The Worlds of the Fifteenth Century

CHAPTER LEARNING OBJECTIVES

• To step back and consider the variety of human experiences in the fifteenth century

• To compare conditions in China and Europe on the cusp of the modern world

• To encourage students to consider why Europe came to dominate the world in the modern era, and how well this could have been predicted in 1500

• To examine the Islamic world in the fifteenth century

• To provide a preview of important trends to come in the modern world

CHAPTER OUTLINE

I. Opening Vignette

A. Columbus’s legacy has been the subject of much debate.
   1. his reputation as heroic discoverer has been challenged
   2. emphasis has been placed on the history of death, slavery, racism, and exploitation that followed his voyage
   3. reminder that the past is as unpredictable as the future

B. Even though Columbus’s voyage is arguably the most important single event of the fifteenth century, many other developments were occurring across the globe at the same time.

C. This chapter’s purpose is to review the human story up to the sixteenth century and to establish a baseline against which to measure the transformations of the period 1500–2000.

II. The Shapes of Human Communities

A. In 1500, the world still had all types of societies, from bands of gatherers and hunters to empires, but the balance between them was different from what it had been in 500.

B. Paleolithic Persistence: Australia and North America
   1. gathering and hunting societies (Paleolithic peoples) still existed throughout all of Australia, much of Siberia, the arctic coastlands, and parts of Africa and the Americas
   2. they had changed over time, interacted with their neighbors
   3. example of Australian gatherers and hunters
      a. some 250 separate groups
b. had assimilated outside technologies and ideas, e.g., outrigger canoes, fish hooks, netting techniques, artistic styles, rituals, mythological concepts
c. had not adopted agriculture
d. manipulated their environment through “firestick farming”
e. exchanged goods over hundreds of miles
f. developed sophisticated sculpture and rock painting

4. northwest coast of North America developed very differently
   a. abundant environment allowed development of a complex gathering and hunting culture
   b. had permanent villages, economic specialization, hierarchies that sometimes included slavery, chiefdoms, food storage

5. elsewhere, farming had advanced and absorbed Paleolithic lands

C. Agricultural Village Societies: The Igbo and the Iroquois
   1. predominated in much of North America, in parts of the Amazon River basin, Southeast Asia, and Africa south of the Equator
   2. their societies mostly avoided oppressive authority, class inequalities, and seclusion of women typical of other civilizations
   3. example of forested region in present-day southern Nigeria
      a. by fifteenth century Yoruba and Benin people had begun to develop small states and urban centers
      b. Igbo peoples: dense population and trade, but purposely rejected kingship and state building
      c. Igbo instead relied on title societies, woman’s associations, and hereditary ritual experts to create a stateless society
      d. Yoruba, Bini, and Igbo peoples traded among themselves and beyond

   e. the region shared common artistic traditions
   f. all shifted from matrilineal to patrilineal system

4. in what is now central New York State, agricultural village societies underwent substantial change in the centuries before 1500
   a. Iroquois speakers had become fully agricultural (maize and beans) by around 1300
   b. population growth, emergence of distinct peoples
   c. rise of warfare as key to male prestige (perhaps since women did the farming, so males were no longer needed for getting food)
   d. warfare triggered the creation of the Iroquois confederation
   e. some European colonists appreciated Iroquois values of social equality and personal freedom (even for women)

D. Pastoral Peoples: Central Asia and West Africa
   1. Turkic warrior Timur (Tamerlane) tried to restore the Mongol Empire ca. 1400
      a. his army devastated Russia, Persia, and India
      b. Timur died in 1405, while preparing an invasion of China
      c. his successors kept control of the area between Persia and Afghanistan for a century
      d. Timur’s conquest was the last great military success of Central Asian nomads
   2. in the following centuries, the steppe nomads’ homeland was swallowed up in expanding Russian and Chinese empires
   3. African pastoralists remained independent from established empires for several centuries longer (until late nineteenth century)
   4. example of the Fulbe (West Africa’s largest pastoral society)
a. gradual eastward migration after 1000 C.E.
b. usually lived in small communities among agriculturalists
c. gradually adopted Islam
d. some moved to towns and became noted religious leaders
e. series of jihads in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries created new states ruled by the Fulbe

III. Civilizations of the Fifteenth Century: Comparing China and Europe

A. By the fifteenth century C.E., a majority of the world’s population lived within a major civilization.

B. Ming Dynasty China
1. China had been badly disrupted by Mongol rule and the plague
2. recovery under the Ming dynasty (1368–1644)
   a. effort to eliminate all signs of foreign rule
   b. promotion of Confucian learning
   c. Emperor Yongle (r. 1402–1422) sponsored an 11,000-volume Encyclopedia summarizing all the wisdom of the past
3. reestablished the civil service examination system
4. created a highly centralized government
   a. great power was given to court eunuchs
   b. state restored land to cultivation, constructed waterworks, planted perhaps a billion trees
   c. was perhaps the best-governed and most prosperous civilization of the fifteenth century
5. maritime ventures
   a. Chinese sailors and traders had become important in the South China Sea and in Southeast Asian ports in the eleventh century
   b. Emperor Yongle commissioned a massive fleet; launched in 1405
   c. Chinese government abruptly stopped the voyages in 1433; many had regarded them as waste of resources
d. Chinese merchants and craftsmen continued to settle and trade in Japan, Philippines, Taiwan, and Southeast Asia, but without government support

C. European Comparisons: State Building and Cultural Renewal
1. a similar process of demographic recovery, consolidation, cultural flowering, and European expansion took place in Western Europe
2. European population began to rise again ca. 1450
3. state building, but fragmented, with many independent and competitive states
4. the Renaissance: reclamation of classical Greek traditions
   a. began in the commercial cities of Italy ca. 1350–1500
   b. “returning to the sources” as a cultural standard to imitate
   c. turn to greater naturalism in art (e.g., Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, Michelangelo)
d. “humanist” scholars explored secular topics in addition to religious matters
5. Christine de Pizan wrote against misogyny
6. Renaissance thinkers more concerned with describing the world as it is rather than exploring eternal truths

D. European Comparisons: Maritime Voyaging
1. Portuguese voyages of discovery began in 1415
2. 1492: Columbus reached the Americas
3. 1497–1498: Vasco da Gama sailed around Africa to India
4. European voyages were very small compared to Chinese ones
5. unlike the Chinese voyages, Europeans were seeking wealth, converts, allies in Crusades against Islam
6. Europeans used violence to carve out empires
7. Chinese voyages ended; European ones kept escalating
   a. no overarching political authority in Europe to end the voyages
   b. rivalry between states encouraged more exploration
   c. much of European elite interested in overseas expansion
   d. China had everything it needed; Europeans wanted the greater riches of the East
   e. China’s food production could expand internally; European system expanded by acquiring new lands

IV. Civilizations of the Fifteenth Century: The Islamic World
   A. The long-fragmented Islamic world crystallized into four major states or empires.
   B. In the Islamic Heartland: The Ottoman and Safavid Empires
      1. Ottoman Empire lasted from fourteenth to early twentieth century
         a. huge territory: Anatolia, eastern Europe, much of Middle East, North African coast, lands around Black Sea
         b. sultans claimed the title “caliph” and the legacy of the Abbasids
         c. effort to bring new unity to the Islamic world
      2. Ottoman aggression toward Christian lands
         a. fall of Constantinople in 1453
         b. 1529 siege of Vienna
         c. Europeans feared Turkish expansion
      3. Safavid Empire emerged in Persia from a Sufi religious order
         a. empire was established shortly after 1500
         b. imposed Shia Islam as the official religion of the state
      4. Sunni Ottoman Empire and Shia Safavid Empire fought periodically between 1534 and 1639

C. On the Frontiers of Islam: The Songhay and Mughal Empires
   1. Songhay Empire rose in West Africa in the second half of the fifteenth century
      a. Islam was limited largely to urban elites
      b. Sonni Ali (r. 1465–1492) followed Muslim practices, but was also regarded as a magician with an invisibility charm
      c. Songhay Empire was a major center of Islamic learning/trade
   2. Mughal Empire in India was created by Turkic group that invaded India in 1526
      a. over the sixteenth century, Mughals gained control of most of India
      b. effort to create a partnership between Hindus and Muslims
      c. Hindu kingdom of Vijayanagara continued to flourish in the south

D. The age of these four great Muslim empires is sometimes called a “second flowering of Islam.”
   1. new age of energy, prosperity, and cultural brilliance
   2. spread of Islam to new areas, such as Southeast Asia
   3. rise of Malacca as a sign of the times—became a major Muslim port city in the fifteenth century
      a. Malaccan Islam blended with Hindu/Buddhist traditions
      b. was a center for Islamic learning

V. Civilizations of the Fifteenth Century: The Americas
   A. Both the Aztec and the Inca empires were established by once-marginal peoples who took over and absorbed older cultures.
   B. The Aztec Empire
      1. the Mexica were a seminomadic people who migrated southward from northern Mexico
         a. established themselves on an island in Lake Texcoco by 1325
b. built themselves up and established capital city of Tenochtitlán

2. Triple Alliance (1428): Mexica and two other city-states united
   a. launched a program of military conquest
   b. conquered much of Mesoamerica in under a century
   c. Aztec rulers claimed descent from earlier peoples

3. Aztec Empire was a loosely structured, unstable conquest state
   a. population of 5–6 million
   b. conquered peoples paid regular tribute
   c. Tenochtitlán had 150,000–200,000 people
   d. local and long-distance trade on a vast scale

4. trade included slaves, many intended for sacrifice
   a. human sacrifice much more prominent in Aztec Empire than in earlier Mesoamerica
   b. Tlacaelel is credited with crystallizing ideology of state, giving human sacrifice such importance

5. created an important philosophical/poetic tradition focused on the fragility of human life

C. The Inca Empire

1. Quechua speakers established the Inca Empire along the length of the Andes
   a. empire was 2,500 miles long
   b. around 10 million subjects

2. Inca Empire was more bureaucratic, centralized than the Aztecs
   a. emperor was an absolute ruler regarded as divine
   b. state theoretically owned all land and resources
   c. around 80 provinces, each with an Inca governor
   d. subjects grouped into hierarchical units of people (10, 50, 100, 500, etc.), at least in the central regions

3. Incas attempted cultural integration
   a. leaders of conquered peoples had to learn Quechua
   b. sons were taken to Cuzco (the capital) for acculturation
   c. subjects had to acknowledge major Inca deities

4. almost everyone had to perform labor service (mita) for the Inca state
   a. work on state farms, herding, mining, military service, state construction
   b. also production of goods for the state
   c. state provided elaborate feasts in return

5. the state played a large role in distribution of goods

D. Both the Inca and Aztec civilizations practiced "gender parallelism."

1. women and men operated in "separate but equivalent spheres"
2. parallel religious cults for women and men
3. parallel hierarchies of female and male political officials (especially among Incas)
4. women’s household tasks were not regarded as inferior
5. still, men had top positions in political and religious life
6. glorification of the military probably undermined gender parallelism
7. Inca ruler and his wife governed jointly, were descended from sun and moon, respectively

VI. Webs of Connection

A. Large-scale political systems brought together culturally different people.

B. Religion both united and divided far-flung peoples.

1. common religious culture of Christendom, but divided into Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy
2. Buddhism linked people in China, Korea, Tibet, Japan, and parts of Southeast Asia
3. Islam was particularly good at bringing together its people
   a. the annual hajj
   b. yet conflict within the umma persisted
C. Patterns of trade were certainly evident in the fifteenth century.
   1. trade was going on almost everywhere
   2. the balance of Afro-Eurasian trade was changing
      a. the Silk Road network was contracting
      b. ocean trade in the west Atlantic/Indian Ocean picked up
VII. A Preview of Coming Attractions: Looking Ahead to the Modern Era (1500–2012)
A. No fifteenth-century connections were truly global.
   1. those came only with European expansion in the sixteenth century
   2. 1500–2000: inextricable linking of the worlds of Afro-Eurasia, the Americas, and Pacific Oceania
B. “Modern” human society emerged first in Europe in the nineteenth century and then throughout the world.
   1. core feature: industrialization
   2. accompanied by massive population increase
   3. societies favored holders of urban wealth over rural landowning elites
   4. states became more powerful and intrusive
   5. opening up of public and political life to more of the population
   6. self-conscious departure from tradition
   7. the modernity revolution was as important as the Agricultural Revolution
      a. introduced new divisions and conflicts, new economic inequalities
      b. destruction of older patterns of human life
C. The prominence of European peoples on the global stage grew over the last 500 years.
   1. after 1500, Western Europe became the most innovative, prosperous, powerful, imitated part of the world
   2. spread of European languages and Christian religion throughout the world
   3. initiated the Scientific Revolution and the Industrial Revolution
   4. origin of modern -isms: liberalism, nationalism, feminism, socialism
   5. rest of the world was confronted by powerful, intrusive Europeans

VIII. Reflections: What If? Chance and Contingency in World History
A. Might history have been shaped, at least at certain points, by coincidence, chance, or the decisions of a few?
   1. What if Ogodei Khan hadn’t died in 1241 and the Mongols had continued their advance into Europe?
   2. What if China had continued maritime exploration after 1433?
   3. What if the Ottomans had taken Vienna in 1529?
B. It’s worthwhile to sometimes take a “what if” approach to history.

CHAPTER QUESTIONS

Following are answer guidelines for the Big Picture Questions, Seeking the Main Point Question, Margin Review Questions, Portrait Question, and Documents and Visual Sources Feature Questions that appear in the textbook chapter. For your convenience, the questions and answer guidelines are also available in the Computerized Test Bank.

Big Picture Questions

1. Assume for the moment that the Chinese had not ended their maritime voyages in 1433. How might the subsequent development of world history have been different? What value is there in asking this kind of “what if” or counterfactual question?
   • If they had continued, Chinese maritime voyages could have had a profound impact on the course of world history. China was the richest, most prosperous, and most technologically advanced civilization in the world at that time, and it would be reasonable to think that, if the Chinese had aggressively competed with their European
counterparts, they likely would have prevailed as the preeminent maritime power in the world. This would have had profound implications for the course of world history, most likely limiting the influence of Western Europe and of Christianity on other regions of the globe and increasing Chinese cultural, economic, and political influences beyond East Asia.

- The usefulness of counterfactual questions is debatable. They do allow one both to highlight the role of contingency in the course of human history and to highlight the difficulty of predicting the future because of contingency. Moreover, counterfactual questions go beyond mere speculation, because they encourage students to think of what was possible in light of known historical facts. Thus a good “what if” question can help scholars think their way into historical reality and to hone their analytical skills. Still, no one can fully predict what the consequences of a change in events would have been, and in any case, the reality of the situation as it happened is the subject of history.

2. How does this chapter distinguish among the various kinds of societies that comprised the world of the fifteenth century? What other ways of categorizing the world’s peoples might work as well or better?

- This chapter organizes societies in two ways. First, it organizes them into Paleolithic peoples, agricultural village societies, herding peoples, and established civilizations and empires. It then organizes those civilizations by region.
- There are other alternatives, including organization by cultural region—Chinese, Indian, Islamic, Mesoamerican, and Christian. Another possibility would have been organization through webs of connections, starting with a single society and radiating out to an exploration of its nearer and more distant contacts.

3. What common patterns might you notice across the world of the fifteenth century? And what variations in the historical trajectories of various regions can you identify?

- In terms of patterns, in many regions gatherer hunter and agricultural societies persisted but were in decline.
- Empires were a growing influence on world history.
- Some religions were spreading across cultural boundaries.
- Long-distance commerce and exchange was having a growing impact on the development of civilization.
- Variations in trajectories would include the relatively rapid commercialization of certain regions which had access to and were actively participating in long-distance trade.
- The emergence of powerful states in some regions but not others.
- No equivalent in the Americas to the widespread conversion of populations to Buddhism, Islam, and to a lesser extent Christianity and Hinduism in the Afro-Eurasian world.
- The relative isolation of the Americas in terms of networks of exchange.
- The continued dominance of gatherer hunter societies on the continent of Australia.

4. **Looking Back:** What would surprise a knowledgeable observer from 500 or 1000 C.E., were he or she to make a global tour in the fifteenth century? What features of that earlier world might still be recognizable?

- Several changes would undoubtedly have surprised a knowledgeable observer, including the emergence of Islam, Japan, of states in Southeast Asia, of powerful empires in West Africa, and of Russia and the spread of Christianity into that region. The revival of China and Western Europe and the collapse of the Byzantine Empire would also have been surprising.
- However, some features of that earlier world would still be recognizable, such as the persistence of Paleolithic, agricultural village, and herding societies; the continuance, albeit at a more intense rate, of long-distance commerce and exchange; and the persistence of broad cultural traditions, especially in the Mesoamerican, Andean, Chinese, European, and Indian civilizations.

**Seeking the Main Point Question**

Q. What predictions about the future might a global traveler in the fifteenth century have reasonably made?

- A global traveler of the fifteenth century might have predicted that Islam, Buddhism, and perhaps Christianity would continue to spread.
- The established cultural regions of China, India, the Islamic world, Christian Europe, the
Andes, and Mesoamerica would continue to develop and expand.
- Long-distance commerce and exchange would continue to have an important impact on the development of civilizations.
- Empires would continue to have a growing influence on world history.
- The regions occupied by Paleolithic, agricultural village, and herding societies would continue to shrink.

Margin Review Questions

Q. In what ways did the gathering and hunting people of Australia differ from those of the northwest coast of North America?
- The gathering and hunting people of the northwest coast of North America possessed permanent village settlements with large and sturdy houses, considerable economic specialization, ranked societies that sometimes included slavery, chiefdoms dominated by powerful clan leaders, and extensive storage of food. None of those features were part of Australian gathering and hunting societies.

Q. What kinds of changes were transforming the societies of the West African Igbo and the North American Iroquois as the fifteenth century unfolded?
- In West Africa, two distinct patterns of political development were taking shape among agricultural village societies, with the Yoruba and Benin peoples creating small states and urban centers and the Igbo peoples relying on other institutions—title societies, women’s associations, hereditary ritual experts serving as mediators, a balance of power among kinship groups—to maintain social cohesion beyond the level of the village.
- In addition, the Yoruba, Benin, and Igbo peoples traded actively among themselves as well as with more distant peoples and changed from a matrilineal to a patrilineal system of tracing their descent.

Q. How would you define the major achievements of Ming dynasty China?
- Under the Ming dynasty, China recovered from the disruption caused by Mongol rule and the ravages of the plague to become perhaps the best-governed and most prosperous of the world’s major civilizations.
- China also undertook the largest and most impressive maritime expeditions the world had ever seen.
Q. What political and cultural differences stand out in the histories of fifteenth-century China and Western Europe? What similarities are apparent?

- Political consolidation occurred in both China and Western Europe, but in China this meant a unitary and centralized government that encompassed almost the whole of its civilization, while in Europe a decidedly fragmented system of many separate, independent, and competitive states made for a sharply divided Christendom.
- While both experienced cultural flowering, Europe’s culture after the Renaissance was rather more different from its own recent past than Ming dynasty China was from its pre-Mongol glory.
- While both sent out ships to explore the wider world, their purposes in doing so were very different.

Q. In what ways did European maritime voyaging in the fifteenth century differ from that of China? What accounts for these differences?

- Chinese exploration was undertaken by an enormous fleet composed of several hundred large ships, while European explorations were undertaken by expeditions made up of a handful of small ships.
- European motivations for exploration included the desire for wealth from trade, the search for converts to Christianity, and the recruitment of possible Christian allies against the Muslim powers. China, by contrast, needed no military allies, required little in the way of trade, and had no desire to convert foreigners to Chinese culture or religion.
- The Europeans sought to monopolize by force the commerce of the Indian Ocean and violently carved out empires in the Americas; the Chinese fleet sought neither conquests nor colonies.
- China ended its voyages abruptly after 1433; the European explorations continued and even escalated.
- In terms of why China’s explorations were so different from their European counterparts, the fragmentation of political authority in Europe, unlike China’s unified empire, ensured that once begun, rivalry alone would drive Europeans to the ends of the earth.
- Much of Europe’s elite, including merchants, monarchs, the clergy, and nobles, had an interest in overseas expansion; in China, by contrast, the emperor Yongle was the primary supporter of the Chinese voyages of exploration, and after he passed from the scene, those opposed to the voyages prevailed within the politics of the court.

- The Chinese were very much aware of their own antiquity, believed strongly in the absolute superiority of their culture, and felt that, should they need something from abroad, others would bring it to them. The Europeans also believed themselves unique; however, in material terms, they were seeking out the greater riches of the East, and they were highly conscious that Muslim power blocked easy access to these treasures and posed a military and religious threat to Europe itself.

Q. What differences can you identify among the four major empires in the Islamic world of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries?

- The Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal empires had Turkic origins, while the Songhay Empire did not.
- The Ottoman and Safavid empires ruled over the heartland of the Muslim world, where a majority of their subjects followed Islam; the Mughal and Songhay empires ruled over regions where Islam was a minority faith.
- The rulers of the Safavid Empire were the only ones to impose a Shia version of Islam as the official religion of the state.

Q. Summing Up So Far: In what ways do the civilizations of China, Europe, and the Islamic world in the fifteenth century seem to be moving in the same direction, and in what respects were they diverging from one another?

- In terms of moving in the same direction, the routes that connected these civilizations were strengthening.
- All were developing new technologies and adopting technologies and crops from the other regions, although the relative impact of borrowed technologies and crops varied from region to region.
- In terms of divergence, their political systems were very different. Europe was the most politically fragmented region with China being the most unified.
- Each region continued to adhere to a different faith and possessed distinct cultural traditions which were developing in distinct directions.

Q. What distinguished the Aztec and Inca empires from each other?

- The Inca Empire was much larger than its Aztec counterpart.
- The Aztec Empire controlled only part of the Mesoamerican cultural region, while at its height the
Inca state encompassed practically the whole of the Andean civilization.
- In the Aztec realm, the Mexica rulers largely left their conquered people alone, and no elaborate administrative system arose to integrate the conquered territories or to assimilate their people to Aztec culture. The Incas, on the other hand, erected a more bureaucratic empire.
- The Aztec Empire extracted substantial tribute in the form of goods from its subject populations, while the Incas primarily extracted labor services from their subjects.
- The Aztec Empire had a system of commercial exchange that was based on merchants and free markets, whereas the Inca government played a major role in both the production and distribution of goods.
- The authority of the state penetrated and directed the Incas’ society and economy far more than that of the Aztecs.

Q. How did Aztec religious thinking support the empire?
- The ideology of state that gave human sacrifice great religious importance shaped the techniques of Aztec warfare, which put a premium on capturing prisoners rather than on killing the enemy.
- Priests and rulers became interdependent, with human sacrifices carried out for political ends.
- Massive sacrificial rituals served to impress enemies, allies, and subjects alike with the immense power of the Aztecs and their gods.

Q. In what ways did Inca authorities seek to integrate their vast domains?
- The emperor was an absolute ruler and was regarded as divine.
- In theory, the state owned all land and resources.
- Subjects were organized, at least in the central regions of the empire, into hierarchical units of 10, 50, 100, 500, 1,000, and 10,000 people, each headed by local officials, who were supervised by an Inca governor or by the emperor.
- An imperial office of “inspectors” checked on provincial authorities.
- Births, deaths, marriages, and other population data were carefully recorded.
- A resettlement program moved one-quarter or more of the population to new locations.
- Leaders of conquered peoples were required to learn Quechua, and their sons were removed to the capital of Cuzco for instruction in Inca culture and language.
- Subject peoples were required to acknowledge major Inca deities, although once they did so, they were largely free to carry on their own religious traditions.
- The Inca Empire played a major role in the production and distribution of goods.

Q. In what different ways did the peoples of the fifteenth century interact with one another?
- They interacted through webs of empire, large-scale political systems that brought together a variety of culturally different people; through webs of religion that linked far-flung peoples; and through long-established patterns of trade among peoples occupying different environments and producing different goods.

Portrait Questions

Q. How might you describe the arc of Zheng He’s life? What were its major turning points?
- Zheng He’s childhood was troubled with the death of his father and collapse of the Mongol regime which his family supported.
- His castration and appointment to serve the future Chinese emperor Yongle proved an opportunity as his success as a military leader brought him important positions at the Chinese imperial court.
- Appointment as commander of the emperor’s oceangoing fleet between 1405 and 1433 C.E. put him in charge of one of the greatest maritime undertakings in history to that point.
- In terms of turning points, Zheng He’s birth coincided with the end of Mongol rule in China.
- His castration provided an entry point into imperial service.
- His success serving the future emperor Yongle was rewarded with important positions in the imperial court.
- His appointment as head of the imperial oceangoing fleet at an extraordinary time in its history ensured that he would be remembered in history.

Q. How did Zheng He’s castration shape his life?
- Castration brought with it the opportunity for imperial service. It was this service that secured him
powerful positions at the imperial court and ultimately command of the imperial oceangoing fleet.

Using the Documents and Visual Sources Features

Following are answer guidelines for the headnote questions and Using the Evidence questions that appear in the documents and visual sources essays located at the end of the textbook chapter.

Headnote Questions

Document 12.1: Diego Duran on the Aztecs

Q. What do Moctezuma’s laws tell us about the social and moral values of the Aztecs?

- Moctezuma’s laws provide several insights into Aztec moral values, including that success as a warrior was an important avenue to social advancement and social prestige, as was becoming a priest. Some government servants, such as the prime minister, also possessed social prestige.
- As for moral values, the laws indicate that hard work, strict morality, and chastity were valued in young men; adultery was considered a crime; and theft was punished.

Q. Based on these two excerpts, how would you describe Aztec society? What distinct social groups or classes can you identify? How were they distinguished from one another? What opportunities for social mobility were available? How might people fall into slavery?

- Aztec society was highly stratified, with finely graded scales of status. It put a great deal of emphasis on valor in war. Priests and wealthy merchants also played important roles. The king was a powerful figure who was separated from society both physically and through dress and other symbols, but during times of war these distinctions were reduced, since important warriors were allowed to wear some royal symbols.
- Students should be able to identify several social classes: the king, twelve great lords, great noblemen, brave captains, the prime minister; soldiers, judges (judges of the supreme council, regular court judges, and municipal judges), district officials, constables, councilmen, teachers of young men, and priests.
- Social grades were finely distinguished through headgear; the wearing of sandals in the palace; clothing, including the color, type of fabric, brocading, and feather decoration; the types of materials used in making labrets, ear plugs, and nose plugs; the building of two-story houses; reception rooms in the royal palace; and the awarding of great honors, rewards, weapons, and insignia by the king for acts of valor in war.
- Social mobility was available primarily through valor and leadership in war; by becoming a priest, a prime minister, a wealthy merchant, or a trader dealing in things of importance, renown, and high value.
- People could fall into slavery if convicted of theft, by losing at a gambling game, or through debt.
- A father could sell a son or daughter who was “incorrigible, disobedient, shameless, dissolute, incapable of receiving counsel or advice” (p. 596); and at times of famine families could sell members of their family into slavery.

Q. What impressed Duran about the markets operating within the Aztec Empire?

- Duran was impressed with how inviting, pleasurable, and gratifying the markets were to those who attended them; by the large numbers of people who attended; and by the monopoly on trade that the markets enjoyed because of laws, fear of divine retribution, and fear of misfortune.

Q. How was human sacrifice related to war, to market activity, to slavery, and to religious belief and practice?

- Prisoners of war were sacrificed.
- Some sacrificial victims were slaves provided to the temples by rich merchants who gained fame for this act, much like the valorous soldiers who brought captives for sacrifice.
- The selection describes in detail the religious practice of offering human sacrifice to Huitzilopochtli; the ritual was conducted by five priests on an altar in a temple, where beating human hearts were offered to Huitzilopochtli’s image. As part of this practice, the soldiers who had captured those sacrificed distributed the bodies so that they could be eaten in celebration on the feast day.

Q. Duran’s accounts of Aztec life and history were written more than fifty years after the Spanish conquest of the Aztec Empire. To what extent do you think this compromises his efforts to describe preconquest Aztec society?
• Students could emphasize that Duran did not directly witness the practices that he describes. His perspective of this civilization is one of a Spanish Christian member of a conquering society.

• Despite these potential problems, Duran’s document is in large part free of language that would leave students suspicious of the accuracy of his observations, which are based on the accounts of indigenous peoples.

Document 12.2: Pedro de Cieza de Léon on the Incas

Q. How would you describe Cieza’s posture toward the Inca Empire? What in particular did he seem to appreciate about it?

• Overall, Cieza’s posture toward the Inca Empire is positive.

• He was struck by the Inca’s means of securing the loyalty of subject peoples; by their use of local elites to rule; and by their ability to enforce the law.

• He also appreciated their accounting system; their central administration, including representatives from the provinces; and their warehouse system for stockpiling supplies.

• In addition, he was impressed by the tours the Inca ruler made of his kingdom.

Q. Based on this account, what difficulties did the Inca rulers face in governing their large and diverse realm?

• The sheer size of the empire

• The number of local languages spoken by subject peoples

• Enforcing the law

• Controlling and overseeing local elites who administered the regions

• Civil wars between provinces

• Conspiracies and mutinies

• War

• Periodic food shortages

• Addressing the needs of the poor

Q. What policies or practices did the Inca authorities follow in seeking to integrate their empire? How do these compare with other empires that you have studied?

• The Inca authorities moved a portion of conquered people to another part of their realm, and kept local chieftains in charge.

• When they occupied a new region peacefully, they ensured that their soldiers did not pillage the newly conquered people, and delivered food or other supplies when needed to win their favor.

• When they conquered a region by force of arms, they ordered their troops to spare the crops and houses of the enemy. They also released war prisoners after the conquest and returned seized property.

• They put local rulers back in charge and gave them gifts of beautiful women and fine pieces of wool or gold.

• They tolerated local religious customs, requiring only that they also worship the sun as god, rule by the laws and customs that prevailed in Cuzco, and speak the Inca language.

• They kept representatives from every province in their capital.

• They had a complex accounting and auditing system that kept close track of tribute payments.

• The Inca emperor traveled his realm, inquiring about the state of the people and righting injustices; judges who traveled the empire provided recourse to imperial law.

• The storehouse system, which stockpiled supplies for war, provided relief to the poor and supplies during lean years.

• The Inca Empire was similar to others in that it conquered some of its subject peoples; forced portions of subject populations to migrate; used local conquered elites to administer regions; tolerated local religious customs; oversaw local administrators through the use of auditors; possessed a tradition of the ruler visiting provinces; promoted an official language and religious cult; and had a strong centralized legal system and a storehouse system designed to stockpile supplies for war or lean years.

• However, the Inca Empire was more centralized than most empires, and it promoted private economic activity less than most other empires.

Q. Some modern observers have described the Inca Empire as “totalitarian” or “socialist.” Do such terms seem appropriate? How else might you describe the Inca state?

• The critical features of totalitarian regimes are that power is focused in the hands of a single ruler and government is centralized. The Incan emperor did seek to focus power in his hands and, for the fifteenth century, the Inca government was remarkably centralized, with provincial representatives at court, a centralized auditing system to keep track of tribute, a system of imperial inspectors that sought to keep the emperor informed,
a remarkably detailed system for recording births, deaths, and marriages, and a relatively centralized judicial system. However, the Inca Empire did not succeed in concentrating power in the emperor or centralizing its governmental institutions to the extent of modern totalitarian regimes.

- A critical feature of a socialist system is that the means of production, distribution, and exchange are owned by society as a whole. The Inca economic system was remarkably centralized with state control; a labor system that forced the whole population to work on government farms, construction projects, or in government industries; the distribution of goods through government warehouses that stockpiled supplies for the needs of society, including war, poor relief, and famine relief; and a lack of a wealthy private merchant elite. Moreover, the government in theory owned all land and resources.

- All of these features bear some resemblance to a modern socialist system; however, modern socialist systems have more elaborate bureaucracies and more sophisticated economies than the Inca Empire. Moreover, in addition to working for the government, Incas also worked at home and kept the products of this labor for themselves.

- Other descriptors of the state might include absolutist, divine right, autocratic, or one that ruled by co-opting local elites.

Visual Source 12.1: Gentile Bellini, Portrait of Mehmed II

Q. What overall impression of the sultan does this portrait convey?

- The triumphal arch, sets of crowns, and inscription present him as a powerful ruler and successful conqueror.
- The rich textile embedded with precious stones draped over the foreground wall and his sumptuous clothing reflect his great wealth.
- A profile portrait reflects a long tradition in imperial portraiture.

Q. Why might this Muslim ruler want his portrait painted by a Christian artist from Venice?

- Display of rare or exotic luxury items was an important means by which rulers reinforced their status and thus a one-of-a-kind work by a well-known foreign artist might have been used as a status item.
- The painting may have been commissioned to strengthen relations with Venice following the signing of a peace treaty.
- It may have been intended to convey Mehmed’s cultural sophistication to Venetians and other Western Europeans who travelled to his court.
- It may reflect his own personal interest in caricatures and busts.

Q. Why might Bellini and the city government of Venice be willing—even eager—to undertake the assignment, less than thirty years after the Muslim conquest of Constantinople?

- The Venetians wanted to foster good relations with Mehmed following the signing of a peace treaty.
- At relatively little cost, the Venetians could offer Mehmed an exotic gift that intersected with his own personal interests.
- Venice could promote its own cultural sophistication.
- For Bellini, this was perhaps an opportunity to gain further commissions from the Turkish court and other wealthy patrons.
- Painting the portrait of such a powerful ruler would also bolster his reputation in Venice and Western Europe more generally.

Q. The candelabra decorating the arch were a common feature in Venetian church architecture. Why might the sultan have agreed to this element of Christian symbolism in his portrait?

- As they were primarily decorative in purpose, he may have been unaware of their symbolic meaning in a Christian context.
- As there was no similar tradition of portrait painting in the Muslim world, he may have felt the need to draw on Christian symbolism in the image.
- Mehmed ruled over Christian as well as Muslim populations. He may have seen this imagery as useful in his interactions with these communities.

Q. What does the episode surrounding this portrait indicate about the relationship of Venice and the Ottoman Empire in the wake of the conquest of Constantinople?

- Both parties sought to maintain peaceful relations.
- Cultural exchange was part of this process.
- There were compelling reasons for both parties to maintain the trading relationships that had
existed between Venice and the Byzantine Empire before the conquest.

**Visual Source 12.2: The Venetian Ambassador Visits Damascus**

Q. What impressions of the city and its relationship with Venice does the artist seek to convey?

- The city appears prosperous with well-kept houses and monuments.
- It appears well-ordered with clearly defined hierarchies of people interacting in appropriate contexts.
- The painting conveys the sense of a bustling city full of active residents.
- It also conveys a sense of the exotic, through for example the camel and deer in the foreground.
- The reception of the Venetian delegation by the Mamluk governor depicts cordial formal relations between the two states.

Q. How are the various social groups of Damascus distinguished from one another in this painting? What does the very precise visual description of these differences suggest about Venetian understanding of urban Mamluk society?

- Dress is critical in distinguishing social groups, especially the wearing of specific turbans.
- Their activities also distinguish them, with some engaged in trade while others stand in attendance of the governor, and a single figure is depicted mounted on a horse.
- In terms of Venetian understanding of urban Mamluk society, it suggests that the Venetians through their extensive contact understand both the social hierarchy in Mamluk society and the ways that social groups displayed their status through dress.

Q. What does the total absence of women suggest about their role in the public life of Damascus?

- They were largely excluded from the public life of Damascus.
- One might speculate that poor women were present in the streets of Damascus, but were not included in this painting which depicts a well-ordered and prosperous city.

Q. How would you know that this is a Muslim city? What role, if any, does religion play in this depiction of the relationship between Christian Venice and Islamic Damascus?

- The Umayyad mosque and three minarets in the background demark Damascus as a Muslim city.
- The case could be made that religion plays no meaningful role in this painting, merely appearing in the background.
- The case could be made that the minarets and Umayyad mosque add a sense of the exotic to the painting reminding the viewer that Damascus is culturally distinct from Venice.

**Visual Source 12.3: Aristotle and Averroes**

Q. What might the possession of such a book say about the social status, tastes, and outlook of its owner?

- This was a high-value luxury item conveying social prestige onto its owner.
- Purchasing such a richly illuminated version of the text speaks to the owner’s interest in art.
- It also speaks to the owner’s interest in both ancient Greek and Islamic philosophical traditions.
- One could reasonably speculate that the owner of this text was open to philosophical insights beyond those offered by Christian thinkers.

Q. What overall impression of Renaissance thinking about the classical world and the world of Islam does this painting convey?

- The fact that this richly decorated edition of Aristotle’s text was printed indicates that his writings were highly valued.
- That Ibn Rushd’s commentaries were included in this edition indicates that Islamic interpretations of classical texts were valued in Renaissance Europe.
- The depiction of Aristotle and Ibn Rushd at the top of the page visually depicts the role of Islamic scholars in transmitting ancient Greek texts with interpretive insights to the West.
- Overall, this page reveals a very positive view of both the classical world and the world of Islam.

Q. Notice the gestures of the two men at the top as well as the pen in Ibn Rushd’s hand and the book at his feet. How might you describe the relationship between them?

- Ibn Rushd is portrayed as the student of Aristotle.
- One might also interpret him as the clarifier of Aristotle. The pen in his hand and the book at his feet may represent his role in annotating the text. While they lived in different time periods, metaphorically Ibn Rushd could be seen as recording
what he has gained from his “conversation” with Aristotle.

- One might speculate that the two figures are depicted engaged in a Socratic conversation with Ibn Rushd playing the role of the student recording his conversation with his teacher.

Q. What made it possible for at least some European Christians of the Renaissance era to embrace both the pagan Aristotle and the Islamic Ibn Rushd?

- The Renaissance movement brought a new interest in and respect for ancient Greek thought.
- Ibn Rushd sought to use Aristotle to better understand the teachings of the Quran in a manner that Christian theologians could also use to study the Bible.
- Universities in the West provided environments where the study of such texts could take place.

Visual Source 12.4: St. George Baptizes the Pagans of Jerusalem

Q. What posture toward the Islamic world does this painting represent? Does it convey resistance to Ottoman expansion or does it hold out the hope for the peaceful conversion of that powerful empire?

- It represents a missionary posture which actively seeks to convert this Muslim empire to the Christian faith.
- It would be reasonable to presume that this scene depicts the baptizing of willing converts given celebratory musicians marking what seems to be a festive occasion.
- However, Saint George as a warrior saint complicates the scene. It would be possible to interpret the painting as the baptizing of a defeated ruler and his followers.

Q. What is the significance of the large Ottoman turban at the foot of the steps?

- This turban undoubtedly belongs to the bareheaded ruler being baptized. As such it may represent the casting off of his worldly status to become a member of the Christian church.
- It might also convey the overcoming of Ottoman power by Christian forces if the ruler being baptized was defeated by Saint George.

Q. Why might the legend of St. George provide a potent symbol for European interaction with the Islamic world in the circumstances of the early sixteenth century?

- Saint George’s role in converting pagans
- His martial reputation as a warrior saint who converted through the inspiration of his heroic deeds
- His overcoming of the far more powerful dragon in the legends may have resonated with Christians who viewed the Ottoman Empire as more powerful than the fragmented states of Western Europe.

Q. Compare this urban scene with that of Visual Source 12.2. What common features do you notice? Apart from any religious meanings, what do these paintings suggest about Venetian interests in the Islamic world?

- Both show a good understanding of how the Muslim peoples of the urban eastern Mediterranean dressed.
- They also both depict substantial bustling cityscapes and include minarets.
- The exotic animals in each painting, along with the clothing made of rich fabrics and the ornate rug on which the band stands in Visual Source 12.4 all speak to the products acquired by Venetians in the eastern Mediterranean.
- Both paintings depict substantial Islamic cities like those that the Venetians traded in.

Visual Source 12.5: Giovanni da Modena, Muhammad in Hell

Q. How does this fresco depict hell? What does this larger context of the fresco as a whole suggest about Modena’s view of Muhammad?

- Hell is a terrible place where the sinful are tormented before they are fed to Satan.
- In terms of Modena’s view, he clearly feels that Muhammad’s revelations were false and that he was not a true prophet.
- Muhammad was in hell suffering torments for his false teachings.

Q. How does this image differ from that of Visual Source 12.4, particularly in its posture toward Islam?

- Visual Source 12.5 attacks Islam as a false faith by presenting its founder being tormented in Hell.
By emphasizing conversion, Visual Source 12.4 presents the possibility of redemption for the followers of Islam even if it still condemns their faith by equating it with pagan faiths which the early church encountered.

Q. Italian Muslims have long objected to this image, noting that Islam portrays Jesus in a very positive light. In 2002 a radical group linked to al-Qaeda plotted to blow up the church to destroy the offending portrayal of their prophet. What particular objections do you imagine motivated Muslim opposition to this element of the fresco?

• Muslims undoubtedly objected to a depiction of their faith’s prophet in hell being tormented by demons.
• Many Muslims believe that it is wrong to create any depiction of Muhammad, let alone one of him in the nude being tormented by demons.

Using the Evidence Questions

Documents: The Aztecs and the Incas through Spanish Eyes

1. Assessing documents: Both Duran and Cieza were outsiders to the societies they described, and they were part of the conquering Spanish forces. In what ways did these conditions affect their descriptions of the Aztec and Inca Empires?

• They described civilizations that had already collapsed without the benefit of having seen them at their height, and so lack the benefit of their own observations.
• They described power structures, law codes, and belief systems that they did not live under or believe in, and therefore may have understood and explained them differently than those who lived in these civilizations.

2. Considering the subtext of documents: In what ways might these authors have been using their observation of Aztec or Inca society to praise or to criticize their own European homeland?

• Duran is neither openly praising nor criticizing his European homeland; European readers, however, might interpret his account of human sacrifice as praise for the Christian faith.
• While nowhere does Cieza explicitly praise or criticize his European homeland, his positive account of the Inca emperor’s efforts to stop his troops from pillaging could be seen as a critique of a common feature of European warfare.

• Cieza offers a largely positive account of the Inca’s administration of their huge empire. His statement that it is “One of the things most to be envied” (p. 598) may indicate that he viewed European administrations as inferior to the Inca model.
• Taking into account the ease with which the Spanish conquered the Inca Empire, European readers might see Cieza’s complimentary portrayal of it as praise for his European homeland.

3. Evaluating the credibility of documents: Which statements in these documents do you find most credible, and which ones might you be inclined to question or challenge? What criteria might you use to assess the evidence in these documents?

• Duran’s account of Moctezuma’s law code, how people became slaves, and the central role of markets seem largely credible. However, students might question passages recounting his description of human sacrifice—these include several phrases that may present his own views as those of the Aztecs, such as when he states “Seeing them come out with their ghastly aspect filled all the people with dread and terrible fear!”
• Cieza is most credible when describing the institutions of government and the Inca approach to rule. Students might question or challenge passages in which Cieza generalizes, such as when he lauds the propriety and accuracy of the tribute accounting system or states, “They never deprived the native chieftains of their rule.”
• Criteria students could use to assess the documents include the sources the authors relied on; how the authors’ social background may have shaped their interpretations; how their Christian faith might have affected their interpretations; how their understanding of the conquest and subsequent collapse of these civilizations shaped their views; and how their gender affected their understanding of the civilizations.

4. Relating primary documents and text narrative: How might you use the information in these documents to support the descriptions of the Aztec and Inca empires that are contained in this chapter? Are there ways the documents might challenge statements in the text?

• Document 12.1 supports the textbook in that it notes the importance of warfare to the Aztec social and religious systems; the prestige of merchants; the central role of marketplaces in the economic system; the custom of merchants securing slaves for
sacrifice; the centrality of human sacrifice for Aztec religion; and the sacrifice of humans in large festivals.

- However, Durán’s account of slavery implies that slaves were used for more than just human sacrifice. His account of Moctezuma’s law code might challenge the chapter’s position that the Aztecs created a loosely structured and unstable state. Also, his account of human sacrifice lacks the theological and cosmographical explanation found in the textbook.

- Document 12.2 supports the textbook’s assertion that the Incas ran a bureaucratic empire; possessed an absolute ruler; relied primarily on local elites to administer the empire in their localities; used inspectors who kept an eye on local regions; used quipus for accounting purposes; resettled some conquered peoples; required that all speak the Inca language; maintained representatives from local regions present in the capital; required that the Inca sun god be worshipped; allowed subject peoples to also worship local gods; and maintained a system of warehouses to stockpile goods for war and public relief.

- Cieza potentially challenges or contradicts the textbook when he describes a tribute system based on the giving of goods by local peoples to the Inca state, whereas the textbook describes the tribute as primarily involving labor service to the state. Also, he does not explicitly indicate that the state owned all land and resources, whereas the textbook does.

5. Making Comparisons: What similarities and differences between Aztec and Inca societies can you glean from these documents?

- The Aztec and Inca societies were similar in that the rulers of both empires were powerful figures set apart from the rest of the population; they had a core of administrators who served directly under the emperor; and both empires possessed considerable social stratification and powerful and successful armies.

- They differed in that the Inca Empire possessed a more elaborate administrative structure than the Aztec Empire; human sacrifice was a more prominent feature of Aztec as compared to Inca society; and the Aztec Empire possessed a more developed capitalist economy, while the Inca Empire relied more on a state-controlled and state-directed economy.

6. Seeking more data: What additional primary sources about the Aztec and Inca empires of the fifteenth century would you like to have? What other perspectives on those empires would be useful for historians?

- Particularly helpful would be a variety of written sources by members of the Aztec and Inca societies before the arrival of the Spanish, including those written by rulers, elites, government officials, priests, commoners, soldiers, and slaves; by subjects who paid tribute; and by neighbors who opposed these two empires.

- Documents written by women of all social classes would be helpful, as would archeological and artistic evidence.

Visual Sources: Islam and Renaissance Europe

1. Making comparisons: What range of postures toward the Islamic world do these images convey? How might you account for the differences among them?


- Visual Source 12.4 offers a more ambiguous message. In a negative sense it depicts Saint George converting Muslims, implying that the Islamic faith was not a true faith. On a more positive note, the setting is a large and prosperous Muslim city.

- Visual Source 12.5 is more overtly negative in its posture than the others, depicting Muhammad, the prophet of the Islamic faith, being tormented in hell. It asserts that Muhammad was a religious heretic or a false prophet.

- Context is important in accounting for their differences. Visual Source 12.1 was commissioned by Mehmed himself and Bellini was serving as a cultural ambassador. Visual Source 12.2 is a cityscape painting without an overtly religious focus. Visual Source 12.3 was created to decorate the frontispiece of a scholarly work that included the annotations of an Islamic scholar held in high regard in the West.

- Visual Source 12.4 was religious in nature, depicting the accomplishments of Saint George. In this context, it is not surprising that the conversion of Muslims is depicted.
3. **Examining the content of visual sources:** While all of these images deal with the Islamic world, with what different aspects of that world are they concerned?

- Visual Source 12.1 is concerned with political power and authority in the Islamic world.
- Visual Source 12.2 is concerned with urban life in the Islamic world.
- Visual Source 12.3 is concerned with Muslim learning.
- Visual Source 12.4 is concerned with the conversion of Muslims to Christianity, although it also casts light on urban life in the Islamic world.
- Visual Source 12.5 is concerned with the Islamic faith and the ultimate fate of the prophet Muhammad.

4. **Considering art and society:** In what ways were these images shaped by the concrete political, economic, and cultural conditions of Renaissance Europe? What role did the Islamic world play in the emerging identity of European civilization?

- Visual Source 12.1 was shaped by the political and economic realities of Venice as it was produced to help strengthen peaceful ties with the Ottoman Empire.
- Visual Source 12.2 reflects the role of trade with the Islamic world in the economic system of Renaissance Europe.
- Visual Source 12.3 reflects the cultural impact of the Islamic world on Renaissance Europe, both as a source for ancient Greek texts and the work of Islamic thinkers.
- Visual Source 12.4 reflects the struggle between Christianity and Islam for converts.
- Visual Source 12.5 reflects the rejection of the Islamic faith by Renaissance Europe.
- The Islamic world shaped European economic development through trade, and its religious and philosophical traditions through the dissemination of texts. Fear of the growing power of Islamic empires also shaped political developments in Renaissance Europe.

**LECTURE STRATEGIES**

**Lecture 1: North America in 1500**

The average college student knows little about North America before European encroachment and tends to be curious about the subject. A lecture focusing on the various social/economic systems in North...
America on the eve of contact will reinforce the chapter’s emphasis on the diversity of human social patterns while providing new material to supplement it. The objectives of this lecture strategy are:

• to encourage students to think about the diversity of human life in the year 1500
• to encourage students to consider the diversity of life among American Indians before European contact
• to reinforce the chapter’s (and indeed the first twelve chapters’) lessons about the conditions for the development of societies of various complexity

Probably the easiest way to approach a lecture on this topic is to choose three or four North American peoples who are particularly exemplary of various levels of societal complexity, and to build a comparative narrative of their stories. Some peoples that might be of particular interest to students are:

• Apaches (nomadic)
• Choctaw (chiefdoms)
• Iroquois confederation
• Nez Perce (complex gathering and hunting society)
• Powhatan confederacy
• Pueblo (village society)

Some points to consider for inclusion are:

• population density and its role in encouraging more complex societies
• suitability of land for agriculture (including availability of water)
• the great number of Indian languages and the role they might have played in discouraging intercommunication
• the fact that Plains Indians did not have horses until the Spaniards arrived
• the potlatch culture of Pacific Northwest Indians
• a comparison of the Iroquois and Powhatan confederations
• domestication of nonfood items (such as tobacco and peyote)

Lecture 2: An ascendant society: The Ottoman golden age

A closer look at the Ottoman Turks—their rise to power, societal structures, and world standing by the time of Suleiman the Magnificent (r. 1520–1566)—will provide an opportunity to explore a basic question: Why was it the Europeans and not the Turks who became the dominant power of the modern world? This lecture strategy has several objectives:

• to help students understand the strengths and weaknesses of the Ottoman Turkic state
• to drive home the lesson that the “rise of Europe” was not inevitable
• to help students understand the long-term tension between Islam and Christianity
• to explore contemporaneous Islamic states by means of comparison to the Ottomans

Begin with the rise of the Ottoman state in Anatolia in the fourteenth century. A chronological, rather than thematic, approach will probably be easiest for students to follow. Some important points to include are:

• jihad as a political tool for expansion of the Ottoman state
• the weakness of the late Byzantine Empire
• Ottoman expansion into the Balkans
• crusades against Ottoman expansion (especially the Crusade of Nicopolis and the Crusade of Varna)
• the devshirme system (tribute of boy children from Christian lands)
• the role of the gunpowder revolution in Ottoman success (especially the janissaries)
• Timur’s defeat of Bayezid the Thunderbolt
• the conquest of Constantinople
• Ottoman expansion into the Middle East and Egypt
• Ottoman naval efforts (include both sieges of Rhodes)
• the problems of “harem politics” (i.e., the frequent fights between a sultan’s sons by different mothers)
• Ottoman support of Muslim education and law
• Ottoman wars with the Safavids as a possible explanation for their failure to prevail against most of Europe

Lecture 3: Aztecs and Incas

A lecture that goes into greater detail about the Aztecs and Incas than is possible in the textbook would be useful, not just because students in general are interested in the topic, but because the Aztecs and Incas provide a good framework with which to review general issues of premodern imperial structures throughout the world. The objectives of this lecture strategy are:
• to help students appreciate the sophistication of these great empires of preconquest America
• to compare the American empires to the states of contemporaneous Eurasia in terms of complexity and purpose
• to ponder more generally how much a premodern government could intrude on the lives of individuals with the resources available

Begin with a brief review of earlier civilizations of Mesoamerica and the Andes. From there, follow the textbook’s layout by dealing first with the Aztecs and then, when introducing the Incas, to develop comparisons between the two civilizations. Key to making this an effective review lecture besides presenting Aztec and Inca material, though, is the identification of some useful points of comparison. Some comparisons to consider for inclusion are:

• societies other than the Incas that regarded their ruler as a deity (Egypt, Japan)
• the issue of human sacrifice and comparison to other kinds of sacrifice (burial of servants with their masters among the early Egyptians, early Mesopotamians, Scythians, Vikings; large-scale animal sacrifice in ancient Greece, Rome, and Israel, among others)
• the way societies conceive of the divine
• population displacement by the government (Assyria, Babylonia, and Han China)
• government demands for labor services (ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia)
• exploitation of subjects versus integration
• communications between the rulers and the ruled (Roman and Persian road systems, courier services, etc.)

It may be useful to refer to the chapter’s Documents feature during your lecture.

THINGS TO DO IN THE CLASSROOM

Discussion Topics

1. Misconception/Difficult topic (large or small group). “Europe has always been the greatest.”

Ask students to list the elements in the fifteenth century that would suggest Europe’s eventual rise to world dominance, and the elements that make Europe’s rise seem surprising.

2. Comparison (large or small group). “Mesoamerica and the world.”

By this point, students should have learned about a wide array of governments; thus this discussion topic provides a useful time for review. Ask groups of students to list the following empires by their degree of government complexity and to be prepared to defend their choices:

• Abbasid caliphate
• Alexander the Great’s empire
• Han dynasty China
• Ming dynasty China
• Mongol Empire
• Mughal Empire
• Persian Empire
• Roman Empire
• Songhay Empire
• Xiongnu Empire

Then ask them to add the Aztec and Inca empires to the ordered list they have established, defending their placement.

3. Contextualization (large or small group). “What if . . . ?”

Ask students to decide on what they regard as a key historical turning point, a “day that the world changed” in world history up to the year 1500 C.E. This could of course be anything from a decisive battle to an invention to the suggestions given in the Reflections section of Chapter 12. It is important to emphasize that the turning point they choose should not be something that was going to happen soon anyway—e.g., if the Ottomans hadn’t conquered Constantinople in 1453 they would surely have taken it in a few years, or if Og hadn’t discovered that it was possible to make a sharp stone tool, Grawp would probably have done so. After each group has chosen a plausible turning point, ask them to theorize what the consequences would have been if that event had gone differently.

Classroom Activities


Distribute to the class a Mesoamerican poem from the era of Aztec dominance. (Look under “Literature” in the Further Reading section of this chapter for a good source.) Ask students to read it
carefully, picking out at least three insights that the poem provides about Mesoamerican society.

2. Review exercise (large or small group). “A roadmap of world history.”

Most students are unimaginative when it comes to studying, often resorting to rote memorization. For this classroom activity, we suggest that you map out, with the class, two possible ways to study by association rather than by rote: the timeline and the thematic outline.

- For the timeline, you will need a large chalkboard or equivalent. Draw four very long horizontal lines, labeling them “Asia,” “Europe,” “Africa,” and “The Americas.” Mark off centuries with short vertical lines. Then ask the class to suggest items to add to the list. Encourage students to participate—for example, by asking other students to provide the time when a particular student has named an event. Ask leading questions to fill in gaps, with an eye toward cultural and religious events as well as political ones. Don’t let students ignore the early societies covered in this text.
- Explain to students the basic concept of memory by association, such as when they make an outline of points relating to a major theme and then study the points as a whole. Then, with the class, make a list of the course’s major themes to date. Offer suggestions for the sorts of points that might be included under each theme. Finally, choose a single theme and sketch out a more detailed outline, soliciting as much input as possible from the students.

3. Clicker question.

Do you think that deeply rooted underlying causes or coincidence and chance play a more important role in shaping the course of world history?

Class Discussion
for the Documents and Visual Sources Features

Comparison (large or small group): Eyewitnesses as Sources

Comparing the strengths and weaknesses of Spanish sources is this feature’s primary purpose. Build on it by asking students to read Duran’s full account of human sacrifice and his description of the marketplace, and Bernal Diaz’s accounts of an Aztec marketplace and human sacrifice. Diaz’s is a useful eyewitness account of the Aztec Empire written by one of Cortez’s foot soldiers decades after the conquest. Before the discussion begins, ask students which source they think will be more accurate or useful to a historian. Then ask them to identify those features of the markets and of human sacrifice that both accounts share. What is different? Can the differences tell us anything about the strengths and weaknesses of an eyewitness account as opposed to secondhand sources? Conclude by asking students to return to their initial assessment. Was Diaz or Duran a more useful source for historians or were they both equally useful? Why?

Comparison (large or small group): Imagining the Islamic World

Few Western Europeans travelled to the Islamic eastern Mediterranean during the Renaissance. Have your class imagine that they were reliant only on the images in the visual sources feature to develop an understanding of the Islamic world.

- What could they reasonably glean from the paintings?
- How would their understanding correlate with reality?

To spur further discussion, you might ask whether the patron of the painting might shape how they interpret it. For instance, Visual Source 12.5 was commissioned for a church in Bologna, a city in the Papal States. How might this piece of information shape their interpretation of the source?

Classroom Activities
for the Documents and Visual Sources Features

Comparison (large or small group): Aztec and Inca Elites

Both the Duran and Cieza devote considerable space to describing Aztec and Inca elites. Ask students to compare the two elites through Spanish eyes. What professions are most esteemed? What routes to social advancement can they identify? What can the presence or absence of elite merchants tell us about a
society? Conclude by asking students to consider how our reliance on sources written by Spanish outsiders might impact our assessment of elites.

**Reading Renaissance Art**

This activity is designed to help students view the images in this chapter’s visual source feature with the sensibilities of a Renaissance patron. Explain to your students how wealth was displayed in the Renaissance through clothing made of expensive or exotic textiles, fine rugs and wall hangings, objects made of precious metals, and consumable products like rare spice and resins. Ask your students to focus on the details in Visual Sources 12.1 to 12.4. What evidence of social status do they see displayed? How might these details help a European living during the Renaissance interpret these paintings? Toward the end of the activity, note that some of the luxury items in Renaissance paintings were likely actual items painted from life and that some paintings seem to be as much about the luxury items as the subject of the painting. A good example of such a painting is Carlo Cevelli, “The Annunciation with Saint Emidius.” A second example with a secular theme is Jan Van Eyck, “The Arnolfini Marriage.”

**WHAT’S THE SIGNIFICANCE?**

**Aztec Empire:** Major state that developed in what is now Mexico in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries; dominated by the seminomadic Mexica, who had migrated into the region from northern Mexico.

**Seizure of Constantinople (1453):** Constantinople, the capital and almost the only outpost left of the Byzantine Empire, fell to the army of the Ottoman sultan Mehmed II “the Conqueror” in 1453, an event that marked the end of Christian Byzantium.

**European Renaissance:** A “rebirth” of classical learning that is most often associated with the cultural blossoming of Italy in the period 1350–1500 and that included not just a rediscovery of Greek learning but also major developments in art, as well as growing secularism in society.

**Fulbe:** West Africa’s largest pastoral society, whose members gradually adopted Islam and took on a religious leadership role that led to the creation of a number of new states. (pron. FULL-bay)

**Igbo:** People whose lands were east of the Niger River in what is now southern Nigeria in West Africa; they built a complex society that rejected kingship and centralized statehood and relied on other institutions to provide social coherence. (pron. EE-boh)

**Inca Empire:** The Western Hemisphere’s largest imperial state in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries; built by a relatively small community of Quechua-speaking people (the Inca), the empire stretched some 2,500 miles along the Andes Mountains, which run nearly the entire length of the west coast of South America, and contained perhaps 10 million subjects.

**Iroquois League of Five Nations:** Confederation of five Iroquois peoples in what is now New York State; the loose alliance was based on the Great Law of Peace, an agreement to settle disputes peacefully through a council of clan leaders. (pron. IR-oh-kwoy)

**Malacca:** Muslim port city that came to prominence on the waterway between Sumatra and Malaya in the fifteenth century C.E.; it was the springboard for the spread of a syncretic form of Islam throughout the region. (pron. mah-LAH-kah)

**Ming dynasty:** Chinese dynasty (1368–1644) that succeeded the Yuan dynasty of the Mongols; noted for its return to traditional Chinese ways and restoration of the land after the destructiveness of the Mongols.

**Mughal Empire:** One of the most successful empires of India, a state founded by an Islamized Turkic group that invaded India in 1526; the Mughals’ rule was noted for their efforts to create partnerships between Hindus and Muslims. (pron. MOO-guhl)

**Nezahualcoyotl:** A poet and king of the city-state of Texcoco, which was part of the Aztec Empire (1402–1472). (pron. nes-ah-wahl-koh-YOHT-l)

**Ottoman Empire:** Major Islamic state centered on Anatolia that came to include the Balkans, the Near East, and much of North Africa.

**Paleolithic persistence:** The continuance of gathering and hunting societies in substantial areas of the world despite millennia of agricultural advance.

**Pochteca:** Professional merchants in the Aztec Empire whose wealth often elevated them to elite status. (pron. poch-TAY-kah)

**Safavid Empire:** Major Turkic empire of Persia founded in the early sixteenth century, notable for its efforts to convert its populace to Shia Islam. (pron. SAH-fah-vid)
**Songhay Empire:** Major Islamic state of West Africa that formed in the second half of the fifteenth century. *(pron. song-GAH-ee)*

**Timbuktu:** Great city of West Africa, noted in the fourteenth–sixteenth centuries as a center of Islamic scholarship. *(pron. tim-buk-TOO)*

**Timur:** Turkic warrior (1336–1405), also known as Tamerlane, whose efforts to restore the Mongol Empire devastated much of Persia, Russia, and India. *(pron. tem-EER)*

**Zheng He:** Great Chinese admiral (1371–1433) who commanded a fleet of more than 300 ships in a series of voyages of contact and exploration that began in 1405. *(pron. jung huh)*

**FURTHER READING**

- Ming China, [http://www.wsu.edu/~dee/MING/CONTENTS.HTM](http://www.wsu.edu/~dee/MING/CONTENTS.HTM). History, an anthology of readings, and references to other Internet resources.
- Native American History Resources, [http://www.hanksville.org/NAResources/indices/NAhistory.html](http://www.hanksville.org/NAResources/indices/NAhistory.html). An index of Native American History Resources on the internet. Organized by region and time, the site also provides some photos and photographic archives.

**LITERATURE**

- Halsall, Paul, ed. Internet Islamic History Sourcebook. [http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/islam/islamsbook.html](http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/islam/islamsbook.html). An interesting collection of primary sources (especially Ottoman), mostly short excerpts that are a good length for class assignments.

**FILM**

- *1421: The Year China Discovered America.* PBS Home Videos, 2004. 120 minutes.
Recounts the controversial claim that Zheng He led an armada of Chinese ships as far as the western coast of North America.

- *Africa before the Europeans*. Insight Media, 1985. 26 minutes. Includes segments on both the Songhay Empire and the kingdom of Benin.

- *Akbar the Great, Mogul Emperor of India*. Films for the Humanities and Sciences, 2000. 54 minutes. Examines Akbar’s successful campaign to forge an empire in India based on political stability and religious tolerance.

- *The Aztecs*. Films for the Humanities and Sciences, 1996. 48 minutes. Explores Aztec history and culture, including the role of human sacrifice in Aztec society.

- *Discovery of a New World*. Films for the Humanities and Sciences, 2004. 30 minutes. Examines European exploration and conquest with particularly good coverage of the late medieval context.


- *The Ottoman Empire*. Films for the Humanities and Sciences, 1996. 47 minutes. Examines the emergence of the Ottoman Empire from 1453 into the sixteenth century, including good coverage of Ottoman interaction with Christian Europe.


- *Yoruba: Nine Centuries of African Art and Culture*. Insight Media, 1992. 15 minutes. Examines Yoruba history and culture through art.

### ADDITIONAL BEDFORD/ST. MARTIN’S RESOURCES FOR CHAPTER 12

#### PowerPoint Maps, Images, Lecture Outlines, and i>clicker Content

These presentation materials are downloadable from the Media and Supplements tab at bedfordstmartins.com/strayer/catalog, and they are available on an Instructor’s Resource CD-ROM. They include ready-made and fully customizable PowerPoint multimedia presentations built around lecture outlines that are embedded with maps, figures, and selected images from the textbook and are supplemented by more detailed instructor notes on key points. Also available are maps and selected images in JPEG and PowerPoint format; content for i>clicker, a classroom response system, in Microsoft Word and PowerPoint formats; the Instructor’s Resource Manual in Microsoft Word format; and outline maps in PDF format for quizzing or handouts. All files are suitable for copying onto transparency acetates.

#### Documents and Essays from Worlds of History: A Comparative Reader, Fifth Edition

The following documents, essays, and illustrations to accompany Chapter 12 are available in the following chapters of this reader by Kevin Reilly:

**Chapter 13:**

- Gregorio Dati, *Corporations and Community in Florence*
- Bernal Diaz, *Cities of Mexico*
- *Map of Aztec Capital and Gulf of Mexico*
- *Images of Medieval Cities*

**Chapter 14:**

- *Image from a French Calendar*
- *Image of European Surveying Instruments*

#### Online Study Guide at bedfordstmartins.com/strayer

The Online Study Guide helps students synthesize the material from the textbook as well as practice the skills historians use to make sense of the past. Each chapter contains specific testing exercises, including a multiple-choice self-test that focuses on important conceptual ideas; a flashcard activity that tests students on their knowledge of key terms; and two interactive map activities intended to strengthen
students’ geographic skills. Instructors can monitor students’ progress through an online Quiz Gradebook or receive email updates.

**Computerized Test Bank**

This test bank provides over fifty exercises per chapter, including multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blank, short-answer, and full-length essay questions. Instructors can customize quizzes, add or edit both questions and answers, and export questions and answers to a variety of formats, including WebCT and Blackboard. The disc includes correct answers and essay outlines.