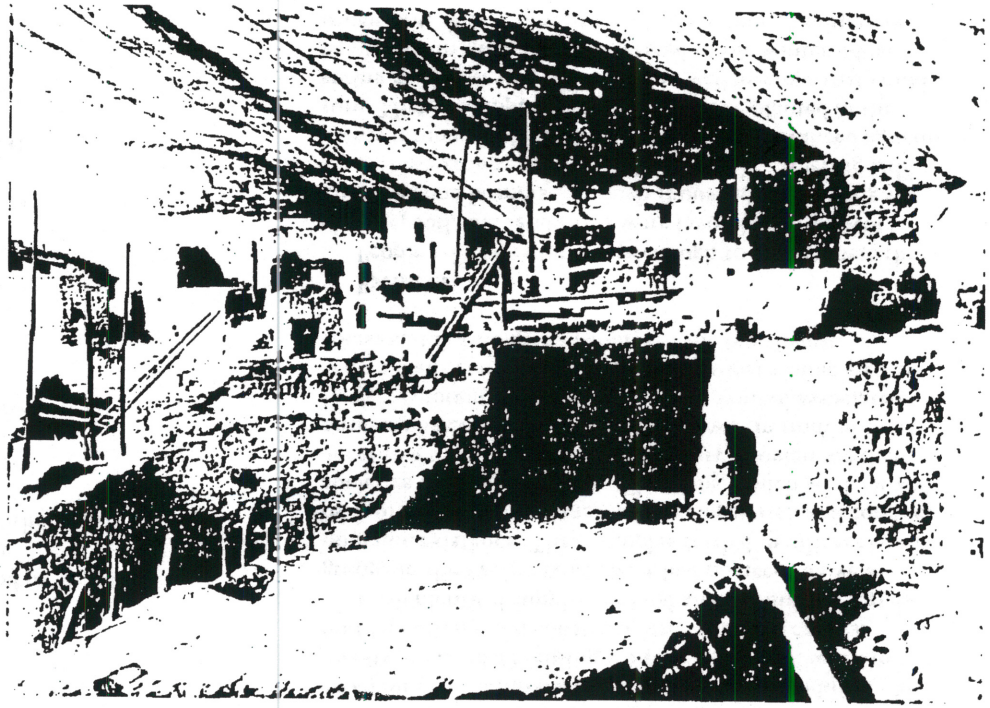
THE ENCOUNTER

A MEETING OF TWO OLD WORLDS



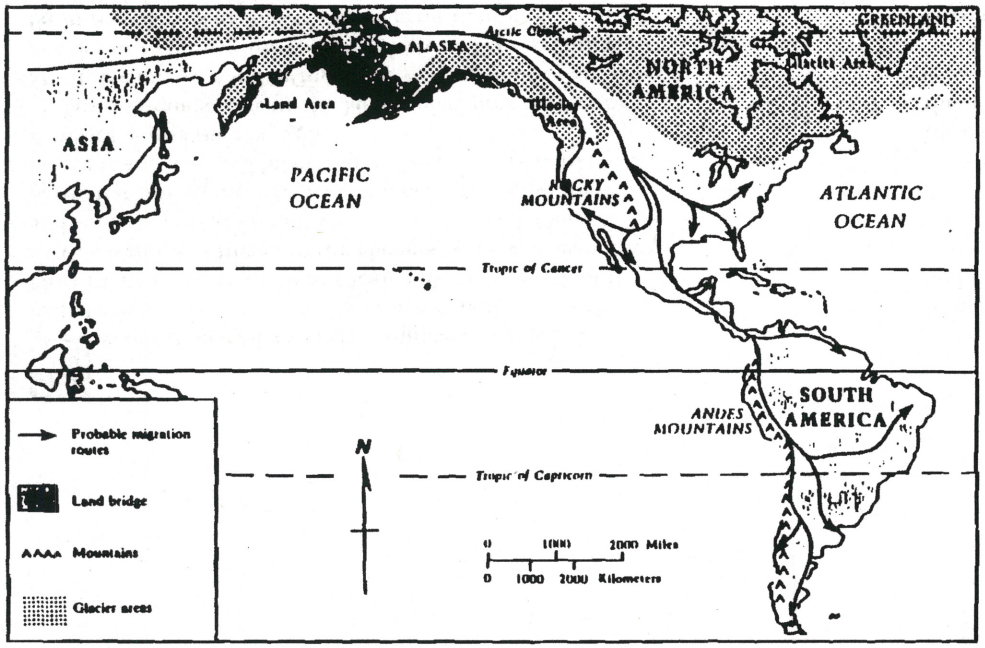
Keet Seel, a cliff dwelling in Arizona's Canyon de Chelly. Keet Seel dates from the 1200s and was probably occupied by native peoples, called the Anasazi, or "ancient ones."

Twenty thousand years ago, immense sheets of ice, called glaciers, stretched across North America from the North Pole to as far south as Mexico. Because much of the earth's water was frozen in the glaciers, sea levels were low and some key areas of land were left uncovered. One area of particular importance to the Americas was a natural land bridge that connected Siberia in northeastern Asia to North America across the Bering Sea.

For thousands of years the land bridge, now the Bering Strait, lay uncovered. During those years, groups of migrant people, as well as animals, traveled across the land bridge. From Asia across to Alaska drifted great mammoths, mastodons, bison with six-foot horns, and rodents the size of calves. Not far behind came small bands of Ice Age hunters, who depended on the animals for food, clothing, and shelter. The migrants eventually moved into the Americas, some traveling east, some west, and some pushing south through Central America and the South American continent to its southern tip, Tierra del Fuego.

Migration from Asia ended when the Ice Age ended. As the earth warmed, the glaciers melted and sea levels rose. In the north, the rising sea covered the Bering land bridge and separated North America from Asia.

During the 10,000 years that followed, most of the great beasts that had migrated from Asia died out as the climate changed. So did many smaller animals such as the horse.



The Bering Land Bridge. *People were able to migrate from Asia to the Americas because lower sea levels during the Ice Age created a temporary strip of land.*

The people now isolated in the Americas gradually found or developed other food sources. They continued to explore and settle in new locations as they searched for food. By the end of a hundred centuries, the Americas had become a world of diverse cultures. To a great extent, the cultures that evolved depended on how and where each group obtained its food supply. Some groups depended on hunting and gathering, others on fishing, and others on farming.

Hunters and Gatherers

Following in the footsteps of their Ice Age ancestors, many groups remained nomadic hunters and gatherers. Small family groups banded together to hunt game and gather the nuts, grains, and fruits that grew wild. In the far north, hunter-gatherers traveled the frozen tundras in search of caribou, moose, elk, and deer. In the huge desert basin of present-day Nevada and Utah, hunter-gatherers wandered, looking for seeds, nuts, berries, roots, and insects to eat. They killed small game animals such as birds and rabbits. Hunter-gatherers stalked the buffalo across the Great Plains. Others ranged through vast South American pampas, looking for wild seeds, fruit, and small game animals such as the rhea, which was similar to the ostrich, or the guanaco, a llama-like animal.

The well-being of each group depended on the success and safety of its hunters. There were no horses, so hunting bands stalked their prey on foot. Working in groups, hunters stampeded animals, especially buffalo, off cliffs or into places where they could be killed easily. Tribes set up temporary camps wherever the location seemed to have a sufficient supply of game and plants, and they changed locations when the food supply dwindled.

Fishing Cultures

Some groups settled along a 2,000-mile stretch of the heavily forested Pacific Northwest coastline. Here the oceans and freshwater streams of the area offered an abundance of fish and other aquatic food sources. The thick forests of giant redwood, Douglas fir, and pine trees provided small game animals, nuts, and berries. In addition, the forests provided a seemingly endless supply of wood to build dwellings and construct large seagoing canoes.

With plentiful supplies of food and building materials, groups in the Pacific Northwest had no need to live a nomadic existence. These peoples settled in villages based on family groups, or clans, and developed rich and complex societies over the centuries. The clans, which were ranked according to wealth and family history, proclaimed their ancestry by carving totem poles to tower in front of their lodges. A totem is an animal or plant symbol associated with a clan. Totem poles became the most visible sign of social status among the peoples of the Northwest.

Farmers

People who were fortunate enough to settle where the climate, soil, and landforms were favorable for growing crops became farmers. Through thousands of growing seasons, these groups progressed from simply gathering wild plants for food and medicine to practicing advanced agriculture. They developed crops that could be planted in the spring and harvested in the fall, as well as crops that could be planted in the fall and harvested in the winter. Most important, the farming groups learned how to purposely

crossbreed plants to produce specific growing qualities in their crops. More than 300 kinds of corn were grown in the different soil conditions and climates of the Americas. More than 3,000 kinds of potatoes flourished, especially in Peru. Plants cultivated in the Americas for medicinal purposes numbered over 1,200.

Farming groups usually had much larger populations and settlements than either the fishing clans or the nomadic groups. They developed sophisticated governments and businesses. The Hopewell mound (burial site) builders, for example, dominated the Ohio Valley between 300 B.C. and A.D. 700. They operated a trading system that spanned the North American continent. The desert-dwelling Anasazi extended their influence throughout Arizona, Utah, Colorado, New Mexico, and northern Mexico between 100 B.C. and A.D. 1300. The Anasazi made the deserts bloom with a series of dams, ditches, and canals that almost by magic seemed to increase the area's meager water supply. The northeastern woodland Iroquois built villages of wood-framed longhouses. Sometime during the 1400s, the Iroquois tribes forged one of the first formal peace-keeping alliances in the Americas.

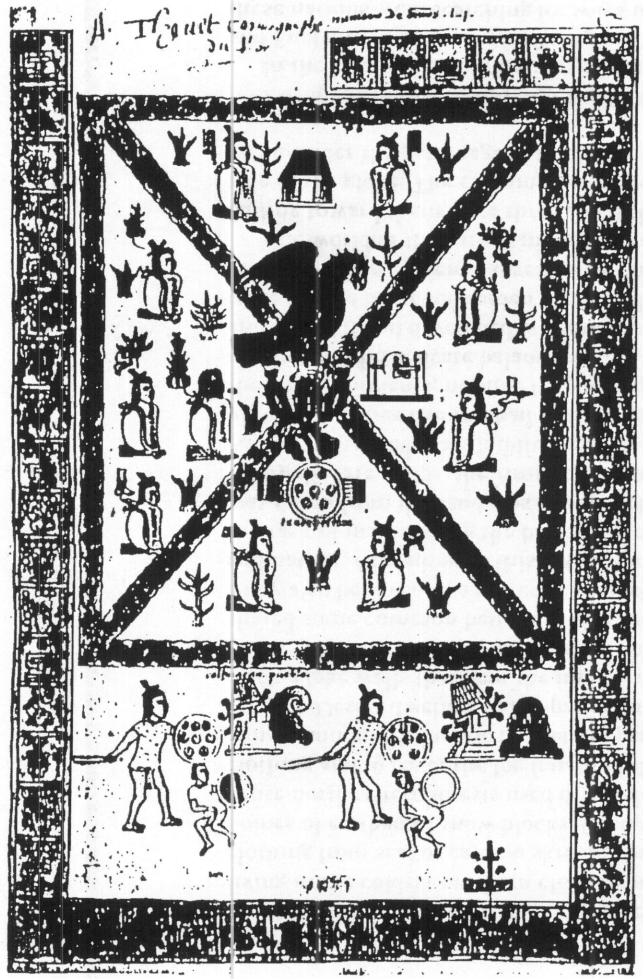
Three Great Empires

The three dominant civilizations that developed in Central and South America—the Mayas, Aztecs, and Incas—were farming cultures. The Mayas ruled in Central America between A.D. 250 and 900. By draining the swamps into an extensive canal system, the Mayas converted the jungles of the Yucatán Peninsula, Guatemala, and Honduras into highly productive farmland. Most Mayan people lived in small villages near cities ruled by chiefs and priests. Cities were religious ceremonial centers consisting of magnificent stone structures such as temple pyramids, astronomical observatories, palaces, public baths, ball courts, plazas, and bridges.

Mayan cities also were centers of art and learning. Mayan artists painted walls with brightly colored murals and created colorful pottery, small clay figures, and huge stone sculptures. Mayan scholars developed intricate mathematical and astronomical systems as well as the only calendar and complete writing system in the Americas.

In the 1300s, the Aztecs came to power in the central valley of Mexico, a huge oval basin about 7,500 feet above sea level. Although the valley was in the tropics, its high altitude gave it a climate milder than that of the surrounding hotter, wetter lowlands.

Like the Mayas, the Aztecs changed the land to make it arable. In the lowlands, they drained marshes, then chopped down and burned sections of forest. They left the ashes to



This Aztec painting te
story of the Aztecs' m
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act as fertilizer and planted crops in the cleared areas. In the highlands, they cut terraces into the hillsides to increase the amount of level farmland. To water the terraced fields, they dug extensive canals. They turned areas of shallow lakes into croplands by scooping up mud from the lake bottoms to form islands. On these three kinds of farmlands, Aztec farmers grew corn, beans, squash, tomatoes, cotton, cacao, mangoes, papayas, and avocados.

The Aztec capital of Tenochtitlán covered more than ten square miles. Four hundred thousand residents bustled through its streets. Canals and causeways connected the capital to nearby cities and villages. Tenochtitlán's administrative center contained law courts, a jail, a military academy, a public treasury, and living quarters for 3,000 servants and workers.

In Aztec marketplaces people traded gold, silver, precious gems, feathers, embroidered goods, building supplies, and foods of all kinds. The abundance of goods was a result of tributes from conquered peoples and a trading system that reached throughout Mexico.

In South America, the empire of the Incas stretched along about 2,000 miles of the rugged terrain of the Andes Mountains. This vast empire had expanded between about A.D. 1400 and 1500 and included southern Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, and parts of Chile and Argentina. Inca farmers living in the small valleys of the Andean mountains dug irrigation ditches and hillside terraces in the surrounding slopes. Inca farms became so efficient that they produced enough corn and potatoes to fill thousands of storehouses holding as much as seven years' worth of food.

The Inca empire was made up of conquered peoples from the west coast of South America. To hold their empire together, the Incas constructed a road system that covered more than 25,000 miles of steep mountains and ravines. Along the roads, runners sped to transmit news, imperial troops marched to quell uprisings, and traders traveled to and from Chile, Argentina, and Ecuador.

Incas used the quipu, an abacus-like device, to calculate the tribute owed them by conquered peoples.

Cultures of the Americas

Methods of obtaining food—whether by hunting and gathering, fishing, or farming—led to differences in social structures, religion, ceremonies, art, and medicine. Other differences among early American peoples developed as groups adapted to the climates of their chosen environments. Those living in the coldest northern climates made protective clothing from seal or caribou skin and built dome-shaped homes of earthen or snow blocks. Groups that settled in dense northeastern forests used deer hides both to make clothing and to cover the log frames of their wigwams. Plains groups hunted the buffalo and left no part of that animal unused. Desert dwellers built apartment-like pueblos with thick adobe walls that kept the interiors cool.

In spite of their many differences, these diverse peoples shared some common beliefs. Most believed in a creator. They also believed in a sacred relationship between humans and nature. According to this belief, each individual shared the task of maintaining the balance of nature, and whatever was taken from the land was used wisely.

By the late 1400s, the Americas were populated from the Arctic to the Andes with differing, complex cultures. Most of these cultures had not had much negative impact on their environments, nor had they damaged significantly the *ecosystem*, the delicate balance among land, plants, and animals. All had developed without the horse or any other large, tamed beasts of burden. They had been isolated and protected from epidemic diseases and plagues.

The world of the early Americans was about to change. Sailing toward them were three small ships from the other side of the globe. The captain was a determined Italian sailor under the patronage of the Spanish king and queen.

European Exploration and the Search for the Indies

In the late 1400s, four nations—Spain, Portugal, France, and England—were vying for European leadership. Heads of these nations were searching for ways to increase their countries' wealth and power. One way, they believed, was to expand trade with the Indies—the Asian lands of China, Japan, Indonesia, and India.

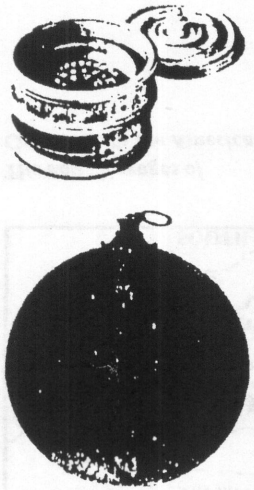
Europeans knew little about the Indies, but they did know about products from that part of the world. Gold, pepper, ginger, cloves, perfumes, silks, and other riches were brought to Mediterranean markets by Venetian traders. Indies trade, however, was controlled by Venetian, Asian, and Arab merchants, who were able to make handsome profits by controlling the trade. Finding new trade routes to the Indies would help European countries establish direct

trade and thereby gain more profits. Europe's monarchs began to support voyages of exploration to find new sea routes to the Indies.

Recent inventions such as the compass and the astrolabe made the navigation of such voyages more accurate and thus safer. Triangular sails and the replacement of steering oars with a rudder changed the look and performance of seagoing vessels. The sails made better use of sea winds. The rudder, a hinged piece of wood attached to the ship's stern, or rear, allowed more control in steering.

Explorers who claimed lands and established settlements for a country received honors and money from the government. Christopher Columbus, an Italian sea captain, wanted such recognition. For seven years prior to 1492, Columbus had haunted the Spanish courts of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, trying to persuade them to finance an expedition that would find the Indies by sailing west. Isabella, eager to expand Spanish influence, was sympathetic to Columbus, but at first Ferdinand was not. In 1492, however, Spain's war against Moors (Moslems) in the south ended when Spanish imperial troops defeated the Moors. Ferdinand was filled with religious fervor against Moslems, including the Arabs who controlled trade with the Indies. He and Isabella outfitted Columbus with supplies and three ships, the *Niña*, the *Pinta*, and the *Santa María*.

On August 3, 1492, Christopher Columbus set sail from Palos, Spain, for "God, glory, and gold." He wanted converts to Christianity, glory for himself, and gold for Spain.



Columbus and later European explorers were able to sail across oceans because of navigational equipment such as the compass and the astrolabe.

The First Encounter

More than two months later, Columbus and his ships were still sailing west. There had been no sight of land since the ships had left the Canary Islands off the northwest coast of Africa. The men were ready to mutiny. Their salted meat and dried beans were almost gone, and the biscuits were infested with maggots. The crew was bored, restless, and beginning to fear they were lost.

On October 10, Columbus had bargained with them to sail three more days. If they did not sight land by then, he promised they would return to Spain. At 2:00 A.M. on the third day, pacing the deck of the *Santa María*, Columbus heard the lookout sailor from the *Pinta* shout, "Land! Land!" To prevent the ships from running aground, Columbus ordered each one to lower its sails and drop anchor. With the first dawn light, the ships edged toward land.

As they approached, Columbus realized that the large land mass he had been expecting was instead a small island. As he was familiar with the writings of earlier explorers, however, he wasn't concerned. He believed there were many small islands offshore from the Indies.

Finding a place to drop anchor, Columbus and the captains from the *Niña* and the *Pinta* took rowboats ashore. Their first act on land that morning of October 12, 1492, was to kneel and thank their Christian God for allowing the ships to reach land. Columbus then planted the Spanish flag in the sandy soil and claimed the island for Ferdinand and Isabella. He named it *San Salvador*, which means "Holy Savior." Later he greeted the island's people, the Arawaks.

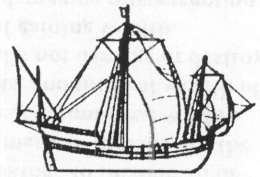
The meeting between Columbus and the Arawaks brought together two worlds that had been isolated from one another for 10,000 years. The period of European conquest and colonization of the Americas had begun.

Naming the Indies

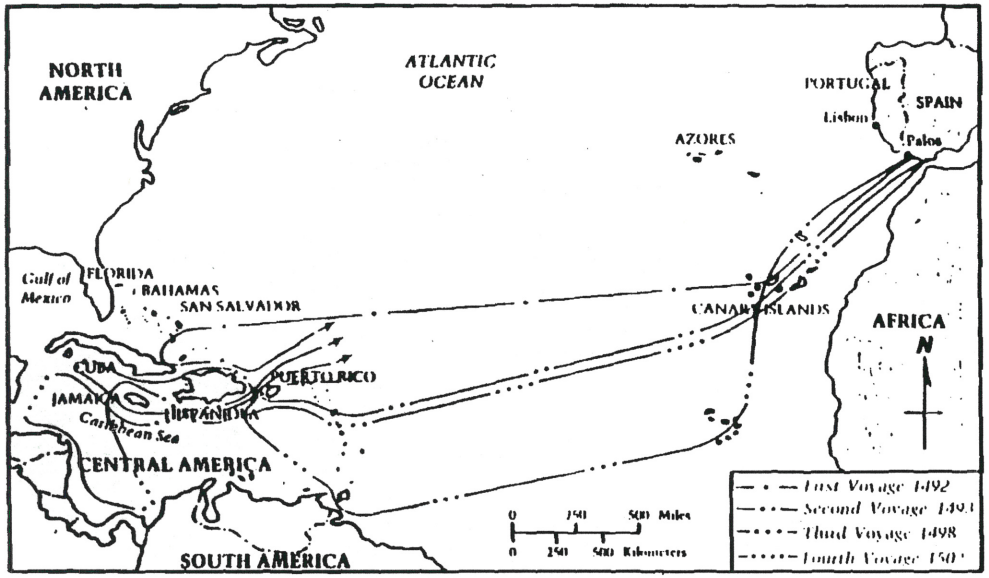
Columbus was certain he had found a gateway to the East Indies. Instead, he had bumped into islands that are part of the Bahamas chain. The Bahamas lie between the Atlantic Ocean and the Caribbean Sea, south of present-day Florida. Both the islands and their inhabitants were misnamed. Even when Columbus's mistake was discovered, the islands retained the name of *Indies*. The word "West" was added so they would not be confused with the other "East" Indies. The islands' inhabitants continued to be called "Indians," a name that was applied to all peoples on the American continents.

Two days after his landing on San Salvador, Columbus and some crew members explored the rest of the island, then sailed to other islands nearby. Hoping to find gold, gems, or spices, they found instead peaceful people and an astonishing array of unfamiliar animals and plants. "I believe the islands contain many herbs and many trees which will be worth a great amount in Spain for dyes and as medicinal spices, but I do not recognize them and I much regret that," wrote Columbus in his journal.

Columbus returned to Spain without having found vast amounts of gold or gems. He did, however, bring back six



The Niña was Columbus's favorite ship. Columbus credited the sturdy Niña for the safe journey home on his first voyage.



The Four Voyages of Columbus to the Americas

"Indian" captives to prove his claim that he had reached the Indies. He hoped his evidence would convince the Spanish monarchs to provide funds for a second voyage.

European Misperceptions of the Americas

Columbus managed to obtain funding not only for a second voyage but for a third and a fourth, as well. Meanwhile, other navigators had begun sailing across the Atlantic to the Americas. In the twelve years following 1492, more than eighty exploration voyages reached the Americas. Because they made little or no effort to understand the land or the peoples of the Americas, the early explorers formed false or inaccurate ideas about the American Indians and their lands. Most Europeans came to believe these misperceptions.

The first misperception was the idea that the Americas were a "new world." To Columbus and the Europeans, the two huge land masses may have been new. But to the peoples living there, the Americas were as old as Europe was to Columbus and other Europeans.

Another misperception was that Europeans had "discovered" the Americas. Columbus had encountered lands yet unexplored by Europeans. Early Americans had already

"discovered" and explored nearly all the land of the two vast continents centuries before the Europeans arrived.

The third misperception was that land in the Americas was unsettled, unlimited, and free for the taking. To Europeans, settled land was owned and fenced off by individuals. The concepts of fences, boundaries, and private land ownership did not exist for American Indians. To them, settled land was any land they used.

Europeans quickly extended the misperceptions of "undiscovered" and "free for the taking" to include all of the Americas' natural resources. American Indians, for the most part, used only what they needed from their world's abundant game animals, rich forests, and mineral wealth of gold, silver, copper, and tin. They did not damage or destroy natural resources for the purpose of gaining wealth.

The greatest and perhaps most damaging misperception fostered by the early explorers was the belief that the peoples of the Americas were uncivilized. Columbus's first descriptions of the Arawaks reflected his belief that they could be easily conquered. He noted that they "bore no arms, nor knew of them . . . had no iron . . . and went around as naked as the days their mothers bore them."

He reasoned that armed men should be able to enslave them easily and make them do "whatever one might wish." He thought their gentleness would also make it easy to convert them to Christianity. He wrote, "Christendom will do good business with these Indians, especially Spain, whose subjects they must all become." Looking back, this statement was a sad forecast of the future. For soon, Spanish adventurers, called *conquistadors*, would conquer large areas of the Americas and enslave thousands of Indians. Later, both North and South America would become colonized by people of many different European countries.

The Americas' First Environmentalists

What the Europeans did not recognize, and what we are now only beginning to understand fully, is how advanced many American Indian groups were 500 years ago. The Aztecs and Mayas had built astounding structures because of their knowledge of advanced mathematics and physics. American Indians had developed solar calendars much more accurate than European calendars. American Indian farmers grew a wide variety of food plants, thanks to careful

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for the land.

recording of weather patterns and soil conditions. They also developed new crops and natural medicines.

American Indians had ongoing traditions of family and community life. Most had strong family ties, with parents and grandparents serving as children's teachers. Family and community histories were passed down through story-telling and drawings on cave walls, hides, pottery, and woven cloth.

Today we admire the Indians' knowledge of and respect for nature. Present-day scientists are trying to learn what the Indians 500 years ago already knew about conserving the land and natural resources. As we attempt to save the earth's natural environment today, we would do well to remember the Indians as the Americas' first environmentalists.

The Exchanges Begin

On his second voyage to the Americas, Columbus brought seventeen ships filled with European settlers, plants, and animals. He landed on the island that he had named *Hispaniola*, "Little Spain," and unloaded his ships. The exchanges that would change the entire world began.

Columbus's crew members planted seeds and cuttings, introducing into the Americas wheat, melons, onions, lettuce, grapes, and sugarcane. With the exception of

sugarcane, these plants did not thrive well in the tropical areas of the Caribbean, although later many would grow very successfully in other parts of the Americas.

Animals that were unloaded included pigs, cattle, chickens, sheep, goats, and a true native American returning home—the horse. Unlike the plants, the animals did well in the tropics, where there was endless natural feed and no animal-killing diseases. Within thirty years, the animal herds had multiplied many times over.

Columbus and his crew also brought a silent but deadly European export—disease. Within several days of the Europeans' landing, hundreds of Hispaniola islanders had caught a fatal respiratory disease. Contagious diseases were common in Europe, but the native populations of the Americas had never been exposed to them and had not developed immunities.

Five Powerful Exchanges

Columbus's accidental landing in the Americas did not fulfill his dreams. He never found the gold he sought, and he enjoyed fame and royal favor for only a short time. But his encounter with the Americas set off the most powerful plant, animal, disease, and cultural exchanges in history.

The sugarcane that Columbus brought to Hispaniola would eventually introduce the plantation system, lead to the use of slave labor, and begin the assault on the earth's tropical forests. The horse that Columbus returned to its native homeland would first frighten the American Indians and then alter their way of life. The diseases that Columbus unwittingly turned loose on the unsuspecting, unprepared native American population would kill between 50 and 90 percent of those peoples. Corn from American Indians' fields would be introduced to Europe and Africa and would feed the enslaved Africans who provided the labor for American plantations. The potato, another American Indian crop, would, like corn, become a worldwide staple after its introduction into Europe.

In the next five chapters, you will learn how the Columbus encounter began a series of long-lasting and powerful exchanges between two old worlds. You will discover how five "seeds of change" planted 500 years ago have influenced the lives of people throughout the world, and will continue to have influence worldwide.

Through the Looking Glass

To fully appreciate the implications of historical events, students of history are often advised to view events from different perspectives. But how can you really put yourself in someone else's shoes and understand how they feel? The article below offers one method — turn the tables! The writer of this article asked the question: What would the world be like today if the Aztecs had crossed the Atlantic and conquered Europe instead of the other way around?

What would the world be like today if the ferocious Caribs depicted in this picture had actually conquered the Spaniards?

An open letter from European Rights Activist Wanblee Johnson

Five hundred years ago Callicoatl sailed across the ocean in three Aztec boats and found a new continent, a new Eastern Hemisphere, an event being commemorated this year with great fanfare and celebration. Every child knows the story: how Callicoatl convinced Montezuma II to support his journey, how the Aztec sailors nearly despaired on the journey, how they "discovered" a strange white-skinned race in the "New World."

But that is only part of the story. On this anniversary, the record must be set straight. Callicoatl did not "discover" this continent; he invaded it. It was already inhabited by many nations. Over the past five centuries, we, the native peoples of Europe, have seen our natural resources and spirituality stolen, and our relatives enslaved and sacrificed. That is hardly a history worth celebrating.

In the Pre-Callicoatlian era, the Greeks, the Romans, the Egyptians, the Moors, and other indigenous peoples of the Eastern Hemisphere ruled great empires. They contributed much to the world, as is attested to by the great temples and pyramids they left behind. They had detailed knowledge of astronomy, law, agriculture, and religion. True, there were wars among them, and persecution of those who did not follow the state religion. But they were no more oppressive than the empires of Montezuma II or the Inca Túpac Yupanki in the "Old World" 500 years ago. And, as in the Western Hemisphere, there were many tribal peoples still living in harmony with nature.

Other explorers sailed to these shores, even some who claimed to have arrived before Callicoatl: the Arawak, the Beothuk, and the Lenni-Lenape. But it was the Aztec flag

of Anahuak and the Inca flag of Tawantinsuyo that were first firmly planted in our lands. Soon thereafter, this land was named Omequauh after another Aztec-sponsored explorer. The Aztecs and Incas conquered and divided up South and Central Omequauh — the lands we call Africa, Iberia, and the islands of the Mediterranean Sea. Later, the Dakota and the Ojibewa fought over and divided North Omequauh, my home continent, which we call "Europe."

Some great European leaders forged alliances of knights to resist the settlers, but our freedom fighters were never unified enough to prevail. Some of our peoples — the Irish, Icelanders, Corsicans, Sardinians, and others — were wiped out, their cultures lost to history.

You may know us as "Native Omequauhns," but we prefer to be called the "Original Europeans." We are not one people but many. We speak many tongues, which you may call "dialects" but we prefer to equate with your languages. We worship under different religions that were outlawed until recently, and are ridiculed to this day as mere superstitions. The religion of my ancestors was known as "Christianity," and some of us still pray to a single god and his son.

Though we are commonly called "tribes," we have historically existed as *nations,* with our own borders, provinces, and capitals. The capital of my ancestors, London, was as great in its time as Cuzco or Tenochtitlán, until was sacked by the invaders. My people, the York band of the English tribe, were once citizens of Yorkshire province (or county) in the English Nation (or England). Many of our peoples are not called by their original names, but by names that others have given them. The Krauts, for instance, are more properly called Germans, or Deutsche in their own language; the Frogs should be called French, or Français in their own language.

Our ancestral land rights have been steadily whittled away. My English people, for instance, are scattered over 50 small reservations throughout the island of Britain, and on the continental mainland where one-third of us were forcibly relocated a century ago. Most of the agreements we signed to guarantee our access to natural resources on lands we used to own were broken, and some lands were stolen outright. Today, some descendants of the settlers don't understand why we continue to exercise these rights. Some even tell us to go back to where we came from!

My people were forced into dependency after the warriors (whom we called the "Long Arrows") slaughtered the sheep — our main livelihood. Our children were sent to schools run by the Bureau of Caucasian Affairs (BCA), where they were forced to learn only Dakota, and beaten if they spoke English. They were given Dakota names to replace their own. Through the generations, many of our people began to look, dress, walk, and talk like the settlers. Some Europeans became so obedient to authority that we called them "conches" — white on the outside, red on the inside.

Only about 25 years ago did our peoples start to reclaim their European heritage. On my reservation, young people started learning the English language. We also began to communicate with native peoples in South and Central Omequauh, some of whom actually form a majority in their countries. Though they speak different colonial languages (Náhuatl and Quechua), our concerns are similar.

Reclaiming our cultures means learning from our elders, and reading the great works of Chaucer and other ancient prophets. It means challenging stereotypes, such as the view that all of our people wear suits of armor. It means reinforcing our traditional governments, to counter the BCA councils which sold off so much of our land. Above all, it means countering the despair on our reservations — the poverty, consumption of beer and chicha, and low self-esteem among native youth.

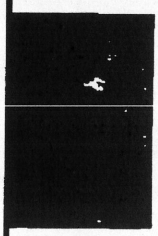
The rebirth of our European cultures has also stimulated interest on the part of mainstream society. Nowadays, some children playing "Warriors and Knights" actually want to be the knights. But we also find non-Europeans romanticizing our cultures, and trying to usurp them in the same way they usurped our land. Some dress up like our holy priests and conduct the sacred catechism ceremony for the benefit of their own curiosity. We don't appreciate seeing ethnic Dakota wearing powdered wigs, or putting on ballroom dances. We roll our eyes whenever one of these "wannabes" says his great-grandmother was a Swedish princess.

There was a time when our only response was passive acceptance. But no more. The European Wars are being rekindled, as more nations defend the lands where our ancestors are buried. Many remember the armed confrontations at the Long Fjord Norwegian Reservation two decades ago, or at the Lake Balaton Hungarian Reservation two years ago. If our sovereignty is not recognized, these skirmishes are likely to continue.

In the face of overwhelming odds — the near-extinction of our population, and the theft of our religions and lands — we have survived. When you talk about "celebrating" the arrival of Callicoatl, it sends a chill up our spines. Even Callicoatl's name, in the Náhuatl language, means "Serpent from the West." If you don't recognize that our people were already here when he arrived, you will never be able to recognize that we are here, in front of you, today.

(Zoltan Grossman, "Through the Looking Glass: An Open Letter from European Rights Activist Wanblee Johnson," *Report on the Americas*, December 1991, Volume XXV, Number 3, p. 38. Reprinted by permission of the North American Congress on Latin America (NACLA), 475 Riverside Drive, #454, New York, NY, 10115.)

Fighting Over History



WHEN THE PLANNERS OF THE CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS Quincentenary Jubilee were mapping out 1992, they expected a year of celebration. What they got was a raging debate.

At the heart of the controversy over Columbus's legacy is the notion of "multiculturalism": the idea that history must be viewed from the perspectives of many ethnic groups, not just whites of European descent. Critics of the official quincentenary events say that the planners failed to include the voices of some groups, like Native Americans, who don't view Columbus as a hero (see *Special Report*, page 11).

To better understand the debate, *UPDATE* talked to five people—an Italian-American politician, a Native American leader, an African-American scholar, a conservative political columnist, and a Latin American legal expert. As you'll see, each sees Columbus in a different light.

—James Earl Hardy

HOUSTON BAKER, *Director, Center for the Study of Black Literature & Culture, University of Pennsylvania.*

In his book *They Came Before Columbus*, Ivan Van Sertima documents the African presence in the Americas before Columbus. Carvings created by the Olmec Indians [of Mexico] dating from 1300 depict people of very dark hue, with distinct African features.

But not many people have heard this theory because no one discusses it. What's wrong with introducing the theory that Africans were in the Americas before Columbus? Discuss it with students and see what they think. We are living in a multicultural society and we all realize that different groups will see things differently. We don't have to like what they propose, we don't even have to believe it, but we have to respect it.

ANTONIA HERNANDEZ, *President & General Counsel, Mexican American Legal Defense Fund.*

The quincentenary poses a delicate question for Latinos [who trace their roots to Spain]. Do we join in celebrating Columbus, or should we denounce the role that Spain played in helping him destroy the lives of millions of people, most of them Native and African American?

I think that we need to stop calling this a celebration. This really is a time to investigate why Columbus came to America's shores and what really happened when he did. First we have to understand this history—the whole history, the good and the bad.

MARIO CUOMO, *Governor of New York State.*

In my family, Columbus has always been viewed as a hero, as in many other Italian homes. [Columbus was born in Italy.] Having October 12 as a national holiday has given many Italian immigrants great pride.

I think we all should recognize, though, that not all groups are going to feel the same way about Columbus. But I think it is also unfair to conclude that . . . Columbus is unworthy of being hailed as a great explorer, as a man who introduced an old world to a new one. He started a democratic system that we still hold on to today, even though it wasn't and still isn't perfect.

WILMA MANKILLER, *Chief of the Cherokee Nation.*

It's a tragedy that no one seems to really care what Native Americans think about all of this. The majority of the groups that are planning events for the quincentenary haven't reached out to our communities to hear what they have to say.

People have to realize that many Native Americans view America's worshiping Columbus as an insult. Even though the comparison may seem strange to some, many see him as a pre-Colonial-day Hitler. He not only stripped Native Americans of their land, but their culture and livelihood.

On the eve of the quincentenary, scholars, historians, and others are arguing over how to remember Columbus. Was he a hero or a villain? It depends on your perspective.

PATRICK BUCHANAN, *Syndicated columnist.*

I believe that all the debate about whether we should celebrate Columbus's discovery is nonsense. It seems that supporters of multiculturalism are really showing their true colors. They just don't want to redress history; they want to rewrite it, sensitize it, so that it makes everyone who is not white feel good. Some things cannot be denied. Yes, millions of Indians died, and were stripped of their land. But can we change that? Do we punish Columbus and deny him his place in our nation's history just to appease certain groups?