

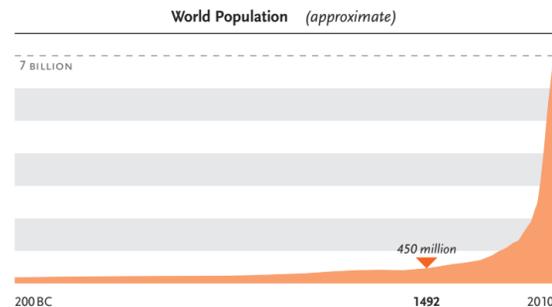
# 1492



The beginning of European expansion was made possible by advances in shipbuilding and navigation in the 15th century, in which the Portuguese took the lead. Feudalism declined as rulers curtailed the independence of the aristocracy and created strong centralized governments. At the same time, the cultural transformation of the Renaissance began to spread outside Italy. A major advance was the development of movable-type printing by Johannes Gutenberg, who opened the first European printing press at Mainz, Germany, c. 1455. Printing reduced the costs and increased the speed of book production, making books available to a much wider public: by 1492 the technology had spread throughout Catholic Europe.

The Roman Catholic church reasserted its authority after a split (1378–1417) that saw rival popes sitting at Rome and Avignon. The church began to expand outside Europe: the king of Kongo in Africa was converted by the Portuguese in 1490. Granada, the last Muslim enclave in Spain, was conquered by Castile in 1492 and the Spanish Inquisition supervised the conversion or expulsion of Spanish Muslims and Jews. Following the fall of the Byzantine empire in 1453, Moscow took over leadership of the Orthodox church. When Prince Ivan II adopted the title Tsar (Caesar) in 1472, he consciously appropriated the Byzantine tradition and Moscow became 'the third Rome'.

Despite the Ottoman conquest, Islam did not make great headway in Greece and the Balkans, where the majority of the population remained loyal to Orthodoxy. Islam continued to win converts in Africa and, especially, Indonesia. The political and military resurrection of China under the Ming since they came to power in 1368 was mirrored in intellectual life with a huge state-sponsored effort to edit and consolidate the canon of Chinese literature and learning in vast encyclopaedic works.



**1405** The empire of **Timur the Lame** is divided between his son and grandsons following his death.

**1405–33** **Admiral Zheng He** leads Chinese naval expeditions to Southeast Asia, the Middle East and East Africa.

**1406** Death of the North African polymath **Ibn Khaldun**, author of works on historiography, philosophy of history, social theory, government and economics.

**1407–28** Chinese occupation of **Dai Viet**.

**1408–8** A team of 3,000 Chinese scholars compile the **Yongle Encyclopaedia** in 29,937 volumes.

**1409** **Yellow Hat school** of Tibetan Buddhism founded.

**1410** **Battle of Tannenberg**: German Teutonic Knights defeated by Poles and Lithuanians.

**1411** **Beijing** becomes the capital of China's Ming dynasty rulers.

**1412** **Portolan navigational maps** produced in Portugal.

**1414** The **Sayyid dynasty** comes to power in the sultanate of Delhi.

**1414** Islam adopted in **Malaya**.

**1415** Portugal captures **Ceuta** in Morocco, its first African possession.

**1417** The **Council of Constance** ends the Great Schism of the papacy.

**1420** A crusade is called against the **Hussite heretics** in Bohemia.

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**1421** **Joan of Arc** is burned by the English at Rouen for heresy.

**1426–32\*** Jan van Eyck paints the **Ghent Altarpiece**, the first major work of Flemish Renaissance art.

**1426–36** Brunelleschi builds the dome of **Florence cathedral**.

**1428** **Portuguese seafarers** begin their exploration of the **West African coast**.

**1430** **Emir Ulugh Beg** builds an **astronomical observatory** at Samarkand.

**1430\*** Beginning of the construction of the Inca sacred city of **Machu Picchu**.

**1431** **Itzcoatl** begins the expansion of the **Aztec empire**.

**1432** **Portuguese seafarers** begin their exploration of the **West African coast**.

**1434–68** **Ethiopian emperor** Zara Yaqob introduces a mandatory **cult of the Virgin Mary**.

**1435\*** **Three-masted sailing ships**, capable of oceanic voyages, come into use.

**1436–55\*** Johannes Gutenberg develops **movable-type printing** in Europe.

**1438** **Albert II of Austria** becomes the first Habsburg Holy Roman emperor.

**1440** English defeat at Castillon ends the **Hundred Years War** with France.

**1441** The Portuguese begin the **slave trade** with West Africa.

**1442** **Pachakuti** initiates the expansion of the Inca empire.

**1443** **Great Zimbabwe** supplanted by Mutapa kingdom.

**1444** **Onin War** leads to the rise of **daimyo** (warlords) and feudalism in Japan.

**1446** The **Korean alphabetic script** is introduced.

**1449** The **Mongols** capture the Ming emperor **Zhengtong** at the **battle of Dumu**.

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**1453** Ottoman Turks capture **Constantinople**, ending the Byzantine empire.

**1453** **Extinction** of the Norse Greenland culture.

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**1460** **Birth** of Guru Nanak, founder of the **Sikh religion**.

**1461** The Ottomans conquer the empire of **Trebizond**, the last Byzantine state.

**1464** **Songhay** under Sanni Ali supplants Mali as the major power in West Africa.

**1466–88** **Bartholomeu Dias** rounds the Cape of Good Hope and enters the Indian Ocean.

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**1478** Hindu/Buddhist **Majapahit** is attacked by an alliance of Islamic states.

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