

THE FLAGS OF TORDESILLAS--1494
The Treaty Flags from the Maps

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Columbus plead with the King of Portugal for expeditionary forces for his voyage of discovery, before appealing to Spain. Pope Nicholas V, with assumed authority, had given the Portuguese the right to the "road to the Indies" in 1454, but the west coast of Africa, which the Portuguese were then timidly exploring, was the territory in mind. Westward was a sea of darkness. When Columbus, under the patronage of Spain, discovered the western lands and believed he had found the Indies, the King of Portugal was aroused. He appealed to the Pope and claimed the rights of discovery under the papal decree of 1454.

Controversies followed. The then Pope, Alexander VI, compromised by laying a line north and south 100 leagues west of the Azores, giving to Spain the right to all west of that line. Portugal again protested. A treaty conference met at Tordesillas, Spain, with the result the line was shifted 270 leagues farther west; essentially the 50th meridian.

This Treaty of Tordesillas of 1494, as events^{later}/proved, gave to Portugal the eastern part of the present Brazil, and the harbor of Rio de Janeiro, and the command of the Amazon River, and explains why Brazil became Portuguese and why Spain was burdened with the problems of colonization on the west coast of South America through Gulf of Mexico bases.

Incidentally, Portugal^{found}/the easy way to the Indies and its riches around the southern tip of Africa, while Columbus and Spain who had sought India by the westward route were blocked by the newly discovered continents.