

F. America: From Obstacle to Goal (1584)

1. After Columbus's discovery, a host of European explorers set out, sent by different European monarchs, to learn about the "New World" and find the quickest possible route to Asia.
2. England sent Giovanni Caboto (a.k.a. John Cabot), and he became the first European to reach Newfoundland since Leif Erickson.
3. Both the Portuguese and the Spanish kings sent explorers to South America, laying claim to their respective parts of what would become the Ibersphere.
4. Only in 1524 did another Italian navigator, Giovanni da Verrazano, sailing in this case for France, actually explore the east coast of *North* America.
5. The map below captures the conception of America that held sway for all this time and indeed in the decades yet to come. Mr. Powell calls it the "map of hope," because it shows both a gap in America (illustrating the hope that one could sail *through* America to Asia) and a North America that is much smaller and thinner than it really is (illustrating the hope that one could sail *over* North America to Asia).



The Waldseemüller Map of 1507 shows the evolving European concept of America.

6. Apart from the of the Aztec empire of Mexico and the Inca empire of Peru no civilization was developed even to the level of ancient Egypt or Mesopotamia in the Americas. The vast majority of the primitive natives encountered were still in the "stone age" and thus had no wealth to be traded for. As far as the Europeans were concerned, therefore, America remained an *obstacle* to getting to their real objective: Asia.
7. As late as 1576, English writers such as the explorer Sir Humphrey Gilbert wrote an essay entitled "*A Discourse of a Discovery for a New Passage to Cathay.*" ("Cathay"

was a European name for China at the time.) Gilbert was essentially promoting the idea of a “Northwest Passage” to Asia.

8. Only in 1584 did a significant argument arise in favor of a new perspective about America. It was put forward by a man named Richard Hakluyt. His essay was entitled “*Discourse on Western Planting.*” By “planting,” Hakluyt meant the settlement of America by colonists.

G. Colonization

1. Richard Hakluyt was proposing the *colonization* of America. What does this mean?
 - a) A “colony” is a distant territory settled by the people of a country in order to bring that territory under the control of the mother country.
 - b) The people who plan, fund, and organize colonizations are called “colonizers.”
 - c) The people who actually leave their homes to settle in the new land are called “colonists.”
 - d) A small area in which colonists settle is called a “settlement,” and usually grows into, or is surrounded by other settlements, until it becomes a “colony.”
2. European peoples had not colonized any part of the world for the entire duration of the Dark Ages. The last time a Western culture had created colonies was the time of the Roman empire. So why do it? And how?
 - a) One reason to create colonies in America, Hakluyt proposed, was connected to the ongoing need to explore. A colony across the Atlantic ocean could serve as a base of operations for further exploration.
 - b) A colony would also be a place where Christianity could grow—especially the English form of Christianity, known as Anglicanism. This included the possibility of converting primitive peoples to Christian belief by missionary activity.
 - c) The main reason to create colonies was to create an Anglosphere of trade. If goods such as tobacco could be produced by Englishmen, then the English would not have to buy them from the Spanish (who now obtained them from the Caribbean). The reason for avoiding trading with people of other European nations was the perceived danger of enriching those nations, who were always seen as potential enemies. Nations that were able to sell more goods to others than they bought from them obtained more money (at that time, gold & silver) and thus were perceived to have more wealth—which could be taxed by their king to fund war against one’s own nation. (Although trade is fundamentally a benevolent or “win-win” activity, this perspective, known as “mercantilism,” views it as a “win-lose” proposition, because of its anticipated connection to the wars between nations.)