

## Lesson 4

### *Student Handout 4.1—Cannon to the Right of Us, Cannon to the Left of Us: How Shipboard Cannon Changed the Rules*

#### **The Portuguese**

Vasco da Gama reached India, though only half of his crew would make it safely back to Portugal. His cargo of pepper and cinnamon was so profitable that, despite these crew losses, Portuguese merchants began to push for more expeditions. They wanted to control trade routes by forcing merchant vessels to land at their trading sites and pay duties or fees to them. A trading post was established at Calicut in 1498. By the mid-sixteenth century, the Portuguese had more than fifty trading posts between West Africa and East Asia. They traded for West African slaves and tried to control the southern African gold trade. From Hormuz, located on the Strait of Hormuz leading from the Arabian Sea to the Persian Gulf, they seized control of access to the gulf. From Goa on the western coast of India they organized export trade in pepper. Finally, at Malacca, they oversaw shipping between the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean. They established posts in the Ternate spice, also at Macau off the coast of China and near Nagasaki in Japan.

#### **How Did They Do It?**

The Portuguese ships were relatively small and light, but they had one great advantage: shipboard cannon. Their vessels had sturdy rib construction so that the recoil from the heavy cannon did not blow them apart. The non-European ships that plied the Indian Ocean were built differently and did not traditionally carry large firearms. After the Portuguese arrived, Muslim and other traders in the Indian Ocean began to install shipboard cannon but not before the Europeans won many sea battles.

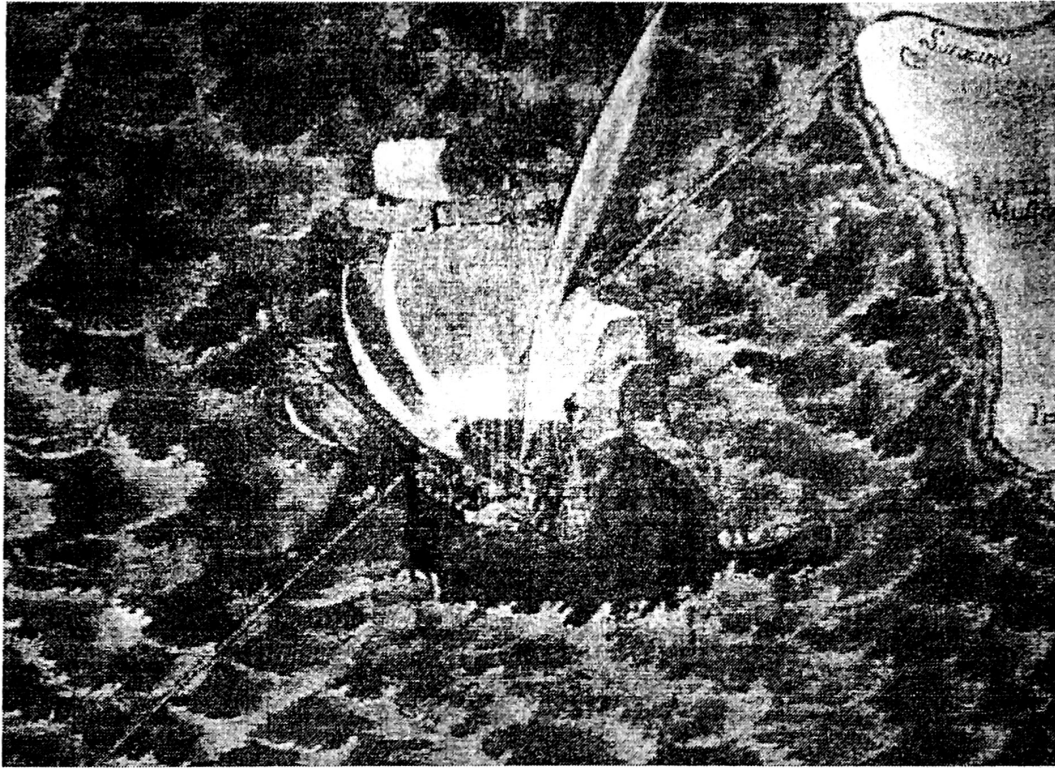
The Portuguese soldier Afonso d'Albuquerque (1453-1515) battled for Hormuz. The excerpt below describes the methods the Portuguese used to take over the spice trade. They seized cities and built military and trading posts in the Indian Ocean. For about fifty years, Portugal controlled the spice trade between Europe and Asia. The following represents an eye-witness account of the methods employed by the Portuguese under the command of Albuquerque:

When Afonso d'Albuquerque perceived the gleaming swords and waving of the bucklers and other doings of the moors [Muslims] on shore, . . . he ordered a broadside to be fired. The bombardiers took aim so that with the first two shots they fired they sent two large ships which were in front of them, with all their men, to the bottom. Manuel Telez, after having caused great slaughter upon some vessels, . . . ran into a large vessel that lay close to him and killed a part of the men in it, while the rest threw themselves into the sea, and those who were heavily armed went down at once.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Jerry H. Bentley and Herbert F. Ziegler, *Traditions and Encounters: A Global Perspective on the Past*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., vol. 2 (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2003), 624.

After the Portuguese came Spanish, Dutch, French, and British expeditions. Because European traders were often backed by their governments, which sought new riches as a way to give them a competitive edge in an increasingly competitive European state system, they “gate crashed” the commercial networks of South and Southeast Asia similarly to the way that Mongol armies had taken over the trade of the silk roads three centuries before.<sup>9</sup>



### European Sailing Ship, Sixteenth Century

Vatican Museum

Photo R. Dunn

<sup>9</sup> Andre Gunder Frank, *ReOrient: Global Economy in the Asian Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 256; David Christian, *Maps of Time: An Introduction to Big History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 394.

**Lesson 4*****Student Handout 4.2—Dialectical Journal***

To write a journal, examine the events in the reading and speculate on or predict the possible long-term effects or results of these events. In the left-hand column, select at least three passages from the reading and record what occurred. In the right-hand column, write what might or should have happened as a result of the information recorded in Column One.

What Happened?	What Might/Should have Happened as a Result?
1	1
2	2
	3