

By 1822 England had already lost some of its colonies in the Americas. It had fought and won the Battle of Trafalgar. It had established its dominance of the seas.

The defeat suffered in the Americas helped to persuade England that it should turn its attention to the East. There beckoned the promise of riches. There lay lands not yet explored and resources not yet exploited. England, with its mighty fleet, was in a good position to gain and rule territory in the East.

The map on page twenty shows the size of the British Empire in 1822. On this map it is clear that England by this time has established colonies along the coasts of India, Africa and Australia. Over time, these colonies would grow in importance and size. In some instances, England would battle other European powers to gain, or retain, territory. In other instances, England would gain control by overcoming the resistance of local populations. These populations often were not unified. They generally did not have fire power or weaponry equal to that possessed by the British.

Although there was often popular resistance to British control, this resistance almost inevitably resulted in high casualties for the local peoples. In some cases, British control meant eventual loss of local culture and even the disappearance of whole populations.

In referring to the indigenous (indigenous means native to, or original) people of a territory, the word aboriginal is often used. The indigenous people of Australia and Tasmania, for example, are usually referred to as Aborigines. This term is convenient but not very accurate. Just as there were different ethnic groups in Europe, so were there different ethnic groups in Australia and Tasmania.

Europeans coming upon the different groups, or tribes, of the new territory did not notice distinctions, only similarities. Among the groups that existed in Australia and Tasmania at the time of conquest are included the following peoples. There were hundreds of groups; these are just a few of them: