Chapter 15 Study Guide AP World History

**The Maritime Revolution, to 1550**

**Global Maritime Expansion Before 1450:**

Since ancient times travel across the salt waters of the world’s seas and oceans had been one of the great challenges to people’s technological ingenuity. Ships had to be sturdy enough to survive heavy winds and waves, and pilots had to learn how to cross featureless expanses of water to reach their destinations. In time ships, sails, and navigational techniques perfected in the more protected seas were tried on the vast, open oceans. However complex the solutions and dangerous the voyages, the rewards of sea travel made them worthwhile. Ships could move goods and people more quickly and cheaply than any form of overland travel then possible. Because of its challenges and rewards, sea travel attracted adventurers. To cross the unknown waters, find new lands, and open up new trade or settlements was an exciting prospect. For these reasons, some men on every continent had long turned their attention to the sea. By 1450 much had been accomplished and much remained undone. Daring mariners had discovered and settled most of the islands of the Pacific, the Atlantic, and the Indian Oceans. The greatest success was the trading system that united the peoples around the Indian Ocean. But no individual had yet crossed the Pacific in either direction. Even the narrower Atlantic was a barrier that kept the peoples of the Americas, Europe, and Africa in ignorance of each other’s existence. The inhabitants of Australia were likewise completely cut off from contact with the rest of humanity. All this was about to change.

**The Pacific Ocean:**

Over a period of several thousand years, peoples originally from the Malay Peninsula crossed the water to settle the islands of the East Indies, New Guinea, the Melanesian and Polynesian islands, the Marquesas, New Zealand, and other Pacific islands out to Hawaii. Polynesian expansion was the result of planned voyages undertaken with the intention of establishing colonies. Polynesian mariners navigated by the stars and by their observations of ocean currents and evidence of land. Until recent decades some historians argued that Polynesians could have reached the eastern Pacific islands only by accident because they lacked navigational devices to plot their way. Others wondered how Polynesians could have overcome the difficulties, illustrated by Magellan’s flagship, *Trinidad*, of sailing eastward across the Pacific. In 1947 one energetic amateur historian of the sea, Thor Heyerdahl, argued that Easter Island and Hawaii were actually settled from the Americas. He sought to prove his theory by sailing his balsa-wood raft, *Kon Tiki,* westward from Peru

Although some Amerindian voyagers did use ocean currents to travel northward from Peru to Mexico between 300 and 900 C.E., there is now considerable evidence that the settlement of the islands of the eastern Pacific was the result of planned expansion by Polynesian mariners. The first piece of evidence is the fact that the languages of these islanders are all closely related to the languages of the western Pacific and ultimately to those of Malaya. The second is the finding that accidental voyages could not have brought sufficient numbers of men and women for founding a new colony along with all the plants and domesticated animals that were basic to other Polynesian islands.

**The Indian Ocean:**

Malayo-Indonesians colonized the island of Madagascar in a series of voyages that continued through the fifteenth century. Arab seafarers used the regular pattern of the monsoon winds to establish trade routes in the Indian Ocean. These trade routes flourished when the rise of Islam created new markets and new networks of Muslim traders. The Chinese Ming dynasty sponsored a series of voyages to the Indian Ocean between 1405 and 1433. The Ming voyages were carried out on a grand scale, involving fleets of over sixty large “treasure ships” (Chinese Junks) and hundreds of smaller support vessels. The treasure ships carried out trade in luxury goods including silk and precious metals as well as stimulating diplomatic relations with various African and Asian states. At the command of the expeditions was **Admiral Zheng He**. The voyages, which were not profitable and inspired opposition in court, were ended in 1433.

**The Atlantic Ocean:**

During the relatively warm centuries of the early Middle Ages, the Vikings, navigating by the stars and the seas, explored and settled Iceland, Greenland, and Newfoundland (Vinland). When a colder climate returned after 1200, the northern settlements in Greenland and the settlement in Newfoundland were abandoned.

A few southern Europeans and Africans attempted to explore the Atlantic in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Voyagers from Genoa in 1291 and from Mali in the 1300s set out into the Atlantic but did not return. Genoese and Portuguese explorers discovered and settled the Madeiras, the Azores, and the Canaries in the fourteenth century.

In the Americas the Amerindians, known as the **Arawak**, from South America had colonized the Lesser and Greater Antilles by the year 1000. The Carib followed, first taking over Arawak settlements in the Lesser Antilles and then, in the late fifteenth century, raiding the Greater Antilles.

**EUROPEAN EXPANSION, 1400 – 1550:**

The preceding survey shows that maritime expansion occurred in many parts of the world before 1450. The epic sea voyages sponsored by the Iberian kingdoms of Portugal and Spain are of special interest because they began a maritime revolution that profoundly altered the course of world history. The Portuguese and Spanish expeditions ended the isolation of the Americas and increased global interaction. The influence in world affairs of the Iberians and other Europeans who followed them overseas rose steadily in the centuries after 1500. Iberian overseas expansion was the product of two related phenomena. First, Iberian rulers had strong economic, religious, and political motives to expand their contacts and increase their dominance. Second, improvements in their maritime and military technologies gave them the means to master treacherous and unfamiliar ocean environments, seize control of existing maritime trade routes, and conquer new lands.

**Motives for Exploration:**

The Iberian kingdoms sponsored voyages of exploration for a number of reasons, including both the adventurous personalities of their leaders and long-term trends in European historical development: the revival of trade, the struggle with Islam for control of the Mediterranean, curiosity about the outside world, and the alliances between rulers and merchants.

The city-states of northern Italy had no incentive to explore Atlantic trade routes because they had established a system of alliances and trade with the Muslims that gave them a monopoly on access to Asian goods. Also, Italian ships were designed for the calm waters of the Mediterranean and could not stand up to the violent weather of the Atlantic.

The Iberian kingdoms had a history of centuries of warfare with Muslims. They had no significant share in the Mediterranean trade, but had advanced shipbuilding and cannon technology. They were open to new geographical knowledge, and had exceptional leaders.

**Portuguese Voyages:**

The Portuguese gained more knowledge of the sources of gold and slaves south of the Sahara when their forces, led by Prince Henry, captured the North African caravan city of Ceuta. Prince Henry (“**the** **Navigator**”) then sponsored a research and navigation institute at Sagres in order to collect information about and send expeditions to the African lands south of North Africa.

The staff of Prince Henry’s research institute in Sagres studied and improved navigational instruments including the compass and the astrolabe. They also designed a new vessel, the **caravel**, whose small size, shallow draft, combination of square and lateen sails, and cannon made it well suited for the task of exploration.

Portuguese explorers cautiously explored the African coast, reaching Cape Verde in 1444 and learning how to return to Portugal faster by sailing northwest into the Atlantic in order to pick up the prevailing westerly winds that would blow them back to Portugal.

The Portuguese voyages were initially financed by income from the properties held by Prince Henry’s Order of Christ. In the 1440s, the voyages began to produce a financial return, first from trade in slaves, and then from the gold trade.

Beginning in 1469 the process of exploration picked up speed as private commercial enterprises began to get involved. The Lisbon merchant **Fernao Gomes** sent expeditions that discovered and developed the island of Sao Tome and explored the Gold Coast. **Bartolomeu Dias** and **Vasco da Gama** rounded the tip of Africa and established contact with India, thus laying the basis for Portugal’s maritime trading empire.

**Spanish Voyages:**

When **Christopher Columbus** approached the Spanish crown with his project of finding a new route to Asia, the Portuguese had already established their route to the Indian Ocean. The King and Queen of Spain agreed to fund a modest voyage of discovery, and Columbus set out in 1492 with letters of introduction to Asian rulers and an Arabic interpreter. After three voyages, Columbus was still certain that he had found Asia, but other Europeans realized that he had discovered entirely new lands. These new discoveries led the Spanish and the Portuguese to sign the **Treaty of Tordesillas**, in which they divided the world between them along a line drawn down the center of the North Atlantic.

**Ferdinand Magellan**’s voyage across the Pacific confirmed Portugal’s claim to the Molucca Islands and established the Spanish claim to the Philippines. It is here, in the Philippines, where he took his final breath.

**ENCOUNTERS WITH EUROPE, 1450–1550:**

European actions alone did not determine the consequences of the new contacts that Iberian mariners had opened. The ways in which Africans, Asians, and Amerindians perceived their new visitors and interacted with them also influenced their future relations. Some welcomed the Europeans as potential allies; others viewed them as rivals or enemies. In general, Africans and Asians had little difficulty in recognizing the benefits and dangers that European contacts might bring. However, the long isolation of the Amerindians from the rest of the world added to the strangeness of their encounter with the Spanish and made them more vulnerable to the unfamiliar diseases that these explorers inadvertently introduced.

**Western Africa:**

During the fifteenth century many Africans welcomed the Portuguese and profited from their trade, in which they often held the upper hand. In return for their gold, Africans received from the Portuguese merchants a variety of Asian, African, and European goods including firearms. Interaction between the Portuguese and African rulers varied from place to place.

The **oba** (king) of the powerful kingdom of **Benin** sent an ambassador to Portugal and established a royal monopoly on trade with the Portuguese. Benin exported a number of goods, including some slaves, and its rulers showed a mild interest in Christianity. After 1538, Benin purposely limited its contact with the Portuguese, declining to receive missionaries and closing the market in male slaves.

The kingdom of Kongo had fewer goods to export and consequently relied more on the slave trade. When the **Christian King Afonso** I lost his monopoly over the slave trade his power was weakened and some of his subjects rose in revolt.

**Eastern Africa:**

In Eastern Africa, some Muslim states were suspicious of the Portuguese, while others welcomed the Portuguese as allies in their struggles against their neighbors. On the Swahili Coast, Malindi befriended the Portuguese and was spared when the Portuguese attacked and looted many of the other Swahili city-states in 1505.

Christian Ethiopia sought and gained Portuguese support in its war against the Muslim forces of Adal. The Muslims were defeated, but Ethiopia was unable to make a long-term alliance with the Portuguese because the Ethiopians refused to transfer their religious loyalty from the patriarch of Alexandria to the Roman pope.

**Indian Ocean States:**

When Vasco da Gama arrived in Calicut in 1498 he made a very poor impression with his simple gifts. Nonetheless, the Portuguese were determined to control the Indian Ocean trade, and their superior ships and firepower gave them the ability to do so.

In order to assert their control, the Portuguese bombarded the Swahili city-states in 1505, captured the Indian port of Goa in 1510, and took Hormuz in 1515. Extending their reach eastward, Portuguese forces captured Malacca in 1511 and set up a trading post at Macao in southern China in 1557.

The Portuguese used their control over the major ports to require that all spices be carried in Portuguese ships and that all other ships purchase Portuguese passports and pay customs duties to the Portuguese.

Reactions to this Portuguese aggression varied. The Mughal emperors took no action, while the Ottomans resisted and were able at least to maintain superiority in the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. Some smaller states cooperated with the Portuguese; others tried evasion and resistance.

The Portuguese never gained complete control of the Indian Ocean trade, but they did dominate it enough to bring themselves considerable profit and to break the Italian city-states’ monopoly on pepper.

**The Americas:**

While the Portuguese built a maritime trading empire in Africa and Asia, the Spanish built a territorial empire in the Americas. The reasons for the difference are to be found in the isolation of Amerindian communities and their lack of resistance to Old World diseases.

The Arawak were an agricultural people who mined and worked gold but did not trade it over long distances and had no iron. Spanish wars killed tens of thousands of Arakaws and undermined their economy; by 1502, the remaining Arawak of Hispaniola were forced to serve as laborers for the Spanish.

What the Spanish did in the Antilles was an extension of Spanish actions against the Muslims in the previous centuries: defeating non-Christians and putting them and their land under Christian control. The actions of **conquistadors** in other parts of the Caribbean followed the same pattern.

On the mainland, **Hernan Cortes** relied on native allies, cavalry charges, steel swords, and cannons to defeat the forces of the Aztec Empire and capture the Aztec ruler, **Moctezuma II** and the Aztec capitol,Tenochtitlan. The conquest was also aided by the spread of **smallpox** among the Aztecs. Similarly, **Francisco Pizarro**’s conquest of the Inca Empire (ruled by **Atahualpa**) was made possible by the prior spread of **smallpox** among the Inca population, the dissatisfaction of the Inca Empire’s recently conquered peoples, and by Spanish cannon and steel swords.

**Patterns of Dominance:**

Three factors contributed to Spain’s ability to establish a vast land empire in the Americas: (1) Amerindians’ lack of resistance to diseases brought from the Eastern Hemisphere; (2) Spanish superior military technology (swords, armor, horses, and some firearms), combined with aggressive fighting techniques and local allies; and (3) Spain’s ability to apply the pattern of conquest, forced labor, and forced conversion—a pattern developed during the re-conquest of the Iberian Peninsula—to the Americas.

In the Eastern Hemisphere, Africans and Asians shared the same diseases as the Europeans and had enough numbers to resist European forces when necessary. Furthermore, the Portuguese and the Spanish were able to gain profit by engaging in already existing trade networks, which meant that they could gain wealth without conquering territory.