

CHAPTER
19
Section 1

PRIMARY SOURCE The Treaty of Tordesillas

In 1493, Pope Alexander VI tried to end the Portuguese and Spanish dispute over land claims. He drew an imaginary dividing line, the Line of Demarcation, from north to south through the Atlantic Ocean. Lands west of the line would belong to Spain; lands east of the line would belong to Portugal. King John of Portugal, however, was dissatisfied with this arrangement. To appease him, the line was moved further west, eventually giving Portugal a claim to Brazil. In 1494, Spain and Portugal signed the Treaty of Tordesillas, which settled the controversy once and for all. What did Portugal and Spain agree to in this portion of the treaty?

. . . Whereas a certain controversy exists between the said lords, their constituents, as to what lands, of all those discovered in the ocean sea up to the present day, the date of this treaty, pertain to each one of the said parts respectively; therefore, for the sake of peace and concord, and for the preservation of the relationship and love of the said King of Portugal for the said King and Queen of Castile, Aragon, etc. it being the pleasure of their Highnesses, they . . . covenanted and agreed that a boundary or straight line be determined and drawn north and south from pole to pole, on the said ocean sea, from the Arctic to the Antarctic pole. This boundary or line shall be drawn straight, as aforesaid at a distant of three hundred and seventy leagues west of the Cape Verde Islands, being calculated by degrees. . . . And all lands, both islands and mainlands, found and discovered already, or to be found and discovered hereafter, by the said King of Portugal and by his vessels on this side of the said line and bound . . . in either north or south latitude, on the eastern side of the said bound . . . shall belong to and remain in the possession of and pertain forever to, the said King of Portugal and his successors. And all other lands, both islands and mainlands, found or to be found hereafter . . . by the said King and Queen of Castile, Aragon, etc. and by their vessels, on the western side of the said bound . . . in either its north or south latitude, shall belong to . . . the said King and Queen of Castile, Leon, etc. and to their successors.

Item: the said representatives promise and affirm . . . that from this date no ships shall be dispatched—namely as follows: the said King and Queen of Castile, Leon, Aragon, etc. for this part of the bound . . . which pertains to the said King of Portugal . . . nor the said King of Portugal to the other side of the said bound which pertains to the

said King and Queen of Castile, Aragon, etc.—for the purpose of discovering and seeking any mainlands or islands, or for the purpose of trade, barter, or conquest of any kind. But should it come to pass that the said ships of the said King and Queen of Castile . . . on sailing thus on this side of the said bound, should discover any mainlands or islands in the region pertaining, as abovesaid, to the said King of Portugal, such mainlands or islands shall belong forever to the said King of Portugal. . . . And if the said ships of the said King of Portugal discover any islands or mainlands in the regions of the said King and Queen of Castile . . . all such lands shall belong to and remain forever in the possession of the said King and Queen of Castile. . . .

And by this present agreement, they . . . entreat our most Holy Father that his Holiness be pleased to confirm and approve this said agreement, according to what is set forth therein; and that he order his bulls in regard to it to be issued to the parties . . . and that he lay his censures upon those who shall violate or oppose it at any time whatsoever . . .

from F. G. Davenport, ed., European Treaties Bearing on the History of the United States and its Dependencies. Reprinted in Henry Steele Commager, ed., Documents of American History (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1971), 4.

Discussion Questions

Determining Main Ideas

1. Where was the imaginary Line of Demarcation drawn?
2. According to the terms of the treaty, what would happen if Portuguese ships sailing on the Spanish side of the boundary line discovered land, and vice versa?
3. **Clarifying** What purpose did this treaty serve?