

Colonial Latin America



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through political organization, the use of religion and ideology, the adoption of the Quechua language, and the resettlement of peoples.

The complexity of the Inka and Aztec empires and their cultural attainments were unparalleled in the Americas in 1500. Yet these high cultures shared a number of characteristics with the area's other indigenous peoples: All New World societies lacked iron and hard metal tools, with the exception of a small amount of bronze used by the Inka. Aside from llamas and their relatives in the Andes, there were no large domestic animals available for transport, food, or clothing. Humans transported goods without the benefit of wheeled vehicles. And religion and belief in the supernatural were widespread. Despite these



Map 2 Major Amerindian Cultures.

commonalities, however, these various New World societies were marked more by their diversity of cultural, economic, and political achievements, a fact that profoundly affected the course of Iberian conquest and settlement.

THE IBERIAN WORLD IN THE LATE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

The Iberian Peninsula, where the conquistadors and settlers of the New World came from, is but a fraction of the size of the future Spanish and Portuguese empires in the Americas. Long a part of the Roman world, Iberia endured centuries of political dislocation following the Germanic invasions that began in the fifth century. The repeated failure to resolve the problem of monarchical succession and bitter conflicts among Christian sects rendered the Visigothic kingdom incapable of withstanding the Muslim invasion launched from North Africa in 711. Divided by differing regional, political, cultural, and linguistic identities, the Iberians carried to the New World attitudes formed during the Reconquest, nearly eight centuries of intermittent conflict with the Islamic civilizations that had dominated the peninsula. The Iberians' own social, cultural, and geographic diversity enabled the conquistadors to perceive, and to manipulate to their own benefit, a similar diversity in the loose collection of cultures that they encountered in Mesoamerica and the Andes.

With the exception of the Pyrenees Mountains that form its northern boundary with France, Iberia is surrounded by water. The Mediterranean Sea on the east and south extends to the Straits of Gibraltar, the narrow expanse that separates the peninsula's southern tip from Africa by ten miles. The Atlantic Ocean and the Cantabrian Sea encircle the remainder of the peninsula. Just over 225,000 square miles in area, Iberia is slightly smaller than the states of Arizona and New Mexico combined. Its landscape is dominated by mountains whose mean altitude is higher than that in any western European country except Switzerland. Although flatlands can be found, mainly on the Portuguese coast, range after range breaks Iberia's terrain into a patchwork of distinct regions. Coupled with few navigable rivers, the mountains make transportation and communication difficult and obstruct political and economic integration. Although its northern and northwestern parts receive substantial rainfall, much of Iberia is dry. A Spanish proverb summarizes the weather of the great central tableland as "nine months of winter and three months of hell."

The Reconquest

The Reconquest created a cultural legacy that the conquistadors and settlers carried to the New World. Although Christians and Muslims struggled intermittently to control Iberia, from about 718 to 1492, the most active years were between about 850 and 1250. During this time, Christian knights and settlers pushed south from their initial redoubt in the mountains of northern Spain. Although the Reconquest is often labeled a crusade, its religious zeal only complemented

the more mundane and important objectives of securing additional grazing and agricultural land. Military action was most frequently a raid for booty, including slaves. But slowly and sporadically the Christians pushed the frontier south.

In 1147 Lisbon was recovered, and in 1179 the pope recognized Alfonso I of the House of Burgundy as the first monarch of the independent kingdom of Portugal. By the mid-thirteenth century the Portuguese had taken the southern coastal region known as the Algarve and expelled the Muslims from their territory. A change of dynasty in 1384 brought the House of Aviz to the throne, and during an almost fifty-year reign, the first monarch, John I, consolidated his position and set the stage for the creation of Portugal's overseas empire.

The Castilian seizure of Seville in 1248 reduced Islamic domination to the kingdom of Granada. Although subsequent Christian princes occasionally engaged the Muslims in battle, the final phase of the Reconquest did not begin until 1482. In that year Isabel and Ferdinand responded to a Muslim attack on a Christian town and launched a war that lasted until the city of Granada surrendered on January 2, 1492.

Royal families, valorous warriors, a militant Church, and military orders founded to spearhead the Christian advance reaped the initial rewards of land, booty, and tribute. Military prowess brought lordship over subject peoples and immediate economic gain; thus serving a king in arms became the Iberian Christians' preferred route to wealth and honor. As the Reconquest progressed, Christian settlers entered the conquered frontier regions, often locating in former Muslim cities and villages. But with the consolidation of territorial gains, the pressure of a growing population for additional land renewed the cycle of military conflict.

The final triumph over the Muslims in Granada reinforced the booty mentality that the Iberian Christians had developed during the long Reconquest. Victorious Christians enslaved fifteen thousand Muslim inhabitants of Málaga alone. Nobles who had contributed to victory gained jurisdiction over areas with large Muslim populations. Commoners received land and in some cases ennoblement for their valor, through royal grants that again confirmed the importance of military service for social advancement. Conveniently, the Christians saw their triumph as evidence that their God actively supported their cause, a belief that they carried into battle against the native civilizations of the Americas.

Iberia in the Age of Ferdinand and Isabel

In the mid-fifteenth century five independent kingdoms occupied Iberia. Portugal, whose boundaries approximated those of the modern country, had a population of perhaps 1 million persons in the late fifteenth century. Thus, it was only slightly less populous than the Crown of Aragon, which held sway in the northeast and maintained long-standing territorial and commercial interests in the Mediterranean, including ties to Italy, Byzantium, and the east. Granada, the remaining Muslim stronghold located in the southeast, had some 500,000 persons; Navarre, a small kingdom in the western Pyrenees, had fewer than 200,000. At the center of the peninsula lay Castile, whose area was more than triple that of either Portugal or Aragon and whose population of perhaps 4.5 million persons was roughly four

times as large. This geographic and demographic dominance increased even more when Castile conquered Granada in 1492 and annexed Navarre in 1512.

The most significant domestic event in Iberian history between the mid-fifteenth century and the fall of Granada was the marriage in 1469 of Isabel of Castile and Ferdinand of Aragon. In 1468 Isabel had been reluctantly recognized by her half-brother Henry IV as the heir to Castile; such was the price of peace in his realm. Henry's reluctance can be traced to his wife's daughter Juana. Juana is also known to historians as La Beltraneja, after Beltrán de la Cueva, who was the queen's lover and—according to Isabel's supporters—Juana's father. Although the charge was probably baseless, Henry, a weak monarch, was cursed with the epithet "the Impotent," and Isabel made the most of her opportunity. Aided by a forged papal bull permitting her to marry a close relative, she wed Ferdinand, heir to the throne of Aragon. Isabel was clearly a woman of strong will, who had already rejected marriage to the widowed King Alfonso of Portugal and the French suitor Charles of Valois. Ferdinand of Aragon was the energetic and ambitious son of John II, who saw in Castile the resources necessary to combat French designs on his kingdom's border.

After Henry IV died in December 1474, Isabel declared herself the queen of Castile. In response, Juana claimed the throne in May 1475 with military support from Portugal and an anti-Aragonese faction at the court of Castile. The ensuing civil war ended in Isabel's victory in 1479. When his father died in the same year, Ferdinand became the king of Aragon, and the "union of the crowns" and a "double monarchy" became reality. For the following quarter-century, the "Catholic Kings"—as the couple were later dubbed by Pope Alexander VI—jointly ruled the largest and wealthiest area of Iberia.

The name Spain is often used to describe the realms of Isabel and Ferdinand, but the term erroneously implies a nonexistent unity. Both Castile and Aragon maintained separate economies, political institutions, monetary systems, customs barriers, and lifestyles. Even though the two monarchs worked together so closely that a chronicler recorded, for example, "the king and queen, on such and such a day, gave birth to a daughter," they never, as did their counterparts elsewhere in Europe, sought political unification of their kingdoms. Although their grandson Charles I (later Charles V of the Holy Roman Empire) inherited both crowns, the creation of a single Spanish polity awaited the abolition of the traditional rights (*fueros*) of the Crown of Aragon in the early eighteenth century.

Earlier, during the unhappy reign of Henry IV (1454–74), the most powerful noble families of Castile exerted a political influence that rivaled the Crown's. Henry accordingly attempted to strengthen his power in ways that anticipated actions by the Catholic Kings; he employed *corregidores*, royal agents assigned to major towns, to provide justice and secure compliance with the Crown's will. He also reorganized the Holy Brotherhood (*Hermanidad*), a league of law officers hired by municipalities, and increased the appointment of university-educated officials. Henry's open-handed grants of land, jurisdictional rights, offices, and incomes in an effort to buy the loyalty of high aristocrats ultimately

failed, however, and consequently Isabel inherited serious financial and political problems.

Isabel's victory over La Beltraneja enabled her to consolidate and extend her royal authority within Castile. Substantial military and political support from many powerful families during the civil war emphasized their importance as allies and the threat they posed if discontented. Consequently the queen moved carefully to maintain their continued support. By confirming most of Henry's grants to them, she ensured the nobility's economic and social preeminence, but at the same time, she worked to curb their political strength.

The queen used a further reorganized *Hermidad* to end the anarchy plaguing Castile and bring peace to the countryside. Its agents captured malefactors and meted out justice. The imposition of royal justice restored order in rural areas, and the destruction of castles held by nobles who had sided with La Beltraneja was further evidence of the queen's intention to rule as well as reign. In 1480 the Catholic



At the time of Spain's conquests in the Americas, blacks, like this drummer at the court of Emperor Charles V, were already a highly visible part of Spanish society.

Kings resolved to increase the number of *corregidores* and to send them into all the major cities. As Henry IV had, they turned to men with a university education to staff many of the royal offices. Both Ferdinand and Isabel turned their personal attention to administering justice—the essence of kingship—and enlarging the judicial system to make it more accessible and effective. In addition, they reorganized the Council of Castile. The queen appointed to this supreme advisory, judicial, and administrative body university-educated jurists who were lower ranking aristocrats or commoners rather than more illustrious nobles. Taken together, the monarchs' actions strengthened the Crown of Castile's authority and increased its ability to implement diplomatic, economic, fiscal, and religious policies.

The Portuguese monarchy in the late fifteenth century was heir to a tradition of strong centralized rule occasionally disrupted by high-ranking nobles eager to enhance their wealth and power. The unprecedented revenue resulting from the Crown's monopoly over trade with newly discovered lands, however, enabled John II (1481–95) to reassert the royal authority lost by his predecessor. John expanded the judicial system and increased the number of provincial administrators (*corregidores*). In addition, he executed for treason the Duke of Braganza, the richest and most influential noble in the realm, and enlarged the royal patrimony in the process. Centralization was again ascendant, although, as in Castile, the aristocracy retained social and economic dominance.

Society

Society in Castile and Portugal shared many characteristics: Each kingdom recognized three estates—clergy, nobility, and commoners—and a number of corporate bodies with special legal privileges. Birth and family normally determined an individual's place in the social hierarchy. Ties created through godparentage and client-patron relationships also were important to both societies. Each kingdom contained Jews, Muslims, Italians and other foreigners, and black slaves, and neither had many professionals or merchants.

At the top of the Castilian and Portuguese social hierarchies were a few great families that bore titles of duke, marquis, or count. In Castile the greatest nobles controlled half of the kingdom's land, and in Portugal a similar group of about fifteen families also held noble titles, extensive lands, and economic power. Other titled nobles, often indistinguishable from the first in resources, formed a second tier of Castile's hierarchy. In Portugal some two thousand non-titled nobles received land grants and incomes from the monarchy and constituted an upper-middle nobility. Together these groups were at the apex of their respective social orders. From 1505 onward, high-ranking Castilian nobles could create entailed estates, or *mayorazgos*, which enabled the preservation of property in perpetuity and formed the basis for consolidating still larger estates through marriage.

The remainder of the nobility were knights known as *caballeros* (*cavaleiros*) or gentlemen, *hidalgos* (*fidalgos*). In Castile they used the prefix *don* and proudly displayed coats of arms. Their status exempted them from direct taxation and provided

additional privileges denied to commoners. The *hidalgos'* economic resources varied considerably: The wealthiest in Castile were indistinguishable from the poorer titled nobles, whereas the poorer *hidalgos* possessed less than did well-to-do commoners. Commoners coveted nobility for both its social cachet and its privileges. Recognizing their desire for noble rank, Castilian monarchs gave and, from the 1520s, sold to them patents of nobility. Thus in both Castile and Portugal a trickle of new families continuously entered the most privileged class in society.

Commoners accounted for over 90 percent of the Iberian population. Most engaged in agricultural or pastoral activities. Although many owned land, frequently it was just a garden plot. Most commoners worked a noble's land for remuneration that at best provided subsistence. A few commoners held professional positions, serving in the clergy, practicing law, or engaging in commerce. Not a bourgeoisie or true middle class, their highest ambition was ennoblement. Though few succeeded, some of the wealthiest did make the transition. Below them were artisans, themselves divided into guilds ranked by prestige, with silversmiths the most honored and cobblers the least.

Although few in number, successful foreign merchants and their descendants formed colonies in Iberia's commercial centers. For example, Genoa's commercial families had their largest Spanish colony in Seville. Their compatriots and other Italian merchants also resided in Lisbon and other Portuguese ports, from which they controlled the kingdom's long-distance trade. Although Iberian merchants were active in Burgos, Medina del Campo, Barcelona, Lisbon, Oporto, and other trading centers, the noble values of the Reconquest—valor and virtue, land, warfare, and religion—stigmatized trade as demeaning for aristocrats. It required the overseas expansion of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries to modify this attitude.

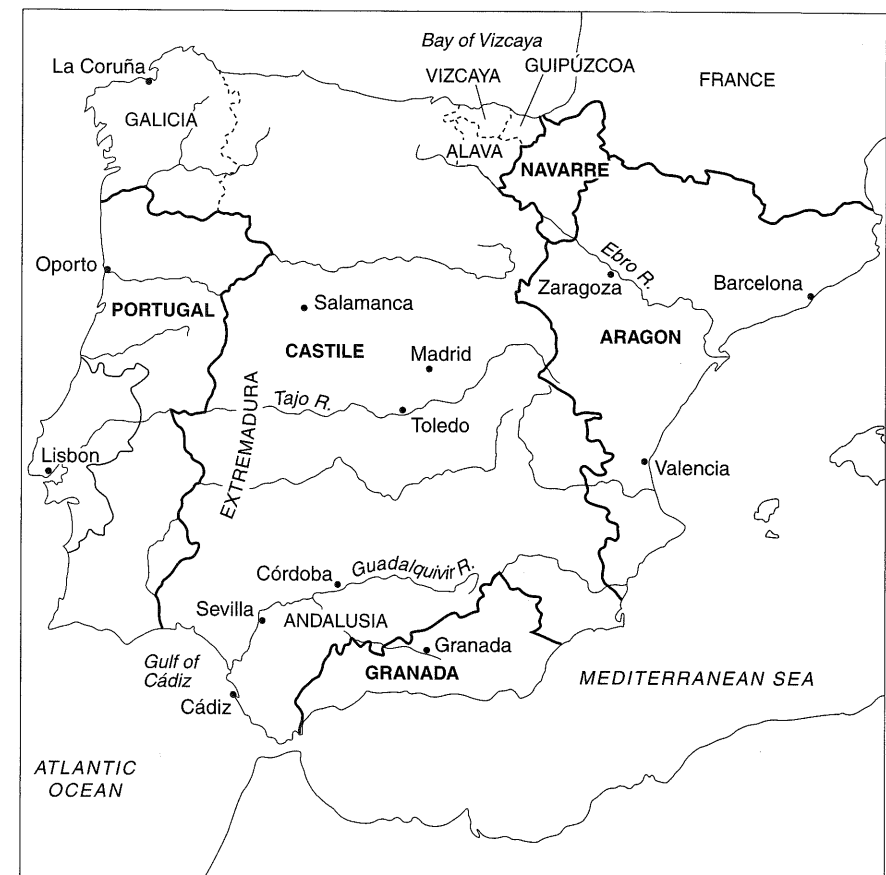
Slaves constituted a small segment of society, though slavery had long been known in Iberia, as captives taken in the Reconquest fighting frequently were enslaved. But when Portuguese traders began importing slaves from Africa in 1441, they transformed the nature of slavery on the peninsula. By 1492 more than 35,000 black slaves had reached Portugal. Although some remained in servitude there, many were reexported. By the late fifteenth century, both Seville and Valencia in Spain had large slave populations and active slave markets. Most slaves worked as domestic servants or as unskilled laborers, and the association of dark skin with slavery had become firmly established before the settlement of the New World.

Although by the time of the Reconquest Iberia contained Christians, Muslims, and Jews, religious tolerance had disappeared by the early sixteenth century. Isabel and Ferdinand followed up the victory over the Muslim minority in 1492 by giving the Jews four months either to convert to Christianity or emigrate. Perhaps 80,000 of the 200,000 Jews in Castile and Aragon fled rather than give up their faith. But they took with them knowledge and skills that the kingdoms could ill afford to lose, although the remaining *conversos* continued in their occupations as tax collectors, financiers, physicians, and the like. Spain's loss was Portugal's gain, as John II allowed the exiled Jews to enter his kingdom and remain for some months in return for monetary payments. After

the prescribed period ended, the wealthiest Jews purchased permits allowing permanent residence. In 1497, however, John's successor Manuel I (1495–1521) ordered the conversion or expulsion of all Jews in Portugal. Some accepted baptism and remained, but others returned to Spain or emigrated to Holland and other countries. Those who remained in the peninsula joined the *converso*, or New Christian minorities.

As the final blow in creating religious homogeneity, Isabel and Ferdinand in 1502 ordered the expulsion or conversion of the remaining Muslims in Castile. Approximately 200,000 had already emigrated after the fall of Granada. But because the terms of the 1502 measure made exile tantamount to the confiscation of their property, nearly all of the remaining Muslims accepted baptism. In Portugal Manuel I had ordered the small number of free Muslims to leave in 1497, thus establishing a single religion for his realm as well.

The expulsions imposed a superficial religious homogeneity, but the new converts still suffered discrimination because of their religious background and



Map 3 The Iberian Peninsula in the Mid-Fifteenth Century.

ancestry. "Old Christians" had viewed the *conversos* with suspicion for many years. Systematic discrimination against the "New Christians" in some jobs and in universities then began in mid-fifteenth-century Castile and continued for centuries. The sudden increase in the number of *conversos* in Portugal also created social and religious tensions that resulted in riots, pogroms, and an official discrimination policy forbidding New Christians to hold public offices, receive honors, or marry nobles.

Suspicion that the *conversos* were secretly practicing their former religion led Isabel in the 1470s and the Portuguese in 1547 to establish tribunals of the Inquisition to investigate the genuineness of the *conversos*' Christianity. Indeed, the Spanish Inquisition proved so effective in prosecuting Judaizers that by 1500 it had largely met its initial goal of eliminating them.

Noble or commoner, wealthy or poor, Iberians preferred to reside in cities, towns, and villages rather than in widely scattered dwellings in the countryside. As the Christians moved south during the Reconquest, the monarchs chartered towns and granted privileges to entice occupation and settlement. Town councils were routinely established and aldermen and officials selected. Within Castile seventeen towns (eighteen after Granada was conquered) were represented in the *cortes*, or parliament.

Cities, towns, and villages housed clerics, local officials, merchants, and artisans. Even nobles with rich estates normally spent much of the year in town houses. For the majority of the population—*labradores* who worked the small properties they owned or rented and wage-earning day laborers who worked in agriculture or pastoral activities—towns and villages were home. Most walked to fields in the adjoining countryside each workday and spent few nights away from home.

The settlement pattern of clustered residences fostered pride in the local region, the town, and adjacent rural lands that fell within its jurisdiction. Kinship ties supplemented by bonds created through godparentage resulted in tight extended family groups that were the primary social units, with political and economic overtones. Individuals tended to maintain a strong allegiance to their native region as well as to their families. Local residents regarded outsiders with suspicion; it required years of residence and the development of social and economic ties for an outsider to enter the local society.

Economy

In the late fifteenth century only Seville, Granada, Toledo, and Lisbon had populations in excess of thirty thousand persons. Thus numerous smaller communities provided many of the cultural activities and social and economic opportunities without which Iberians considered civilization nonexistent and living conditions intolerable. Urban centers were the locus of local economic exchange and social contact.

Agricultural and pastoral activities were the foundation of the Iberian economies. Although the yield was low, grain production on the Castilian plateau was

ample enough in good years to permit exporting a surplus to the poorer regions of Galicia, Asturias, and Vizcaya to the west and north. In lean years, however, even Castile had to import grain from abroad, and beginning in 1502 the Crown started to fix the maximum price of grain. Portugal was chronically short of wheat and other cereals, and by 1500 imports of grain were commonplace. In contrast, Andalusia exported grain, first to Aragon and later to the New World. Olive orchards and vineyards completed the traditional triad of Mediterranean agriculture in Spain. In Portugal, wine, fruit, cork, olive oil, salt, and fish were the major products.

High-quality wool from merino sheep dominated Castile's exports in the mid-fifteenth century and continued to do so for many years. Vast numbers of sheep held by members of the *mesta*, or sheep owner's guild, migrated annually from summer pastures in Aragon to winter forage in Andalusia and Extremadura. Great aristocrats, monasteries, and small private owners sent their sheep on the great walks that traversed Castile, but even more sheep stayed home. Although restrictions prohibited owners from letting their sheep wander through planted lands, the immense size of the flocks necessarily reduced the amount of land available for agriculture. The pattern of exporting raw materials (wool) and importing finished goods (textiles) was firmly established before Henry IV's reign. Castile lacked a solid industrial base on the eve of empire and failed to develop one in the next three centuries.

Engaging in substantial foreign trade joined northern Castilians with merchants of Barcelona, Seville, and Lisbon in an international mercantile system. The Portuguese, long involved in international trade, in the second half of the fifteenth century were exporting slaves, gold, ivory, and sugar brought from Africa and the Madeira Islands as well as salt and other domestic products in exchange for finished goods. With important bases in Seville and Lisbon, Genoese financiers and merchants comprised an influential foreign presence in Iberian commercial circles.

The Castilian Crown employed a plethora of taxes and tariffs, but the principal source of revenue during the reign of Ferdinand and Isabel was the *alcabala*, a sales tax frequently farmed out to city councils for collection. Although the amount of regular revenue increased more than tenfold during their reign, it was never enough to support the court, the army, and Ferdinand's foreign ventures. Consequently the Crown resorted to borrowing, a recourse that ultimately had disastrous results for the succeeding Habsburg monarchs. The revenue of the Portuguese Crown also rose in the late fifteenth century, but similarly its expenses repeatedly exceeded its normal tax income.

The Iberian world of the late fifteenth century remained fragmented politically but had become substantially stronger through the union of the crowns of Castile and Aragon and the conquest of Granada. In addition, the forced conversion or exile of non-Christians, the Inquisition's activities against suspected heretics, and the imposition of royal justice had brought a unity to Castile that rivaled that achieved earlier in Portugal. The centralization of royal authority

had increased in both kingdoms. The Iberian population was expanding as it continued to recover from the ravages of the fourteenth-century Black Death. The African trade and early exploitation of the Atlantic islands was benefiting Portugal. And with technological advances in sailing vessels and sailors' increased confidence in their ability to undertake lengthy voyages, the way was opened for the great era of exploration.

ATLANTIC AFRICA IN THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

First Contacts with Europe

Western Europe and West Africa were situated at the far western boundary of the rich medieval trade routes that distributed the products of the Eastern Hemisphere. As these commercial links increased in importance at the beginning of the fifteenth century, the economic power of the Islamic Middle East grew relative to both regions. By the mid-sixteenth century, Portugal's direct entry into both African and Asian trades and Spanish and Portuguese exploration, conquest, and settlement in the Western Hemisphere had transformed these global economic and commercial arrangements. In contrast to the direct colonial rule and substantial European immigration imposed by the Iberians on their American colonies, however, most peoples of Africa remained outside of direct European domination into the nineteenth century.

The Portuguese capture of Ceuta across the Strait of Gibraltar in 1415 opened the era of exploration, trade, conquest, and settlement for the Iberian kingdoms. The arrival of the Portuguese on the Atlantic coast of sub-Saharan Africa in the fifteenth century, and the later appearance of other Europeans, initiated what would ultimately become broad changes in the region. Prince Henry, the energetic, ambitious, and wealthy younger son of John I of Portugal (1385–1433), promoted the exploration of the West African coast—earning from later generations but not contemporaries the nickname “the Navigator,” despite his personally having sailed no farther than Morocco. Progress accelerated after 1434 when an expedition finally rounded Africa's fearsome Cape Bojador on the coast of the modern territory of Western Sahara.

By the late fifteenth century, Portuguese ships had coasted Atlantic Africa and with the permission of native rulers established a small number of fortified trading posts. These vulnerable commercial outposts would remain the most common form of European presence for more than three centuries. These fortress warehouses were erected at São Jorge da Mina (Elmina) in 1482 and at other coastal sites, and Portuguese reliance on them reflected several realities. First, with the important exception of the Atlantic islands, the Portuguese generally sought quick profits from trade, avoiding the more expensive and difficult alternative of colonization and the direct control of economic resources in the African interior. Second, while larger and faster vessels armed with cannons

gave the Portuguese a clear military advantage in coastal water, native peoples along the West African coast had considerable iron and steel weapons as well as the use of cavalry in combat against formidable military opponents. As West African states gained firearms through trade, the ability of the Portuguese and other Europeans to impose their will was further reduced. Consequently, the Portuguese could control the sea, but African kingdoms controlled the land, and native merchants, as a result, largely determined the terms of trade.

And finally, the effects of deadly local diseases, notably malaria, yellow fever, and gastrointestinal maladies, retarded any ambitions of the Portuguese or other Europeans to penetrate permanently the interior of Africa. Contemporary accounts suggest that disease killed approximately half of new European arrivals to the West African tropics within a year and another quarter within the second year. A voyage in 1588 to what the English merchants called the “great city of Benin” to purchase pepper and ivory ended in near disaster when a local fever attacked the ship's crew. In little more than a week, the fever took the lives of the captain, mate, and so many crew members that the survivors could barely pull up the anchor.

When Bartholomeu Dias rounded the Cape of Good Hope in 1488, a sea route to India and its spices was open at last. The lure of direct maritime trade with Asia reduced even more the willingness of the Portuguese court to allocate significant resources to controlling the West African coast. They therefore sought to find profits within existing markets and trade routes. The richest gold mines were distant from the coast, and West African gold had long been one of the most important products traded north across the Sahara Desert. Portuguese merchants soon gained access to this profitable commodity through coastal intermediaries. They also began to trade European goods for slaves, purchasing and exporting about 2,200 slaves annually from all of Africa between 1480 and 1499. The Atlantic slave trade eventually came to dominate relations between Africa and Europe. For at least a hundred years after first contacts, however, the Portuguese and other important European coastal traders bought and sold relatively small numbers of slaves. In this era, European merchants purchased a range of African goods including cloth, salt, gold, iron, and copper. They also paid local taxes and generally accepted restrictions imposed by African rulers.

West Africa and West Central Africa, vast regions extending from the Senegal River to the southern reaches of Angola, were home to hundreds if not thousands of ethnic groups often separated by language and other cultural differences. Here, numerous rulers of states of varied size competed for power and wealth. A large number of languages and even more dialects formed three principal linguistic zones: Upper Guinea, Lower Guinea, and West Central Africa. As in contemporary Iberia, the local and regional identities—for example, Bambara, Hausa, Jolof, Mandingo, and other ethnicities—dominated. Few fifteenth-century Iberians