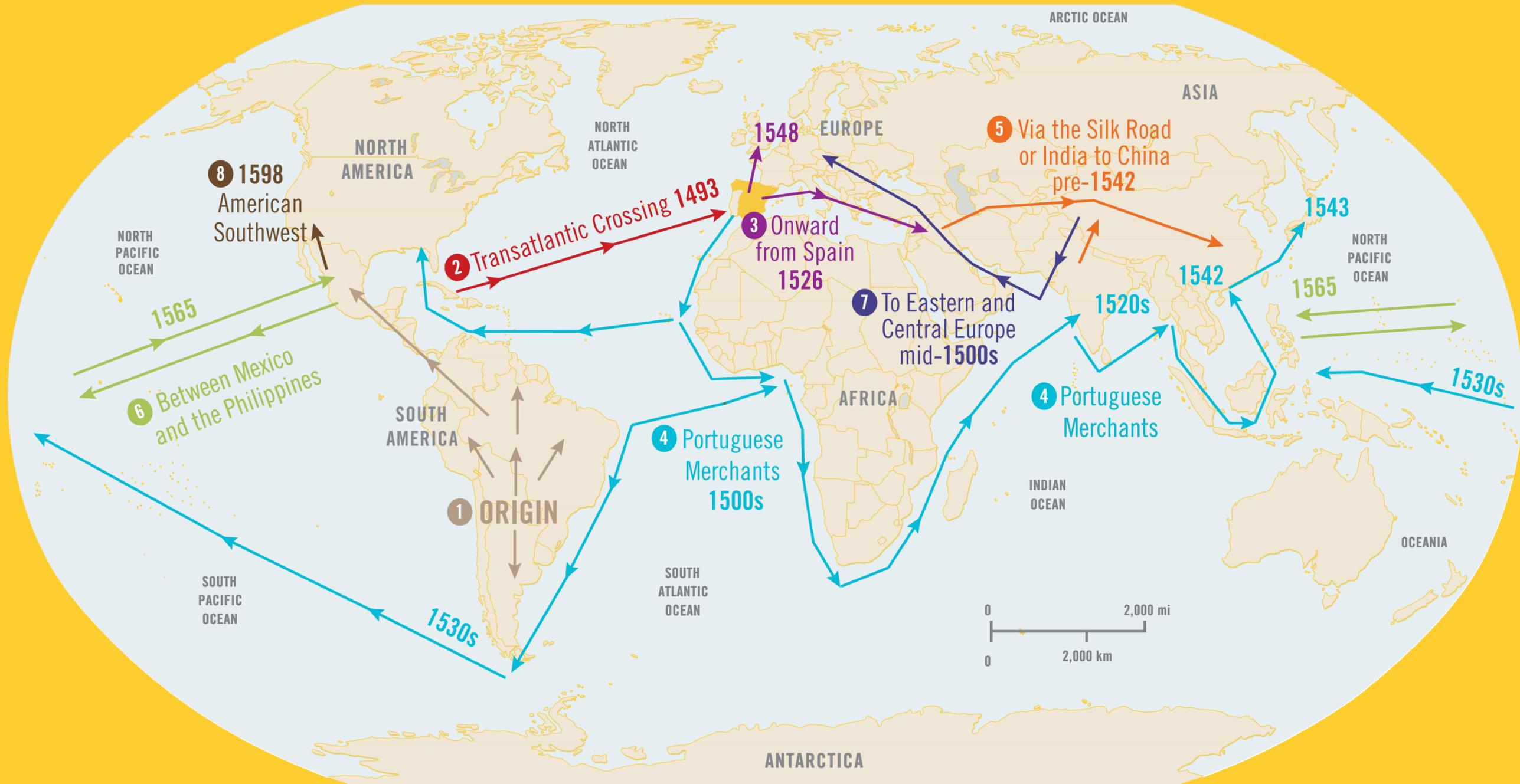


EARLY WORLDWIDE DISPERSAL OF CHILE PEPPERS

Most peppers dry well and their seeds remain viable for a long time, allowing long distance transport. Because they thrive in both temperate and tropical climates, they readily became established as they were introduced around the globe. New varieties specific to different regions developed and chile peppers became the primary hot spice worldwide.



1 Origin of Wild Peppers

Wild chile peppers evolved in Bolivia and Southern Brazil.

2 Transatlantic Crossing

Chile peppers traveled from the New World to Spain in 1493 with the return of Christopher Columbus from one of his voyages to the Caribbean.

3 Onward from Spain

From Spain, peppers spread west to Portugal, north as far as Britain and east through the Mediterranean.

4 Portuguese Merchants

Within 50 years of the chile pepper's arrival in Spain, Portuguese maritime merchants spread them to coastal regions of Africa, India and much of Asia. They introduced them directly from Portugal, as well as from their colony in Brazil. They also eventually carried chiles on voyages from Africa to southeast North America.

5 Via the Silk Road to China

Although the Portuguese reached the coast of China by 1542, chile peppers may have reached the interior of the country earlier, brought overland by traders via the Silk Road or India.

6 Between Mexico and the Philippines

Chile peppers reached the Philippines when the Spanish established a colony there in 1565. With travel back and forth between the Philippines and their other colony in Mexico, the Spanish also spread chiles to Hawaii and other Pacific Islands.

7 To Eastern and Central Europe

Chile peppers didn't reach Eastern and Central Europe through trade with other Europeans. Rather, Arab or Turkish traders likely transported them from India or Asia through the Persian Gulf and northwards in the mid-1500s. From Hungary, where paprika became a dominant spice, peppers spread to Germany.

8 American Southwest

Although Toltec Indians of Mexico traded with Pueblo Indians of the American Southwest, there is no evidence they introduced them to chile peppers. The Spanish certainly brought them along when they colonized the region in 1598.

