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Introduction

This Study Guide has been developed exclusively with the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC®) to be used as an additional resource by candidates, both in and out of school, following the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC®) programme.

It has been prepared by a team with expertise in the CSEC® syllabus, teaching and examination. The contents are designed to support learning by providing tools to help you achieve your best in CSEC® Caribbean History and the features included make it easier for you to master the key concepts and requirements of the syllabus. Do remember to refer to your syllabus for full guidance on the course requirements and examination format!

This Study Guide is supported by a website which includes electronic activities to assist you in developing good examination techniques:

- **On Your Marks** activities provide sample examination-style short answer and essay type questions, with example candidate answers and feedback from an examiner to show where answers could be improved. These activities will build your understanding, skill level and confidence in answering examination questions.

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This unique combination of focused syllabus content and interactive examination practice will provide you with invaluable support to help you reach your full potential in CSEC® Caribbean History.

Access your support website for additional content and activities here: **www.oxfordsecondary.com/9781408526477**
LEARNING OUTCOMES
At the end of this topic you should be able to:
• Trace the migration patterns of early humans in the Americas.
• Identify in their original locations the different Caribbean cultural groups that existed.
• State the basic resources in the Caribbean.
• Understand what self-sufficiency means.

The Americas and the Caribbean
The Caribbean (the West Indies) comprises all islands and countries bounded by the Caribbean Sea or with specific historical, economic and political similarities. There are over 700 islands in the chain, subdivided into the Greater and Lesser Antilles and further into the Windward and Leeward Islands.

Migration into America
Archaeologists support the theory that early man entered the Americas around 13,500 years ago. Hunters and gatherers, following wild herds, crossed the Bering Straits ice bridge from Siberia into Alaska up to 10,000 years ago.

Artefacts confirm they moved south while hunting, reaching the southern tip of South America around 8,000 years ago, and settling around 5,000 years ago. Their staple crops were maize, cassava and potatoes. Villages were soon established and eventually developed into the great civilisations of the Maya, Aztec and Inca.

Moving into the Caribbean
The Taino and Kalinago were some of the earliest settlers in the Caribbean. They came from different areas. Archaeologists have, however, identified that many peoples preceded them by a few thousand years.

DID YOU KNOW?
Workers who came from India in the second half of the 19th century used to be referred to as East Indians, to distinguish them from the indigenous West Indian people. It is now customary to refer to them simply as Indian.

EXAM TIP
Make sure that you always read the examination questions and instructions carefully so that you understand exactly what the task is.
The Europeans came after the Amerindians. The Spaniards came first in 1492, led by Christopher Columbus. They were followed by the English, French and Dutch. Africans came as enslaved people from the late 16th century and indentured Africans, Portuguese, Chinese and Indians between 1838 and 1845.

Cultural groups
Archaeologists believe that the earliest indigenous groups mixed farming, fishing and hunting and gathering. Their cultures were simple; they believed in animism and spirits.

The Taino evolved from another indigenous group. They migrated from the lower Orinoco, through Venezuela and Trinidad into the Caribbean (Figure 1.1.1). They had a well developed farming system based on cassava (manioc) cultivation. Leadership was hereditary and their culture and society was advanced.

The Kalinago migrated from the Amazonian basin to the Caribbean. Cassava was also important in their diet, but their leadership was based on war prowess. Contrary to common belief, they were not cannibals, but did consume blood from the heart of a slain warrior in the belief that this would give them his power. The Kalinago obtained their women from Taino raids, explaining the many similarities in Taino and Kalinago practices and language.

Resources
The South American and Caribbean’s tropical rainforests provided humans and animals with food, clothing, shelter and materials for construction, industrial and medical uses. The land afforded stable ground for settlement, especially on the protected leeward coasts. Rivers provided water.

Historically, indigenous groups cultivated cassava, maize and potatoes and extensively used native fruits including guava, pawpaw sour sop and sapodilla. Native hardwoods were used to make canoes, weapons, bowls and the duhos (ceremonial chairs; see Figure 1.4.1).

The indigenous people hunted agouti, deer, turtles and iguanas, and fished for lobster, conch and crabs. They made tools and weapons from bones, wood, stones and shells, pottery from clay, graters, mortars, pestles and spear heads from stone, and hooks and decoration from animal bones.

Early European settlers depended on the indigenous people’s resources to survive.

Summary Questions
1. Explain how and why the early migrants came into the Americas.
2. Describe the settlement patterns of the indigenous people in the Caribbean.
3. Explain how the Taino and Kalinago organised their societies.

DID YOU KNOW?
Abundant resources allowed the indigenous to be self-sufficient, using all parts of plants or animals and not needing any outside help. They used slash and burn, a method of farming that involves cutting down and burning the old vegetation before sowing new seed.

Activity
Identify three things that show that the Taino and Kalingo were not the first people to settle in the Caribbean.

Key Points
- Early man migrated across the Bering Straits into America between 15,000 and 10,000 years ago.
- Early cultures included the Maya, Aztec, Inca, Taino and Kalinago.
- Indigenous culture was based on subsistence farming, hunting and fishing.
- Early people were self-sufficient.
At the end of this topic you should be able to:

- Locate the Mayan empire on a map.
- Describe the organisation of Mayan society.
- Explain the role of agriculture and trade in the Mayan economy.
- Assess the contribution of the Mayans to science, astrology and mathematics.

The Maya were the oldest of the three empires in Central and South America (the others were Aztec and Inca). Their empire stretched from Southern Mexico in the North to Nicaragua in the South and they flourished during the Classical Period, between 250 and 900 CE (Figure 1.2.1).

A network of city states

By 200 CE the Mayan people had evolved from small agricultural villages into city dwellers. These cities were political, religious and trading centres and comprised temples, palaces, plazas, religious pyramids and ball courts. Roads connected cities and runners carried news from one to another. During the Classical period there were over 45 cities with between 1,500 and 100,000 people. Cities included Coba, Copan, Tikal and Rio Azul.

Mayan society

Mayan society was stratified and everyone knew his place. The most powerful class included leaders called ahaw and halach uinic, and beneath them were ah kinob, priests, and batabs, nobles. Pampions were political officials who were also part of the military, and under them were labourers and skilled artisans such as farmers, architects, stone cutters and carpenters. War captives became slaves and servants in the lowest class.

The Maya were obsessed with building temples, which needed a large labour force. Great temples, elaborate pyramids and places were used for religious rites, burial chambers and living quarters for nobles. Houses were made of stone and clay and walls were painted.

Mayan society was patriarchal, so the man was dominant in the family. Babies were blessed by priests and their foreheads were flattened for beauty and intelligence. Looking cross-eyed was considered a sign of beauty. Men wore an ex (loin cloth) and pati (larger cotton shirts). Women were in charge of domestic duties. Married women wore jewellery and elaborate headdresses.

Religious beliefs

The spirit world was very important to the Maya; they believed in many gods which were good and evil and which controlled daily life. The ruler was semi-divine and was an intermediary between men and gods, interpreting events and messages of the gods. The Maya believed in an afterlife, but only those who were sacrificed went straight to heaven.

Religious activities included science, astrology and mathematics. Priests used them to forecast eclipses, and to decide when to plant
and harvest. Priests practised divination, that is predicting the future. The chief priest, the ahaucan, was an advisor to the ahaw and decided which days would be sacred, for worship and festivals. The chilane, who had visionary power, and the nacom, who performed human sacrifice, were lesser priests. The Maya invented a haab, a lunar calendar of 18 months, or uinals. The year was 365 days long and which had an extra 20-day month every five years.

Religious activities also included dancing and games, for example pok-a-tok, a ball game. The winners were heroes and the losers were sacrificed.

Political organisation

During the classical period city-states were run by nobles. Several dynasties rose and fell. The ruler of the Maya, the ahaw, lived in the city. Towns and villages round the city-state were administered by sub-lords, the sajalo, and represented by a chief, the bhaah sahal.

The halach uinic governed the city-state for the ahaw, and he was helped by a council of chiefs and priests known as ah cuch cabob. The batabobs were lesser chiefs responsible for the day-to-day running of a village. It was an inherited position. Nacoms, war chiefs elected for proving themselves in war, were part of the political system. They lived a regimented life, abstaining from alcohol and women, and assisted officials with the daily collection of taxes and planting of crops.

Agriculture

The Maya lived in tropical forests which were practically impenetrable. They drained swamps and built irrigation canals and terraces. Forests were cleared. Agriculture was the basis of their economy. Each farmer was allotted a piece of land to grow crops (milpas), with crop rotation used to keep the soil fertile. At harvest time the priests and nobles received a share as tribute. Food and grain were stored for times of scarcity in chultuns, underground dug-outs.

Economic patterns and trade

Crops were also grown, with shells, cocoa beans and precious stones used as money. Traded items included fish, squash, potatoes, corn, honey beans, fruits and raw materials such as limestone, marble, jade, wood, copper and gold. The pploms, the merchants, used the many waterways to carry goods throughout the city-states.

The Maya depended on a skilled and semi-skilled artisan middle class which produced jewellery, carvings, toys, weapons, paper, books and furniture.

Reasons for decline

By the 9th and 10th centuries Mayan Society had begun to decline. People abandoned the cities which became overgrown. The decline was caused by drought, environmental disaster and deforestation.
At the end of this topic you should be able to:

- Identify the islands occupied by the Taino when the Europeans came.
- Explain why these groups occupied these specific islands.
- Describe the organisation of Taino society.

The Taino move into the Greater Antilles

The Taino settled in the Greater Antilles between 250 CE and 1500 CE. They populated the island of the Bahamas, Cuba, Hispaniola (Haiti and the Dominican Republic) and Puerto Rico.

Taino society

Taino settlements ranged in number from small family units of 150 to as many as 4,000 people. The largest settlements were located in Cuba, Hispaniola and Puerto Rico. These islands were divided into provinces which were ruled by caciques, with sub-caciques governing smaller districts. Villages were ruled by a headman and had plazas and ball courts.

Taino society was made up of close family relations. Both patrilineal and matrilineal descent existed. The men prepared the land for agriculture, hunted and fished. The women did the planting, weeding, fertilising, harvesting, food preparation and they also made pottery. While men were naked women did wear a loin cloth. Some women wore beads and feathers. Both sexes painted their bodies. Monogamy was practised by the people, but the chief was polygamous.

The cacique’s role was to organise the farming, hunting and storage of food. The cacique was an absolute leader and negotiated with other villages over disputes, treaties and to keep the peace. When a cacique became old he or she was strangled to death, wrapped in cotton and buried with ornaments. Because of the rules of heredity, it was not uncommon to have a female cacique, as in the case of Anacana in Hispaniola.

The Taino used a variety of plant dyes, especially rouncou. Dyes were used on the body, cloths and pottery. Houses were round with thatched roofs, large houses had porches and the chief’s home had several rooms. Taino made pottery that was not glazed, but there were markings and most vessels had rims for easy pouring. They were used to store food and as funeral urns. The Taino were excellent basket weavers and created a double-weaved wood and leaf basket to carry water.

The Taino loved festivities and celebrated weddings and the naming of babies. There was singing and dancing and instruments used included drums, pipes and gongs. They also played a ball game called batos and played on a field called a batey.

The Kalinago in the Lesser Antilles

The Kalinago were the last group to enter the Caribbean around the 13th century from the Orinoco region. They were still moving up the Lesser Antilles and had reached the Virgin Islands when Columbus
arrived in 1492. The Kalinago therefore settled the Lesser Antilles from Trinidad and Tobago to the Leeward Islands.

**Kalinago society**

Kalinago villages were small and built around a square or plaza. In these squares there was a central fire. All land was owned communally but canoes and ornaments were private property. Houses were small, oval and built of wood. The carbet, or meeting hall, was located in the middle of the village.

The Kalinago chief was called the ubutu (or ouboutou). He was chosen for his prowess, either for killing a number of Taino men or bringing back the head of a cacique. Competition for the position of chief led to rivalry and intrigue. The ubutu was the village commander and was assisted by the ubutu malairici, his many lieutenants. There was also a commander of the canoes, the naharlene and a captain of the crew, the tiubutuil. To prove their prowess warriors went through an initiation rite that tested their power to endure pain.

Women and men lived separately but men were polygamous. Women were obtained from raids on Taino villages, and so there was a similarity in their language and culture. The women worked in the field planting and harvesting crops, and they also wove cotton, cooked the food and made pottery. It was a patriarchal society.

Men and women wore loin cloths and used plant dyes to colour them. They also painted and tattooed their bodies with dye. Ceremonies were common, especially for the birth of a child. Boys were initiated in the art of war at puberty when they would be separated from their parents. The itehwenne was a religious festival which was held in the carbet. It lasted many days and involved a lot of drinking.

The Kalinago were potters. They used many different layers of clay, adding rims to give strength to the vessels and painted the pottery in different colours. They made strong hammocks and stools called matoutou. They preserved meat by drying and smoking it or soaking it in cassava juice.

The Kalinago were semi-nomadic and moved from island to island using large canoes. Villages were located near rivers or the sea to give easy access to waterways in times of raids. Because they were always preparing for raids, they were never in one place for long.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

Both the Tainos and Kalinagos occupied Puerto Rico and Trinidad.

**ACTIVITY**

On a map of the Caribbean and South America, locate the original homes of the Taino and Kalinago. Trace their movements from these homes to the territories they occupied when the Europeans came.

**EXAM TIP**

Make sure you remember these names: a Taino chief was called a cacique. A Kalinago chief was called an ubutu or ouboutou.

**KEY POINTS**

- The Taino arrived in the Caribbean before the Kalinago.
- Taino society was organised for permanence.
- The Kalinagos were semi-nomadic.
- The Taino and Kalinago depended on the environment for shelter and sustenance.

**SUMMARY QUESTIONS**

1. Explain the settlement patterns of the Taino and Kalinago in the Caribbean.
2. Describe the political organisation of the Taino and Kalinago.
3. Identify four ways in which the Taino and Kalinago were similar and four ways in which they were different.
The Taino: art forms, beliefs and technology

Beliefs
The Taino respected and venerated nature and believed in a spirit world. Zemis, idols or gods made of gold, stone and bone, were placed around the person and homes of Tainos to ward off evil, sickness and war. Some of these protective spirits represented fertility while others gave strength.

Tainos believed in a sky god, a god of rain, sun and wind, an earth goddess and in a heaven where the soul went after death. The Taino stayed indoors at night because they believed that spirits, called opi, would come out and possess them. The cacique and shaman communicated with the spirits on behalf of the people. To pray, the Taino shaman would sniff cahoba, a powerful herb, which allowed him to travel to the spirit world and commune with the spirits.

Art forms
Taino art could be seen in all aspects of their daily life, from their homes to canoes. Their homes were built of hardwood with tightly woven thatched roofs. The roof was rectangular, gabled and conical.

Taino pottery was made from sand, ash and crushed shell. Potters used the coil method, layering wet clay in strips and moulding it with their fingers. They put stamped geometric motifs into the pottery. Dyes from plants were used to colour the variety of jars, bowls, cups and trays that were made.

Weaving was sophisticated and specialised. Cotton was used to make nets, hammocks and cloth. Women wove fast and produced fine cotton fabrics. Though baskets were made from cotton, green and dry palm leaves and grass were the main source materials.

Painting the body was a form of decoration but it also gave protection from the sun. Roucou, saffron, and berries were used as dyes. Ornaments, including jewellery made of bone, stone and gold were also worn. Other creative objects included ceramic items, decorative belts and sceptres, canoes and duchos, ceremonial chairs, which were decorated with carvings (Figure 1.4.1).

Technology
The Taino were good potters and weavers. They created a variety of tools including stone chisels, graters, hooks and cutting devices. They produced sophisticated cotton cloth and were skilled at making hammocks. They were known to have created stone works and good canoes. Goldsmiths hammered gold nuggets into plates which were then turned into ornaments.
Music, dance and storytelling

The Taino used a variety of shell or wooden musical instruments which included a wooden drum, gongs and reed pipes.

The main celebrations, which were the naming of a baby and the cacique’s wedding, included food, music singing and dancing.

The Taino had no real writing system though hieroglyphs were found in Cuba and Hispaniola. Stories were transferred orally and were religious in nature, for example legends of their creation and how the sun appeared.

Agriculture

The Taino were subsistence farmers who grew a variety of crops such as cassava, the chief crop, maize, sweet potatoes, yam, cotton, tobacco, pineapple, tania, peanuts and peppers. They grew these on plots of land called cunucos.

Men cleared the land but women planted, watered, fertilised and harvested the crops. A cunuco was worked for two to three years after which it was left fallow for the same period.

Both sweet and bitter cassava were cultivated. Women knew how to extract the poisonous bitter juice from the cassava which was used to make flour and the juice to make beer. They supplemented their diet by fishing, hunting animals like the lap, agouti and deer and gathering fruits from the forest.

DID YOU KNOW?

A cunuco was a large mound of earth which was formed especially for farming. It would be packed with leaves which improved drainage and protected it from soil erosion.

DID YOU KNOW?

A bohio, or Taino house, was made of a single piece of wood, which could be folded up for easy relocation.

EXAM TIP

Make sure that you can give examples of art forms from daily life, eg making zemis, canoes, baskets.

ACTIVITY

Make a list of Taino activities that made use of the natural environment.

KEY POINTS

- The Taino belief system was based on nature and the spirit world.
- Taino art is reflected in all spheres of life.
- Taino tools were simple, but enabled them to produce high quality craftwork.
- The Taino were festive and used wooden and plant musical instruments.
- The Taino had a diversified agricultural system based on cunuco cultivation.

SUMMARY QUESTIONS

1. Describe the belief systems of the Taino.
2. Explain how Taino artforms were integrated into their daily lives.
3. Examine the methods used to provide food in Taino communities.
**Beliefs**

The Kalinago revered ancestral sprits, believed in a supreme creator and an afterlife. They believed that evil spirits roamed the earth making mischief. Malevolent spirits caused tragedies and death; to protect themselves Kalinago people kept a *maboya* to ward off evil. To keep the *maboya* happy cassava and fruit were given as offering.

The *boyez*, the priest, was very important and more influential than the *ubutu*. To help the sick the *boyez* inhaled tobacco to go into a trance so he could find out the cause. All illness was believed to be caused either by spirits or witchcraft.

When a person died, the body would be washed and painted and placed in a sitting position in the grave, which was usually in the family hut. Tools and ornaments were placed with the dead person, for the afterlife. They would be celebrated with singing and dancing. The dead were always with the living and it was believed that after three days they rose from the dead and entered the body of the youngest child.

**Art forms**

Kalinago art was simple. Houses were made of wood with thatched roofs. The *carbet* was built with foundation pillars, which made it strong, and also had a thatched roof, oval or rectangular in shape.

Like the Taino the Kalinago made pottery. It was intricate and made of terracotta. Vines, and stalks and leaves from the cocorite palm were used to make baskets, ropes and nets. Cotton was used to make loin cloths.

Body paint and dyes were very important to the Kalinago. They used *roucou*, red and orange dyes from the annatto plant. Dye was used not only in pottery and weaving but also for body decoration, protection against the sun and for camouflage. This last was useful in war and hunting, to avoid detection. It was considered a disgrace not to wear body paint.

The Kalinago knew the art of making cassava and sweet potato beer. A hanging basket called *matapis* was used to squeeze the juice out of cassava and sweet potato. This was left to ferment to create an intoxicating beer (Figure 1.5.1).

The art of war was well developed by the Kalinago. From puberty boys were put through gruelling training in pain endurance and fighting in preparation for battle.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

Maboya were evil spirits in Taino religion, but the Kalinago would wear them as small idols around their necks.
Dance, music and storytelling

Kalinago festivities were very lively with dancing and singing. Birth, the first cutting of a child’s hair, manhood initiation ceremonies and burial were all cause for celebration which could last several days and included eating, drinking and smoking. Kalinago drums were more advanced than those of the Taino.

The Kalinago also had oral traditions and many of their stories were religious. Stories of the afterlife included rewards for a warrior who had died honourably.

Technology

The Kalinago used similar tools to the Taino, but created superior weapons. Bows and arrows were skilfully made. The Kalinago knew how to apply both poison and fire to arrow heads. They were skilled canoe makers. They made sophisticated pirogues, fast canoes which could carry up to 100 people.

Agriculture

The Kalinago also grew cassava, sweet potatoes and a variety of crops. Their agricultural practices were similar to those of the Taino. Their main crop, however, was arrowroot which was important for its starch content. They also grew plantain and other root crops. Like the Taino, the women did all the work in the field. To supplement their diet the men would also hunt and fish.
Gold, God and glory!

The age of exploration
Islam’s spread into Europe between the 14th and 15th century led Christian crusaders to repel the invaders from the Holy Land. As Europeans ventured into the Middle East they came across wonders that led them to explore further, into Asia.

The Crusades and expanding trade resulted in a flood of information entering Europe. This led to the Renaissance which began in the middle of the 14th century. Old Greek and Roman works, ancient maps and Islamic mathematics propelled Europeans to invent a wide range of useful tools which included ship navigation and exploration improvements such as the compass, quadrant, hour glass and sundial. Ships were made sturdier and new styles of sail added.

As European trade expanded in the 15th century the demand for luxury goods increased. Asia was the source of these goods so merchants from Venice, Genoa and Florence ventured there to obtain silks, spices, ivory and gold. As demand and profits grew, merchants wanted to increase the volume of trade and find a safer and faster route to Asia. Geographers, topographers and intellectuals discussed ways to do so.

Demand for gold
European countries depended on gold to finance wars, pay armies and pay off debts. Kings wanted their treasury filled with gold since those who had it were powerful and influential. As increased trade brought more gold, nations wanted more. Gold from West Africa was pouring into Europe and the promise of gold from Asia was very enticing.

Gold had become a medium of exchange and nations were dependent on it. This led to the economic system called mercantilism (see also 2.1). In addition to gold, silks, spices and other Asian products also brought wealth. A country that controlled foreign lands and resources had power over its rivals.

Spread of Christianity
The Roman Catholic faith was the main religion in Europe. The church dominated every aspect of people’s lives. Roman Catholic leaders became patriotic and militant in their battle to expel the Moors from Granada, the Turks from Eastern Europe, and to spread Christianity.

Catholic nations wanted to push Christianity beyond the borders of Europe. There was no separation of church and state and thus the church was influential in state decisions. Missionary work was more than just spreading the word of Christ. The new crusade would
unite all the lands they found and vanquish pagans and heathens. The Pope directed Catholic rulers to conquer foreign lands in the name of the Church. Nations vied to be the leading Christian state to bring ‘souls’ to Christ. The Church too gained from expansion as it obtained wealth from conquered lands, thus increasing its power.

**Glory for self and Spain**

Nations wanted to prove themselves powerful and nationalism as well as patriotism pushed them to expand and gain glory. Ownership of new land and wealth meant victory and power over others. Those that pursued a colonial agenda strived for glory, power and influence in Europe.

In 1469 Isabella of Castile and Ferdinand of Aragon united their kingdoms through marriage; in 1492 they achieved unity for the country by expelling the Moors from Granada in Southern Spain. To capitalise on their victories they envisioned an Empire to gain glory and power. Spain also needed to rebuild its economy, pay off the conquistadores and its creditors after the crusades. Expansion also meant accumulation of gold and wealth. Spain and Portugal were in a race to get to the East and dominate the rich spice market, and acquire the gold that was central to the European monetary system. Spain saw itself as the model Catholic country which would spread Christianity and civilisation. Nationalism and patriotism was spreading in Spain and a military campaign, if successful, would prove Spain’s power.

### SUMMARY QUESTIONS

1. Describe two inventions that emerged from the Renaissance.
2. Explain why gold and accumulation of wealth were important to Europeans.
3. Explain why the Roman Catholic Church was influential in European affairs.
4. State four factors which influenced Spain’s involvement in voyages of exploration after 1492.

### KEY POINTS

- The Crusades, expanding trade and the Renaissance were key to the age of exploration.
- Accumulation of gold led to a nation’s prosperity and the push to colonise.
- The Roman Catholic Church’s mission to spread Christianity contributed to expansion.
- A country’s prestige, power and glory lay in controlling more land and having an Empire.

### DID YOU KNOW?

- The Moors were a mixed Berber and Arab people of Islamic faith who originated in Morocco and who had settled in Andalucía, Spain, in the 700s CE.
- The Portuguese Prince Henry the Navigator did not go out on exploration voyages. He earned the title because of his sponsorship of explorers and navigators.

### ACTIVITY

Draw a timeline showing the chronology of inventions used in exploration during the 1400s.
LEARNING OUTCOMES
At the end of this topic you should be able to:

- List the ways in which the European presence impacted on the indigenous people.
- Describe the factors that led to the economic collapse of the indigenous people.
- Explain how colonisation brought about the demographic destruction of the indigenous people.
- Identify cultural changes which European contact brought to the indigenous people.

The impact of the Europeans on the indigenous people

When the Spanish rediscovered the Americas in 1492, little did people know that it spelled the destruction of the indigenous way of life. Europeans brought with them a different culture, technologically superior weapons and machinery, new agricultural products such as wheat, barley, oats (Figure 1.7.1), and animals such as cattle, sheep, pigs and goats. They also brought germs such as smallpox which decimated populations, and of course Christianity, which superseded indigenous belief systems.

Demographic collapse

In 1492 it was estimated that the indigenous population numbered around 40–60 million; within 30 to 40 years, however, nearly 95 percent were dead. At the same time thousands of foreigners from Europe were pouring into the Americas, as migration changed the demographic landscape.

Europeans were immune to the many diseases that evolved in Europe; the isolated indigenous population, however, were not. Diseases like smallpox, typhus, influenza, and measles once contracted spread rapidly among the indigenous people who had never encountered these diseases and did not have a cure for them.

The decline of the indigenous people was exacerbated by European mistreatment including overwork, enslavement under the encomienda system, war and displacement of people from their homes. Settlements were destroyed and forests cleared. The destruction led to forced migration, food and labour shortage and genocide. With reduced populations cities were abandoned and forests took over; animals no longer hunted increased in numbers.

Colonisation

The Empires of Spain, Britain and France all pursued power through conquest. They used superior technology and weapons to impose their will on conquered people and European civilisation and the Christian religion to expand the empire and obtain resources.

The colonial systems were foreign to the indigenous people. In addition to the encomienda system, repartimento demanded that all indigenous people over 18 years provide a week’s service for pay. In return they Christianised the indigenous people, a further means of exercising control.

In their colonial drive the Europeans used tricks, alliances and force to dominate the Americas. The indigenous people met them with diplomacy, and Stone Age tools.

DID YOU KNOW?

In 1972 a historian, Alfred Crosby, coined the term ‘Columbian Exchange’ in a book that focussed on the biological changes resulting from the voyages of Christopher Columbus.

KEY TERMS

Encomienda: a grant by the crown to a conquistador or official enabling him to demand tribute from the Indians in gold, in kind, or in labour. In turn he was required to protect them and instruct them in the Christian faith.

Genocide: the killing of a whole people. The Spanish committed genocide against the Taino.
Cultural impositions

Many families and communities were forced off their land and found it difficult to adapt to the new foreign systems. Extended family life patterns were disrupted. Europeans replaced their towns and cities with Spanish towns, forts, administrative buildings, churches, haciendas and plazas.

The indigenous people believed in the spirits of nature. They were now forced to convert to the Roman Catholic faith. In many cases they were made to follow European traditions instead of their own.

Indigenous people were seen as inferior ‘pagans’. They were forced to wear European clothing, eat European food and learn European languages. They were now governed by a distant, invisible and demanding monarch. The guidance they had formerly sought from their traditional ruler was no longer available.

This cultural imposition led in time to a new mixed race, the mestizo, and of language — the development of creole.

Economic destabilisation

The indigenous people had worked their land as a community but With the arrival of the Europeans staple crops like maize and manioc were neglected. Indigenous people were forced off their land to areas which were not economically viable and the food they produced was consumed by the Europeans. Hunting grounds were destroyed and fish stocks depleted. European animals like cattle, horses, sheep and goats were allowed to graze on indigenous crops or trample them. The indigenous people could not supply the labour needed for the new intense plantation, which led to the introduction of enslaved Africans.

ACTIVITY

Draw an outline map of the Atlantic world. Show by the use of arrows the different items exchanged in the contact between Europeans and indigenous people.

SUMMARY QUESTIONS

1. Explain five factors that led to the demographic decline of the indigenous people after 1492.
2. Discuss five ways in which Spanish colonialism caused the destruction of the indigenous way of life.
3. Explain five ways in which the encomienda and repartimento systems impacted on the indigenous economies.

KEY POINTS

- The Europeans brought more misery than good for the indigenous people.
- ‘Guns, germs and steel’ led to the destruction of the indigenous people.
- The conquest and submission of the indigenous people was all part of the European colonial enterprise.
- The Europeans destroyed indigenous culture and replaced it with Western-style systems.
- Indigenous-based communal sharing was destroyed for encomienda plots and plantation systems.

EXAM TIP

Distinguish between the encomienda and repartimento, both tools of social and economic control used by the Spanish against the indigenous people.
LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of this topic you should be able to:

• Identify the ways Europeans have benefitted from indigenous knowledge.
• List indigenous crafts that have been adopted by Europeans.
• Describe indigenous foods and foodways that have had a global impact.
• Explain how indigenous labour facilitated European colonisation of the Americas.

Impact of the indigenous people on the Europeans

Though the European impact on the indigenous people was significant, the indigenous people’s contribution was wide ranging with many of their inventions still in use in the world today.

Items introduced by the indigenous people include the zero, the almanac and calendar system from the Maya (Figure 1.8.1), canoeing, kayaking, tug-of-war and many ball games (the rubber ball was introduced by the Olmec). Snowshoes, hammocks, tipis, smoking tobacco, drinking chocolate and chewing-gum were all known to the indigenous people. Certain place names including Haiti, Tobago, and Palmiste are indigenous names.

Europeans benefitted from indigenous knowledge of the environment and used local people as guides during exploration and marine activity. Indigenous knowledge of herbs and their uses was heavily relied upon by the Europeans and indigenous food prevented the invaders from starving. In addition some crops, like potato and cassava, were taken to Europe and other European colonies where they became staples.

Introduction of craft

Many of the crafts produced by the indigenous people have relevance today. The design of indigenous homes has been incorporated into modern architecture, for instance in circular rooms and adobe walls.

Different styles of pottery were introduced to the Europeans. Indigenous beadwork and turquoise jewellery are high-fashion items even today. The indigenous people were skilled in the art of melting gold and creating jewellery. Cotton was used to create fine cloths. Baskets and hammocks are popular items and basket weaving is still practised today. Dyes from different plants are increasingly used for colouring and flavouring food as the demand for organic products increases.

Introduction of agricultural products

The indigenous people domesticated a number of species of flora and fauna which have been added to our diet. Products grown included peanuts, squash, pumpkins, tomato, avocado, pineapples, guavas, beans and vanilla. For generations the people had experimented with maize or corn and were growing it for a variety of purposes, including making bread and pop-corn. Potatoes which were grown by the Inca in the Andes, were taken back to Europe where they became a main staple of the people. Cassava or manioc

DID YOU KNOW?

In the field of language North America Indians created sign-language to communicate and trade. Today it is universally used to communicate with the hearing impaired.
was cultivated to make flour, beer and for the meal pepper-pot. In the Caribbean cassava is the basis of a number of cuisines. Corn and cassava were used to facilitate European colonisation in Africa.

For the wealthy, cocoa was cultivated to make a warm beverage. It became a major plantation crop for export to Europe.

Tobacco was cultivated and harvested for its medicinal and religious purpose. It was taken as snuff, chewed and smoked in pipes. The habit was transferred to Europeans and is still in use, though now widely considered unhealthy.

A number of animals were also domesticated which we use today, including the llama. The indigenous people were expert at extracting honey from bees without being stung.

Provision of labour

In the beginning the indigenous people showed the Europeans how to grow crops for survival. Trackers showed them how to hunt and where to find resources.

At first labour was voluntary. By the 16th century, however, Europeans had enslaved the indigenous people and forced them to work on encomiendas or on plantations. They grew crops, extracted resources like gold and silver and would dive for pearls. In this way they contributed to the wealth of European empires.

Diseases and adaptation to the tropics

Europeans who came to the Americas faced the sweltering heat and suffered from deficiency diseases, malnutrition and dehydration. There has been speculation that syphilis was introduced to the Europeans, but some historians question this: there is evidence to show that the disease existed in Europe before 1492. New to the Europeans, however, was chagas, an infectious disease spread by bloodsucking insects.

Europeans began to realise the medicinal value of local plants. With the help of the indigenous people Europeans learned about the nutritive and medicinal value of fruits and plants. For example, cocoa was used as an anaesthetic and the bark of the willow tree, which contains salicylic acid, a main ingredient for aspirin, was used to reduce fever and pain.

DID YOU KNOW?

Adobe is a form of building material used by the Indigenous People to construct buildings. It is made with clay, sand, straw and water. Adobe bricks are put in the sun to dry before using.

SUMMARY QUESTIONS

1. Explain three ways in which the indigenous people impacted on Europeans.
2. List four inventions or contributions of the indigenous people.
3. State six ways in which cassava has impacted on our diet.
4. Identify three indigenous sources of modern medicine.

KEY POINTS

- The Indigenous contributed significantly to science, sports, clothing and everyday life.
- Cultural practices from home design to pottery, jewellery and toys are still common today.
- A variety of flora and fauna were domesticated by the indigenous and are key staples of life.
- Indigenous labour was the building block of European prosperity and development.
- Though they had few diseases, the Indigenous contributed to medical knowledge.

ACTIVITY

Draw up a table with two columns. In the table write down the different contributions, European and indigenous people, side by side.