

## COLUMBIAN CONTACT

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Here we will use the elementary-school phrase, "In Fourteen Hundred and Ninety-two, Columbus Sailed the Ocean Blue" to better understand the impact of Columbian Contact.

### I. In Fourteen Hundred Ninety-two

#### A. End of Medieval Period (c. 500-1400 C.E.) When Europe Was Dominated By Roman Catholic Church

##### 1. T-O Map, Isidore of Seville "A Diagram of Inhabited World" (630 C.E.)

Isidore was Bishop of Seville when he compiled his encyclopedia of knowledge (called *Etymologiae* or *Origins*) around 630 AD. Books 8 and 9 of his encyclopedia dealt with geography. This map presents the simplest possible for, the typical T-O conception of the world. The T-O maps became simple diagrams of how the earth was supposed to be arranged according to Christian concepts. They were meant to provide a general view of the world rather than to delineate the shape of continents or actual distances. The image of the cross made them devotional statements.

The map is oriented in the direction of the rising sun: east. Paradise is in the Far East. Oriens=east, the rising sun, Occidents=west, the setting sun, Meridies=south, midday sun, Septentrio=north.

The oceans on the outside, the O, are cut off from the rivers. The Mediterranean is the upshot of the T. The crossbar is formed by waters from the Danube (here Don) river, the Black, Aegean, the Mediterranean and the Nile.

The Continents are labeled and given each to one of the sons of Noah. Shem (Sem), the oldest son gets the largest Asia. Ham (Cham) and Jafeth received Africa and Europe respectively.

##### 2. T-O Map, The Psalter Map (c. 1250 C.E.)

This is another T-O map. Again East is at the top. Christ's rule over the world is indicated both by his location above the world, and by the orb in his hand.

The circle at the top of the map indicates Paradise, or the Garden of Eden. Within the circle Adam and Eve are separated by the tree of Life. The Mediterranean Sea is colored green. Sicily is the large island near the top of the T.

The panel cut into southern Africa illustrates a series of mythical races. A similar region, across the map in northeast Asia, is walled off to hold the armies of Gog and Magog that were to destroy the earth in the last days.

Jerusalem is the center of the map (this is typical of T-O maps). The Red Sea is red, and may be parted to illustrate Moses crossing.

##### 3. New St. Peter's church begun by Julius II.

#### B. Age of the Renaissance (c. 1400-1600 C.E.) Revival of Greco-Roman "Pagan" Traditions

##### **1. First of all, Renaissance means the rediscovery of Greco-Roman styles –whether in be in art, architecture, or literature –and joining them with the Christian Culture that had dominated the Medieval Period.**

###### Michelangelo (1475-1564), David, Sistine Chapel

The high point of Michelangelo's early style is the gigantic (14.24 ft) marble *David* (Accademia, Florence), which he produced between 1501 and 1504, after returning to Florence. The character of David and what he symbolizes, was perfectly in tune with Michelangelo's patriotic feelings. At the time, Florence was going through a difficult period, and its citizens had to be alert and mobilized to confront permanent threats. He used David as a model of heroic courage, in the hope that the Florentines would understand his message. This young Biblical hero demonstrated that inner spiritual strength can prove to be more effective than arms. His faith in God ("The Lord is my strength and my shield.") enabled this young shepherd to overcome Israel's enemies, using a mere sling, which is the only element in the composition enabling us to identify the figure of David.

Michelangelo chose to represent David as an athletic, manly character, very concentrated and ready to fight. The extreme tension is evident in his worried look and in his right hand, holding a stone. The meaning of this David becomes fully clear if we take into consideration the historical circumstances of its creation. Michelangelo was devoted to the Republic, and wanted each citizen to become aware of his responsibilities and commit himself to accomplishing his duty.

Michelangelo wrote in his diaries: *"When I returned to Florence, I found myself famous. The City Council asked me to carve a colossal David from a nineteen-foot block of marble -- and damaged to boot! I locked myself away in a workshop behind the cathedral, hammered and chiseled at the towering block for three long years. In spite of the opposition of a committee of fellow artists, I insisted that the figure should stand before the Palazzo Vecchio, as a symbol of our Republic. I had my way. Archways were torn down, narrow streets widened...it took forty men five days to move it. Once in place, all Florence was astounded. A civic hero, he was a warning...whoever governed Florence should govern justly and defend it bravely. Eyes watchful...the neck of a bull...hands of a killer...the body, a reservoir of energy. He stands poised to strike."*

With this statue Michelangelo proved to his contemporaries that he not only surpassed all modern artists, but also the Greeks and Romans, by infusing formal beauty with powerful expressiveness and meaning.

## **2. More Specifically, the Renaissance also reveals an increasing curious European culture –one that is slowly moving away from the absolute authority of the Church based on authority and faith and towards questioning, inquiry, and reason.**

### Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519), Child in Womb (drawing)

Leonardo was a Florentine master of the High Renaissance, who is celebrated as a painter, sculptor, architect, engineer, and scientist.

Leonardo "belongs to no epoch, he fits into no category, and the more you know about him, the more mysterious he becomes. Of course, he had certain Renaissance characteristics. He loved beauty and graceful movement. He shared or even anticipated the megalomania of the sixteenth century: the horse that he modeled as a memorial to Francesco Sforza was to be twenty-six feet high; he made schemes for diverting the River Arno that even modern technology could not accomplish. And then, of course, he had, to a supreme degree, the gift of his time for recording and condensing whatever took his eye.

Though Clark says that "all [Leonardo's] gifts were dominated by one ruling passion . . . curiosity."

Leonardo "was the most relentlessly curious man in history. Everything he saw made him ask why and how. Why does one find sea-shells in the mountains? How do they build locks in Flanders? How does a bird fly? What accounts for cracks in walls? . . . Of all these questions, the one he asks most insistently is about man – not immortal man – but man as mechanism. How does he walk? He describes how to draw a foot in ten ways, each of which should reveal some different components in its structure. How does the heart pump blood? What happens when he yawns and sneezes? How does a child live in the womb? Finally, why does he die in old age?

Leonardo stole bodies from a nearby morgue to do his work. Every question demanded dissection and every dissection was drawn with marvelous precision.

## **3. In addition, the Renaissance is the also the Age of the Nation State in Europe:**

In Western Europe, the nation-state develops with trade and the need for security. Trading over distances requires stability--the assurance that you, as a merchant, will arrive safely, trade in the area, and then make it back home with the money you made. If a political organization, like a lord or a group of lords, offers security for trade routes, then the money the merchant societies make goes into the political center with taxes. That money in turn provides more security, and the political organization grows in strength. Development of economic and political organization together.

Also, we see nation-states taking power from the church. Locals may not like all their tithes going to Rome. They may not approve of the pope and see him as a "foreign" ruler. Political ruler may thus gain power.

The Nation-State is:

- an entity with fairly well defined geographical lines.
- Political institutions emerge in the nation-state.

- Political groups assert the principle that they represent the people and should have a monopoly on violence, external or internal. Crime becomes not a family issue, but a community problem and the community will punish it through the state.
- By 1500, there are about 500 of these states in Western Europe.
- By 1900, there are only about 25. Why?
- War, geographical position, where the black plague goes. The ability of a competent monarch, and that monarch must be able to reproduce a child.
- So we see in the 15th and 16th century a trend toward centralization.

Example: Unification of Spain

In the late fifteenth century. This new unity resulted primarily from the marriage of two sovereigns, Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile, and from the brutal expulsion of the "infidel" Muslim Moors from Spain after centuries of Christian-Islamic warfare. Glorifying in their new strength, the Spaniards were eager to outstrip their Portuguese rivals in the race to tap the wealth of the Indies. To the south and east, Portugal controlled the African coast and thus controlled the gateway to the round-Africa water route to India.

#### 4. Age of Exploration

The broadening curiosity and willingness of Europeans to question the world around them, when harnessed with the military and economic power of the state led to an Age of Exploration.

##### Leader, Portugal's Prince Henry the Navigator Leads the Way

The voyages of discovery began from Portugal because it was best prepared to launch them.

- A.** Prince Henry the Navigator - after returning from a crusade against the Moslems in 1418, Henry retired to Sagres, where he created an informal university of the sea, welcoming sailors, map makers, mathematicians, instrument makers, or shipbuilders.
- B.** Prince Henry was the first, as Boies Penrose notes, to make "a systematic and continuous campaign of exploration," to convert it into an art and science tied to national interest.

##### The Accomplishments of Prince Henry's Men

- A.** Revolutionized ship designs: caravela
- B.** Improved the tools of navigation and techniques of map making.

##### **1.** New Maps, from Ptolemy to the Portolan chart

###### Claudius Ptolemy, World Map (Second Century C.E.)

This map was reproduced from the Ulm edition of the *Cosmographia*, printed between 1482-86.

Claudius Ptolemy of Alexandria published his books during the second century C.E. His works were almost totally forgotten in western Europe during the Medieval period, but were preserved in Islamic and Byzantine libraries. Greek scholars brought Ptolemy's geographical texts to the West in the early fifteenth century, where they were translated to Latin.

Ptolemy advocated a scientific approach to cartography. He advocated determining the latitude and longitude for specific place on the basis of astronomical observations.

He believed the world was a sphere, a globe, round.

**The Ptolemaic tradition also led to a new style of map in the Renaissance, called the Portolan Chart.**

###### Portolan Chart by Petrus Roselli, 1456 C.E.

This is a fairly late example of a type of map that emerged in centers around the Mediterranean Sea around 1300.

There is debate over how such a refined cartographic form could have appeared so suddenly from nowhere. The most likely explanation is that this development was linked to

the emergence in the Mediterranean Sea of the mariner's compass, which allowed courses to be plotted with a new accuracy.

This navigational device permitted map-makers to measure the angles between ports whose approximate position was known and to construct a grid for the whole inland sea.

At first the maps centered on the Mediterranean and later spread to broader areas. This one shows the Black Sea, the west coasts of North Africa, the Iberian Peninsula, and France and Britain.

The map is crisscrossed with a maze of lines, which some scholars think were aid to navigation (in setting a course), and others believe were a way of copying one chart from another. The place names are listed at right angles on the coasts.

The Madeira and Canary Islands are shown.

The Portolan charts of the seas are for people who travel near the coasts around Europe. They are practical and meant to help one get from place to place.

2. An early version of the modern nautical almanac with calculated tables of planet elevations and time differences, was devised independently by Johann Muller and by Abraham Zacuto

3. Quadrant

C. Between 1420 and 1440, the Portuguese rediscovered and conquered the Azores, the Madeiras, and the Canary Islands.

D. In 1487, 17 years after Prince Henry's death, Bartholomew Diaz rounded the Cape of Good Hope.

## II. Columbus

A. Who was Columbus? No contemporary painting of him.

The portrait attributed to the artist Sebastiano del Piombo (Sebastiano Luciani) is highly regarded as it has been used in descriptions and articles about the Admiral in such recent publications as the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, *New York Times Magazine*, and *Newsweek*, magazine. Curiously, it is a portrait that is surely not that of Columbus.

Sebastiano Luciano was an artist of considerable fame. Michelangelo is reported to have said that he could make his student "the best painter in Rome." Sebastiano had a reputation for anatomical clarity learned from the great master. From 1519 to 1530 he had an unparalleled reputation as a portraitist. In 1531 Pope Clement VII awarded him the title of "keeper of the papal seal." It is from that title that he obtained his nickname, Piombo: *Piombino* is Italian for "lead seal"

Born around 1485, he would have been 21 years old when Columbus died, but there was no indication he knew the Admiral. Moreover, Piombo took up painting later in his life having devoted his early years to music.

Two questions remain: Is the portrait by Piombo and is it a portrait meant to be Columbus? Piombo's biographer, Michael Hirst, asserts that the portrait matches his style and the technique he used in other 1520s era paintings. Hirst includes the painting now in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum in New York in his biography, but with the simple caption, "Portrait of a Man." In 1891, the Geographical Society of France concluded that it was probably painted by Piombo, but it is not Columbus. Hirst theorizes that it is probably a portrait of one of the clerics present at Bologna in the winter of 1529-30.

As a portrait, it is a bit unusual. All other paintings of Columbus show him without a hat. In this one the figure wears a hat with a curled border. A deep-edged and ornate mantle hangs from his shoulders. His fingers are long and delicate. His face is round, his eyes blue, and a dimple is barely visible in his chin. Most striking about this painting is the legend that runs along the top. The inscription which identifies the sitter as Columbus was certainly included much later. There is also doubt about the signature. In those days it was an exceptional occurrence for an artist to sign a work (or to add a legend). It was probably added by the writer of the inscription to increase the value of the work.

## B. Columbus's Life

- Columbus was born in Genoa around 1451.
- Went to sea early, traveled into the Mediterranean, to the Madeira Islands, to North Africa, and to Scandinavia
- By his early thirties, he had married into one of the better families of Portugal and was a master mariner, who had learned all the practical navigation that could be picked up from experience.
- In the 1480's, Columbus became obsessed with the idea of reaching the East by sailing westward.
- It matters little where Columbus got the idea; he could hardly have escaped from it:
- Perhaps on trips into the northern Atlantic he had picked up tales preserved in the Icelandic sagas of Lief Ericson's landfall to the west, where the Vikings had traded on the northern tip of Newfoundland Island.
- If the Icelandic sagas escaped notice, Columbus may have acquired the notion from listening to northern fishermen who often traveled far westward in search of better catches.
- Also, there were the popular tales of Marco Polo's eastern exploration
- Columbus knew about Diaz's voyage

## C. What Was Driving Columbus and the Other Explorers?

1. Trade with the East
2. European Curiosity about the Far East
3. Wealth for the Nation-States
4. Scientific progress
5. Religious drive to save the "infidel"

## D. Columbus's reasoning on the most important question, the size of the Globe

Columbus believed that the globe was much smaller and the east much nearer than it was. He did not believe Aristostanes estimation that the world was 25,000 miles in circumference, instead he believed Ptolemy's figure of 18,000 miles. Columbus also accepted Marco Polo's estimation of the size of Asia, which put it much further east than it really was. In addition, Columbus accepted Marco Polo's estimation that Japan was 1,500 miles off the coast of the Asian mainland, when it was more like 600 miles.

## E. Columbus works his trip out

After trying, in the early 1480s, to interest the Portuguese in his project to get east by sailing west, Columbus went to the Spanish in 1485. Queen Isabella refused because she was too busy fighting the Moslems. After going back to the Portuguese, Columbus went to the English and then to the French, who were both too busy with internal problems and too short of money to take on anything more.

At the end of 1491, the Spanish accepted Columbus's plan. The contract signed authorized Columbus to "discover and acquire certain islands and mainland in the ocean"; to take for himself a tenth of all precious metals found; and to be "Admiral of the said islands and mainland, and Admiral and Viceroy and Governor therein."

## III. Sailed

### A. The sailing technology available for Columbus's voyage was mostly from Portugal, a nation whose Age of Exploration was led by Prince Henry the Navigator

#### 1. Revolutionized ship designs.

a. As pilots returned from their trips with complaints about the broad-bottomed, single masted, square-rigged vessel they had been using, the shipwrights at Sagres produced a series of modifications that eventually resulted in the caravel.

b. The caravel was borrowed with variations from the Moslem world. Its hull was long and narrow, and in an early version it carried two large lateen sails - that is, triangular sails with one edge laced to a long yard.

c. A later version, the caravela redonda - the Nina and Pinta of Columbus' first voyage were of this type - carried a square sail on the foremast and lateen rigs on the main- and mizzenmasts and was so swift that few sailing ships since have bettered it for speed.

#### 2. Improved the tools of navigation and techniques of map making.

a. By now the works of the Alexandrian geographer called Ptolemy had been recovered. Ptolemy systematized the mapping of the earth, laying down principles and methods - he oriented maps to the north, he argued that the earth was round; he argued that distance on it can be measured in degrees; and, he argued that by taking "fixes" on known celestial bodies, a man can precisely determine his location north or south of the equator (latitude) and east or west of an arbitrary line (longitude).

b. The experts at Sagres simplified the principles and techniques of Ptolemy so that they could be used by sailors. In place of the fairly precise but awkward astrolabe used by Ptolemy to make celestial observations, Henry's men were taught to use the simpler quadrant, which was more easily handled at sea. Later in the fifteenth century the cross-staff and still later the back-staff were designed to help sailors make more accurate observations from the deck of a bobbing vessel.

c. Taking a celestial fix requires several mathematical calculations, and, here, to aid the sailor, an ephemerides, an early version of the modern nautical almanac with calculated tables of planet elevations and time differences, was devised independently by Johann Muller, a German, and by Abraham Zacuto, a Spanish Jew.

3. Between 1420 and 1440, the Portuguese rediscovered and conquered the Azores, the Madeiras, and the Canary Islands.

4. When Henry died in 1460, his pilots had sailed past the site of modern Dakar.

5. Exploration lagged for nearly a decade after Henry's death. Then the notion arose that with the new ships and skills sailors might be able to reach India by water, Portugal's crown took up where Henry had left off.

6. Under its urging, navigators soon rounded the great western bulge of Africa. By 1472 the end of the bulge had been reached, but sailors saw with dismay that there was more land, which trended south again.

7. In 1487 Bartholomew Diaz left Lisbon, and after a gale swept him out to sea off the coast of Africa for fourteen days, he turned eastward, then, having failed to raise the coast, north. Land, when it came, rose in the west and trended to the northeast. Diaz knew he had reached the Indian Ocean. He pushed on four hundred miles more and would have continued to India, but the crew forced him back. On the return trip he saw the tip of Africa, the Cape of Good Hope.

#### B. Columbus used the technology to sail on his first voyage

1. On August 3, 1492, the Nina, Pinta, and Santa Maria, with a total crew of about ninety, set out.

2. On October 11, seventy days out from Spain, a lookout on the Pinta sighted land. Columbus named the island San Salvador (Holy Saviour).

3. Columbus cruised through the islands of the West Indies for two and a half months searching for gold and spices and great cities. He came upon Haiti, which he named Hispaniola (Spanish Isle), and Cuba, which he took to be the mainland of Asia.

4. At Hispaniola he lost the Santa Maria.

5. The ship's crew of thirty-nine was left behind to explore further, and Columbus headed for home.

6. Columbus finally landed in March 1493. When he made it back to Spain he Isabella and Ferdinand that he had reached islands just off the coast of Asia

#### C. The European Division of the Lands to the West

Portuguese claims to Columbus's discoveries led Pope Alexander VI to issue papal bulls in 1493 that divided the world into areas open to colonization by Spain and Portugal. The two nations moved the line of demarcation to 370 leagues west of the Cape Verde Islands by the Treaty of Tordesillas (1494) and undertook colonization.

#### D. The Second Voyage and the Spanish Empire

A. Funded by Ferdinand and Isabella, Columbus set sail from Cadiz on his second voyage on Sept. 25, 1493. This time he had 17 ships and almost 1,500 men. Again they stopped in the Canary Islands and then made landfall on Nov. 3, 1493, near Dominica among the Lesser Antilles. The expedition then sailed

through the Lesser Antilles; islands were sighted and named, and some were landed on. The explorers went past Puerto Rico and reached the site of Navidad on Nov. 27-28, 1493. The encampment had been destroyed, and the Spaniards, who had seized gold and women, had been killed.

B. Columbus set up a new colony, named Isabella, about 70 miles to the east of Navidad's site. He left in April 1494, explored the southern coast of Cuba but did not prove it an island, discovered and circumnavigated Jamaica, and returned to Isabella after 5 months. Columbus tried to govern the colony until he returned to Spain in 1496, but he was not a good administrator. He left his brother Bartolome in charge with instructions to move the settlement to the south coast of Hispaniola. This was done in 1496, and this settlement, named Santo Domingo, became the first permanent European settlement in the New World.

C. Columbus reached Cadiz in June 1496. He was coolly received at court. He had not found the rich Asian mainland, and his efforts to get gold from the Indians on Hispaniola had been only moderately successful.

#### E. The Third Voyage

A. Columbus was finally authorized to make a third voyage after the Portuguese had sent Vasco da Gama to India in 1497-98. Columbus departed Spain in May 1498 with six ships and made landfall at Trinidad on July 31, 1498. The next day he reached the mainland and thus first saw South America.

B. Having found pearls at islands near the coast, the expedition then sailed across the Caribbean to Santo Domingo. The colonists there were in revolt, and Columbus soon met the new royal commissioner, Francisco de Bobadilla, who arrived from Spain in 1500 with full powers. Bobadilla sent Columbus and his brother back to Spain in chains.

#### F. Fourth Voyage

Freed by royal command after arrival in Cadiz in November 1500, Columbus mounted a fourth expedition, which left Spain in May 1502, made a landfall at Martinique, and sailed to Santo Domingo. After traveling around the Caribbean, he had to abandon his vessels in Jamaica, where he was marooned for a year. Finally rescued, he reached Spain in November 1504.

#### G. Death and Legacy

Columbus died in Valladolid on May 20, 1506, while pressing his claims at court. He still believed that he had reached Asia. He no longer had royal support, and the crown had, from 1495 onward, violated its original agreement with Columbus by authorizing others to sail to the Indies. Columbus's real greatness lies in the fact that having found the West Indies--making major errors in his navigational computations and location in doing so--he was able to find his way back to Europe and return to the Indies.

### IV. The Ocean

A. Was what he discovered, the circular patterns of the waters and winds

B. Made the Ocean cross-able again. Established Atlantic World

### V. Blue –Instead let us focus on Red, White, And Black –the groups Columbus brought together

A. Red – Amerindians, become the largest population group in the Spanish Empire, despite the fact that experience a terrible die-off as a result of European disease and treatment.

B. White – Europeans pursue a course of Imperialism in the Americas, establishing the Spanish, Portuguese, French, and English colonial systems, among others.

C. Black – Africans are the largest group of people to cross the Atlantic to the Americas. Ten million or more African people are forced to the Americas to labor as slaves in the European Atlantic Empires.

D. Triangular Trade and the Columbian Exchange