

The Columbian Exchange and Triangular Trade (1492-1750 C.E.)

You Mean the Potato Wasn't Originally from Ireland?

Columbus and Connecting the Two Hemispheres

In 1453, the city of Constantinople fell to the Ottomans and European trade routes to Asia closed. Many Europeans began exploring the Atlantic Ocean as an alternative. We call this the European Age of Discovery. In 1492, Christopher Columbus sailed from Europe to the Americas. He was trying to get to Asia. When he arrived in the Americas he thought he had arrived in Asia and called the native population "Indians." Although wrong, we remember him today because he returned to Europe and shared the news of his trip. His trips to the Americas, along with those of other European explorers, began the exploration and conquest of much of the Americas. For the first time the Americas were



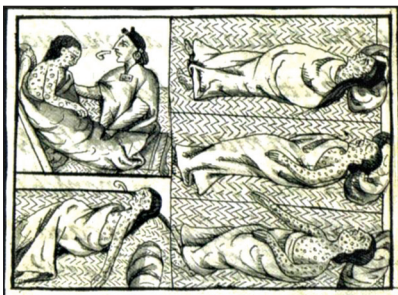
The Columbian Exchange
Source: http://mswynnworldhistory.wikispaces.com/file/view/columbian_exchange.jpg/204858156/409x254/columbian_exchange.jpg

connected to Asia, Africa, and Europe by trade and migration on a constant basis. We call this the **Columbian Exchange**.

The Columbian Exchange transported plants, animals, diseases, technologies, and people one continent to another. Crops like tobacco, tomatoes, potatoes, corn, cacao, peanuts, and pumpkins went from the Americas to rest of the world. At the same time, Europeans brought in foods like bananas and coffee; animals like cattle, sheep, pigs and horses; and diseases like smallpox and malaria. This process is often seen as an earlier stage of what we call globalization today.

Impact of the Columbian Exchange

In Europe new types of foods improved diets and lifespans. European economies also improved through trade (see Mercantilism). Animals like the cow and the horse changed the lives of many Native American groups. However,



Native Americans infected with smallpox
Source: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Azteken_Pocken.jpg
Category:Smallpox#mediaviewer/File:Azteken_Pocken.jpg

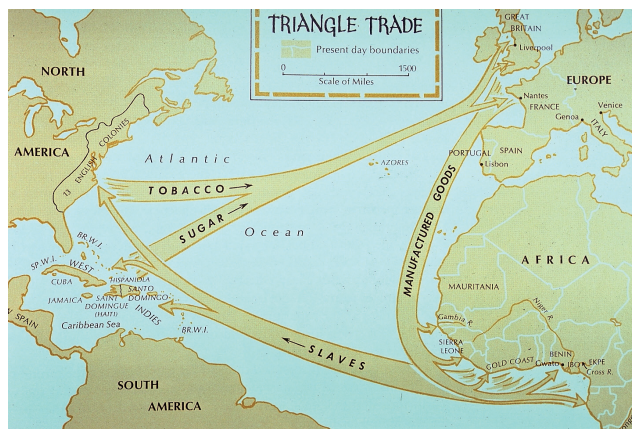
European diseases had the largest impact on Native Americans. Diseases like smallpox and influenza killed millions of Native Americans. Historians estimate that diseases killed between 50% and 90% of natives. The large number of dead made their societies much easier to conquer and control. As Europeans took control of land, they needed labor for the cash crops (like sugar, cotton, and tobacco) grown in the Americas. One result from the need of labor was the development of slavery.

The Triangular Trade

The triangular trade was the trade between Europe, Africa, and the Americas. **Raw materials** like precious metals (gold and silver), tobacco, sugar and cotton went from the Americas to Europe. **Manufactured goods** like cloth and metal items went to Africa and the Americas. Finally, slaves went from Africa to the Americas to work. This trade created great profits for Europe. The lives of Native Americans were severely damaged or destroyed through violence and economic and environmental damage. African slaves also suffered horribly. The trip from Africa to the Americas was called the **Middle Passage**. In the Middle Passage hundreds of slaves were packed tightly into ships. Conditions were horrible. Diseases spread in the small spaces, and as many as 20% of Africans died before even arriving in the Americas. Survivors were sold into brutal slavery, working in mines or on farms growing **cash crops**.

Mercantilism

The triangular trade continued through the 16th and 17th centuries. Eventually the system of **Mercantilism** developed. In this system European colonial powers, led by France, Spain and Great Britain, tried to use their colonies to improve their economies and become self-sufficient. They created colonies in Africa, the Americas, and Asia. The colonies provided raw materials which were then turned into manufactured goods and sold back to the colonies. Under this system, European countries competed with each other for raw materials and new markets. They gained wealth from gold and silver. However, inflation caused by an excess of gold and silver damaged some economies. Some colonies developed economically but they were limited by the mother countries that controlled them.



The Triangular Trade, 16th-19th cs.
Source: http://historyproject.ucdavis.edu/ic/image_details.php?id=14119

Key Vocabulary

Columbian Exchange: the transfer of plants, animals, diseases and people between the Americas and Asia, Africa and Europe

Triangular Trade: the trade of raw materials from the Americas to Europe, manufactured goods from Europe to Africa and slaves from Africa to the Americas

Raw Materials: unprocessed natural resources such as wood, cotton, food crops, and metals

Manufactured Goods: raw materials processed into useful items, like clothing made from cotton or furniture made from wood

Cash Crops: crops grown on large farms in large amounts meant for trade, such as tobacco, sugar cane

Middle Passage: the trip slaves were forced to take from Africa to the Americas. Conditions were horrible and many died of disease, starvation and abuse.

Mercantilism: an economic practice of European colonial powers that used colonies for the benefit of the mother country

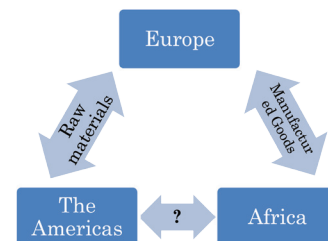
Quick Review

1. The Columbian Exchange introduced all of the following to Europe except:

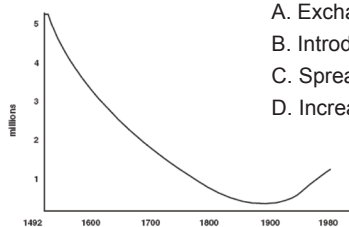
- A. Tobacco
- B. Potatoes
- C. Horses
- D. Tomatoes

2. Match the explorer with the country for which he sailed:

- A. Gold
- B. Slaves
- C. Horses
- D. Clothing



3. The graph (left) shows the population of Native Americans from the arrival of Columbus in 1492. What is the main reason for the dramatic decrease in population in the first 300 after his arrival?



- A. Exchange of new foods
- B. Introduction of new technologies
- C. Spread of European diseases
- D. Increase in growth of cash crops

Native American Population

Source: <https://sites.google.com/a/lvschools.org/mr-godoy/apush/ap-us-history-2011-2012/week1822-826/document-population-graph>

4. Oceans can be seen as barriers to trade or as bridges between cultures. Explain how the Columbian Exchange demonstrates one of these views and support this explanation with specific facts.

Connection to Today

The Columbian Exchange was the beginning of the modern system of international trade. Describe the current system of international trade. What are some items, people, and diseases move around the world today that you have learned about?

Resources

- FCPS Library Resource - ABC Clío: The African Slave Trade in Perspective <http://worldhistory.abc-clio.com/Analyze/Display/1525001>

Learn 360

- The "Hulls of Hell" <http://goo.gl/ijOcdO>