

[MUSIC PLAYING]

**ROBERT W.
STRAYER:**

In Chapter 13, Europe conquers the Americas. Those of us who live in the United States learn quite early in our lives about the voyages of Columbus and the European empires in the Americas that followed, leading to our own country and those of Latin America as well. But just how distinctive or unique was that process? How does it look if we place it alongside other empire-building projects of the early modern era? These are the central questions of Chapter 13.

On one level, the early modern era was an age of empire all across the world. European conquests in the Americas were matched by Russia's march across Siberia, by Chinese expansion into Central Asia, by the Mogul Empire in India, and by the Ottoman Empire stretching across the Middle East and North Africa. In fact, while Christians from Western Europe were creating their empires across the Atlantic, other Christians from Central and Southeastern Europe were threatened by the empire of the Muslim Ottoman Turks.

So Europe was not the only center of vitality and expansion, and European empires were simply part of a larger global process. And yet, there are distinctive features of these European empires. Only the European empires took shape an ocean away from the imperial homeland and in wholly unknown lands, while the others represented expansion into neighboring areas with which they were at least somewhat familiar.

Furthermore, the European empires had a far greater impact on the people they conquered. Nothing else compares to the catastrophic collapse of Native American populations. And none of the Asian empires gave birth to the kind of slave-based societies and transoceanic trade in slaves that accompanied European empire building in the Americas. Comparison then is a very powerful tool that allows us to see the more familiar European empires in the mirror of their less familiar counterparts in Asia and the Middle East.