

King Affonso I: Letter to King John III of Portugal

In 1490, the Portuguese converted the son of a Kongo king to Christianity and then helped him take his father's throne. The new king, born Nzinga Mbemba, was renamed Affonso. King Affonso soon realized that his relationship with Portugal had extremely negative consequences, as can be seen from his letter to King John III of Portugal in 1526. In this letter, the king of Kongo appeals to the king of Portugal to end the slave trade.

Sir, Your Highness of Portugal should know how our Kingdom is being lost in so many ways. This is caused by the excessive freedom given by your officials to the men and merchants who are allowed to come to this Kingdom to set up shops with goods and many things which have been prohibited by us. Many of our vassals, whom we had in obedience, do not comply¹ because they have the things in greater abundance than we ourselves. It was with these things that we had them content and subjected under our jurisdiction², so it is doing a great harm not only to the service of God, but to the security and peace of our Kingdoms and State as well.

And we cannot reckon how great the damage is, since the mentioned merchants are taking every day our natives, sons of the land and the sons of our noblemen and vassals and our relatives. The thieves and men of bad conscience grab them wishing to have the things and wares of this Kingdom which they are ambitious of; they grab them and get them to be sold. And so great, Sir, is the corruption and licentiousness³ that our country is being completely depopulated, and your Highness should not

sold. And so great, Sir, is the corruption and licentiousness³ that our country is being completely depopulated, and your Highness should not agree with this nor accept it as in your service. And to avoid it we need from those your Kingdoms no more than some priests and a few people to teach in schools, and no other goods except wine and flour for the holy sacrament.

That is why we beg of Your Highness to help and assist us in this matter, commanding your factors⁴ that they should not send here either merchants or wares, because it is our will that in these kingdoms there should not be any trade of slaves nor outlet for them. Concerning what is referred to above, again we beg of Your Highness to agree with it otherwise we cannot remedy such an obvious damage.

1. **comply** (kum PLY) *v.* agree to a request
2. **jurisdiction** (joor is DIK shun) *n.* area of authority or power
3. **licentiousness** (ly SEN shus nis) *n.* lack of morality
4. **factors** (FAK turs) *n.* agents



▲ A Congolese brass and wood crucifix dating from the 1500s blends Christian and traditional African symbols.



▲ King John III of Portugal

Thinking Critically

1. **Identify Causes** What does King Affonso believe has caused his vassals to become disobedient?
2. **Analyze Information** What specifically does King Affonso say he still needs from the Portuguese?



Commander Afonso de Albuquerque

WITNESS HISTORY AUDIO

Gunfire Over Malacca

In 1511, a Portuguese fleet commanded by Afonso de Albuquerque (AL buh kur kee) dropped anchor off Malacca, a rich Islamic trading port that controlled the sea route linking India, Southeast Asia, and China. The fleet remained at anchor for several weeks before opening fire. According to a Malaysian account:

“The cannon balls came like rain. And the noise of the cannon was as the noise of thunder in the heavens and the flashes of fire of their guns were like flashes of lightning in the sky; and the noise of their matchlocks [guns] was like that of groundnuts [peanuts] popping in the frying pan.”

—From the *Malay Annals*

Focus Question How did European nations build empires in South and Southeast Asia?

European Footholds in South and Southeast Asia

Objectives

- Summarize how Portugal built a trading empire in South and Southeast Asia.
- Analyze the rise of Dutch and Spanish dominance in the region.
- Understand how the decline of Mughal India affected European traders in the region.
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Terms, People, and Places

Afonso de Albuquerque	Dutch East India Company
Mughal empire	sovereign
Goa	Philippines
Malacca	sepoys
outpost	

Note Taking

Reading Skill: Identify Causes and Effects As you read this section, fill in a chart like the one below with the causes and effects of European exploration in South and Southeast Asia.

Portugal	Netherlands	Spain	Britain
•	•	•	•



Portugal was the first European power to gain a foothold in Asia. The Portuguese ships were small in size and number, but the firepower of their shipboard cannons was unmatched. In time, this superior firepower helped them win control of the rich Indian Ocean spice trade and build a trading empire in Asia.

Portugal Builds an Eastern Empire

After Vasco da Gama's voyage, the Portuguese, under **Afonso de Albuquerque's** command, burst into the Indian Ocean. By that time, Muslim rulers, originally from central Asia, had established the **Mughal empire** throughout much of India. The southern regions of India, however, were still controlled by a patchwork of local princes. The Portuguese won these princes to their side with promises of aid against other Europeans. With these southern footholds, Albuquerque and the Portuguese hoped to end Muslim power and turn the Indian Ocean into a “Portuguese lake.”

A Rim of Trading Outposts In 1510, the Portuguese seized the island of **Goa** off the coast of India, making it their major military and commercial base. Albuquerque burned coastal towns and crushed Arab fleets at sea. The Portuguese took the East Indies port of **Malacca** in 1511, massacring the city's Muslims.



In less than 50 years, the Portuguese had built a trading empire with military and merchant **outposts**, or distant areas under their control, rimming the southern seas. They used the cities they had seized on the east coast of Africa to resupply and repair their ships. For most of the 1500s, Portugal controlled the spice trade between Europe and Asia.

A Limited Impact Despite their sea power, the Portuguese lacked resources and faced too much resistance to make great inroads into the region. They made harsher efforts to convert local people to Christianity than they had in Africa, attacking Muslims and destroying Hindu temples. Still, by 1600 the Portuguese had converted fewer than a million people to Christianity. The conversion rate was especially low among Asian Muslims.

 **Checkpoint** How did the Portuguese control the spice trade?

Rise of the Dutch

The Dutch were the first Europeans to challenge Portuguese domination of Asian trade. The land we know today as the Netherlands included a group of provinces and prosperous trading cities on the North Sea. In the early 1500s it was part of the Holy Roman Empire, but later the Protestant northern provinces won independence. The independent Netherlands entered vigorously into competition for overseas influence.

Building a Mighty Sea Power In 1599, a Dutch fleet returned to Amsterdam from Asia after more than a year's absence. It carried a cargo of pepper, cloves, and other spices. The success of this voyage led to a frenzy of overseas activity. Soon Dutch warships and trading vessels had made the Netherlands a leader of European commerce. Dutch power set up colonies and trading posts around the world. With their **strategic** settlement at Cape Town, the Netherlands had a secure foothold in the region.

A Powerful Dutch Company In 1602, a group of wealthy Dutch merchants formed the **Dutch East India Company**. From the beginning, this company had an unusual amount of power. Unlike Portuguese and Spanish traders, whose expeditions were tightly controlled by government, the Dutch East India Company had full **sovereign** powers. With its power to build armies, wage war, negotiate peace treaties, and govern overseas territory, it came to dominate the region.

Vocabulary Builder

strategic—(struh TEE jik) *adj.* important to carrying out a plan of action

Different Perspectives

A European artist (right) shows the king of Sri Lanka and a Dutch explorer meeting as equals. In the Indian painting to the left, Europeans are shown as vassals bringing gifts to India's ruler. *How did European and Asian artists bring their own perspectives to early encounters?*





Asserting Dutch Dominance In 1641, the Dutch captured Malacca from the Portuguese and opened trade with China. Soon they were able to enforce a monopoly in the Spice Islands, controlling shipments to Europe as well as much of the trade within Southeast Asia. Like the Portuguese, the Dutch used military force to further their trading goals. Yet they forged closer ties with local rulers than the Portuguese had. Many Dutch merchants married Asian women.

In the 1700s, the growing power of England and France contributed to the decline of the Dutch trading empire in the East. Still, the Dutch maintained an empire in Indonesia until the 1900s.

Checkpoint How did the Dutch build up a strong presence in Southeast Asia?

Symbols of the Dutch Empire

The Dutch painting *Jacob Mathieusen and His Wife* (c. 1650) shows a senior official in the Dutch East India Company overlooking the Dutch fleet in Batavia, Indonesia. A slave holds a parasol, an Asian symbol of power. *How can you tell that the artist was European?*

Spain Seizes the Philippines

While the Portuguese and Dutch set up bases on the fringes of Asia, Spain took over the **Philippines**. Magellan had claimed the archipelago for Spain in 1521. Within about 50 years, Spain had conquered and colonized the islands, renaming them for the Spanish king Philip II. Unlike most other peoples of Southeast Asia, the Filipinos were not united. As a result, they could be conquered more easily.

In the spirit of the Catholic Reformation, Spanish priests set out to convert the Filipino people to Christianity. Later, missionaries from the Philippines tried to spread Catholic teachings in China and Japan.

The Philippines became a key link in Spain's overseas trading empire. The Spanish shipped silver mined in Mexico and Peru across the Pacific to the Philippines. From there, they used the silver to buy goods in China. In this way, large quantities of American silver flowed into the economies of East Asian nations.

Checkpoint Why was Spain able to conquer the Philippines easily?



Princes and warriors from India gather at a reception for British officers



Mughal India and European Traders

For two centuries, the Mughal empire had enjoyed a period of peace, strength, and prosperity. European merchants were dazzled by India's splendid Mughal court and its many luxury goods.

A Center of Valuable Trade Mughal India was the center of the valuable spice trade. It was also the world leader in textile manufacturing, exporting large quantities of silk and cotton cloth. The Mughal empire was larger, richer, and more powerful than any kingdom in Europe. When Europeans sought trading rights, Mughal emperors saw no threat in granting them. The Portuguese—and later the Dutch, English, and French—thus were permitted to build forts and warehouses in Indian coastal towns.

A Great Empire Shatters Over time, the Mughal empire weakened. Conflicts between Hindu and Muslim princes rekindled. Years of civil war drained Mughal resources. Rulers then increased taxes, sparking rebellions. Corruption became widespread, and the central government collapsed. As Mughal power faltered, French and English traders fought for power. Like the Dutch, both the British and the French had established East India companies. These companies made alliances with local officials and independent rajahs, or local chiefs. Each company organized its own army of **sepoys**, or Indian troops.

By the mid-1700s, the British and the French had become locked in a bitter struggle for global power. The fighting involved both nations' lands in Asia and the Americas. In India, the British East India Company used an army of British troops and sepoys to drive out the French. The company then forced the Mughal emperor to recognize its right to collect taxes in the northeast. By the late 1700s, it had used its great wealth to dominate most of India.



Checkpoint How did Britain gain control of India?

SECTION 3 Assessment



Progress Monitoring Online

For: Self-quiz with vocabulary practice
Web Code: naa-1431

Terms, People, and Places

1. For each term, person, or place listed at the beginning of the section, write a sentence explaining its significance.

Note Taking

2. **Reading Skill: Identify Causes and Effects** Use your completed flowchart to answer the Focus Question: How did European nations build empires in South and Southeast Asia?

Comprehension and Critical Thinking

3. **Draw Inferences** You read that the Portuguese did not attempt to conquer inland territory. What does that tell you about their assessment of the inland empires?

4. **Analyze Information** Why did the leaders of the Netherlands give so much power to the Dutch East India Company?
5. **Identify Central Issues** What about the location of the Philippines made it a valuable asset for Spain?
6. **Identify Assumptions** The Mughal empire gave trading rights to several European countries. What assumptions about the power of those countries does this show?

Writing About History

Quick Write: Present Evidence to Support a Thesis Write a biographical essay about Afonso de Albuquerque. First, think of a thesis statement that describes the main points you want to make. Then write the main body text, referring frequently to your thesis statement. The details in a biographical essay should directly support your main point. For example, if your thesis is that Albuquerque was a violent man, you would include details about his takeover of Malacca.