

Colonialism

I. Terra Incognita

Although humans have been exploring since the dawn of civilization, the 15th – 18th Centuries are known as the Age of Discovery due to the extensive overseas exploration conducted, especially by European nations.




Shortly after Columbus “sailed the ocean blue,” the World Map by Martin Waldseemüller was the first of its kind to label America and show the continent as a separate land mass. Examine the maps from the Age of Discovery.

When were these maps created and who do you think the intended audience was?

Map of the Peninsula of Florida	Waldseemüller	Map of America
Date_____	Date_____	Date_____

Select a map and list/explain three features that you think were important:

MAP:

Feature	Reason
1.	
2.	
3.	

How do you think survey technology of the 16th Century differs from that of today?

What “frontiers” are left to explore and how do we go about it in the 21st Century?

II. Columbus

Columbus landed on Hispaniola, an island currently shared by the nations of the Dominican Republic and Haiti. Read an excerpt from [Columbus' letter to the King and Queen of Spain in 1494](#):

“In the first place, as regards the Island of Espanola: Inasmuch as the number of colonists who desire to go thither amounts to two thousand, owing to the land being safer and better for farming and trading, and because it will serve as a place to which they can return and from which they can carry on trade with the neighboring islands:

1. That in the said island there shall be founded three or four towns, situated in the most convenient places, and that the settlers who are there be assigned to the aforesaid places and towns.
2. That for the better and more speedy colonization of the said island, no one shall have liberty to collect gold in it except those who have taken out colonists' papers, and have built houses for their abode, in the town in which they are, that they may live united and in greater safety.
3. That each town shall have its alcalde [Mayor] ... and its notary public, as is the use and custom in Castile.
4. That there shall be a church, and parish priests or friars to administer the sacraments, to perform divine worship, and for the conversion of the Indians.
5. That none of the colonists shall go to seek gold without a license from the governor or alcalde of the town where he lives; and that he must first take oath to return to the place whence he sets out, for the purpose of registering faithfully all the gold he may have found, and to return once a month, or once a week, as the time may have been set for him, to render account and show the quantity of said gold; and that this shall be written down by the notary before the alcalde, or, if it seems better, that a friar or priest, deputed for the purpose, shall be also present
6. That all the gold thus brought in shall be smelted immediately, and stamped with some mark that shall distinguish each town; and that the portion which belongs to your Highnesses shall be weighed, and given and consigned to each alcalde in his own town, and registered by the above-mentioned priest or friar, so that it shall not pass through the hands of only one person, and there shall be no opportunity to conceal the truth.
7. That all gold that may be found without the mark of one of the said towns in the possession of any one who has once registered in accordance with the above order shall be taken as forfeited, and that the accuser shall have one portion of it and your Highnesses the other.
8. That one per centum of all the gold that may be found shall be set aside for building churches and adorning the same, and for the support of the priests or friars belonging to them; and, if it should be thought proper to pay any thing to the alcaldes or notaries for their services, or for ensuring the faithful performance of their duties, that this amount shall be sent to the governor or treasurer who may be appointed there by your Highnesses.
9. As regards the division of the gold, and the share that ought to be reserved for your Highnesses, this, in my opinion, must be left to the aforesaid governor and treasurer, because it will have to be greater or less according to the quantity of gold that may be found. Or, should it seem preferable, your Highnesses might, for the space of one year, take one half, and the collector the other, and a better arrangement for the division be made afterward.
10. That if the said alcaldes or notaries shall commit or be privy to any fraud, punishment shall be provided, and the same for the colonists who shall not have declared all the gold they have.

11. That in the said island there shall be a treasurer, with a clerk to assist him, who shall receive all the gold belonging to your Highnesses, and the alcaldes and notaries of the towns shall each keep a record of what they deliver to the said treasurer.
12. As, in the eagerness to get gold, every one will wish, naturally, to engage in its search in preference to any other employment, it seems to me that the privilege of going to look for gold ought to be withheld during some portion of each year, that there may be opportunity to have the other business necessary for the island performed.
13. In regard to the discovery of new countries, I think permission should be granted to all that wish to go, and more liberality used in the matter of the fifth, making the tax easier, in some fair way, in order that many may be disposed to go on voyages.”

Sub-divide Columbus’ 13 recommendations into three categories:

1.
2.
3.

The language of these recommendations may be difficult for some students. Rewrite two in your own words:

#	
#	

What are two of Columbus’ biggest concerns for the King and Queen? (What ideas should they mainly focus on?)

Do you think most explorers thought the same way about their voyages and missions during the 16th Century?

III. Valladolid Debate

Perhaps one of the most famous moral debates in European history, the Valladolid debate in 1550 examined the rights and treatments of colonized/native people.

Juan Gines de Sepulveda was a Spanish theologian, philosopher, historian, and astronomer. A student of Aristotle, he relied heavily on the Classical distinction between the civilized and the barbarians. In his book, *The Second Democrates*, Sepulveda sets forth his basic arguments

Bartolome de Las Casas was a Dominican friar and the antagonist of Sepulveda during the debates. He had sailed to the West Indies in 1502, seeing firsthand the interactions between conquerors and natives. Later known as the "Protector of the Indians," his accounts of the destruction of the Indies spread the "black Legend" of Spanish brutality in the New World.

"The Spanish have a perfect right to rule these barbarians of the New World and the adjacent islands, who in prudence, skill, virtues, and humanity are as inferior to the Spanish as children to adults, or women to men, for there exists between the two as great a difference as between savage and cruel races and the most merciful, between the most intemperate and the moderate and temperate and, I might even say, between apes and men. You surely do not expect me to recall at length the prudence and talents of the Spanish.... And what can I say of the gentleness and humanity of our people, who, even in battle, after having gained the victory, put forth their greatest effort and care to save the greatest possible number of the conquered and to protect them from the cruelty of their allies? Well, then, if we are dealing with virtue, what temperance or mercy can you expect from men who are committed to all types of intemperance and base frivolity, and eat human flesh? Although some of them show a certain ingenuity for various works of artisanship, this is no proof of human cleverness, for we can observe animals, birds, and spiders making certain structures which no human accomplishment can competently imitate. Therefore, if you wish to reduce them, I do not say to our domination, but to a servitude a little less harsh, it will not be difficult for them to change their masters, and instead of the ones they had, who were barbarous and impious and inhuman, to accept the Christians, cultivators of human virtues and the true faith. ..."

—Juan Gines de Sepulveda (*The Second Democrates*, 1547)

"Now if we shall have shown that among our Indians of the western and southern shores (granting that we call them barbarians and that they are barbarians) there are important kingdoms, large numbers of people who live settled lives in a society, great cities, kings, judges and laws, persons who engage in commerce, buying, selling, lending, and the other contracts of the law of nations, will it not stand proved that the Reverend Doctor Sepulveda has spoken wrongly and viciously against peoples like these, either out of malice or ignorance of Aristotle's teaching, and, therefore, has falsely and perhaps irreparably slandered them before the entire world? From the fact that the Indians are barbarians it does not necessarily follow that they are incapable of government and have to be ruled by other's, except to be taught about the Catholic faith and to be admitted to the holy sacraments. They are not ignorant, inhuman, or bestial. Rather, long before they had heard the word Spaniard they had properly organized states, wisely ordered by excellent laws, religion, and custom. They cultivated friendship and, bound together in common fellowship, lived in populous cities in which they wisely administered the affairs of both peace and war justly and equitably, truly governed by laws that at very many points surpass ours, and could have won the admiration of the sages of Athens.... Next, I call the Spaniards who plunder that unhappy people torturers.... For God's sake and man's faith in him, is this the way to impose the yoke of Christ on Christian men? Is this the way to remove wild barbarism from the minds of barbarians? Is it not, rather, to act like thieves, cut-throats, and

cruel plunderers and to drive the gentlest of people headlong into despair? The Indian race is not that barbaric, nor are they dull witted or stupid, but they are easy to teach and very talented in learning all the liberal arts, and very ready to accept, honor, and observe the Christian religion and correct their sins (as experience has taught) once priests have introduced them to the sacred mysteries and taught them the word of God. They have been endowed with excellent conduct, and before the coming of the Spaniards, as we have said, they had political states that were well founded on beneficial laws.

The Indians are our brothers, and Christ has given his life for them. Why, then, do we persecute them with such inhuman savagery when they do not deserve such treatment? The past, because it cannot be undone, must be attributed to our weakness, provided that what has been taken unjustly is restored.

Finally, let all savagery and apparatus of war, which are better suited to Moslems than Christians, be done away with. Let upright heralds be sent to proclaim Jesus Christ in their way of life and to convey the attitudes of Peter and Paul. [The Indians] will embrace the teaching of the gospel, as I well know, for they are not stupid or barbarous but have a native sincerity and are simple, moderate, and meek, and, finally, such that I do not know whether there is any people readier to receive the gospel. Once they have embraced it, it is marvelous with what piety, eagerness, faith, and charity they obey Christ's precepts and venerate the sacraments. For they are docile and clever, and in their diligence and gifts of nature, they excel most peoples of the known world.

- Bartolome de Las Casas (*The Destruction of the Indies*, 1552)

How do Las Casas and Sepulveda describe the native population and compare them to Spaniards?

Las Casas	Sepulveda

How does each author suggest treating the natives? Do they share any ideas?

Las Casas	Shared	Sepulveda

Although Las Casas was the “Protector of the Indians,” he was still not against Spanish colonization of the New World. Instead of the Spanish “outsiders” assimilating into the native cultures, what do you think his ideal relationship would have been?

IV. Slave Trade Logic

Examine the [Chart of the Seacoasts of Europe, Africa, and America \(p.23\)](#)

Examine the cartouche (drawing) on the map. What can this tell us about the triangular trade in the 1700s?

What would have been transported from Europe/colonial America to Africa?

From Africa to Brazil and the Caribbean?

From Brazil/Caribbean to Europe?

Think back to the Valladolid debate. Who do you think would have been supportive of slavery and why?