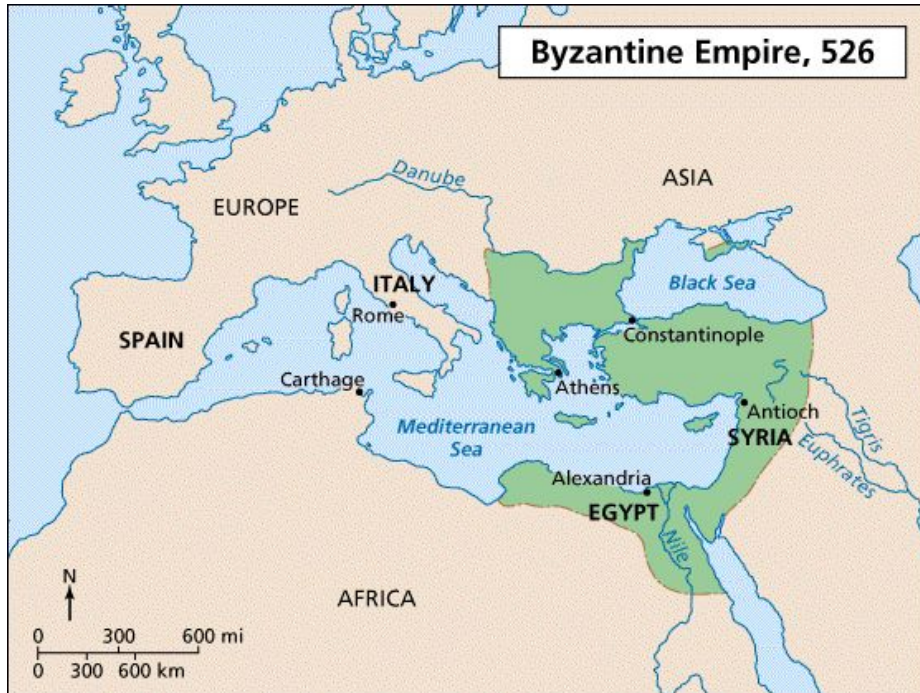
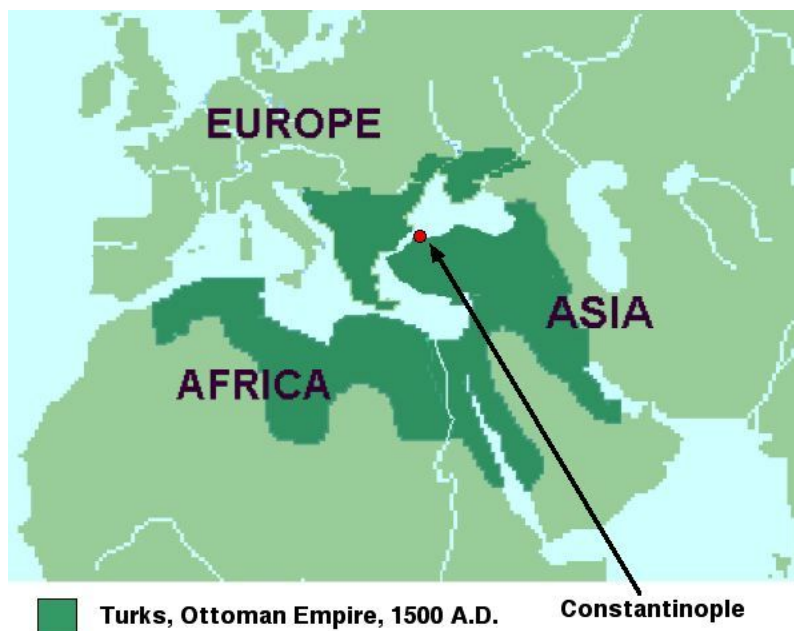


A Barrier to Trade & Finding a Sea Route to Asia

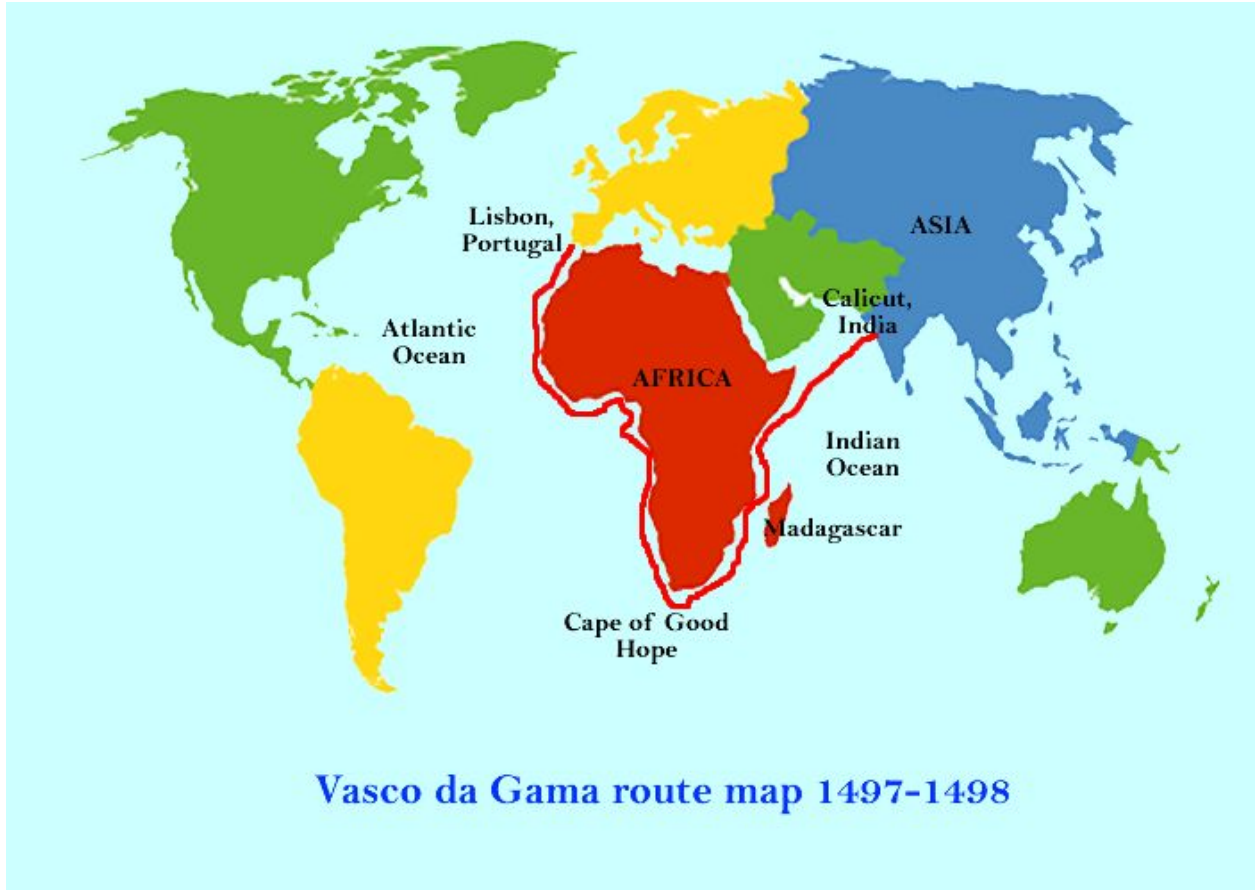
In the late 1400s, economic motives for exploration grew out of a competition among European kingdoms for increased trade with Africa, India, and China. In the past, this trade had traveled from the Italian city-state of Venice and the Byzantine city of Constantinople on to an overland route that reached all the way to the capital of the Chinese empire. This land route to Asia had become blocked when, in 1453, the Ottoman Turks took control of Constantinople. Might a new way to the rich Asian trade be opened up by sailing either west across the Atlantic Ocean or south along the West African coast? At first, sailing around Africa seemed more promising. Voyages of exploration sponsored by Portugal's Prince Henry the Navigator eventually succeeded in opening up a long sea route around South Africa's Cape of Good Hope. In 1498, The Portuguese sea captain Vasco da Gama was the first European to reach India by this route.



Byzantine Empire and capital city of Constantinople



In 1453, trade with Asia suddenly stopped. The **Turks**, a people from the **Ottoman Empire**, captured the city of **Constantinople** and took control of the **Middle East**. This closed the trade routes between Europe and Asia. This change also motivated Europeans to find an all-water route to Asia.



Vasco da Gama route map 1497-1498