

Lesson 2

Student Handout 2.1—The Flow of Maritime Trade and Travel, 1400-1550.

- Before America became linked to the rest of the world, Europe held a geographical position on the western edge of a complex maritime shipping network carrying people, goods, information, and ideas throughout Afroeurasia.
- The network connected most sea-bordered parts of Afroeurasia from the Asian rim of the Pacific Ocean to the shores of the Indian Ocean, East Africa, the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf, and then overland to the eastern and southern coasts of the Mediterranean. From there, it took additional travel by sea or by land to reach the various countries of Europe.
- China and India dominated Asian commerce in the fifteenth century and well beyond. They had the biggest populations, generated the most economic wealth, offered the largest markets, and had the largest volume of exchanges.
- Much of the trade in the network was local, carrying everyday bulk commodities like grain, salt, fish, textiles, and timber. Long-distance maritime trade focused on high value and luxury items, such as gold and silver, cowrie shells (used as currency in parts of India and Africa), precious stones, ivory, pearls, porcelain, silk, and spices.
- Chinese ships mostly serviced the routes between Japan, China, and Indonesia. Those between Indonesia, Sri Lanka (Ceylon), and India were mostly in Indian and Malay hands. People of many belief systems took part—Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, Jews, Christians, animists, and ancestor-worshippers. Muslim traders from Egypt, Turkey, Persia, and East Africa at times joined the annual spice-buying voyages setting out from India. These brought back to India nutmeg and cloves from the Spice Islands (Moluccas), pepper from Sumatra and Thailand, cinnamon from Sri Lanka, and porcelain and silk from China, along with other merchandise.
- From Indian ports to the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf, and East Africa, mostly Indian, Arab, Persian, and East African shippers transported spices and other cargoes that had already arrived in India from elsewhere, along with pepper from Malabar (southwest India), textiles, and other Indian products. In return they picked up horses, pearls, ivory, slaves, and local specialties.
- Muslim Arab, Persian, Jewish, and Armenian traders moved goods overland and by sea across Southwest Asia (Persia and Syria) to distribution ports in Egypt and other areas of the eastern Mediterranean coast.
- From there, Venetian, Genoese, Florentine, Catalan and other European merchants carried goods on to consumers in western and northern Europe.
- The average sailing time in the fifteenth century from Canton (China) to the Persian Gulf was about three-and-a-half months. With stops for provisioning, waiting for favorable winds, and trading, the actual trip took almost double that time. Added was the time taken for overland caravan trips across Southwest Asia to the Mediterranean, plus three more months for the trip by sea from there to northern Europe. Merchants typically specialized in one segment, or circuit of the trade, relaying goods from one trading group to another.

- About 1500, sailing time from Portugal to the west coast of India around Africa took an average of 180 days. The return took about 200 days. Including time in ports, the roundtrip took a total of 500 days.
- In comparison, sailing time from Spain to America in the sixteenth century varied between 39 and 175 days, and the return trip from 70 to 298 days.
- Regular crossings of the Pacific did not begin until after 1550, when European mariners better understood the wind patterns.

Lesson 2

Student Handout 2.2—What Did Mariners Find on Long-Distance Voyages in the Fifteenth and Early Sixteenth Centuries?

Document A

Treasure fleets of the Dragon Throne The Middle Kingdom reaches out

Zheng He, Muslim eunuch and confidant of the Chinese emperor, organized six long-distance naval expeditions to the south and west of China from 1403 to 1433. Each involved thousands of men, including professional negotiators, diplomats, interpreters, scribes, signalers, doctors, soldiers, mechanics, and other specialists. The fleet consisted of over one hundred auxiliary ships, including troop and supply carriers and forty to sixty “treasure ships.” These were estimated to weigh some 1,500 tons and range up to 400 feet in length, with three decks, nine masts, twelve sails, and watertight compartments to keep them afloat even when damaged. Besides ample supplies, they carried Chinese trade goods.

Their destinations, ports in India, Arabia, and East Africa, were not unknown. There is evidence that Chinese in earlier centuries sailed regularly to India and occasionally to the Persian Gulf, and they knew about East Africa at least from hearsay. Zheng He himself had made the pilgrimage to Mecca.

Having generally followed a contemporary’s advice to “treat the barbarian kings like harmless seagulls,” the expeditions traveled over 30,000 miles and returned with “wonderful precious things,” among them a giraffe. With no need for ongoing supplies from abroad, no desire for conquest at a distance, and no cultural tradition of proselytizing, they built no forts and left neither garrisons nor naval patrols.

Some Confucian government officials opposed the long-distance voyages as a waste of money, especially since deforestation at this time raised the costs of shipbuilding. They felt the government would do better to invest in containment of belligerent Mongols and other pastoral peoples who lived along China’s northwestern frontier. In fact, nomad raids were not uncommon, so these officials had good reason for concern. Confucian bureaucrats also feared that the court eunuchs, a powerful political faction, were threatening their power and influence. Consequently, the Ming government banned further large-scale maritime expeditions to the Indian Ocean after 1433, though Chinese trade in the East and South China seas continued.

The following account of Zheng He’s voyages is from an inscription on a stone he ordered erected in the winter of 1431-32. The last paragraph is from a different inscription.

The Imperial Ming Dynasty, in unifying seas and continents, surpasses [earlier] dynasties. The countries beyond the horizon and at the ends of the earth have all become subjects and to the most western of the western, or the most northern of the northern countries, however far they may be, the distances and the routes may [now] be calculated. Thus the barbarians from beyond the seas, though their countries are truly distant ... have come to audience bearing precious objects and presents.

The Emperor, approving their loyalty and sincerity, has ordered us [Zheng He] and others at the head of several thousands of officers and troops to [board] more than a hundred large ships to go and confer presents on them, in order to [make clear] the transforming power of the imperial virtue, and to treat distant people with kindness. From [1405] until now, we have several times been appointed ambassadors to the Western Ocean. The barbarian countries we have visited are [among others, Java, Siam, Ceylon, Calicut in India, Aden on the Red Sea, and Mogadishu in East Africa], all together more than thirty countries large and small.

We have crossed more than one hundred thousand *li* of immense water spaces, and have seen in the ocean huge waves like mountains rising sky-high, and we have set eyes on barbarian regions far away hidden in the blue transparency of light vapors, while our sails, loftily unfurled like clouds, day and night continued their course, crossing those savage waves as if we were treading a public thoroughfare.

Those among foreigners who were resisting the transforming influence of Chinese culture and were disrespectful, we captured alive, and brigands who indulged in violence and plunder, we exterminated. Consequently the sea route was purified and tranquillized and the natives were enabled to pursue their vocations.

Source: Qtd. in Joseph R. Levenson, *European Expansion and the Counter-Example of Asia, 1300-1600* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1967), 14-5; last paragraph qtd. in Michael Pearson, *The Indian Ocean* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 90.

Document B**Sailing, raiding, and trading on the Guinea Coast
Portugal's Prince Henry orders ships to explore the African shore**

Starting about 1415, Prince Henry, often called The Navigator, consistently sent out two or three ships a year to sail as far south along the western shore of Africa as they could. Captained typically by courtier "gentlemen of his household," they averaged about fifty tons, and needed crews of only twenty-five sailors. He financed the enterprise from the king's grant to him of a 20 percent share in all profits from any voyages to West Africa, from the sale of licenses to do so, and from his income from sugar plantations on the island of Madeira. In spite of these resources, he was in debt, owing his bastard half-brother 35,478 crowns of gold, an obligation not paid off until after his death in 1460.

By this time, some fifty ships had passed south of Cape Bojador on the coast of the western Sahara Desert. Twenty years later, a dozen or so Portuguese ships a year made the voyage to West Africa's Gold Coast, cutting into the profits of the Muslim merchants who had monopolized the traditional trans-Saharan gold routes to the Mediterranean coast. Each ship carried some 700 kilos of gold to Portugal, as well as slaves, ivory, a spice similar to pepper, and other merchandise. For these, the Portuguese traded textiles, iron, brass, glass, and hardware.

The gold was sorely needed in Europe to pay for Asian luxuries in high demand there. By contrast, demand in India and China for European goods was sluggish at best, so payment had mostly to be made in gold.

From about 1460 on, the Portuguese cultivated friendly relations with the powerful rulers of West African kingdoms as a matter of policy. Their lively trade with the locals, which during the second half of the fifteenth century seemed to have been satisfactory to both parties, centered on the forts of Arguin and Elmina that they had built on the coast. To protect the West African trade and its profits, the king decreed in 1481 that any foreign ship visiting the Guinea coast without his license could be sunk or captured, no questions asked, and the crew thrown to the sharks.

The Portuguese historian Azuarara was charged by his king to write a record of the discovery and conquest of Guinea (West Africa). The events he describes all took place before 1450, when he finished the account from which the following excerpts are taken. Note that the Portuguese called all Muslims "Moors."

After the taking of Ceuta [in Muslim North Africa, 1415] he always kept ships well armed against the Infidel, both for war, and because he had a wish to know the land that lay beyond Cape Bojador, for up to his time [nothing] was known with any certainty about the land beyond that Cape. [Muslim knowledge extended little further, nowhere near Africa's southern tip.] ... Since it seemed to him that without knowledge no mariners or merchants would ever. . . sail to a place where there is not a sure . . . hope of profit, he sent out his own ships.

If there chanced ... to be havens into which it would be possible to sail without peril ... the products of this realm might be taken there, which traffic would bring great profit to our countrymen.

[Also] he sought to know if there were in those parts any Christian princes, [who] would aid him against the enemies of the faith. [Moreover, it] was his great desire to make increase in the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ and to bring to him all the souls that should be saved.

But over and above these reasons [is] the root from which all others proceeded: ... the inclination of the heavenly bodies. ... Because his ascendant was Aries, which is in the house of Mars ... [which] was in Aquarius ... and in the mansion of hope, it signified that this Lord should toil at high and mighty conquests.

So the Prince began to make ready his ships and his people ... but although he sent out many times ... there was not one who dared to pass that Cape of Bojador and learn about the land beyond it. ... [They believed] hindrance to the passage into these lands consisted of very strong currents ... on account of which it was impossible for any ship to navigate those seas; ... that the lands were all sandy and without any inhabitants ... [and] that the shores were so shallow that [ships would not] have sufficient depth for their management. ... Being satisfied of the peril, and seeing no hope of honor or profit, they left off the attempt.

[It was not until 1434 that, having gradually crept south along the West African coast by sending out yearly regular exploring ventures of two or three ships of 20 to 50 feet in length, a Portuguese ship managed to get past Cape Bojador into territory until then unknown to Europeans].

All the land from the Mediterranean Sea as far as the land of the Negroes [is] peopled by shepherd folk. ... They make war with the Negroes more by thieving than by force, for they have not so great strength as these last. And to their land come some Moors and they sell them of those Negroes whom they have kidnapped, or else they take them ... beyond the kingdom of Tunis [in North Africa] to sell to the Christian merchants who go there ... in exchange for bread and some other things. ... The men of rank possess abundant gold which they bring from the land where the Negroes live. ... [Their wives] wear rings of gold in their nostrils and ears, as well as other jewels.

[In 1441, one of Prince Henry's nobles] armed a very fine caravel [to sail past Cape Bojador. The Prince] ordered him to have regard to no other profit, save only to see and know any new thing that he could. And he was not to [make] raids in the land of the Moors, but to take his way straight to the land of the Negroes and thenceforward to lengthen his voyage as much as he could. [Another purpose of the voyage was] to ship a cargo of the skins and oil of sea-wolves [seals]. [When they had loaded this, the captain called together the 21 men on the ship, and said:] "We have already got our cargo ... and may well turn back, ... but O how fair a thing it would be if we, come to this land for a cargo of such petty merchandise, were ... to bring the first captives before the face of our Prince ... getting knowledge by that means. And as to our reward, you can

estimate what that will be by the great expense and toil he has undertaken in years past, only for this end. [This captain made several voyages to the “land of the Negroes,” also known to the Portuguese as “Guinea,” and was the first to bring back both captives and gold dust from West Africa to Portugal. Traffic in slaves accelerated from then on.]

[In 1446, having been granted a license by Prince Henry to travel to West Africa, a Portuguese] made him ready two caravels, one decked and the other a fishing-boat, in which were twenty men. “Let us go” [he said] “to the ... river where I promised the Moors the year before that I would come and traffic.” ... After three days were passed, the Moors began to arrive, and [he] began to speak with them by means of his interpreters, asking them to have some Guineans brought there, in exchange for whom he would give them cloth.

[The same year, pitched battles were fought between the natives and Portuguese seamen. The latter’s captains addressed their men before the battle.] “It is for war, and war alone, that we are come to this land; and this being so, we must not be timid, for if we fight our battle by day it will be much more to our honor than if we fight by night, attacking the Moors ... and expelling them by sheer force of arms rather than by any cunning or stratagem.” ... The Christians, besides the desire they had to get at them, when they saw their behavior, which was that of enemies who despised them, felt doubly eager to fight. ... The enemy ... boldly trusting in their multitude, [thought] that victory would hasten to them as it had come the other day when they slew the seven men from the other [Portuguese] caravels. ... The Christians, in order to gain the land, and the Moors in order to prevent them, began their fight, plying their lances, by which there could well be seen the hatred there was between them. But the fight on the part of the Moors was not so much from enmity as in defense of their women and children, and still more for the salvation of their own lives. Our men wondered greatly at the courage they perceived in their enemies. . . Yet, God being willing to aid His own, they slew out of hand sixteen and the others were routed. ... [We] took fifty-seven of them, and with them returned to the caravels.

[It remains for me to fix the certain number of souls of infidels who have come from those lands to this, through the virtues and talents of our glorious Prince. And I counted these souls and found they were nine hundred twenty and seven, of whom ... the greater part were turned into the true path of salvation. ... After this year [1448] the affairs of these parts [West Africa] were henceforth treated more by trafficking and bargaining of merchants than by bravery and toil in arms.

Source: Charles Raymond Beazley and Edgar Prestage, trans. and eds., *The Chronicle of the Discovery and Conquest of Guinea*, by Gomes Eannes de Azuarara (London: Hakluyt Society, vol. 1, 1896, vol. 2, 1899), Vol. 1: 27-30, 40-1, 109; Vol. 2: 163-70, 225, 230-5, 267-8, 288-9.

Document C**“This is the first voyage and the routes taken by the Admiral Don Cristóbal Colón when he discovered the Indies”**

Before his voyages across the North Atlantic, Columbus had lived in port cities in Italy, Spain, and Portugal. He had sailed with at least one of the Portuguese voyages to Guinea, and he married into a family of cartographers. He spent nearly a decade seeking royal funding for his own plan to access Asia by sailing west. His conviction that he could get there by his novel way was based on a miscalculation of the earth’s circumference and on authorities of the time that assumed a narrow and island-studded Atlantic. He did not figure on stumbling across a whole continent between Europe and Asia.

Spain’s monarchs financed his enterprise with funds freed up by the victorious outcome of their war against Moorish Granada, and with loans from a Genoese banker. In addition, the town of Palos, from where he departed, had to provide him (as a penalty for some crime against the crown) with a crew of ninety, which included two pilots, two physicians, a surgeon, and an interpreter who spoke Arabic and Hebrew. He had three ships, estimated to have been between 50 and 100 tons and 50 to 60 feet long. One of these ships was lost during the first voyage. During his following three voyages, Columbus was to lose eight more ships. His contract with the crown, however, assured him “one-tenth of any merchandise bought, found, or acquired in any mainland and islands he may discover in the sea,” after deducting expenses. Nine-tenths went to the crown.

Crossing the Atlantic, he was out of sight of land for thirty-three days, amazing in a time when mariners were used to navigating largely by observing landmarks.

After the first voyage, Columbus’s mandate from Spain’s rulers changed from seeking converts, alliances, and trade to settlement and exploitation. For instance, from 1495 on, every native Hispaniolan over fourteen years old had to pay tribute money to the Spanish king and owed compulsory labor services in mines or on plantations to individual Spaniards.

The excerpts below from Columbus’ Journal were condensed by its sixteenth-century editor. Those in quotation marks were claimed to be words that Columbus spoke or wrote.

“In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Acting on the information that I had given to your Highnesses [the King and Queen of Spain] touching the lands of India, and respecting Gran Can [Great Khan, title of Mongol rulers in China] ... your Highnesses as ... Princes who love the holy Christian faith, and the propagation of it, and who are enemies to the sect of Mahoma ... resolved to send me, Cristóbal Colón, to ... India to see the said [ruler], and the cities and lands, and their disposition, with a view that they might be converted to our holy faith ... and that I should go by way of the west, whither up to this day, we do not know for certain that any one has gone.”

Tuesday, 25th of September [1492]

[Having been under way since August 3rd, this day] the Admiral [Columbus] conversed with ... the captain of the *Pinta*, [about a map, Document H, which showed islands in that area of the sea they were currently in. Though they not only thought their ships ought to be where islands were shown, but even thought they saw land, it was not so.] That day they made 4 leagues [at the time a league was usually counted as four miles] ... and 17 during the night. ... But the people were told that 13 was the distance ... for it was always feigned to them that the distances were less, so that the voyage might not appear so long.

Wednesday, 3rd of October

They saw no birds. The Admiral therefore thought that they had left the islands behind them which were depicted on the charts.

Sunday, 7th of October

They passed a great number of birds flying from N. to S.W. This gave rise to the belief that the birds were ... going to sleep on land. ... The Admiral was aware that most of the islands held by the Portuguese were discovered by the flight of birds.

Wednesday, 10th of October

They made 59 leagues, counted as no more than 44. Here the people could endure no longer. They complained of the length of the voyage. But the Admiral cheered them up ... giving them good hope of the advantages they might gain from it. He added that however much they might complain, he had to go to the Indies, and that he would go on until he found them, with the help of our Lord.

Thursday, 11th of October

They saw sandpipers, and ... a bit of cane, a land plant ... and a small branch covered with berries. ... At two hours after midnight the land was sighted. ... Presently they saw naked people. The Admiral went on shore in the armed boat ... took the royal standard, and the captains ... and said that they should bear faithful testimony that he ... now took possession of the said island for the King and for the Queen. ... Presently many inhabitants of the island assembled. ... "I," [said the Admiral] "that we might form great friendship, for I knew that they were a people who would be more easily ... converted to our holy faith by love than by force, gave to some of them red caps, and glass beads to put around their necks, and many other things of little value, which gave them great pleasure. ... They should be good servants and intelligent, for I observed that they quickly took in what was said to them, and I believe that they would easily be made Christians. I ... will take hence, at the time of our departure, six natives for your Highnesses, that they may learn to speak."

Saturday, 13th of October

"The people are very docile. ... They give away all they have got, for whatever may be given to them, down to broken bits of crockery and glass."

Sunday, 14th of October

“These people are very simple as regards the use of arms, as you Highnesses will see from the seven that I caused to be taken, to bring home and learn our language and return; unless your Highnesses should order them all to be brought to Castile, or to be kept captives on the same island; for with fifty men they can all be subjugated and made to do what is required of them.”

Friday, 19th of October

“There are villages in the interior, where, the Indians I bring with me say, there is a king who has much gold. ... I do not give much faith to what they say, as well because I do not understand them as because they are so poor in gold that even a little ... would appear much to them.”

Sunday, 21st of October

“I shall ... shape a course for another much larger island, which I believe to be Cipango [Japan], judging from the signs made by the Indians I bring with me. ... According as I obtain tidings of gold or spices. ... I am still resolved to go to the mainland and ... deliver the letters of your Highnesses to the Gran Can requesting a reply.”

Wednesday, 24th of October

“I intended to go to the island of Cuba, where I heard of the people who ... had gold, spices, merchandise, and large ships. ... I believe that it is so, as all the Indians ... told me by signs. I cannot understand their language, but ... on the map of the world [see Toscanelli’s map, Document H], Cipango [Japan] is in this region.”

Monday, 12th of November

“I ... seized seven women, old and young, and three children. I did this because the men would behave better in Spain if they had women of their own land. ... For on many occasions the men of Guinea have been brought to learn the language in Portugal, and afterwards, when they returned, and it was expected that they would be useful in their land, owing to ... the gifts they had received, they never appeared after arriving.”

Tuesday, 25th December

It pleased our Lord that, at twelve o’clock at night, when the Admiral had retired to rest, and when all had fallen asleep, seeing that it was dead calm and the sea like glass, the tiller being in the hands of a boy [though the Admiral had forbidden this], the current carried the ship on one of the sand-banks. ... Then the timbers opened and the ship was lost.

Wednesday, 26th of December

The Admiral ... knew our Lord had caused the ship to stop here, that a settlement might be formed. ... “For it is certain that, if I had not lost the ship. ... I should not have left people in the country during this voyage, [though] many people had asked me to give them leave to remain. Now I have given orders for a tower and a fort ... with provision of bread and wine for more than a year, with seeds for sowing, the ship’s boat, a ... carpenter, gunner and cooper [and forty-

four men].” He trusted in God that, when he returned from Spain ... he would find a ton of gold collected by barter by those he was to leave behind, and that they would have found the mine, and spices in such quantities that the Sovereigns would ... be able to ... fit out an expedition to go and conquer the Holy Sepulcher.

Wednesday, 16th of January [1493]

The wind freshened from a quarter which was very favorable for the voyage to Spain. The Admiral had noticed that the crew were downhearted when he deviated from the direct route home, reflecting that both caravels were leaking badly, and that there was no help but in God. He therefore ... shaped a direct course for Spain.

Friday, 15th of March

At noon, with the tide rising ... they reached the port [in Spain] which they had left on the 3rd of August of the year before [having been absent 225 days].

Source: Clements R. Markham, trans. and eds, *The Journal of Christopher Columbus, During His First Voyage, 1492-9* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1893), 15, 16, 28-9, 32-8, 40-1, 52-3, 55, 57, 75, 119, 133-4, 137-9, 165, 192.

Document D**Breaking into the Eastern spice trade: an all-sea route to India becomes possible**

That India was on the other side of Africa and washed by a sea was known. That this sea connected to the Atlantic was in doubt until 1488. That year, the Portuguese mariner Dias, with his two fifty-ton ships, was unknowingly blown past the Cape to the east coast of Africa by a storm. A near-mutiny of his crew caused him to turn back soon after, but he had proved that the eastern end of the Atlantic was not land-locked. Leaving Portugal nearly ten years later, Vasco da Gama dealt with a mutiny near the same place by putting the ringleaders in chains and continued on to sail all the way to India.

Da Gama had learned navigation serving in the navy, and he was an experienced seaman. His voyage was financed in part with the confiscated property of the Jews and Moors expelled by the king in 1495. At first, his mandate from the king was to find direct access to spice suppliers. He had four ships, the largest 300 tons with twenty cannon, and 170 men, Dias among them. Of these, only two ships and fifty-five men returned in 1499.

In 1502, the Portuguese king named da Gama “Admiral of India ... throughout the territories which shall be placed under [our] rule.” On his voyage that year, two Franciscan friars accompanied him as missionaries. His mandate this time was to “show the flag” in the East with a display of military might, strike against Muslim fleets and centers of trade, and gain a monopoly of Indian Ocean trade. This led him to attack Muslim ships whenever he could and to intimidate rulers around the Indian Ocean with threats and violence. He raided and killed inhabitants of fishing villages, locked pilgrim passengers into the hold before setting their ship on fire, and bombarded the towns of those resisting his demands.

Of his twenty-three ships, ten belonged to the king, and thirteen to wealthy merchant investors. By a royal decree of 1500, the latter owed the crown one-fourth of the value of the cargo they brought back, but they could still more than double their investment. Soon, the spice trade became a royal monopoly. Da Gama’s share of profits on this voyage was ten hundredweights of pepper worth 800 ducats (a ducat was worth about sixty grams of gold) and each sailor’s, half a hundredweight. He left half his fleet in India to protect the coastal trading posts he had set up, and to patrol Indian waters. The intent was to enforce a policy whereby any non-Portuguese ships in the Indian Ocean had to buy a Portuguese license to operate there, or be liable to losing their cargo, ship, and lives.

The following selections are from the journal of a crewmember, who described da Gama’s first Europe-to-India all-sea voyage. It involved sailing about 27,000 miles, some ninety days and 4,000 miles of it out of sight of land.

We left [Portugal] on Saturday, 8th July 1497. May God our Lord permit us to accomplish this voyage in his service. Amen!

On Thursday, 3rd August [1497] we left [the Cape Verde islands. On November 4th] we tacked so as to come close to land, but as we failed to identify it, we again stood out to sea. [Some days later] we landed with the captain-major, and made captive one of the natives, [then] had him well dressed and sent ashore. On the following day fourteen or fifteen natives came to where our ships lay. ... [We] showed them a variety of merchandise, with a view of finding out whether such things were to be found in their country. This merchandise included cinnamon, cloves, seed-pearls, gold, and many other things, but it was evident that they had no knowledge whatever of such articles. ... Having careened our ships and taken in wood, we set sail.

At that time we did not know how far we might be [from] the Cape of Good Hope. ... We therefore stood out towards the south-south-west, and late on Saturday [18th November] we beheld the Cape. [Contrary winds prevented their rounding the Cape until the 22nd November]. ... By Christmas Day ... we had discovered seventy leagues of coast [beyond the furthest northeast that Dias had got to in 1488]. ... Drinking water began to fail us, and our food had to be cooked with salt water. Our daily ration of water was reduced to [a cup-and-a-half].

11th January [1498] ... we went close to shore, and saw a crowd of negroes. ... The Captain-major [da Gama] ordered Martin Afonso, who had been a long time in Manicongo [kingdom about 1000 miles by sea south of Guinea] to land. ... The chief [there] said that we were welcome to anything in his country of which we stood in need: at least, this is how Martin Afonso understood him. ... Two gentlemen of the country came to see us. They were very haughty, and valued nothing which we gave them. ... A young man in their company—so we understood from their signs—came from a distant country, and had already seen ships like ours.

The people of this country [near Mozambique] are Mohammedans. ... They are merchants, and have transactions with white Moors [Arabs] four of whose vessels were at this time in port, laden with gold, silver, cloves, pepper, ginger [and precious stones]. ... We understood them to say that ... where we were going ... there was no need to purchase them as they could be collected in baskets. All this we learned through a sailor ... who, having formerly been a prisoner among the Moors, understood their language.

The captain-general [presented the Sultan of Mozambique with] hats, [gowns], corals, and many other articles. He was, however, so proud that he treated all we gave him with contempt, and asked for scarlet cloth, of which we had none. ... The captain-major ... begged him for two pilots to go with us. He at once granted this request.

The lord of the place [a close-by port] sent many things to the captain-major. All this happened at the time when he took us for Turks or Moors from some foreign land. ... But when they learnt that we were Christians they arranged to seize and kill us by treachery. ... We forthwith armed our boats, placing bombards in their poops, and started for the village. ... Our bombards soon made it so hot for them that they fled. ... On 29th March we left.

[On April 7th] ... we cast anchor off Mombasa. ... [The pilots from Mozambique had misled the Portuguese, promising them a friendly welcome in Mombasa.] At midnight there approached us a [boat] with about a hundred men, all armed with cutlasses. ... They attempted to board ... but this was not permitted. ... It seemed to us [they just wanted] to find out whether they might not capture one or the other of our vessels. [The two pilots jumped into the water, and were picked up by the native boat.] At night the captain-major 'questioned' two Moors whom we had on board, by dropping boiling oil upon their skin, so that they might confess any treachery intended against us. They said that orders had been given to capture us ... to avenge what we had done at Mozambique. And when this torture was applied the second time, one of the Moors, although his hands were tied, threw himself into the sea whilst the other did so during the morning watch. About midnight two [boats] with many men in them approached. [Some swam to our ships and] began to cut the cable, [and] got hold of the rigging. [Being discovered,] they fled.

[After we left,] we saw two boats ... in the open sea, and at once gave chase, with the intention of capturing them, for we wanted to secure a pilot who would guide us to where we wanted to go. [They captured seventeen men, gold, silver, provisions, and the young wife of "an old Moor of distinction." All tried to escape by jumping into the water but were recaptured. Thirty leagues from Mombasa, they anchored in Malindi.]

The Moors whom we had taken in the boat told us that there were at this city ... four vessels belonging to Christians from India, and if it pleased us to take them there, they would provide us, instead of them, Christian pilots. ... The captain-major ... having discussed the matter with his Moorish prisoners, cast anchor off the town. ... [In return for freeing the Moorish prisoners, the text says that Malindi's king provided a Christian pilot with whom the Portuguese were "much pleased." Use by Portuguese mariners of Muslim and later Hindu and Malay pilots is well documented, as is their frequent confusion about others' religion. They long persisted in mistaking Hindus for a kind of Christian.] We remained in front of this town during nine days, and all this time we had [feasts], sham fights, and musical performances.

We left Malindi on the 24th [of April], for a city called [Calicut, in India] with the pilot whom the king had given us. ... After having seen no land for twenty-three days, we sighted lofty mountains ... and when we were near enough for the pilot to recognize them he told us they were above Calecut, and that this was the country we desired to go to.

The captain-major sent [a messenger] to Calecut, and those with whom he went took him to two Moors from Tunis who could speak Castilian and Genoese. The first greeting that he received was in these words: "May the devil take thee! What brought you hither?" They asked what he sought so far away from home, and he told them he came in search of Christians and of spices.

Source: E. G. Ravenstein, trans. and ed., *A Journal of the First Voyage of Vasco da Gama, 1497-1499*. (London: Hakluyt Society, 1898), 1, 3, 5-9, 16-7, 20-1, 23-5, 28, 30-1, 35-7, 39-40, 45-8.

Document E**All the seas are one sea****Magellan and the first voyage around the world**

Before his famous voyage, Magellan had studied astronomy and nautical sciences. He took part in several Portuguese sailings to India between 1505 and 1512 and in several battles in the Indian Ocean. From there, he was sent to explore the Spice Islands [Moluccas, off western New Guinea] where a Portuguese mercenary captain serving a local sultan gave him information that badly understated the width of the Pacific.

After returning home, Magellan fought against Muslims in Morocco, but on a false accusation he was dismissed by his king. Hence, he turned to Spain, selling its king on his project to reach the Moluccas by sailing west and finding a sea-borne passage across the southernmost part of South America.

The king covered three-quarters of the cost of this expedition, borrowing from German bankers to do so. A Flemish commercial firm funded the rest. Five ships were outfitted, between 120 and 60 tons each, crewed by 270 men. About a third were Portuguese, Spanish, and Italian. Among the rest were “French, Flemings, Germans, Sicilians, English, Malays, Negroes, Moors,” and others. Only one ship and eighteen men returned after completing the voyage under the command of Elcano, who took over leadership of the expedition after Magellan’s death in the Philippines. The few survivors arrived home in poor shape, with a load of fifty tons of spices.

The Pacific crossing did not contribute to the Spanish empire until after 1550, when mariners finally figured out how to use the winds that made a return trip from Asia to America possible. Soon after, regular round-trip crossings of the Manila galleons between Mexico and the Philippines made the Pacific a communications highway.

Pigafetta, an Italian gentleman-volunteer, had studied astronomy, geography, and cartography before becoming a member of Magellan’s crew. The excerpt below was taken from the account he wrote of his voyage.

Having heard [in 1519] that a fleet composed of five vessels had been fitted out for the purpose of going to discover the spicery in the islands of Maluco [the Moluccas], I determined to go to see those things for myself. ... The captain-general having resolved to make so long a voyage through the Ocean Sea, where furious winds and great storms are always reigning, [did] not make known to any of his men the voyage he was about to make, so that they might not be cast down at the thought of doing so great and extraordinary deed.

Many days did we sail along the coast of Ghinea [West Africa] ... with contrary winds, calms, and ... sixty days of continual rain. ... Many furious squalls of wind and currents of water struck us head on. ... That the ships might not be wrecked, all the sails were struck.

That land of Verzin [Brazil, where we landed,] is wealthier and larger than Spagnia, Fransa, and Italia put together, and belongs to the king of Portugalo. The people of that land ... go naked. ... They are as well-proportioned as we. ... The men gave us one or two of their young daughters as slaves for one hatchet or one large knife, but they would not give us their wives in exchange for anything at all. ... These people could be converted easily to the faith of Jesus Christ.

[In the port we called St. Julian] we remained about five months. [Here] the captains of the other four ships plotted treason in order that they might kill the captain-general. [Some of the crew supported the mutineers, for their food was being rationed and they wanted to turn back and go home. However, the plot was discovered; one of the plotters was knifed, two were executed and another two left behind, marooned. Forty men were pardoned, because they were needed to work the ships, one of which had deserted and returned to Spain. After this] one of the [remaining] ships was wrecked in an expedition made to explore the coast.

Leaving that place, we found ... towards the Antarctic Pole, a river of fresh water. There the ships almost perished because of the furious winds. ... We stayed about two months ... to supply the ships with water, wood, and fish. ... Then, going ... toward the same pole, we found a strait ... [440 miles long]. ... It leads to another sea called the Pacific Sea. ... Had it not been for the captain-general, we would not have found that strait for we all thought and said that it was closed on all sides. But the captain-general ... knew where to find a well-hidden strait, which he saw depicted on a map in the treasury of the king of Portugal. ... A great storm struck us that night. ... Two ships suffered a headwind ... [and on] approaching the end of the bay, and thinking that they were lost, they saw a small opening. ... Like desperate men they hauled into it, and thus they discovered the strait by chance. ... The captain-general [sent two ships to find out whether the opening had an exit into the Pacific Sea. Returning], they reported that they had seen ... the open sea. The captain-general wept for joy.

[Eventually we left] that strait, engulfing ourselves in the Pacific Sea. We were three months and twenty days without getting any kind of fresh food. We ate biscuit, which was no longer a biscuit, but powder of biscuit swarming with worms. ... We drank yellow water that had been putrid for many days. We also ate some ox-hides that covered the top of the mainyard. ... and which had become exceedingly hard. ... We left them in the sea for four or five days, and then placed them for a few moments on top of the embers, and so ate them; and often we ate sawdust from boards. ... But above all other misfortunes the following was the worst. The gums of both the lower and upper teeth of some of our men swelled, so they could not eat under any circumstances and therefore died. Nineteen men died from that sickness, and ... twenty-five or thirty men fell sick. ... We sailed about four thousand leguas [16,000 miles] during those three months and twenty days through an open stretch in the Pacific Sea. ... We saw no land except two desert isles [with no anchorage]. ... Had not God and His blessed mother given us good weather we would all have died of hunger in that exceedingly vast sea. Of a verity I believe no such voyage will ever be made [again].

[They made landfall in Guam, stocked up on provisions, and landed on various islands after. On entering the port of Cebu, all the artillery was fired, frightening the inhabitants badly. On being asked what they wanted, the] interpreter replied that his master was a captain of the greatest king

in the world, and that he was going to discover Malucho [the Moluccas or Spice Islands]. ... The king told him he was welcome, but it was their custom for all ships that entered their ports to pay tribute. ... [The interpreter replied that the] captain did not pay tribute to any ... and that if the king wished peace he would have peace, but if war instead, war. ... [After a while, peace was established and Magellan spoke to the king and his followers about Christianity, telling] them that they should not become Christians for fear or to please us, but of their own free will; and that he would not cause any displeasure to those who wished to live according to their own law, but that the Christians would be better regarded and treated than the others.

[The king and his following were baptized. After a while, a chief of an island near Cebu] requested the captain to send him only one boatload of men on the next night, so that they might help him fight against [another chief]. ... The captain-general decided to go thither with three boatloads. We begged him repeatedly not to go [but he did not listen]. At midnight, sixty men of us set out armed with corselets and helmets, together with the Christian king [and some of his following, who were asked to just watch the fight. When we reached the island of the chief we were to help against, the captain] sent a message to the natives by the [interpreter] to the effect that if they would obey the king of Spagnia, recognize the Christian king as their sovereign, and pay us our tribute, he would be their friend; but that if they wished otherwise, they should wait to see how our lances wounded. [Receiving a challenge as reply, Magellan and forty-eight others went ashore to face] more than one thousand five hundred persons. ... The musketeers and crossbowmen shot from a distance for about half an hour, but uselessly. ... the natives would never stand still, but leaped hither and thither. ... They shot so many arrows at us and hurled so many bamboo spears ... at the captain-general, besides pointed stakes hardened with fire, stones, and mud, that we could scarcely defend ourselves. ... They shot the captain through the right leg with a poisoned arrow. On that account, he ordered us to retire slowly, but the men took to flight. ... The natives continued to pursue us. ... [Magellan was wounded several more times.] That caused the captain to fall face downward, when immediately they rushed upon him with iron and bamboo spears and with their cutlasses, until they killed our mirror, our light, our comfort, and our true guide.

[Those who took over the leadership alienated their ally the baptized king of Cebu; they and over a dozen of their men were murdered. The rest escaped but had to abandon one of their ships, which was in too poor a condition to sail. The remaining two ships, with the crew of the sunken third on board, continued on to the Moluccas, capturing pilots by violence to show them how to get there. On the way, they entered the port of Brunei.]

The king of that island sent a very beautiful prau [boat] to us, whose bow and stern were worked in gold. ... When we reached the city, we [waited] until the arrival of two elephants with silk trappings, and twelve men each of whom carried a porcelain jar for our presents. ... Accompanied by the governor and other chiefs, [we] entered a large hall full of many nobles. ... [The hall] was all adorned with silk hangings, and ... brocade curtains. ... Then a chief told us that we could not speak to the king, and that if we wished anything, we were to tell it to him, so that he could communicate it to one of higher rank. The latter would communicate it to a brother of the governor ... and this man would communicate it by means of a speaking tube through a

hole in the wall to one who was inside with the king. The chief taught us the manner of making three obeisances to the king.

The men in the palace were all attired in cloth of gold and silk ... and carried daggers with gold hafts adorned with pearls and precious gems, and they had many rings on their hands. ... We supped on the ground upon a palm mat from thirty or thirty-two different kinds of meat besides the fish and other things. ... We ate with gold spoons. ... In our sleeping quarters there during those two nights, two torches of white wax were kept constantly alight in two rather tall silver candlesticks. ... [The third day they returned elephant-back to their ships].

[Finally reaching the Moluccas, they bartered for cloves]. For four brazas [about twenty feet] of ribbon, they gave us one bahar [448 pounds] of cloves; for two brass chains, worth one marcello [a coin of sixty-three grams of silver] they gave us one hundred libras [pounds] of cloves. Finally, when we had no more merchandise, one man gave his cloak, another his doublet, and another his shirt, besides other articles of clothing, in order that they might have their share in the cargo. [Next day] three of the sons of the king ... came to the ships. We gave each of the three brothers a gilt glass drinking cup. ... Several days later our king told us that he was ... disconsolate [that we planned to leave] because now he had become acquainted with us and enjoyed some of the products of Spagnia. Inasmuch as our return would be far in the future, he earnestly entreated us to leave him some of our culverins [heavy cannon] for his defense. ... We gave our king certain pieces of artillery ... which we had captured among those India [islands], and some of our culverins, together with four barrels of powder.

[About to leave, they found one of their two ships had sprung a leak they could not fix. They had to unload it, lighten the one ship remaining also of part of its cargo of cloves, and leave it and fifty-four men behind. The one ship leaving for home did so with forty-seven crew and thirteen Indians, avoiding Portuguese-patrolled coasts and sea-lanes in the Indian Ocean.]

In order that we might double the cape of Bonna Speranza [the tip of Africa]. ... We were nine weeks near that cape with our sails hauled down because of [contrary winds and] a most furious storm. ... Some of our men wished to go to a Portuguese settlement called Mozanbich, because the ship was leaking badly, because of the severe cold, and especially because we had no other food than rice and water; for as we had no salt, our provisions of meat had putrefied. Some of the others however, more desirous of their honor than their own life, determined to go to Spagnia living or dead. Finally by God's help we doubled that cape. ... Then we sailed northwest for two months continually without taking on fresh food or water. Twenty-one men died during that short time. [Another thirteen men were detained by the Portuguese when the ship was forced to stop at the Cape Verde Islands for provisions.]

On Saturday, September six, 1522, we entered the bay [near Seville, Spain, where they had left from] with only eighteen men and the majority of them sick, all that were left of the sixty men who left Malucho. Some died of hunger; some deserted at the island of Timor; and some were put to death for crimes. From the time we left that bay until the present day we had sailed

fourteen thousand four hundred and sixty leguas [57,840 miles] and furthermore had completed the circumnavigation of the world from east to west.

Source: James Alexander Robertson, trans. and ed., *Magellan's Voyage Around the World*, by Antonio Pigafetta, 2 Vols. (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark, 1906), Vol. 1: 23, 27, 35, 39, 43, 45, 61, 65, 67, 133, 135, 141, 171, 173, 175, 177; Vol. 2: 27, 29, 31, 97, 99, 103, 183, 185, 189.