

# Outwards into the atlantic world in the 1400s

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The reasons for Western European exploration in the 1400s are numerous. Europeans desperately sought a sea route to the spices of Asia. Further more they believed that Asia was loaded with silver, gold and precious things. Europeans also had eye on the animal furs and other resources of these lands. Exploring these worlds was the best idea for them. Europeans were also anxious to expand the knowledge of the world. European rulers like King of Portugal madly desired larger empires. They wanted to plunder the wealth of these lands and capture the native people to work for them as slaves. European rulers of the 1400s were so religious that they attempted to convert everyone to Christianity.

The rising population and the expansion of cities, towns and commercial activities triggered a demand for goods in Europe. As the Historian William D. Phillips says “ A rising population stimulated by innovations in agriculture and stock breeding, led to the expansion of land under cultivation. The increasing food supply supported not only a continuing rise in population but also the growth of towns, cities and commercial activity”(Mooney 1). This made Europeans launch long-distance trade to gather resources from foreign lands. Increase in foreign trade aroused curiosity to explore the Eastern lands and collect valuable things like silk and spices. The Venetian merchant Marco Polo’s name is the first to be mentioned while explaining the European expedition of the 1400s. Pax Mongolica enabled fellowship with Europeans and Asians and encouraged commercial activities between these regions. Mongol control of the vast regions ensured safe travel that triggered the interests of merchants. Pax Mongolica gave birth to a stability and safety

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that were well utilized by European champions like Marco Polo. Marco Polo's special interest of the Chinese customs, their civilization and innovations revealed the news of Chinese wealth to Europeans. This initiated European expedition to China and other East Asian regions. Europeans began craving for East Asian products. Accidentally this was the period of cultural revival in the West. Polo's description about the immense wealth of Asian countries made Columbus and other expeditors to explore the lands. The peaceful internal conditions that emerged because of the new regime also encouraged external expansion. Portuguese began their exploration in 1400s along the Atlantic coast of Africa marking the new era, the Age of Discovery. The contemporary movement Renaissance enhanced the outlook of people and encouraged them to be more creative. They were curious about the world beyond the Mediterranean Sea, and began exploring these lands. Portuguese initiated the Age of Discovery. Asian spiced caught the interest of Venetians and other traders. Venetians' relationship with Arab traders made them move towards making fellowship with Egyptians. Portugal was ideally placed to make use of the trans-Saharan trade networks to exploit the West African gold and ivory. The stories of rich monarchs and the references of wealth of African kings mentioned in 1375 Catalan Atlas aroused the interest of expeditors. The news of the wealth of king of Tombuto, the splendor of his empire excited the Portuguese. They began seeking the immense wealth, West African Gold, and explore the lands. The capturing of Ceuta helped Portuguese to reach the North African coast and other unexplored areas. Prince Henry, the Navigator sponsor for the voyages and the advent of exploratory ships, Caravel enabled more expedition. Prince Henry's idea of colonization of Madeira Islands and Azores and the Portuguese expedition <https://assignbuster.com/outwards-into-the-atlantic-world-in-the-1400s/>

beyond Cape of Bojador made further expedition possible. Prince Henry's desire to amass wealth and his interest to Christianize people opened the way for explorations. Henry expected that voyages " could bring back to the realm many merchandises [such as gold and ivory] at little cost" (Mooney 4) Portuguese expanded further southward desiring African goods and slaves. Portuguese aim of the expedition was commerce. They traded for gathering gold, ivory and human beings. Portugal made a big trade of ivory and gold through its ' factory'. The spice markets of Asia caught their interest as they attempted to move towards the Indian subcontinent. Coast of Africa was explored so that they could move towards India along that route. Christopher Columbus proposed a route to Asia across the Atlantic. However, John II, the King of Portugal planned to access the silk and spice markets of Asia through the Cape of Good Hope. Vasco da Gama and his crew moved towards India and gathered spices and precious stones from there. Spices from India accounted for vast profits. Religious motives also made Westerners move towards the East. Columbus says that he was sent to India to spread Christianity there. Columbus immediate motive, however, was to gather wealth. His eyes were on the wealth of Asia. Western Europeans explored to the Atlantic world in the 1400s seeking wealth and knowledge.

#### Works Cited

Dr. Matthew Mooney, American History.