

The Quest of the Europeans (300-1500 CE)

Middle Ages & Middle East

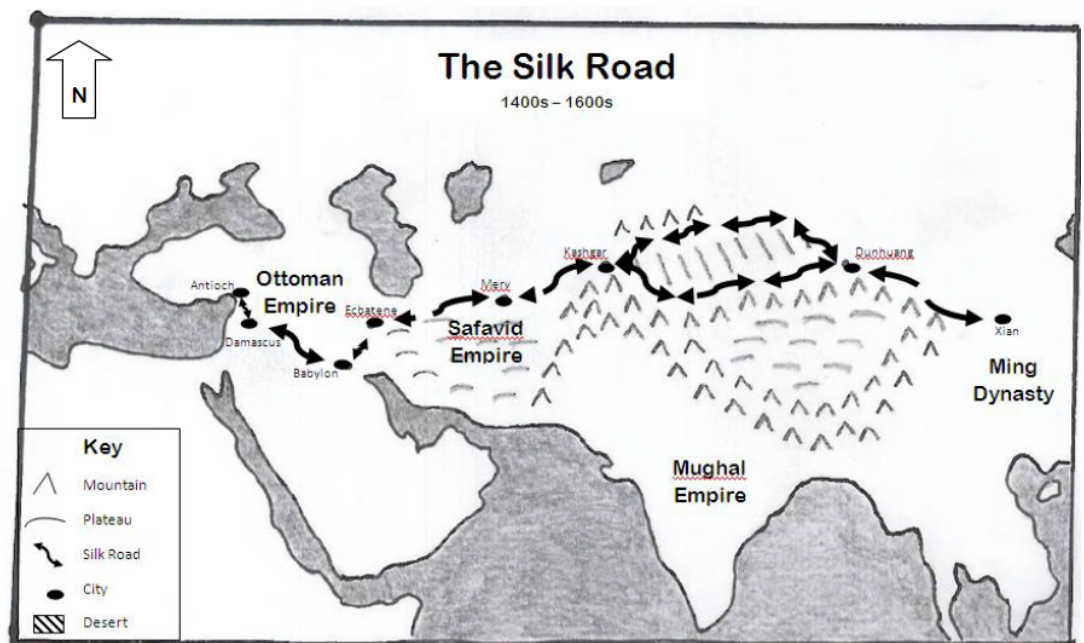
After the Roman Empire fell in 300 AD, Western Europe went from being the home of the world's largest and most advanced empire to being a disparaged group of illiterate barbarians. The next 700 years were known as the Middle Ages, Europeans wallowed in intellectual darkness. During this time the Europeans formed kingdoms to protect against Viking invaders from the North. In the process, they converted to Roman Catholic Christianity. This gave the Pope a great deal of political power.

The Pope was leader of the Roman Catholic Church. The Roman Catholic Church was the only church in Western Europe. The Roman Catholic Church believed that for a person to get to heaven they had to believe in Jesus and confess their sins. Once a person was a member of the Catholic church, they still had to regularly confess your sins, since unrepented sin would keep you from getting into Heaven. The only place where you could confess your sins was to a Priest in a Catholic Church. The priest would give you a series of actions to do to get your sin removed, called a penance. A person would also have to attend weekly meetings called Mass and take part in the Eucharist. The Eucharist is the symbolic bread and wine/juice to symbolize the body and blood of Christ. Doing these things would clean the person's sinful record and secure their access to Heaven.

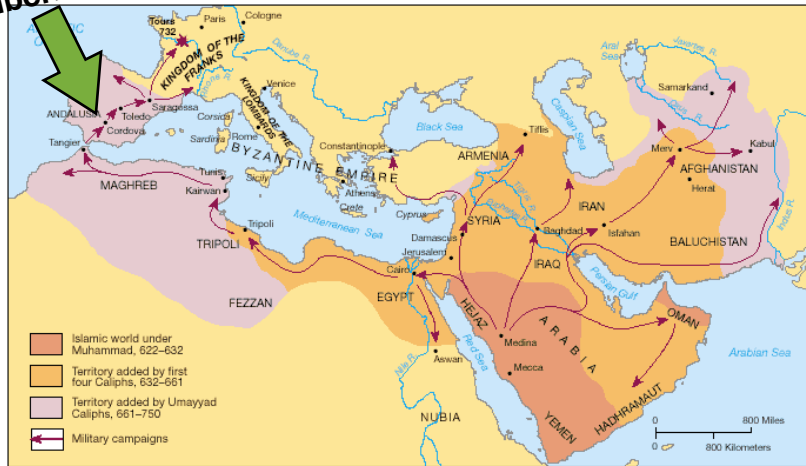
If someone did not obey the Pope, or any church official, they could be excommunicated from the Church. Being excommunicated meant that person would not be allowed to go to church, could not attend Mass, could not take the Eucharist and could not confess their sins to a priest. It all added up to the person's sins not being forgiven and the excommunicated person not being banished from heaven. Controlling the keys to heaven allowed the Pope to control the monarchs of Europe and there was little the monarchs could do about it.

Spice & Silk

During the days of Rome, there was a lucrative trade route called the Silk Road that went from China, through India, across the Middle East, across Constantinople, and finally into Europe. When Rome collapsed, so did the trade route to China. During the Crusades, when the Christians tried to take Jerusalem back from the Muslims, the Europeans came back into contact with the glorious goods of silk and spice from the East. This lit a lust in the Europeans for the refined goods from China and India. The reconnection with the advanced Eastern world along the Silk Road led the Europeans into a Renaissance, or rebirth, of art, architecture and education.

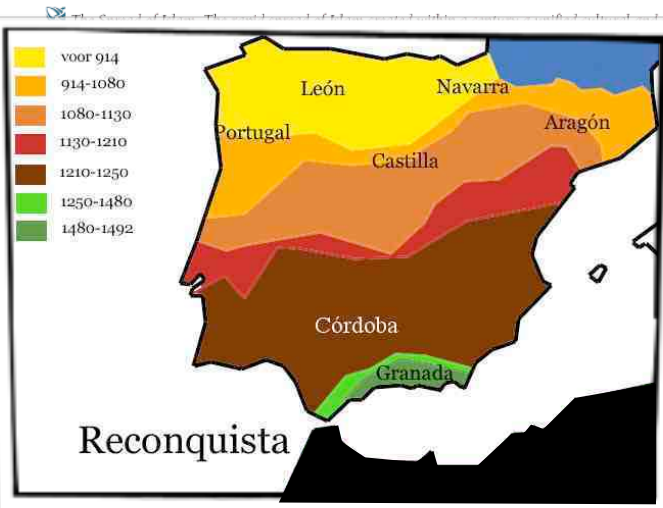


Iberian Peninsula



Reconquista

Back in the 700s AD, the Muslims had expanded from the Arabian Peninsula, across North Africa and up into the Iberian Peninsula (Home of Spain & Portugal). During the first part of the Muslims' reign, the people could practice whatever religion they wanted, as long as they paid an extra tax. As the centuries progressed, the Muslims became less friendly towards the Christians and Jews living in land, making the tax higher and life more miserable. The Muslims ruled the Iberian Peninsula for close to 600 years.

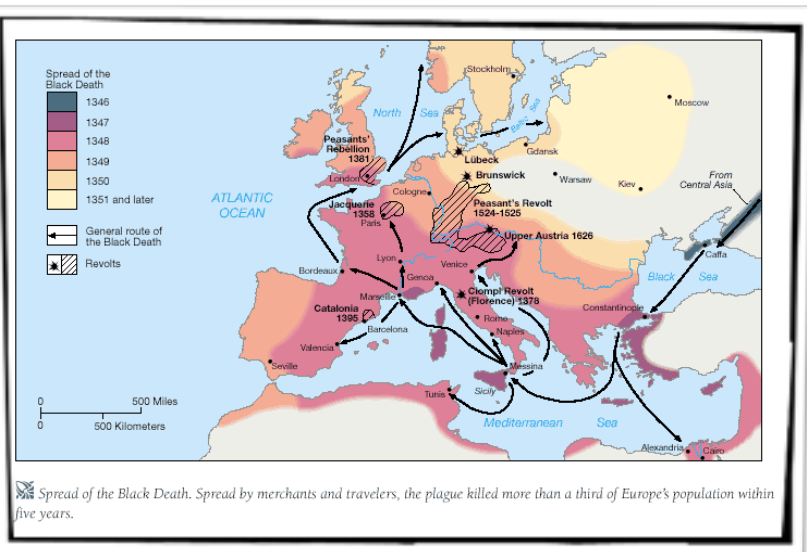


Starting in 900 CE, the Spanish and Portuguese kingdoms started a quest to push the Muslims out of Western Europe. They called it the "Reconquista," or the "re-conquering" of the lands we now know as Spain and Portugal. During this 600 year war, the Europeans developed their version of the gun. Gun powder had been a Chinese technology that traveled to Europe thanks to the Mongol Empire and trade with the East. The European guns could be carried by one person, with the ability to load and fire the gun quickly. Guns changed the face of war and brought great success to European armies.

Problems for the Europeans

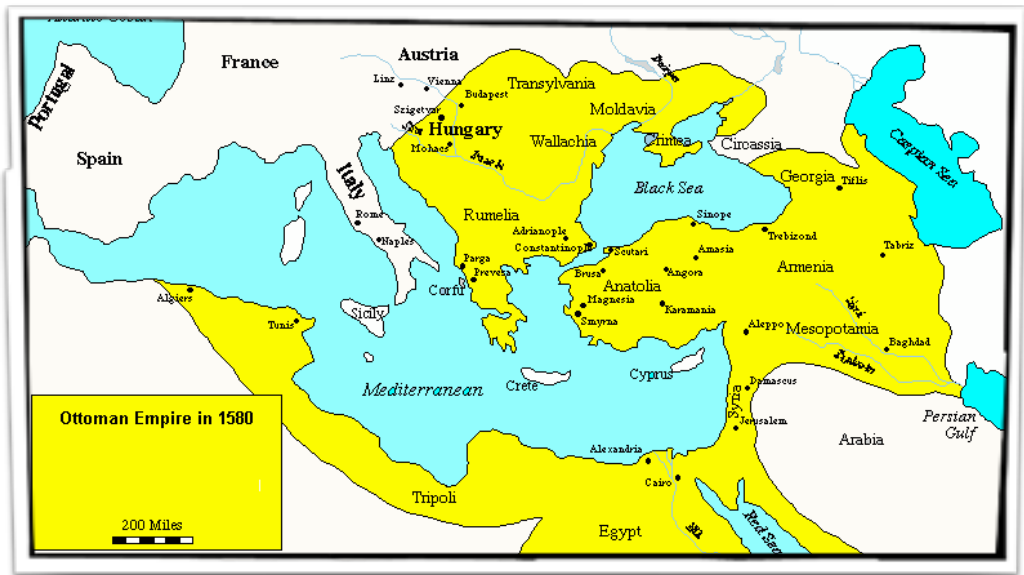
The 1300s saw the development of a number of problems for the Europeans. The first problem was in their trading. China and India were self-sufficient countries. This means that China and India had the all the natural resources they needed to feed their people and make their metal tools/weapons. Add to this that China and India were far more advanced and powerful then the Europeans. This meant that when the Europeans went to trade with the Chinese, the Chinese did not want to (or need to) buy anything from Europe. Actually, the Chinese thought the European products were behind the times and ugly (*like if someone wanted to trade you a cassette player or 8-track for your iPod*). The only thing that the Europeans had that China would accept was Silver and Gold. Thus, if the Europeans wanted any Chinese or Indian goods, they had to mine for silver and gold to do so.

The second problem was the "Black Death," also known as the Bubonic Plague. This was terrible disease that was carried by fleas on the back of rats. The rats would board the trading ships and get off at the new location; spreading the disease. The Bubonic Plague would kill 25-30% of the European population, roughly 10 million people between 1346-1350.



Spread of the Black Death. Spread by merchants and travelers, the plague killed more than a third of Europe's population within five years.

The third problem was the Ottoman Turks. In 1450, a Muslim group called the Ottoman Turks conquered Constantinople, bringing an official end to the Roman/Byzantine Empire. This was a devastating blow to the Christian world. Constantinople was the greatest Christian city on the planet and it had kept the Muslims from invading into Europe. It had also kept trade open between Europe and East Asia. Now, the Muslims had easy access into Eastern Europe and would take full control of trade. As a result, Many of the intellectuals who had lived in Constantinople fled to Italy, which helped to fan the flames of the Renaissance in Europe.



With the Fall of Constantinople, Muslims controlled all of the Middle East (Ottoman Empire) & India (the Mughal Empire), which meant that European traders would have to travel through Muslim lands to trade, PLUS pay Muslims a fee for crossing their land. The Christians in Europe did not want to give a sliver of their silver to the Muslims. The Muslims had grown to distrust the Christians, and did not like the idea of Christians crossing their lands either. The Europeans began to look for a route to get to China & India by sea, so that they could avoid the Muslims all together.

The fourth problem is that the silver and gold mines in Portugal & Spain were beginning to run dry. Europeans were buying Chinese and Indian goods. The Chinese and Indians were not buying European goods. Thus, Europe was not receiving ANY Gold or Silver from China or India, while China and India were receiving all of it. If the Portuguese or Spanish wanted the good goods, they needed to find new sources of silver and gold and fast.

Portuguese Exploration Begins

In the 1200s, Portugal was the first to fully regain its land and started a navy. The problem was that the only boating knowledge they had was for fishing boats that could not stray far from the coast or else the boats would get lost at sea or destroyed by the waves. The only people with decent sailing technology were the Northern Italians, and they were busy trading goods across the Mediterranean Sea between the Muslim nations and Italy to be bothered.

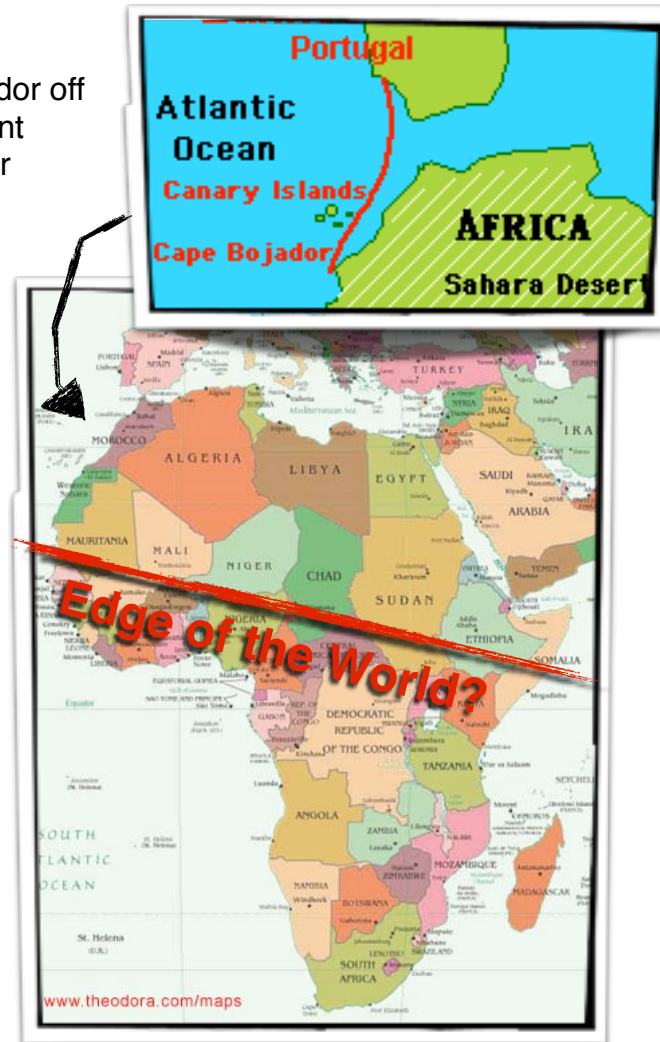
In 1415, Portugal conquered an Island off of the coast of Morocco. Through these exploits, Prince Henry the Navigator (as he will later be called) learned of the Trans-Saharan Slave Trade. This sparked a curiosity inside of Prince Henry. How far inland did this trade route go? How much gold was being made through this slave trade? How could he get this slave trade to go by sea on HIS boats, taking that gold away from the Muslims? Also in Prince Henry's mind was the question of India: was there a way to get to India by sea AROUND Africa? This questions started to take root in Prince Henry's mind.

Prince Henry used that curiosity and his wealth to start a navigation school in 1418. At this school, they studied astronomical observations, map making techniques, and other similar sciences. Many important advancements were made at Prince Henry's navigational school

In 1434, the Portuguese had gone as far south as... Cape Bojador off the coast of Morocco, near Mauritania. This coast was significant because it meant the Portuguese were nearing the edge of their maps. Indeed, if myths were to be believed, they were sailing close to the edge of the world! Even still, they sailed onward. Their quest was aided by a nautical breakthrough called the Caravel, which was discovered at Prince Henry's Navigational School. This was an improvement on their fishing boats that allowed them to sail safely away from shore into the open waters of the Atlantic. To compare, at the same time that Zheng He was sailing his 300 treasure ships on voyages that lasted over 4,000 miles, the Portuguese are celebrating the ability to set sail without being able to see the coast line. The advancement of the Caravel helped to speed up the journey south.

In 1455, Pope Nicholas the Fifth made a decree: all lands south of Cape Bojador will belong to the Portuguese (unless they are already owned by other Christians, of course).

In 1460, Prince Henry the Navigator died. His life had lit the spark that sent the Portuguese exploring along Africa, spurred the Portuguese to explore the dangerous unknown, while providing educational resources to teach others the arts of sailing (not to mention creating a great place for great minds to meet up and invent). Upon his death, the Portuguese sailors accelerated their quest down the African Coast... off of the map into the great unknown.

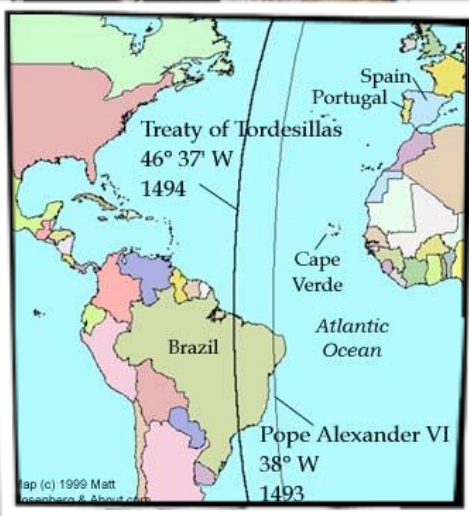


Enemies Amongst Friends

Now that the Muslim armies were removed, the Spanish turned their attention to a different problem: Portugal. While the Spanish had been fighting the Muslims, the Portuguese were making great strides in exploring south to find a sea route to India, going around Africa. The Pope had granted all the land and trade in Africa and India to the Portuguese. This meant that the Spanish could not try to compete for that land or trade without disobeying the Pope. It was at this time that a desperate

Christoforo Columbus came to the courts of Ferdinand and Isabella, seeking someone to fund an exploration sailing west to reach India. Ferdinand and Isabella could not let the Portuguese gain the upper hand in trade, so they paid for Columbus to take three ships for his voyage (the Nina, Pinta, and Santa Maria).

Columbus' discovery was a major success for Spain. Their success was further cemented by the Pope setting the Treaty of Tordesillas in 1494, giving the land west of the $46^{\circ} 37'$ line to Spain and the land east to Portugal. Between 1500-1502, Spain sent 12 new expeditions, seeking to further their claims in the new world. Because of the power of the Pope, other countries did not try to claim any new land for fear of excommunication.



Spanish Inquisition

The Iberian Peninsula was not the only place where the Muslims and Christians were fighting. In 1450, the Muslims had conquered Constantinople in the East along with much of Eastern Europe. There was the threat that the Ottoman Turks would attempt to conquer Rome. Ferdinand was providing the Pope in Rome a large amount of military support to protect the Pope from a Turk invasion. This gave King Ferdinand and Spain an extra special influence with the Pope.

In Spain, there was a fear of people of different religions. In 1478, Ferdinand & Isabella decided they wanted to start an "Inquisition" in their land to "inquire" or search for, identify and remove anyone who was not a devoutly Catholic Christian. An inquisition is a time of intensive questioning and investigation. The Spanish Inquisition was where people were questioned about whether they were truly Catholic Christians. It would go something like this:

- A person would be accused of heresy. Heresy is having an opinion that goes against the church.
- The person would be put on trial, but not given a lawyer. If a person refused to testify, they were considered guilty. Anyone could testify against you (relatives, friends, criminals, other heretics...)
- The goal was to get the accused person to confess (admit they were guilty). Torture was often used to get people to confess. Torture would take the form of:

- Starving
- Forced to consume large amounts of water or other liquids
- Heaping burning coals onto parts of the body
- Strappado: The persons hands/arms were tied together behind their back, attached to a rope on a pulley, and then lifted into the air. This would dislodge their shoulders. Sometimes short drops or jerks would be added, along with adding weights to the prisoners ankles.
- The Rack: Prisoners hands and feet would be tied to a wooden/metal frame. The torturer would then turn the roller, causing the frame to separate and stretching the persons body. This could dislocate the persons joints or remove limbs.

- If the person confessed to heresy and repented (and gave the names of other heretics), they would be set free.
- If the person was found guilty and would not repent, they would be burned at the stake.
- It was the inquisitor's job to "get the person to confess and bring them back to the faith... by any means necessary."

Ferdinand & Isabella were told that there were Jews and Muslims who were pretending to be Christians, but were secretly practicing their other religions. There were also claims that the Jews were trying to lead Christians away from the Catholic Church. Ferdinand persuaded the Pope to allow Spain to expand their inquisition by threatening to remove Spain's military support if the Pope did not give his approval. The Pope reluctantly gave his permission.



In 1480, all Jews were given the choice of leaving Spain, convert to Catholic Christianity or death. Some Jews did leave and there were large conversions to Christianity. Those who converted were called, “marranos” which is Spanish for “Pig,” and were treated like second class citizens. Those Jews that did not leave or convert faced great violence called “Pogroms,” where thousands were killed.

In 1492, Ferdinand signed peace treaty with the Muslims to end the war for Grenada. King Ferdinand had agreed that the Muslims who lived in Grenada would be allowed to practice their Muslim faith without being harassed. In 1502, Ferdinand and Isabella went back on their word and began to harass the Muslims. The Muslims were forced to convert to Christianity, leave or die. The Spaniards also implemented a social hierarchy:

- Pure Blooded Spaniards (Full Citizen Rights)
- Mix-Blooded Spaniards (Partial Citizen Rights)
- Jews/Muslims/Others (Little-to-No Rights)

Conclusion

By 1500 CE, the world was undergoing a dramatic change. Europeans, who had struggled after the fall of Rome, found stability and began to expand their areas of influence. As Europeans explored the oceans, they used their guns to seize land from natives in the Americas. The Spanish Inquisition and the newly created social order based on race, spread from Spain into the new Spanish colonies... with devastating effects.

Questions

- 1) Who is the Pope? Explain why did the European Kings (who had large militaries) obeyed the Pope (who had no military)?
- 2) What were the Crusades? What was an unintended result of the Crusades?
- 3) Using the Reconquista Map, answer the following questions:
 - What was the Reconquista?
 - How many years was the Reconquista?
 - Do you believe this was a long or short amount of time to reconquer this land? Why?
- 4) The Europeans had four key problems in the 1300 and 1400s.
 - List the 4 problems in order from (1) Most important to (4) Least important. Explain why the #1 problem was most important.
- 5) Many Historians say that Christians and Muslims have a long history of not liking each other. Based on what you have read, do you agree or disagree?
- 6) Why did the Portuguese begin exploring off the edge of their maps?
- 7) In 1434 why were the Portuguese afraid? Knowing what we know now, did the Portuguese have reason to be afraid?
- 8) The Pope had a tremendous amount of influence. Identify & rank the 4 most important ways the Pope influenced Europe and the World during this era.
- 9) Explain why Ferdinand and Isabella initiated the Spanish Inquisition? Were they justified in doing so?
- 10) The Spanish Inquisition led to the creation of a new Social Structure. How was this Social Structure different from previous Social structures from Ancient Times?