

agriculture and were never far from the specter of famine. Moreover, around 1350, a deadly plague was introduced from Central Asia — the Black Death — that killed one-third of Europe's people. The lives of ordinary people were afflicted by poverty, disease, and uncertainty, and the future looked as difficult and dark as the past.

Hierarchy and Authority

In traditional hierarchical societies — American or European — authority came from above. In Europe, kings and princes owned vast tracts of land, forcibly conscripted men for military service, and lived off the peasantry's labor. Yet monarchs were far from supreme: local nobles also owned large estates and controlled hundreds of peasant families. Collectively, these nobles challenged royal authority with both their military power and their legislative institutions, such as the French *parlements* and the English House of Lords.

Just as kings and nobles ruled society, men governed families. These were **patriarchies**, in which property and social identity descended in male family lines. Rich or poor, the man was the head of the house, his power justified by the teachings of the Christian Church. As one English clergyman put it, "The woman is a weak creature not embued with like strength and constancy of mind"; law and custom "subjected her to the power of man." Once married, an Englishwoman assumed her husband's surname, submitted to his orders, and surrendered the right to her property.

Men also controlled the lives of their children, who usually worked for their father into their middle or late twenties. Then landowning peasants would give land to their sons and **dowries** (property or money given by a bride's family to her husband) to their daughters and choose marriage partners of appropriate wealth and status. In many regions, fathers bestowed all their land on their eldest son — a practice known as primogeniture — forcing many younger children to join the ranks of the roaming poor. Few men and even fewer women had much personal freedom.

Powerful institutions — **nobility**, church, and village — enforced hierarchy and offered ordinary people a measure of security in a violent and unpredictable world. Carried by migrants to America, these security-conscious institutions would shape the character of family and society well into the eighteenth century.

AP® EXAM TIP

Consider the ways that European societies were similar to and different from Native societies in the Americas.

Peasant Society

Most Europeans were **peasants**, farmworkers who lived in small villages surrounded by fields farmed cooperatively by different families. On **manorial** lands, farming rights were given in exchange for labor on the lord's estate, an arrangement that turned peasants into serfs. Gradually, obligatory manorial services gave way to paying rent or, as in France, landownership. Once freed from the obligation to labor for their farming rights, European farmers began to produce surpluses and created local market economies.

As with Native Americans, the rhythm of life followed the seasons. In March, villagers began the exhausting work of plowing and then planting wheat, rye, and oats. During the spring, the men sheared wool, which the women washed and spun into yarn. In June, peasants cut hay and stored it as winter fodder for their livestock. During the summer, life was more relaxed, and families repaired their houses and barns. Fall brought the harvest, followed by solemn feasts of thanksgiving and riotous bouts of merrymaking. As winter approached, peasants slaughtered excess livestock and salted or smoked the meat. During the cold months, they threshed grain and wove textiles, visited friends and relatives, and celebrated the winter solstice or the birth of Christ. Just before the cycle began again in the spring, they held carnivals, celebrating with drink and dance the end of the long winter.

For most peasants, survival meant constant labor, and poverty corroded family relationships. Malnourished mothers fed their babies sparingly, calling them "greedy and gluttonous," and many newborn girls were "helped to die" so that their brothers would

AP PRACTICES & SKILLS

COMPARE & CONTRAST

In what ways were the lives of Europeans similar to and different from those of Native Americans?

have enough to eat. Half of all peasant children died before the age of twenty-one, victims of malnourishment and disease. Many peasants drew on strong religious beliefs, “counting blessings” and accepting their harsh existence. Others hoped for a better life. It was the peasants of Spain, Germany, and Britain who would supply the majority of white migrants to the Western Hemisphere.

Expanding Trade Networks

In the **millennium** before contact with the Americas, Western Europe was the barbarian fringe of the civilized world. In the Mediterranean basin, Arab scholars carried on the legacy of Byzantine civilization, which had preserved the achievements of the Greeks and Romans in **medicine**, **philosophy**, mathematics, astronomy, and geography, while Arab merchants controlled trade in the Mediterranean, Africa, and the Near East. This control gave them access to spices from India and silks, magnetic compasses, water-powered mills, and mechanical clocks from China.

In the twelfth century, merchants from the Italian city-states of Genoa, Florence, Pisa, and especially Venice began to push their way into the Arab-dominated trade routes of the Mediterranean. Trading in Alexandria, Beirut, and other eastern Mediterranean ports, they carried the luxuries of Asia into European markets. At its peak, Venice had a merchant fleet of more than three thousand ships. This enormously profitable commerce created wealthy merchants, bankers, and textile manufacturers who expanded trade, lent vast sums of money, and spurred technological **innovation** in silk and wool production.

Italian moneyed elites ruled their city-states as **republics**, states that had no prince or king but instead were governed by merchant **coalitions**. They celebrated civic humanism, an **ideology** that praised public virtue and service to the state; over time, this tradition profoundly influenced European and American conceptions of government. They sponsored great artists—Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, and others—who produced an unprecedented flowering of genius. Historians have labeled the arts



Procession in St. Mark's Square in Venice, 1496 Venice was one of the world's great trading centers in the fifteenth century. Its merchant houses connected Europe to Asia and the Middle East, while its complex republican government aroused both admiration and mistrust. Here, Venetian painter Gentile Bellini (c. 1429–1507) depicts a diplomatic procession celebrating the League of Venice, a union of European states opposed to French expansion into Italy. Galleria dell'Accademia, Venice, Italy/Graudon/The Bridgeman Art Library

and learning associated with this cultural transformation from 1300 to 1450 the Renaissance.

The economic revolution that began in Italy spread slowly to northern and western Europe. England's principal export was woolen cloth, which was prized in the colder parts of the continent but had less appeal in southern Europe and beyond. Northern Europe had its own trade system, controlled by an alliance of merchant communities called the Hanseatic League. Centered on the Baltic and North seas, it dealt in timber, furs, wheat and rye, honey, wax, and amber.

As trade picked up in Europe, merchants and **artisans** came to dominate its growing cities and towns. While the Italian city-states ruled themselves without a powerful monarch, in much of Europe the power of merchants stood in tension with that of kings and nobles. In general, the rise of commerce favored the power of kings at the expense of the landed nobility. The kings of Western Europe established royal law courts that gradually eclipsed the manorial courts controlled by nobles; they also built bureaucracies that helped them centralize power while they forged alliances with merchants and urban artisans. Monarchs allowed merchants to trade throughout their realms; granted privileges to guilds or artisan organizations that regulated trades; and safeguarded commercial transactions, thereby encouraging domestic manufacturing and foreign trade. In return, they extracted taxes from towns and loans from merchants to support their armies and officials.

AP® EXAM TIP

Take detailed notes on the changing structure of the European economy from the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries and how that in turn impacted European society.

AP® PRACTICES & SKILLS

CHANGE OVER TIME

How did the growth of commerce shift the structure of power in European societies?

Myths, Religions, and Holy Warriors

The oldest European religious beliefs drew on a form of animism similar to that of Native Americans, which held that the natural world — the sun, wind, stones, animals — was animated by spiritual forces. As in North America, such beliefs led ancient European peoples to develop localized cults of knowledge and spiritual practice. Wise men and women created rituals to protect their communities, ensure abundant harvests, heal illnesses, and bring misfortunes to their enemies.

The **pagan** traditions of Greece and Rome overlaid animism with elaborate myths about gods interacting directly with the affairs of human beings. As the Roman Empire expanded, it built temples to its gods wherever it planted new settlements. Thus peoples throughout Europe, North Africa, and the Near East were exposed to the Roman pantheon. Soon the teachings of Christianity began to flow in these same channels.

The Rise of Christianity Christianity, which grew out of Jewish monotheism (the belief in one god), held that Jesus Christ was himself divine. As an institution, Christianity benefitted enormously from the conversion of the Roman emperor Constantine in A.D. 312. Prior to that time, Christians were an underground sect at odds with the Roman Empire. After Constantine's conversion, Christianity became Rome's official religion, temples were abandoned or remade into churches, and noblemen who hoped to retain their influence converted to the new state religion.

For centuries, the Roman Catholic Church was the great unifying institution in Western Europe. The pope in Rome headed a vast hierarchy of cardinals, bishops, and priests. Catholic theologians preserved Latin, the language of classical scholarship, and imbued kingship with divine power. Christian dogma provided a common understanding of God and human history, and the authority of the Church **buttressed** state institutions. Every village had a church, and holy shrines served as points of contact with the sacred world. Often those shrines had their origins in older, animist practices, now largely forgotten and replaced with Christian ritual.

Christian doctrine penetrated deeply into the everyday lives of peasants. While animist traditions held that spiritual forces were alive in the natural world, Christian priests taught that the natural world was flawed and fallen. Spiritual power came from outside nature, from a supernatural God who had sent his divine son, Jesus Christ, into the world to save humanity from its sins. The Christian Church devised a religious



The Beaune Altarpiece, c. 1445–1450 Fifteenth-century Christians understood their lives to be part of a cosmic drama. Death—and their fate in the afterlife—loomed large in their imaginations, and artists depicted their hopes and fears in vividly rendered scenes. In this massive altarpiece by Dutch painter Rogier van der Weyden, Christ sits in judgment as the world ends and the dead rise from their graves. The archangel Michael weighs the souls of the dead in a balance to determine their final fate: either eternal life with God in heaven or everlasting punishment in hell.

Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY

calendar that transformed animist festivals into holy days. The winter solstice, which had for millennia marked the return of the sun, became the feast of Christmas.

The Church also taught that Satan, a wicked supernatural being, was constantly challenging God by tempting people to sin. People who spread **heresies**—doctrines that were inconsistent with the teachings of the Church—were seen as the tools of Satan, and suppressing false doctrines became an obligation of Christian rulers.

The Crusades In their work suppressing false doctrines, Christian rulers were also obliged to combat **Islam**, the religion whose followers considered Muhammad to be God's last prophet. Islam's reach expanded until it threatened European Christendom. Following the death of Muhammad in A.D. 632, the newly converted Arab peoples of North Africa used force and fervor to spread the Muslim faith into sub-Saharan Africa, India, and Indonesia, as well as deep into Spain and the Balkan regions of Europe. Between A.D. 1096 and 1291, Christian armies undertook a series of **Crusades** to reverse the Muslim advance in Europe and win back the holy lands where Christ had lived. Under the banner of the pope and led by Europe's Christian monarchs, crusading armies aroused great waves of popular piety as they marched off to combat. New orders of knights, like the Knights Templar and the Teutonic Knights, were created to support them.

AP EXAM TIP

Evaluate the relationship between religious causes and exploration by European nations.

The crusaders had some military successes, but their most profound impact was on European society. Religious warfare intensified Europe's Christian identity and prompted the persecution of Jews and their **expulsion** from many European countries. The Crusades also introduced Western European merchants to the trade routes that stretched from Constantinople to China along the Silk Road and from the Mediterranean Sea through the Persian Gulf to the Indian Ocean. And crusaders encountered sugar for the first time. Returning soldiers brought it back from the Middle East, and as Europeans began to conquer territory in the eastern Mediterranean, they experimented with raising it themselves. These early experiments with sugar would have a profound impact on European enterprise in the Americas—and European involvement with the African slave trade—in the centuries to come. Although Western Europe

in 1491 remained relatively isolated from the centers of civilization in Eurasia and Africa, the Crusades and the rise of Italian merchant houses had introduced it to a wider world.

The Reformation In 1517, Martin Luther, a German monk and professor at the university in Wittenberg, took up the cause of reform in the Catholic Church. Luther's *Ninety-five Theses* condemned the Church for many corrupt practices. More radically, Luther downplayed the role of the clergy as mediators between God and believers and said that Christians must look to the Bible, not to the Church, as the ultimate authority in matters of faith. So that every literate German could read the Bible, previously available only in Latin, Luther translated it into German.

Meanwhile, in Geneva, Switzerland, French theologian John Calvin established a rigorous Protestant regime. Even more than Luther, Calvin stressed human weakness and God's omnipotence. His *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1536) depicted God as an absolute ruler. Calvin preached the doctrine of predestination, the idea that God chooses certain people for salvation before they are born and condemns the rest to eternal damnation. In Geneva, he set up a model Christian community ruled by ministers who prohibited frivolity and luxury. "We know," wrote Calvin, "that man is of so perverse and crooked a nature, that everyone would scratch out his neighbor's eyes if there were no bridle to hold them in." Calvin's authoritarian doctrine won converts all over Europe, including the Puritans in Scotland and England.

Luther's criticisms triggered a war between the Holy Roman Empire and the northern principalities in Germany, and soon the controversy between the Roman Catholic Church and radical reformers like Luther and Calvin spread throughout much of Western Europe. The **Protestant Reformation**, as this movement came to be called, triggered a **Counter-Reformation** in the Catholic Church that sought change from within and created new monastic and **missionary** orders, including the Jesuits (founded in 1540), who saw themselves as soldiers of Christ. The competition between these divergent Christian traditions did much to shape European colonization of the Americas. Roman Catholic powers—Spain, Portugal, and France—sought to win souls in the Americas for the Church, while Protestant nations—England and the Netherlands—viewed the Catholic Church as corrupt and exploitative and hoped instead to create godly communities attuned to the true gospel of Christianity.

IN YOUR OWN WORDS How had recent developments changed Western Europe by 1491?

AP[®] PRACTICES & SKILLS

CHANGE OVER TIME

How did the growing influence of the Christian Church affect events in Europe?

West and Central Africa: Origins of the Atlantic Slave Trade

Homo sapiens originated in Africa. Numerous civilizations had already risen and fallen there, and contacts with the Near East and the Mediterranean were millennia old, when Western Europeans began sailing down its Atlantic coast. Home to perhaps 100 million in 1400, Africa was divided by the vast expanse of the Sahara Desert. North Africa bordered on the Mediterranean, and its peoples fell under the domination of Christian Byzantium until the seventh century, when Muslim conquests brought the region under Islamic influence. In its coastal seaports, the merchandise of Asia, the Near East, Africa, and Europe converged. South of the Sahara, by contrast, the societies of West and Central Africa bordering on the Atlantic were relatively isolated. After 1400, that would quickly change.

Empires, Kingdoms, and Ministates

West Africa—the part of the continent that bulges into the Atlantic—can be visualized as a broad horizontal swath divided into three **climatic** zones. The Sahel is the mostly

From these cultural origins, three great empires arose in succession in the northern savanna. The first, the Ghana Empire, appeared sometime around A.D. 800. Ghana capitalized on the recently domesticated camel to pioneer trade routes across the Sahara to North Africa, where Ghana traders carried the wealth of West Africa. The Ghana Empire gave way to the Mali Empire in the thirteenth century, which was eclipsed in turn by the Songhai Empire in the fifteenth century. All three empires were composed of smaller **vassal** kingdoms, not unlike the Aztec and Inca empires, and relied on military might to control their valuable trade routes.

Gold, abundant in West Africa, was the cornerstone of power and an indispensable medium of international trade. By 1450, West African traders had carried so much of it across the Sahara that it constituted one-half to two-thirds of all the gold in circulation in Europe, North Africa, and Asia. Mansa Musa, the tenth emperor of Mali, was a devout Muslim famed for his construction projects and his support of mosques and schools. In 1326, he went on a pilgrimage to Mecca with a vast **retinue** that crossed the Sahara and passed through Egypt. They spent so much gold along the way that the region's money supply was devalued for more than a decade after their visit.

To the south of these empires, the lower savanna and tropical rain forest of West Africa were home to a complex mosaic of kingdoms that traded among themselves and with the empires to the north. In such a densely populated, resource-rich region, they also fought frequently in a competition for local power. A few of these coastal kingdoms were quite large in size, but most were small enough that they have been termed ministates by historians. Comparable to the city-states of Italy, they were often about the size of a modern-day county in the United States. The tropical ecosystem prevented them from raising livestock, since the tsetse fly (which carries a parasite deadly to livestock) was **endemic** to the region, as was **malaria**. In place of the grain crops of the savanna, these peoples pioneered the cultivation of yams; they also gathered resources from the rivers and seacoast.

Trans-Saharan and Coastal Trade

For centuries, the primary avenue of trade for West Africans passed through the Ghana, Mali, and Songhai empires, whose power was based on the monopoly they enjoyed over the trans-Saharan trade. Their **caravans** carried West African goods—including gold, copper, salt, and slaves—from the south to the north across the Sahara, then returned with textiles and other products. For the smaller states clustered along the West African coast, merchandise originating in the world beyond the Sahara was scarce and expensive, while markets for their own products were limited.

Beginning in the mid-fifteenth century, a new coastal trade with Europeans offered many West African peoples a welcome alternative. As European sailors made their way along the coast of West and then Central Africa, they encountered a bewilderingly complicated political landscape. Around the mouths of the Senegal and Gambia rivers, numerous Mande-speaking states controlled access to the trade routes into the interior. Proceeding farther along the coast, they encountered the Akan states, a region of several dozen independent but culturally linked peoples. The Akan states had goldfields of their own, and this region soon became known to Europeans as the Gold Coast. East of



Terracotta Figure from Mali Dating to the thirteenth or fourteenth century, this terracotta figure came from an archaeological site near Djenné. The rider wears a large, ornate necklace, while the horse has a decorative covering on its head. The Mali Empire relied on a large cavalry to expand and defend its borders, and the horse was an important symbol of Mali's wealth and power. Werner Forman/Art Resource, NY

AP PRACTICES & SKILLS

COMPARE & CONTRAST

How do the states of the savanna compare to those of the Americas and Europe?

Colliding Cultures

Carefully consider each of the objects or texts below. What meanings might you—thinking like a historian—impart to them?

1. **Mississippian warrior gorget (neck guard), A.D. 1250–1350.**



SOURCE: National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution 15/853.

2. **Portuguese officer's account of de Soto's expedition, 1557.** *This excerpt describes Indian resistance in the face of de Soto's campaign of conquest against Indians in the southeastern United States.*

[Spanish soldiers] went over a swampy land where the horsemen could not go. A half league from camp they came upon some Indian huts near the river; [but] the people who were inside them plunged into the river. They captured four Indian women, and twenty Indians came at us and attacked us so stoutly that we had to retreat to the camp, because of their being (as they are) so skillful with their weapons. Those people are so warlike and so quick that they make no account of foot soldiers; for if these go for them, they flee, and when their adversaries turn their backs they are immediately on them. The farthest they flee is the distance of an arrow shot. They are never quiet but always running and crossing from one side to another so that the crossbows or the arquebuses can not be aimed at them; and before a crossbowman can fire a shot, an Indian can shoot three or four arrows, and very seldom does he miss what he

shoots at. If the arrow does not find armor, it penetrates as deeply as a crossbow. The bows are very long and the arrows are made of certain reeds like canes, very heavy and so tough that a sharpened cane passes through a shield. Some are pointed with a fish bone, as sharp as an awl, and others with a certain stone like a diamond point.

3. **Duarte Lopez, *A Report on the Kingdom of Kongo*, 1591.** *A Portuguese explorer's account of his travels in southern Africa in the sixteenth century.*

[T]he Kingdom of Sofala lies between the two rivers, Magnice and Cuama, on the sea-coast. It is small in size, and has but few villages and towns. . . . It is peopled by Mohammedans, and the king himself belongs to the same sect. He pays allegiance to the crown of Portugal, in order not to be subject to the government of Monomotapa [Mutapa]. On this account the Portuguese have a fortress at the mouth of the River Cuama, trading with those countries in gold, amber, and ivory, all found on that coast, as well as in slaves, and giving in exchange silk stuffs and taffetas. . . . It is said, that from these regions the gold was brought by sea which served for Solomon's Temple at Jerusalem, a fact by no means improbable, for in these countries of Monomotapa are found several ancient buildings of stone, brick, and wood, and of such wonderful workmanship, and architecture, as is nowhere seen in the surrounding provinces.

The Kingdom of Monomotapa is extensive, and has a large population of Pagan heathens, who are black, of middle stature, swift of foot, and in battle fight with great bravery, their weapons being bows and arrows, and light darts. There are numerous kings tributary to Monomotapa, who constantly rebel and wage war against it. The Emperor maintains large armies, which in the provinces are divided into legions, after the manner of the Romans, for, being a great ruler, he must be at constant warfare in order to maintain his dominion. Amongst his warriors, those most renowned for bravery, are the female legions, greatly valued by the Emperor, being the sinews of his military strength.

4. **Benin figurine of a Portuguese soldier from the seventeenth century.** This brass figure would have been kept on an altar or on the roof of the royal palace of Benin.



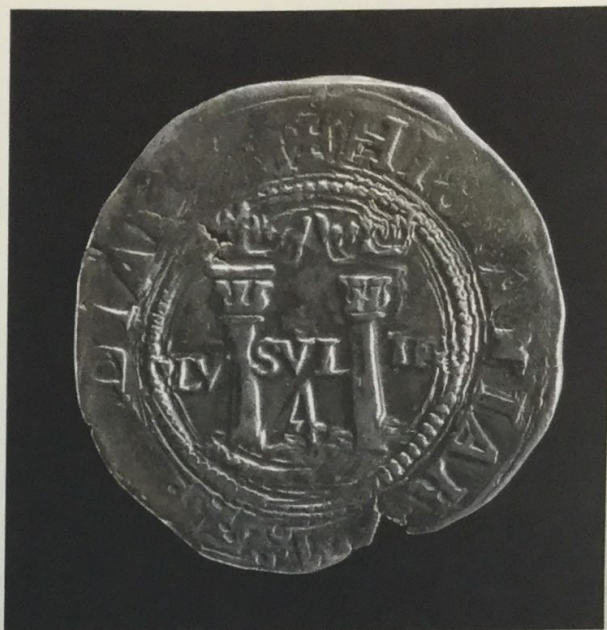
SOURCE: © The Trustees of the British Museum/Art Resource, NY.

5. **Sixteenth-century Portuguese coin made from African gold.** Before the discovery of the Americas, half of the Old World's gold came from sub-Saharan Africa.



SOURCE: © The Trustees of the British Museum/Art Resource, NY.

6. **Sixteenth- or seventeenth-century Spanish silver real.** Spain minted enormous quantities of American silver; much of it was shipped to Manila, where it was exchanged for Asian luxury goods.



SOURCE: © RMN-Grand Palais/Art Resource, NY.

SOURCES: (2) John E. Worth, "Account of the Northern Conquest and Discovery of Hernando de Soto by Rodrigo Rangel," trans. John E. Worth, in Lawrence A. Clayton et al., eds., *The De Soto Chronicles: The Expedition of Hernando de Soto to North America in 1539–1543* (University of Alabama Press, 1993), 59; (3) Filippo Pigafetta, *A Report of the Kingdom of Congo*, trans. Margarine Hutchinson (London: John Murray, 1881), 117–119.

ANALYZING THE EVIDENCE

1. What can you infer about cultural values among Mississippian peoples from source 1? About the cultural values of the Spanish and Portuguese from sources 5 and 6? What *can't* you infer from these objects?
2. How does de Soto describe the Native peoples he encounters in Florida (source 2)? How does that compare to the traits of the African kingdoms that Lopez comments upon in source 3? Why might the king of Sofala prefer a Portuguese alliance to subjection to Monomotapa?
3. What does source 4 suggest about Benin relations with the Portuguese?

AP[®] DBQ PRACTICE

What do these sources tell us about the ways Native Americans, Europeans, and Africans thought about themselves, perceived one another, and capitalized on cross-cultural exchanges as they came into sustained contact? Write a short essay that considers the connection between the impulses of warfare and commerce, which appear again and again in contact settings.

AP® PRACTICES & SKILLS**CONTEXTUALIZATION**

Why were West African leaders eager to engage in trade with Europeans?

the Akan states lay the Bight of Benin, which became an early center of the slave trade and thus came to be called the Slave Coast. Bending south, fifteenth-century sailors encountered the Kingdom of Kongo in Central Africa, the largest state on the Atlantic seaboard, with a coastline that ran for some 250 miles. It was here in 1578 that Duarte Lopez visited the capital city of more than 100,000 residents. Wherever they went ashore along this route, European traders had to negotiate contacts on local terms (AP® Thinking Like a Historian).

The Spirit World

Some West Africans who lived immediately south of the Sahara—the Fulanis in Senegal, the Mande-speakers in Mali, and the Hausas in northern Nigeria—learned about Islam from Arab merchants and Muslim leaders called imams. Converts to Islam knew the Koran and worshipped only a single God. Some of their cities, like Timbuktu, the legendary commercial center on the Niger River, became centers of Islamic learning and instruction. But most West Africans acknowledged multiple gods, as well as spirits that lived in the earth, animals, and plants.

Like animists in the Americas and Europe, African communities had wise men and women adept at manipulating these forces for good or ill. The Sudanic tradition of divine kingship persisted, and many people believed that their kings could contact the spirit world. West Africans treated their ancestors with great respect, believing that the dead resided in a nearby spiritual realm and interceded in their lives. Most West African peoples had secret societies, such as the Poro for men and the Sande for women, that united people from different lineages and clans. These societies conducted rituals that celebrated male virility and female fertility. “Without children you are naked,” said a Yoruba proverb. Happy was the man with a big household, many wives, many children, and many relatives—and, in a not very different vein, many slaves.

IN YOUR OWN WORDS How was sub-Saharan Africa affected by the arrival of European traders?

Exploration and Conquest

Beginning around 1400, the Portuguese monarchy propelled Europe into overseas expansion. Portugal soon took a leading role in the African slave trade, while the newly unified kingdom of Spain undertook Europe’s first conquests in the Americas. These two ventures, though not initially linked, eventually became cornerstones in the creation of the “Atlantic World,” which connected Europe, Africa, and the Americas.

Portuguese Expansion

As a young soldier fighting in the Crusades, Prince Henry of Portugal (1394–1460) learned about the trans-Saharan trade in gold and slaves. Seeking a maritime route to the source of this trade in West Africa, Henry founded a center for oceanic navigation. Henry’s mariners, challenged to find a way through the treacherous waters off the northwest African coast, designed a better-handling vessel, the caravel, which was rigged with a lateen (triangular) sail that enabled the ship to tack into the wind. This innovation allowed them to sail far into the Atlantic, where they discovered and colonized the Madeira and Azore islands. From there, they sailed in 1435 to sub-Saharan Sierra Leone, where they exchanged salt, wine, and fish for African ivory and gold.

Henry’s efforts were soon joined to those of Italian merchants, who were being forced out of eastern Mediterranean trade routes by the rising power of the Ottoman Empire. Cut off from Asia, Genoese traders sought an Atlantic route to the lucrative

AP® EXAM TIP

Take detailed notes on the impact of technology on Europeans’ ability to explore away from the Atlantic coast and reach the Americas.