palace, and unknown assailants, perhaps his own people, soon killed the ruler. The empire lost more leaders, as many Aztec nobles were murdered by Spaniards led by Pedro de Alvarado, trapped as they danced at a religious celebration in an enclosed plaza. A smallpox epidemic also decimated the Aztecs. By 1521, the Spaniards had destroyed Tenochtitlan, imprisoning the last emperor, Cuauhtémoc. Cortés and his followers tortured Cuauhtémoc for information on the lost treasure of the Aztec emperors but could not extract the knowledge they sought. Cortés finally hanging the successor to the Aztec Empire in 1524.


Pizarro
Francisco Pizarro was a Spanish conquistador who discovered and conquered the Inca Empire of Peru. Born in poverty in Spain, he became a fearless and ruthless expedition leader in the New World. With a small army of men, Pizarro was able to quickly subdue the Inca. Lured by rumors of free land and kingdoms filled with treasures of gold and silver, Pizarro set off for the New World in the Americas in 1502 when he was 27 years old. He was fascinated by rumors of a highly developed Indian kingdom, abounding with gold and silver, somewhere south of Panama. He knew the fantastic rumors had a high probability of being true because Hernando Cortés had conquered the wealthy Aztec Empire in Mexico only a few years before. Pizarro was joined by two partners, Diego de Almagro, a fellow explorer, and Hernando de Luque, a wealthy priest. They set sail for the Inca Empire in Peru in January 1531 with 180 soldiers and two cannons. Pizarro arrived in the Inca Empire at its most vulnerable moment. The emperor, Atahualpa, was involved in a civil war with Huascar, his brother. Pizarro marched his 180 men into the heart of the mountainous kingdom, arriving to an encampment of 40,000 Inca soldiers. Ruthless with greed, he invited the emperor to meet him in November 1532. Escorted by 6,000 unarmed men, Atahualpa entered the small town to meet the apparently unthreatening Pizarro. All the Incas were massacred, except for the emperor. Pizarro’s strategy was to rule through Atahualpa, as Cortés had ruled through the Aztec emperor in Mexico. Atahualpa had his own strategy, however. He offered a ransom for himself of a roomful of gold. He then had his brother Huascar assassinated so he could not be an alternate emperor. Pizarro countered by collecting the ransom and executing Atahualpa in 1533. Pizarro, his brothers, and their men pillaged the Inca Empire of tremendous amounts of gold and silver, including 10 bars of silver that were 20 feet long, one foot wide, and several inches thick. With their society in chaos and fighting new European illness, the Inca population began to starve. Huascar’s brother became emperor and regrouped the Inca Army. For the next 40 years, they launched a guerrilla war on the Spanish from the mountains.

7. Jacques Cartier

During three voyages in which he hoped, like several adventurers before him, to find a short ocean passage from Europe to China, Jacques Cartier of France explored the St. Lawrence River. His discoveries eventually led to the French colonization of Canada.

By the 1530s, Spain, England, and Portugal had already sponsored sea voyages to find a westward route to Asia, known as the Northwest Passage. Such a route remained elusive, but in the process, parts of the North American continent and nearby islands had been discovered. In 1533, King Francis I of France, who had already commissioned Verrazano's voyage, authorized Cartier to make a voyage to the New World.

On April 20, 1534, Cartier sailed from St. Malo with two small ships. The weather was cooperative, and he crossed the Atlantic Ocean in a short three weeks, approaching the coast of northern Newfoundland. He passed through the Strait of Belle Isle, sailing southward to Prince Edward Island, before heading northwest past the New Brunswick coast. A bout of stormy weather forced him to anchor his ships in a cove off the Gaspe Peninsula. He went ashore and planted a cross, claiming all the land he saw for King Francis.

While near shore, Cartier became one of the first Europeans to encounter North American Indians. He established friendly relations with Chief Donnacona, the head of an Iroquois tribe, who permitted two of his sons to return with Cartier to France. Cartier's little fleet arrived in St. Malo in September 1534. Cartier, however, was eager to return to the New World. The Native Americans had told him of an area that was rich in gold and silver, and Cartier was convinced that the waterway to this land would prove to be the Northwest Passage to Asia.

In May 1535, Cartier went back to the Canadian coast with three ships. In early August, he entered a bay near the Gaspe Peninsula that he named the Bay of St. Lawrence, because the ships had arrived there on the saint's feast day. He sailed up the St. Lawrence River until he reached the foot of a mountain, which he named Mont Real (Mount Royal)—the future site of the city of Montreal. No precious metals were found. The two Native American boys who had acted as his guides were returned to their father. Cartier and his crew spent the winter at a base camp in the area, where conditions were harsh. Before the winter was over, 25 of the 110 men had died.

During the winter months, relations between the French and the Native Americans deteriorated and became violent. Cartier seized 10 Native Americans, including Chief Donnacona, as hostages to ward off tribal attacks. He forced the Native Americans to accompany him during his summer return to France, where he brought them before Francis I. Cartier hoped that the Native Americans' accounts of gold and riches in Canada would persuade the king to sponsor a third expedition.

Five years passed, however, before another trip was organized. By then all of the Native Americans had died, except for one little girl. Francis I commissioned a nobleman, Jean-Francois de La Rocque de Roberval, to set up permanent French colonies in the New World, and he gave Cartier a subordinate role. After Roberval's departure was delayed, however, Cartier set sail in May 1541 as the commander of five ships. Returning to the St. Lawrence, he continued down the river, past Mount Royal, to search (vainly) for gold before setting up camp in what is now Quebec City for the winter.

8. Trade Winds and the Treaty of Tordesillas

**Trade Winds**
In the early fifteenth century, Europeans sailed out of sight of the coastlines of Europe for the first time and ventured into the Atlantic Ocean. In order to navigate, sailors had to learn to harness the wind systems of the Atlantic, which produce a clockwise wind carousel north of the equator and a counterclockwise wind carousel south of the equator. Christopher Columbus used the northern carousel to reach the West Indies in 1492, and Vasco da Gama used both to circumnavigate the Cape of Good Hope and enter the Indian Ocean in 1497. Europeans discovered a very different wind system dominating the Indian Ocean. Monsoon winds, formed as a result of air warming or cooling over the Asian continent, create a seasonal cycle whereby summer winds propel sailors to India and winter winds propel sailors to Africa.

**Treaty of Tordesillas**
After Christopher Columbus arrived in the New World in 1492, conflict arose between Spain and Portugal over land claims. The Treaty of Tordesillas, approved by Pope Alexander VI in 1494, separated the New World into two spheres. Spain acquired the right to discover and conquer everything from Brazil westward, while Portugal’s sphere of influence encompassed everything east of Brazil. It is also called the Pope’s Line of Demarcation.

Very little of the newly divided area had actually been seen by Europeans, as it was only divided via the treaty. Spain gained lands including most of the Americas. The easternmost part of current Brazil was granted to Portugal when Pedro Álvares Cabral landed there while he was en-route to India. Some historians contend that the Portuguese knew of the South American bulge that makes up most of Brazil before this time, so his landing in Brazil was not an accident. The line was not strictly enforced—the Spanish did not resist the Portuguese expansion of Brazil across the meridian. The treaty was rendered meaningless between 1580 and 1640 while the Spanish King was also King of Portugal.

It was evident that little exploration had taken place at the time the treaty was signed because Spain was granted a much larger portion of land. Portugal was only given possession of Brazil. Portugal pushed over the next several hundred years to move the border of Brazil westward. Because the line was not very well defined, the Spanish did not put up any opposition to this Portuguese expansion.
9. Marine Technology

**Speed**

Navigation techniques on these early voyages were rudimentary to say the very least. The speed of the ship was calculated by having one member of the crew throw a chip of wood over the side of the vessel. By judging how far the ship travelled before the object hit the water helped determine how fast the ship was moving. This technique was later changed by attaching a wooden float to a line - known as the "logline" - where knots were tied at measured intervals. When the wooden float was tossed overboard, the speed was calculated by counting the number of knots that slipped through the fingers of the sailor holding the logline. This process, incidentally, gave rise to the calculation of a ship's speed in knots. For the most part, a good captain would rely on the ship's log, his lookout, and his leadsman to determine the location of the ship.

**Compass**

Most ships were equipped with a magnetic compass. Although the compass was in wide use, most captains did not know why its needle pointed north. In fact, many captains preferred to keep the existence of a compass on board a ship secret because superstitious crewmembers would think that the ship was being guided by sinister forces. Nearby was the sand hourglass, which was the only reliable method of keeping time on board the ship - provided that a member of the crew did not heat the hourglass with the lamp, making the sand run faster, in order to shorten his shift.

**Astrolabe**

The mariner's astrolabe, also called sea astrolabe, was an inclinometer used to determine the latitude of a ship at sea by measuring the sun's noon altitude (declination) or the meridian altitude of a star of known declination. Not an astrolabe proper, the mariner's astrolabe was rather a graduated circle with an alidade used to measure vertical angles. They were designed to allow for their use on boats in rough water and/or in heavy winds, which astrolabes are ill equipped to handle.

In order to use the astrolabe, the navigator would hold the instrument by the ring at the top. This caused the instrument to remain in a vertical plane. He would align the plane of the astrolabe to the direction of the object of interest. The alidade was aligned to point at the object and the altitude was read off the outer degree scale.

If observing a dim object such as a star, the navigator would observe the object directly through the alidade. If observing the sun, it was both safer and easier to allow the shadow of one of the alidade's vanes to be cast onto the opposite vane.

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10. The Caribbean and Brazil

The Caribbean

Upon discovering a new territory in the Caribbean, the Spanish expeditions were usually, but not always, greeted by friendly inhabitants. During this initial stage the Europeans would survey the area and the people to determine their potential for exploitation. Within a short period of time the inhabitants would grow to resent the Spanish who helped themselves to ‘the natives’ food, women and gold. Such abuses were common in Spanish cross-cultural contact and provoked violent reactions by various indigenous populations. On the island of Hispaniola a group of tribal leaders, joined forces to expel the Spaniards from the island. The Spaniards, who had the benefit of muskets and armor, ruthlessly put these uprisings down and took captive the tribal leaders to ensure native co-operation. Once native resistance was crushed the Spanish forced the villages to grow cash crops, pay tribute, and mine for their precious gold. The Spanish regime was brutal and violent. Rapes and massacres were casual and frequent in occurrence, rationalized by a racist worldview that justified the exploitation of non-Christians or non-whites.

Brazil

Brazil was discovered by accident when a Portuguese expedition to India, led by Pedro Alvares Cabral, swung too far westward in 1500. It remained virtually ignored by the Crown for twenty-five years because it lacked the rich trade cities found in Asia and it had no ready supplies of precious metals. Furthermore, there were no indigenous empires to manipulate, as there were in Mexico and Peru, and the native population was too few in number to provide a dependable source of slave labour. The discovery of Brazil wood, the source of red dye, much in demand by the European textile industry, was incentive for founding the colony and provided its name. The fear that Brazil might fall into French hands accelerated settlement efforts by the Portuguese Crown.

By 1533 the Crown began to follow the precedent of the Portuguese Atlantic colonies of Madeira and the Azores, by placing the burden of the cost of colonization on the shoulders of private individuals. These individuals were noblemen who incurred the cost of pioneering settlement in exchange for extensive powers and privileges granted to them by the Portuguese Crown. The noblemen received the hereditary title of captain and lord proprietor (donatário) of his area and agreed to administer and develop the territory. This institution was known as the donatary captaincy and evolved in the Atlantic colonies to facilitate the production of sugar on large sugar mill plantations. Portuguese colonists proved to be adaptable and had no single preconceived imperial policy. They used whatever techniques were appropriate to gain their objectives whether it was conversion, co-operation, threats, or force.

In 1549 the Crown sent an expedition to establish a royal government in Brazil. This expedition included six Jesuits, the first of the regular Catholic orders in Brazil. The Jesuits and the royal government collaborated to firmly establish a centralized government and a missionary church whose primary goal was the conversion of the indigenous population. This proved to be difficult and the Jesuits began bringing “Indians” (Columbus’ highly inaccurate term) to live in Jesuit controlled villages designed according to a European model. The Indians often chose flight rather than the regulated life of the Jesuits. It was clear by 1570’s that the Indian population was not a dependable source of labor for the expanding sugar complex, thus African slaves became the primary source of labor in Brazil. By 1600 the transition to African labor in the sugar plantations of coastal Brazil was complete and Brazil became the world’s leading sugar producer.

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