
European Colonial Expansion & Its Aftermath

The Historical, Ecological and Cultural Consequences of 1492



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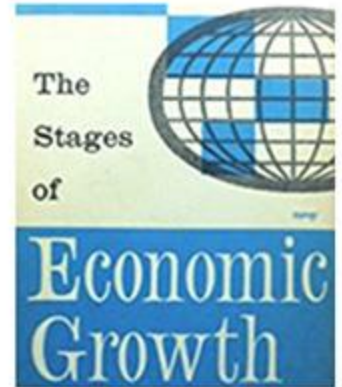
Young Scholars Online Learning Initiative

by

Timothy C. Weiskel

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The European Mercantile Empires – 15th through the 18th Centuries

13 July 2018

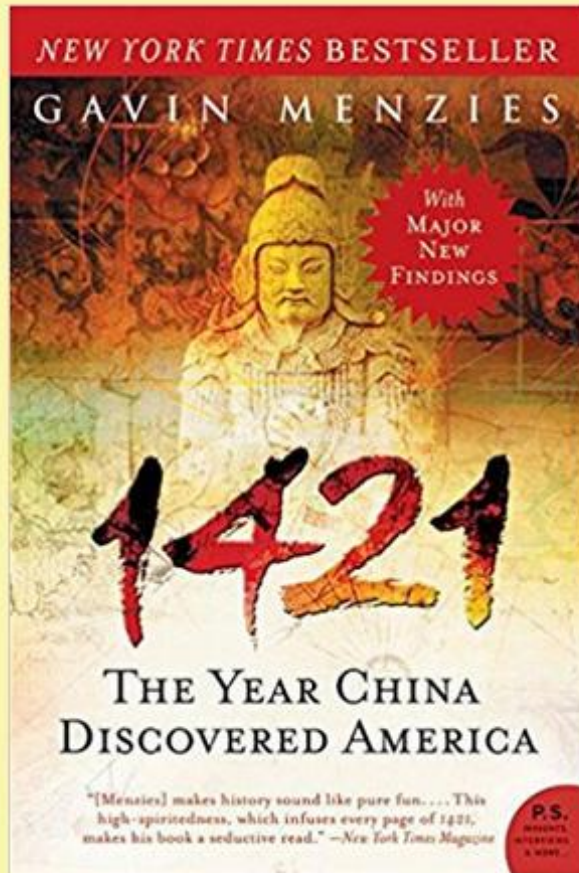
1421: The Year China Discovered America: Gavin Menzies

Posted on [October 2, 2017](#) | [Leave a comment](#) | [Edit](#)

On March 8, 1421, the largest fleet the world had ever seen set sail from China to “proceed all the way to the ends of the earth to collect tribute from the barbarians beyond the seas.” When the fleet returned home in October 1423, the emperor had fallen, leaving China in political and economic chaos.

The great ships were left to rot at their moorings and the records of their journeys were destroyed. Lost in the long, self-imposed isolation that followed was the

knowledge that Chinese ships had reached America seventy years before Columbus and had circumnavigated the globe a century before Magellan. And they colonized America before the Europeans, transplanting the principal economic crops that have since fed and clothed the world.



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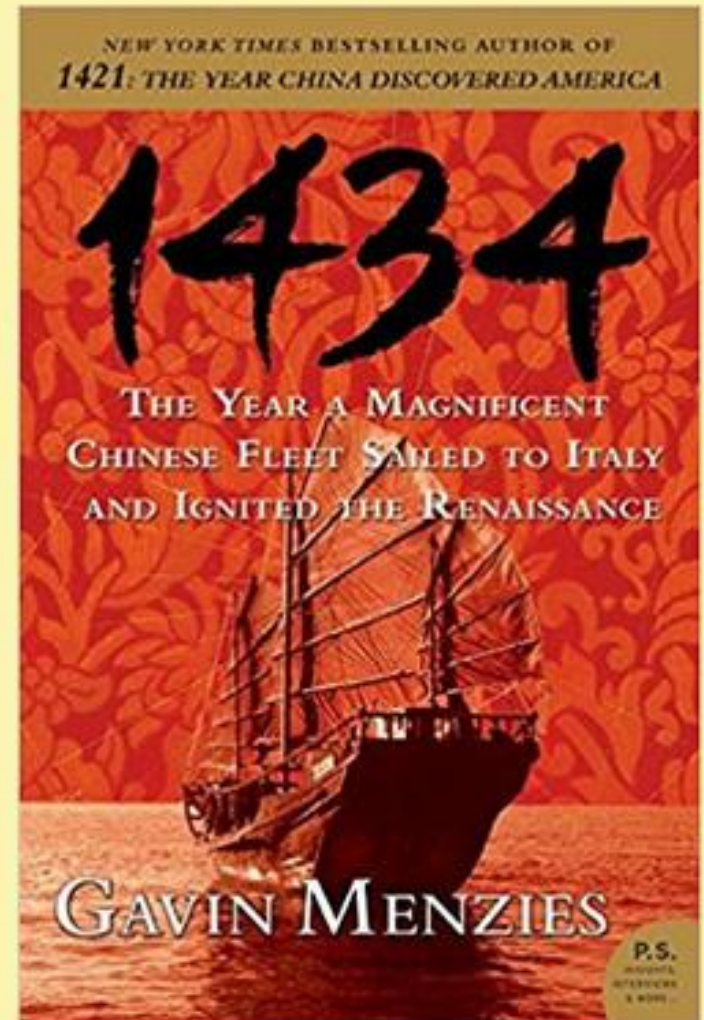
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1434: The Year a Magnificent Chinese Fleet Sailed to Italy and Ignited the Renaissance: Gavin Menzies

Posted on [October 2, 2017](#) | [Leave a comment](#) | [Edit](#)

The brilliance of the Renaissance laid the foundation of the modern world. Textbooks tell us that it came about as a result of a rediscovery of the ideas and ideals of classical Greece and Rome. But now bestselling historian Gavin Menzies makes the startling argument that in the year 1434, China—then the world’s most technologically advanced civilization—provided the spark that set the European Renaissance ablaze. From that date onward, Europeans embraced Chinese ideas,



4/25/03

Gavin Menzies

Author, "1421: The Year China
Discovered America"

Book tv
C-SPAN2

<https://environmentaljusticetv.wordpress.com/2017/10/22/did-the-chinese-discover-america-in-1421-2003-2/>

SECRETS *of the* FORBIDDEN CITY



<https://environmentaljusticetv.wordpress.com/2017/10/20/nova-official-website-forbidden-city-facts/>





China and the “first phase” of “Globalization”



<https://environmentaljusticetv.wordpress.com/2017/11/11/how-the-ancient-silk-road-pioneered-globalization/>

China was the world's greatest empire at the beginning of the 15th Century....



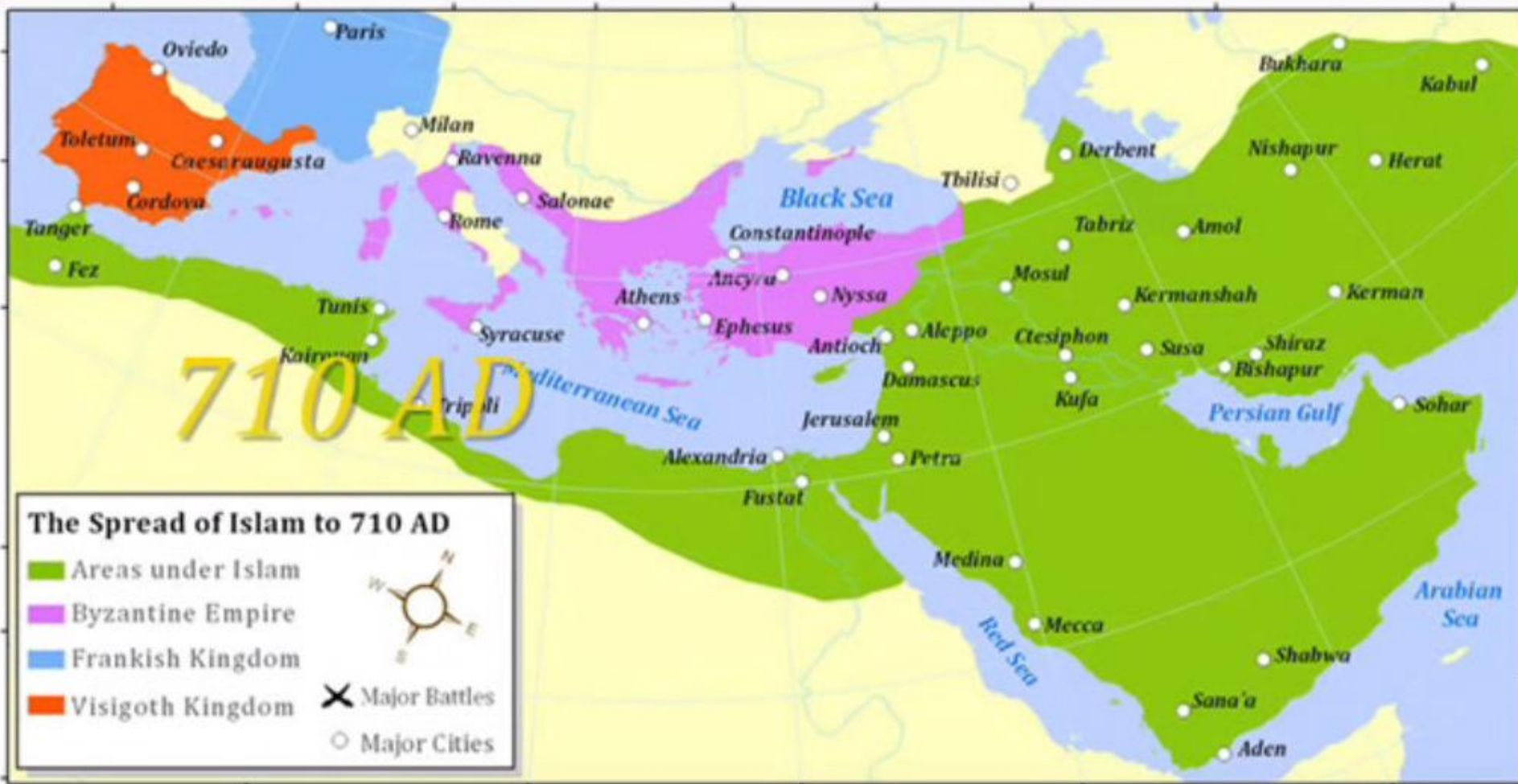
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Why were the great naval achievements of Admiral Zheng He -- under the Ming Dynasty -- *abandoned*?

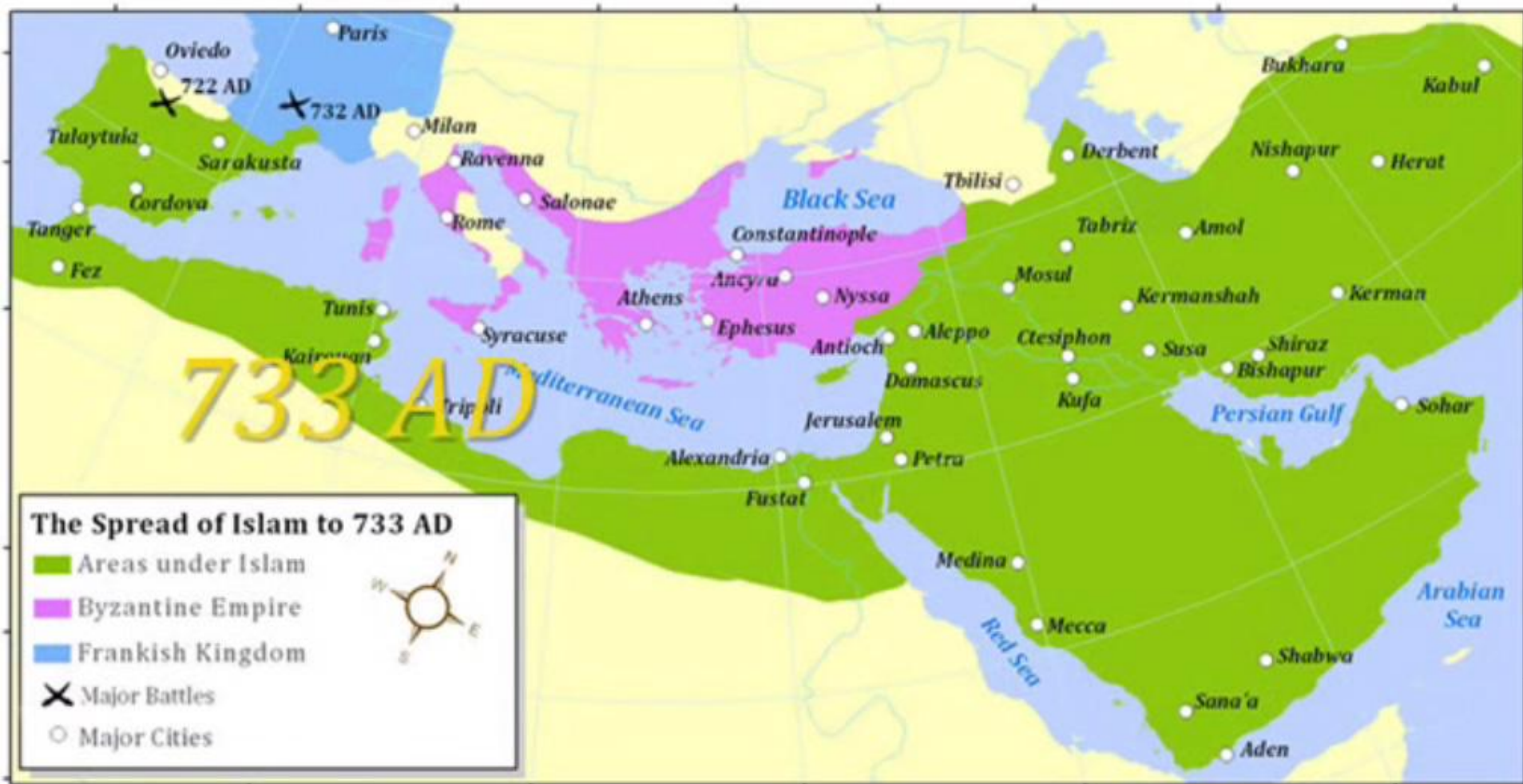
The answer is unclear to Western historians. Perhaps Chinese historians can help us understand this puzzling withdrawal from global exploration. Some authors attribute this to the rise of the “Confucian Courtiers” in the 1480s. See:

What is the *real* history behind this mystery?





By the year 710 AD, however, -- just 110 years later -- much of the Mediterranean came to be dominated by Muslim political leaders because of the remarkably swift conquests of Arab populations, with the military deployment of the camel.



Then, with remarkable speed, Muslim military leaders conquered virtually the whole of the Iberian peninsula – what we know as Spain and Portugal – by 733 AD, only 13 years after they had come to dominate North Africa.

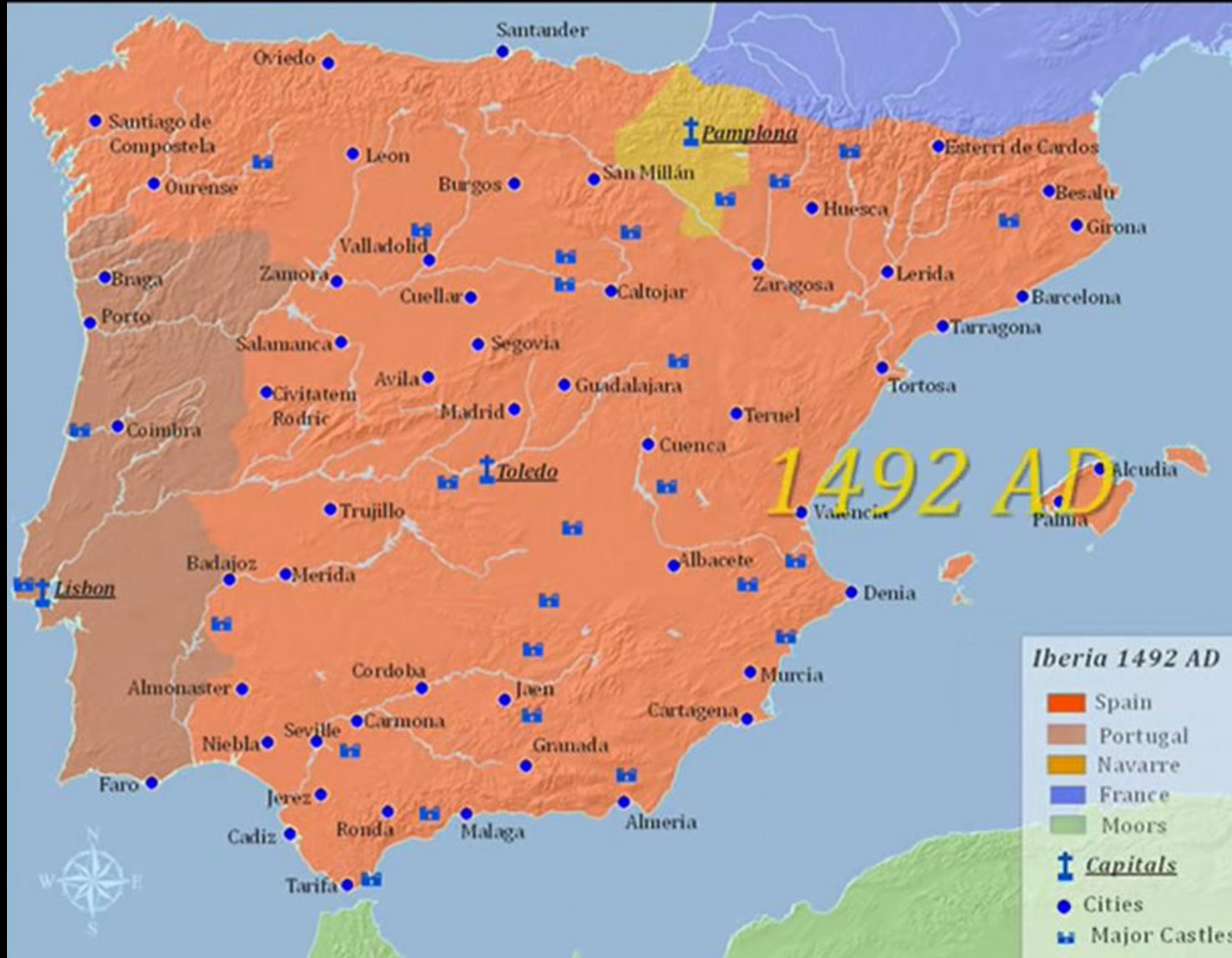


The Spanish Reconquista

Muslim rulers dominated Spain for the much of the next 650 years, but eventually there were a series of long and protracted conflicts waged by Christian leaders to “re-conquer” Spain (an Portugal).



1265 AD

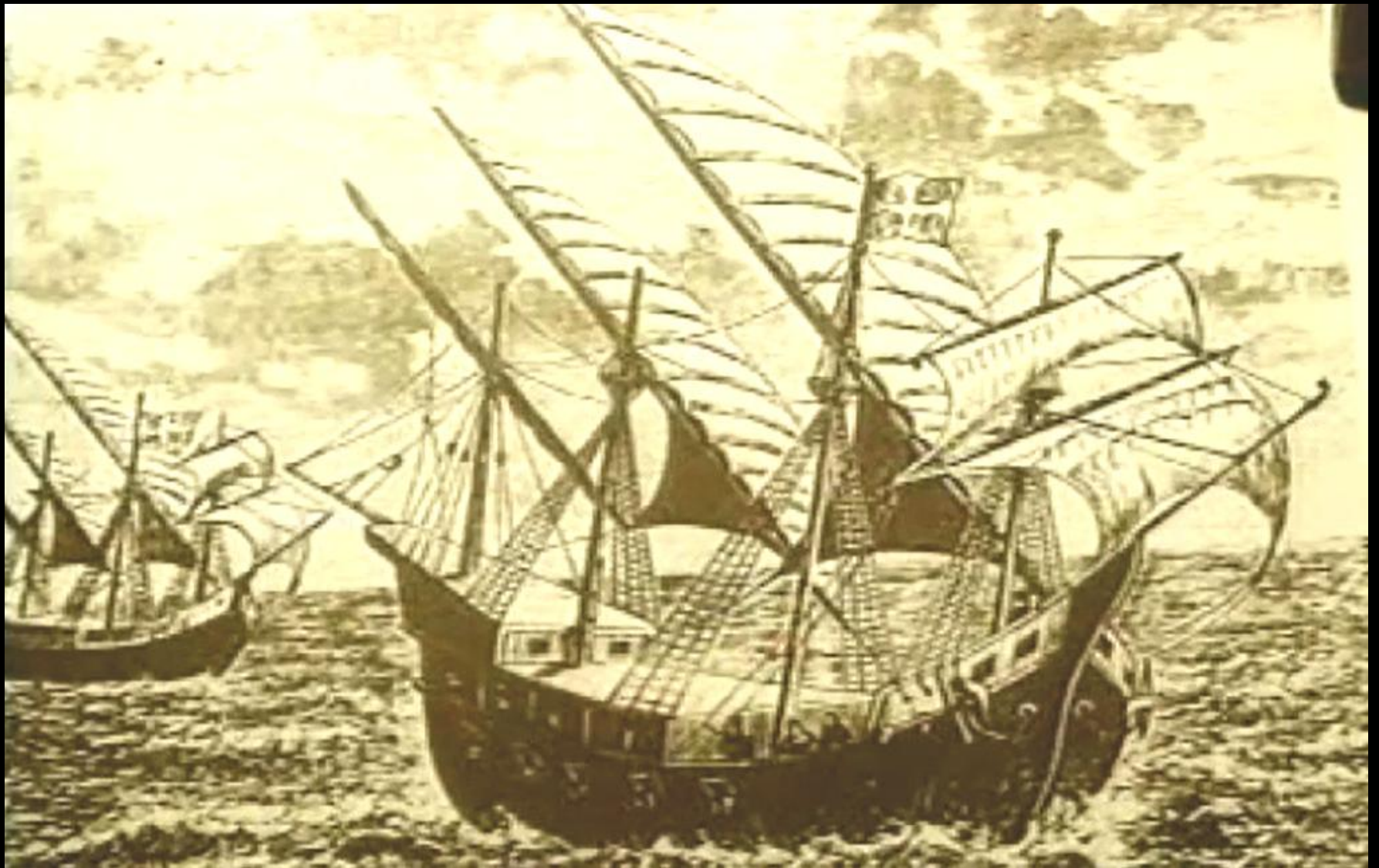


1492 AD



Henry, “The Navigator” – 3rd son of King of Portugal – from 1420 onwards began a campaign to focus on maritime discovery

<https://environmentaljusticetv.wordpress.com/2017/11/13/exploring-the-world-the-portuguese-explorers/>



First the Portuguese (and subsequently the Dutch) came to dominate maritime empires with the development of new naval technology. See: <https://environmentaljusticetv.wordpress.com/2017/11/13/portuguese-ships-age-of-exploration/>

The Dutch “Maritime Empire”



“Maritime Empires” consisted of widely dispersed coastal ports dominated by fortified “castles”. These were developed for the long-distance trade of “*high-value-to-weight ratio*” items, like gold and spices....and eventually human slaves.



The “Spice Islands” →

The islands of Indonesia were of particular interest to the Portuguese and then the Dutch because of their indigenous flora. Europeans sought dependable access to large quantities of the spices derived from native plants. Some of these spices like “nutmeg” were thought to have the power to heal or ward off the “plague” – a disease that had devastated European populations in the 14th century.

Even small sailing craft can cross the seas, and carry significant “wealth” in high “value-to-weight items...



Local populations can approach these small ships with things to exchange. If exchanges are expanded to patterns of regular trade, commerce can ensue....



Even small craft need to be re-provisioned with fresh water and food from time to time, and creating a permanent “onshore” presence with a fort is an advantage to an expanding “maritime empire.”



European rival kingdoms expressed their competitive struggles for power by expanding overseas. Merchants and Royalty worked in a loose alliance in each kingdom to extend the extend of their particular interests against those of rival European powers.



Dutch Merchant ship – armed with cannons

Over the decades of the 16th and 17th centuries the Dutch displace the Portuguese and come to dominate the Banda Islands – or “spice islands” – in the modern day area of Indonesia



Even small islands can have great importance for maritime empires. In the late 17th Century the Dutch trade their control over “Manhattan” to the British in exchange for control for nutmeg trade from the Banda Islands



Today you can see that these islands are still dependent upon international trade. The airport is the biggest structure, BUT the historic Dutch trading fort is also visible

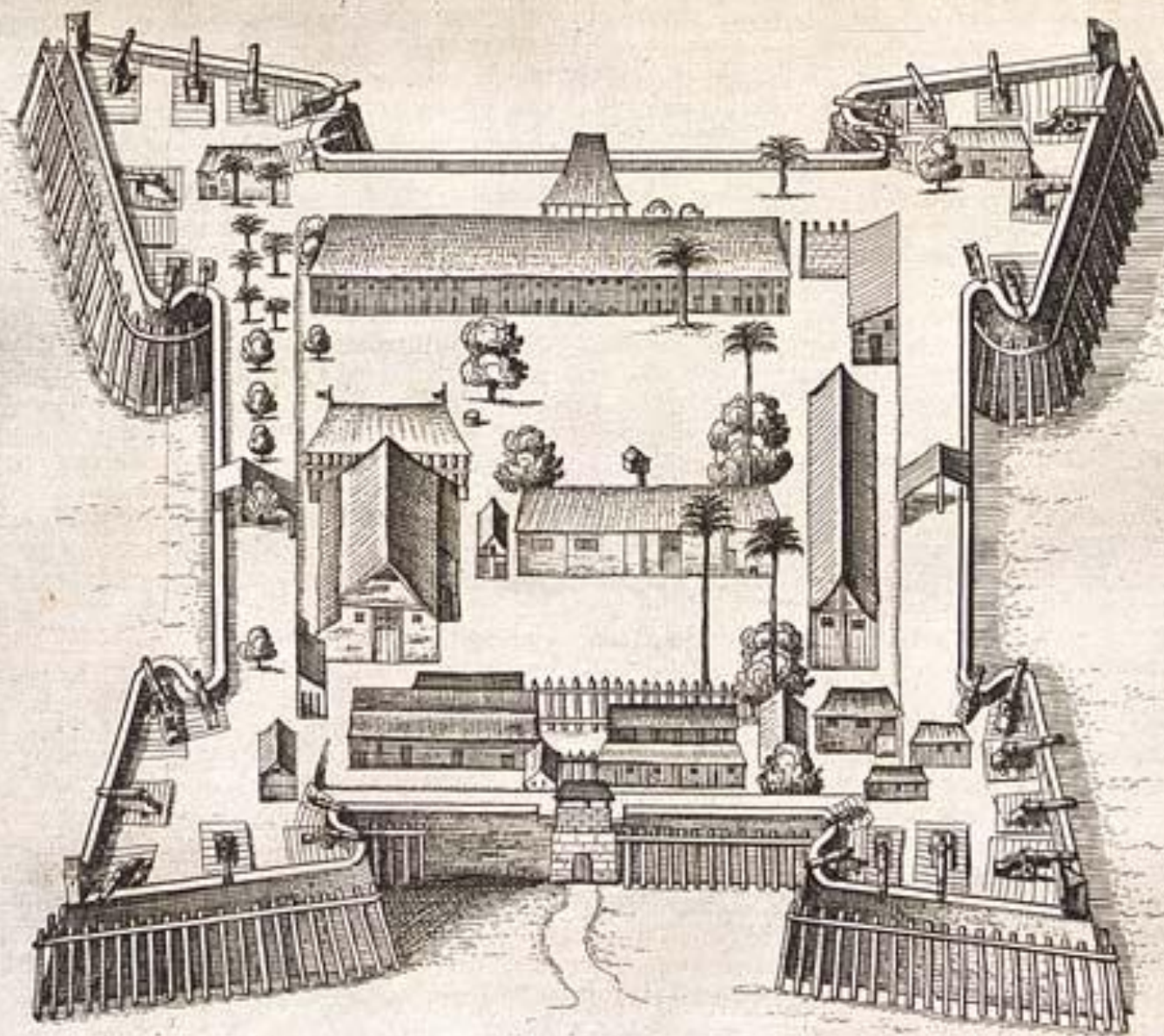


The Dutch “fort” was a substantial building, requiring a lot of manpower and “capital” investment. It was built in the style of a European medieval castle.









The Portuguese, Dutch and English rivalries focused on the control of the “spice” trade, including a particular focus on nutmeg.



The nutmeg fruit



BBC – Travel – The tiny island the British traded for Manhattan

Posted on [November 11, 2017](#) | [Leave a comment](#)



Banda Run is one of 11 lush Banda Islands, or Spice Islands, in the Banda Sea (Credit: NNeiring/Getty Images)



By Diane Selkirk

11 October 2017

<https://environmentaljusticetv.wordpress.com/2017/11/11/bbc-travel-the-tiny-island-the-british-traded-for-manhattan/>

At the same time that they had interest in the trade to the East, the Dutch explored and settled “New Amsterdam” – ie. the current area of New York

NIEUW NEDERLANDT.



Lith. by H.R. Robinson.

This view of Fort Amsterdam on the Manhattan is copied from an ancient Engraving executed in Holland. The Fort was erected in 1628 but finished upon the above model by Governor Van Twiller in 1635.

* 534, 18605



RECENS EDITA
 totius
NOVI BELGII.
 in
 AMERICA SEPTENTRIONALI
 sita.
 delineatio
 cura et sumtibus
 MATTHI SEUTTERII,
 Sac. Cas. Maj. Geographi
 August. Vind.



A. Capiteum, B. D. de Witte, C. de Witte, D. de Witte, E. de Witte, F. de Witte, G. de Witte, H. de Witte, I. de Witte, K. de Witte, L. de Witte, M. de Witte, N. de Witte, O. de Witte, P. de Witte, Q. de Witte, R. de Witte, S. de Witte, T. de Witte, U. de Witte, V. de Witte, W. de Witte, X. de Witte, Y. de Witte, Z. de Witte.



Cum Privilegio Ordinum Hollandiae et West-Frisiae

The Dutch created a fort on the island of Manhattan in the “New World” and developed a small colony of settlers up the Hudson River as far as Albany. This Dutch outpost was traded to the English in exchange for Dutch dominance in the “spice islands” in Banda.



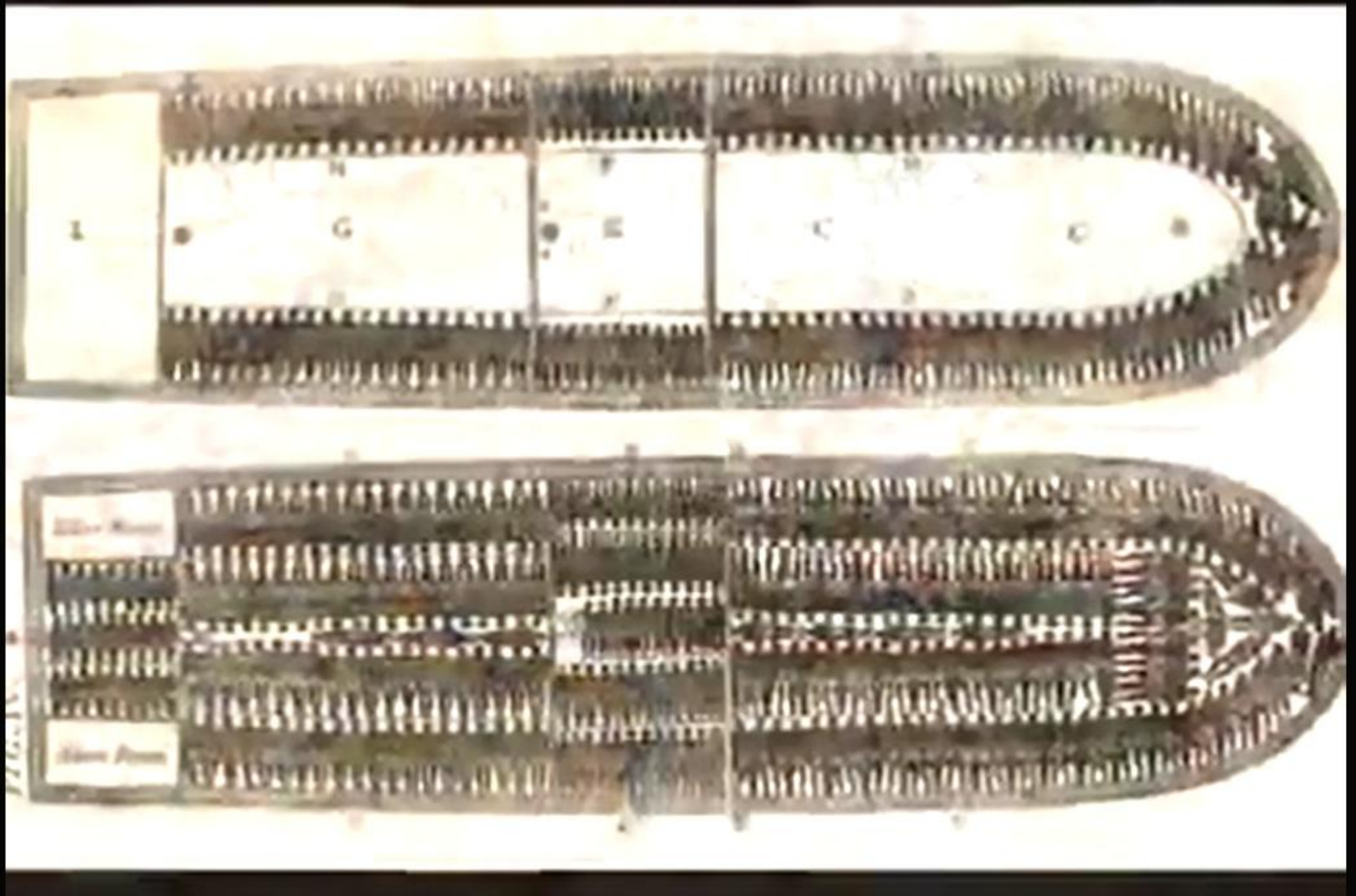
An Englishman – Henry Hudson – was in the employ of the Dutch when he discovered and explored the “Hudson River as far north as Albany



<https://environmentaljusticetv.wordpress.com/2017/11/11/dutch-new-york-with-historian-barry-lewis-dutch-golden-age-segment/>

The Dutch maritime trade in “high-weight-to-value” items extended to the interest in buying and selling slaves from Africa to the Americas – where there was an acute labor shortage for newly established plantations.





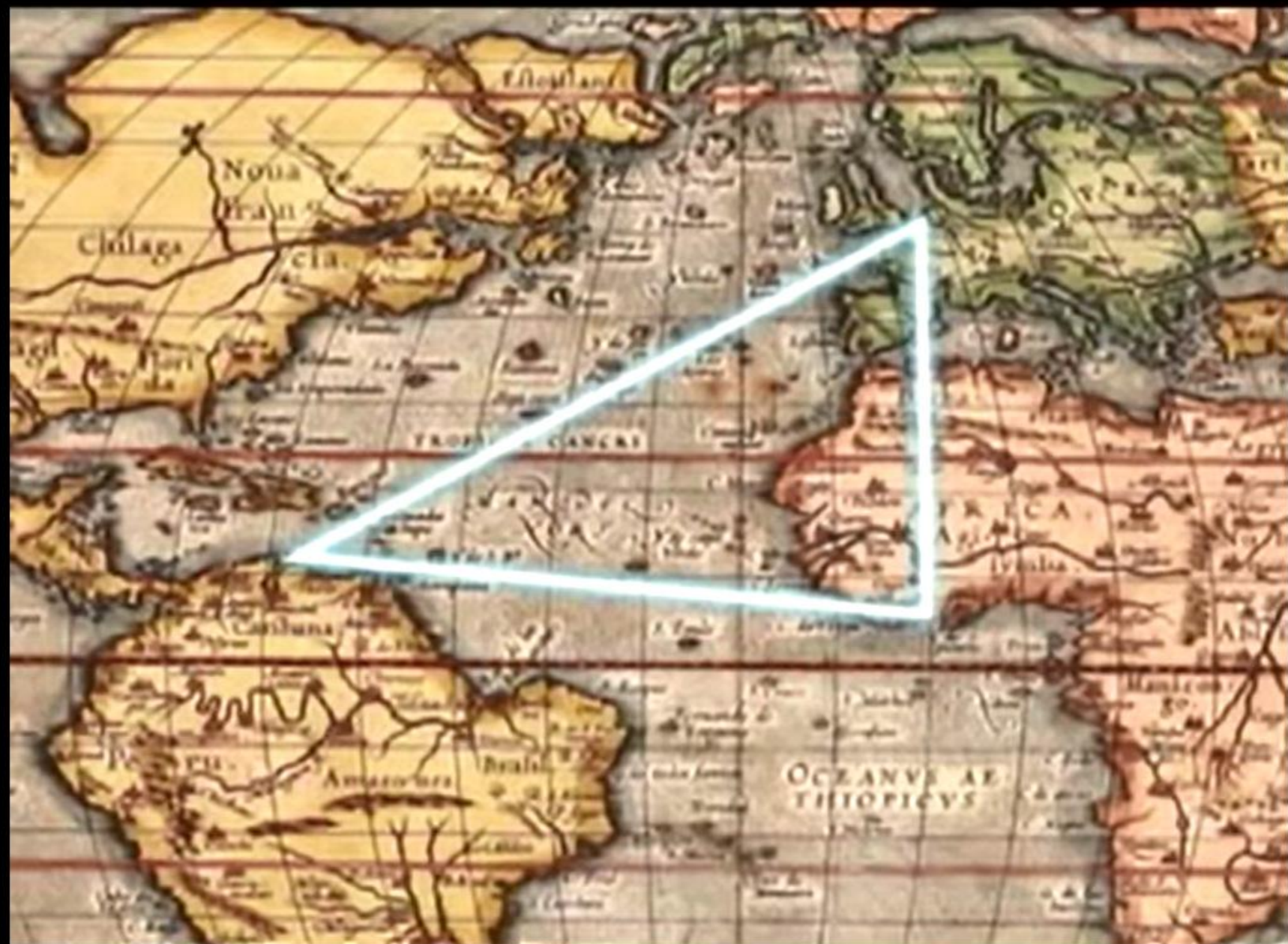
<https://environmentaljusticetv.wordpress.com/2017/11/11/going-dutch-the-netherlands-slave-trade/>



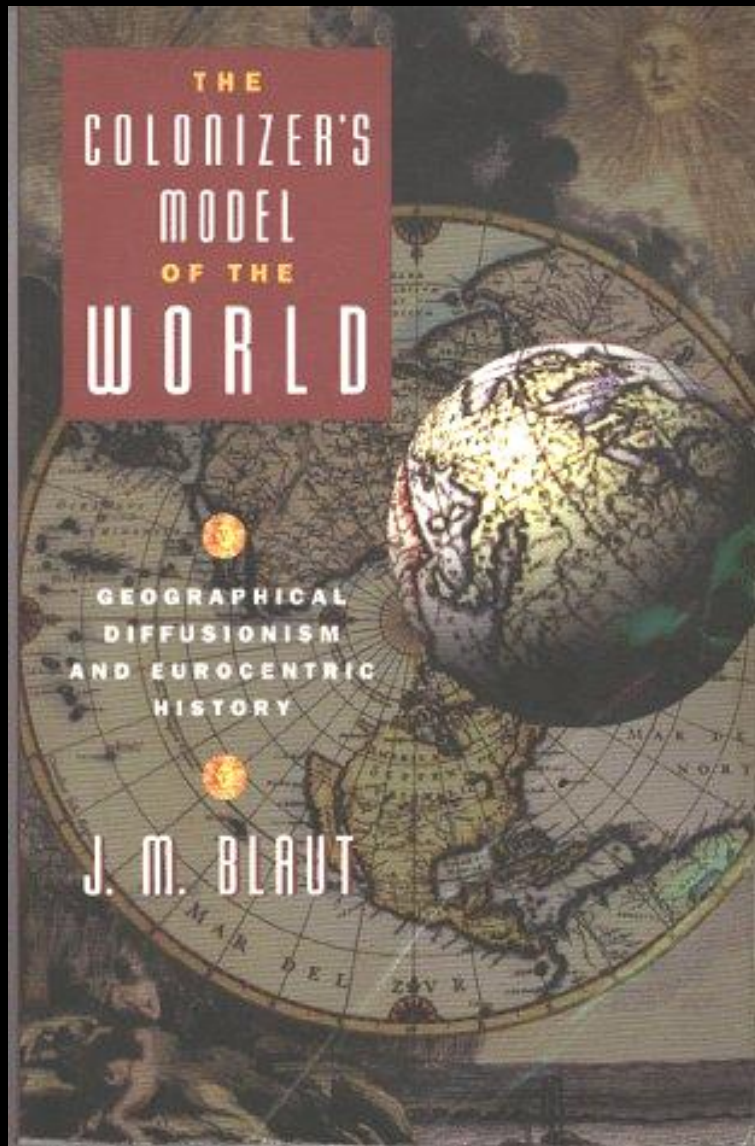
The creation of slave-based agricultural plantations on islands were of particular importance to rival European powers as they extended the “spice trade” into the trans-Atlantic “triangular trade” system.







What are its key components?



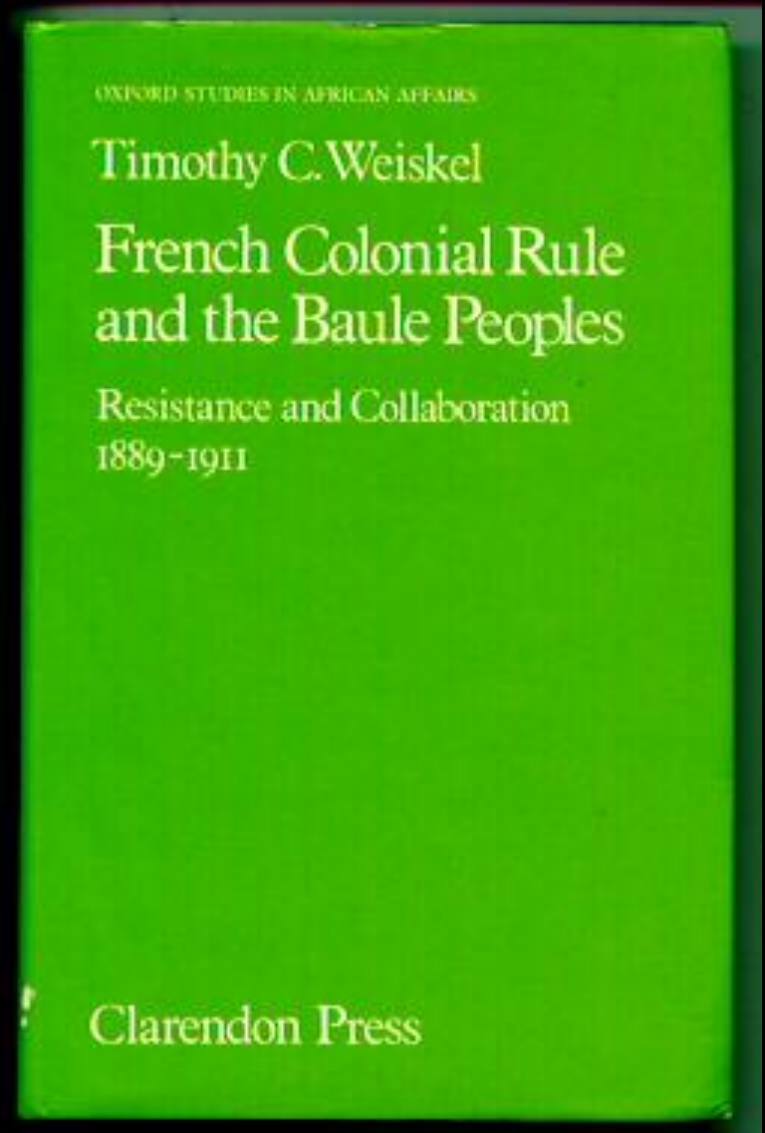
Numerous books abound to characterize the worldview of the colonizers, and it would be presumptuous to attempt to summarize all of Western European thought in this course.

Nevertheless,...

Colonialism can also be studied as an ecological phenomenon

The careful study of modern colonialism -- especially as an ecological phenomenon -- is a basic necessity for understanding the ecological worldview of Americans today.

Most of the time those who thought they were in charge were acting out roles on the ecological stage of which they were only vaguely conscious, and certainly did not control.



The approach is three-fold

This includes

==> Cultural Ecology (emic approach)

==> Ecological Anthropology (etic approach)

==> **Ecology of Culture** (historical approach)

Effort is to understand the origin, function and persistence of cultural beliefs about the environment and how these beliefs condition individual and collective behavior.

*Agents of Empire:
Steps Toward an Ecology
of Imperialism*

Timothy C. Weiskel

The first step to understanding man is to consider him as a biological entity which has existed on this globe, affecting, and in turn affected by his fellow organisms, for many thousands of years.

Alfred W. Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange* (1972)

When contemplating the invasion of continents and islands and seas by plants and animals and their microscopic parasites, one's impression is of dislocation, unexpected consequences, and increase in the complexity of environments already difficult enough to understand by alone control, and the piling up of new human difficulties.

If we look far enough ahead, the eventual state of the biological world will become not more complex but simpler—and poorer.

Charles S. Elton, *The Ecology of Invasions* (1958)



European mercantilism was based on the discovery, appropriation, transport, cultivation and sale of exotic plants, animals and animal products -- purposeful and sustained ecological disruption.

The 'Age of Discovery' was largely an age of ecological discovery -- *and intentional disruption*. Europeans and their trading counterparts acted brutally to transform all accessible ecosystems around the world.

We are heirs to this cultural tradition....We call it agricultural development and/or progress. It thrives on change, innovation and everywhere is based on ecological destruction of existing biodiversity.

Colonialism was built on plantation agriculture

From 1492 (and actually before), Europeans observed native usage and looked to the 'economic' value of new and exotic plants (sugar, coffee, pepper, bananas, tea, etc.)

Some 'introductions' were intentional -- most were not. We are heirs to these cultural habits of behavior and thought....





Our concepts of race emerge from the culture of colonialism as well....

TIMOTHY C. WEISKEL

Rubbish and Racism: Problems of Boundary in an Ecosystem

We had fed the heart on fantasies;
The heart's grown brutal from the fare.

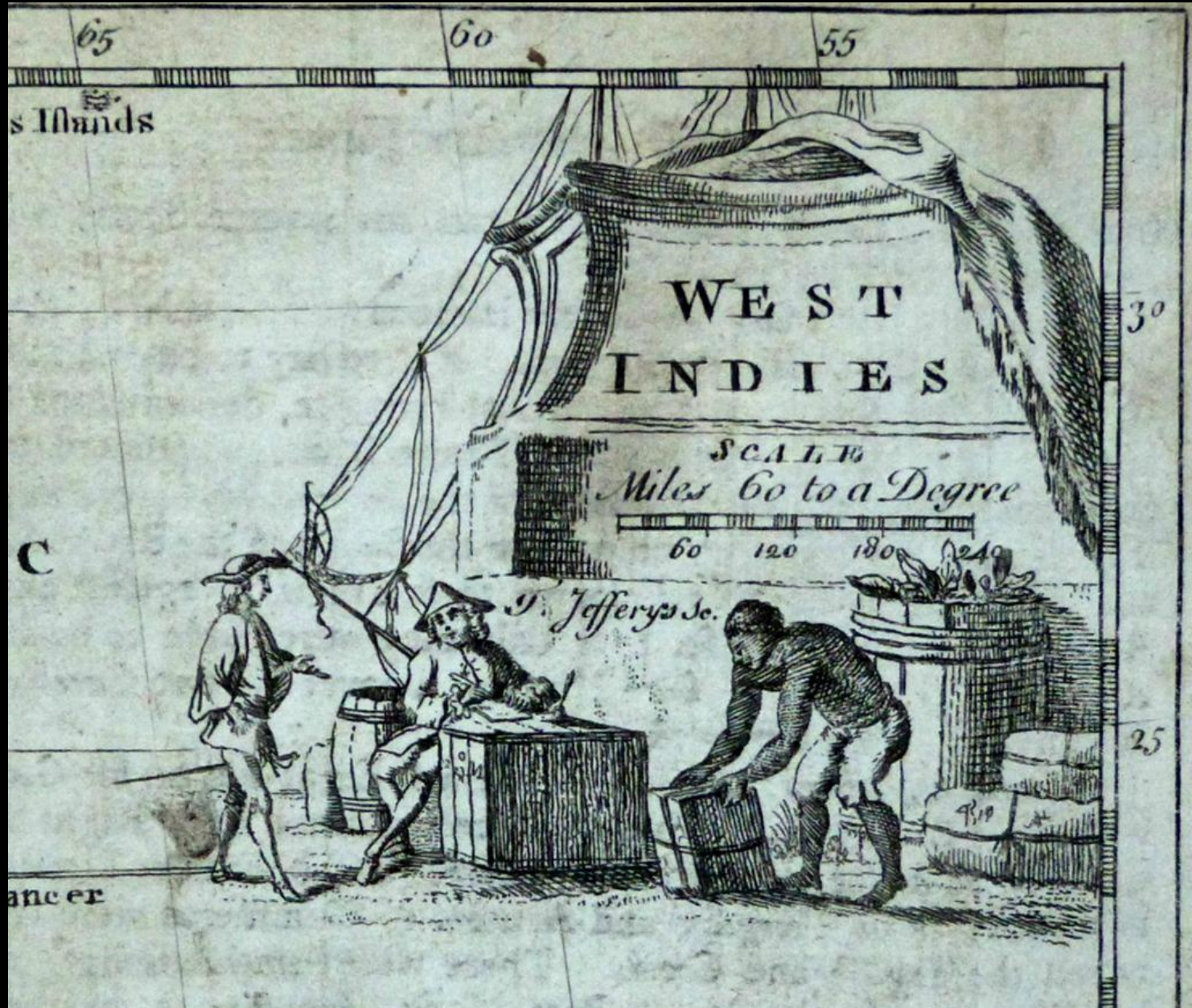
W. B. Yeats, *Meditations in Time of Civil War*

In an age of mounting racial tensions and in the presence of an impending environmental crisis, it may seem irresponsible for anthropologists to fly off to remote corners of the world and continue their studies of people who, even if they do survive, will have no effect upon the world's major problems. As research money becomes scarce, government agencies and foundations appear to agree that such field work is a luxury they can ill afford. Anthropologists, of course, have always maintained that their research has been intimately bound up with the total human condition, and if their peoples have been remote and their theories esoteric, this has been so only in order to offer a fresh approach to the problems we all face daily. If anthropologists have been right, then they should have something to offer concerning two of the major crises which confront us: the growth of racism and the threat of irreversible environmental pollution.

Environmental problems and racist thinking are deeply related in western culture.

No effective effort can be made to address environmental issues without addressing the social experience of racism in this culture's history.

The European sense of cultural superiority stems from the “myth of tropical exuberance,” that stems from the fundamental ecology of exogenous plant introductions....



The Columbian Exchange

Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492



The world would certainly be a different ecological phenomena had the Chinese sustained contact with the “New World, but the Chinese never followed up their “discovery” with sustained contact. With a highly developed, centralized state, the Mandarins essentially ruled out ‘foreign adventures’ after a traumatic collapse of a particular Emperor.

The Columbian Exchange

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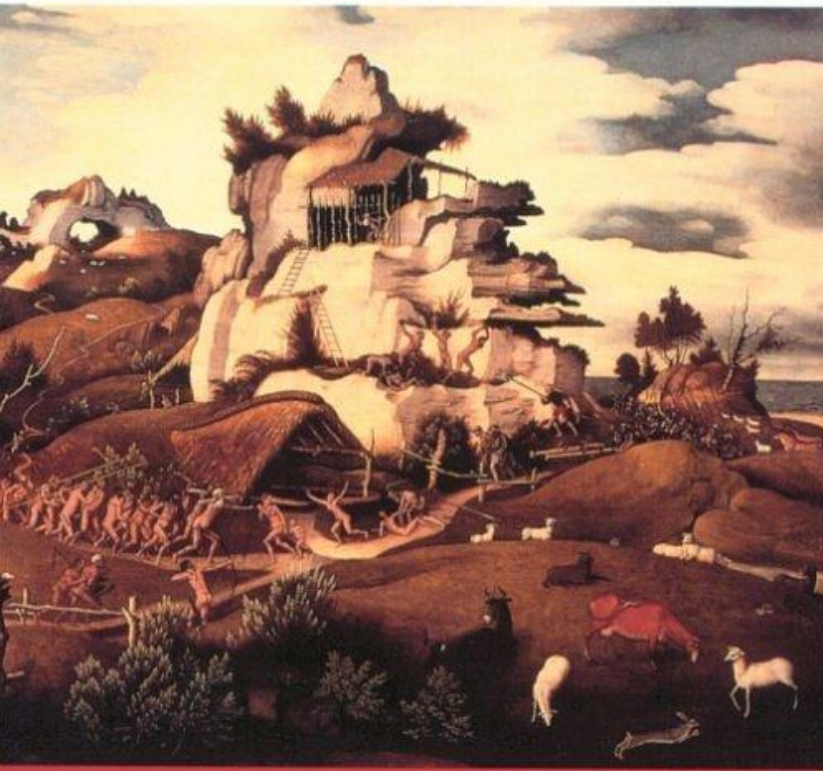
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Instead it is, the “Columbian Exchange” engendered the dominant **“biological and cultural consequences”** of the 15th Century

Ecological Imperialism

The Biological Expansion of
Europe, 900–1900

ALFRED W. CROSBY

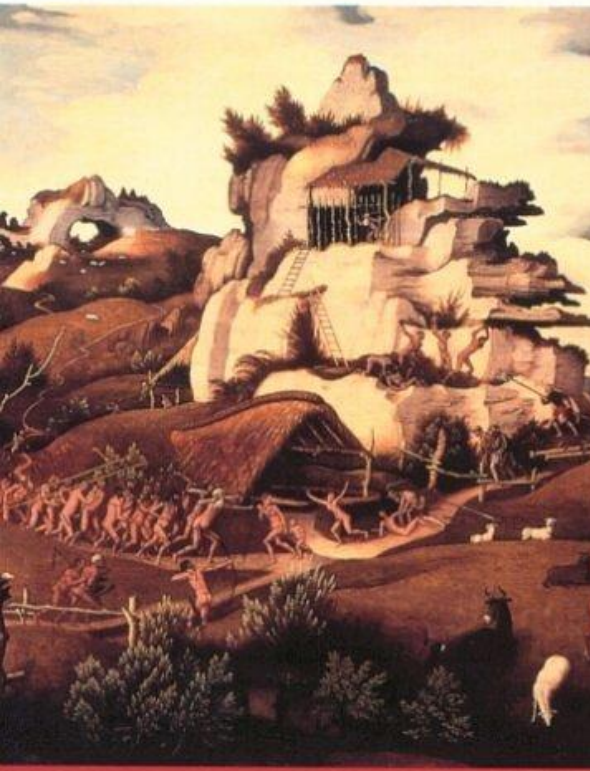


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Europe, 900–1900

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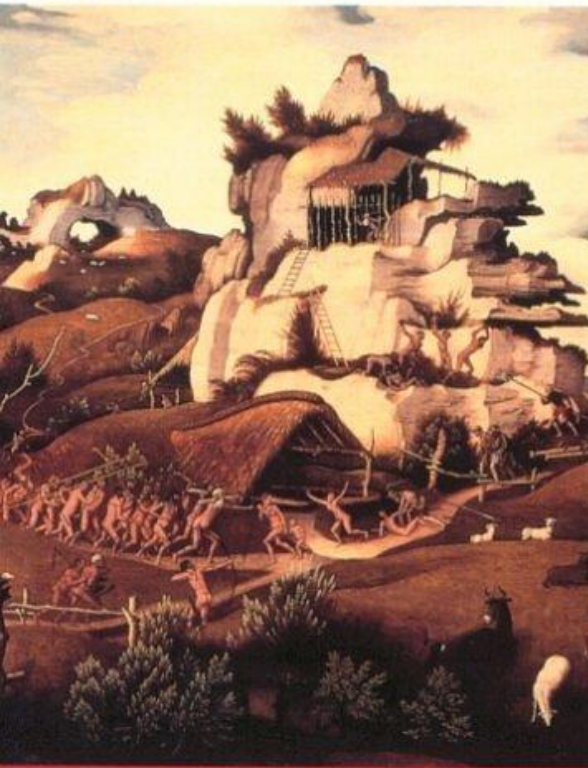
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The Biological Expansion of
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ALFRED W. CROSBY

So, several questions occur...

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What are the implications for the legacy of
the period of “European Mercantile
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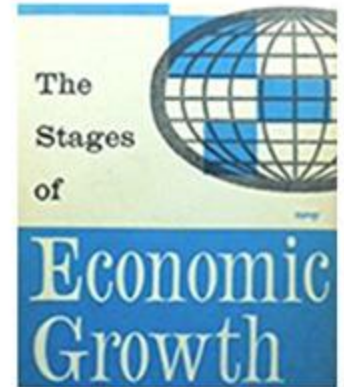
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