# **Christopher Columbus**

Christopher Columbus<sup>[a]</sup> (/kəˈlʌmbəs/;<sup>[3]</sup> born between 25 August and 31 October 1451, died 20 May 1506) was an Italian<sup>[b]</sup> explorer and navigator who completed four voyages across the Atlantic Ocean, opening the way for the widespread European exploration and colonization of the Americas. His expeditions, sponsored by the Catholic Monarchs of Spain, were the first European contact with the Caribbean, Central America, and South America.

The name *Christopher Columbus* is the <u>Anglicisation</u> of the Latin *Christophorus Columbus*. Scholars generally agree that Columbus was born in the <u>Republic of Genoa</u> and spoke a dialect of <u>Ligurian</u> as his first language. He went to sea at a young age and travelled widely, as far north as the British Isles and as far south as what is now <u>Ghana</u>. He married Portuguese noblewoman <u>Filipa Moniz Perestrelo</u> and was based in Lisbon for several years, but later took a Castilian mistress; he had one son with each woman.

Largely self-educated, Columbus was widely read in geography, astronomy, and history. He developed a plan to seek a western sea passage to the East Indies, hoping to profit from the lucrative spice trade. Following Columbus's persistent lobbying in multiple kingdoms, the Catholic Monarchs Queen Isabella I and King Ferdinand II agreed to sponsor a journey west. Columbus left Castile in August 1492 with three ships and made landfall in the Americas on 12 October (ending the period of human habitation in the Americas now referred to as the pre-Columbian era). His landing place was an island in the Bahamas, known by its native inhabitants as Guanahani. He subsequently visited the islands now known as Cuba and Hispaniola, establishing a colony in what is now Haiti. Columbus returned to Castile in early 1493, bringing a number of captured natives with him. Word of his voyage soon spread throughout Europe.

Columbus made three further voyages to the Americas, exploring the Lesser Antilles in 1493, Trinidad and the northern coast of South America in 1498, and the eastern coast of Central America in 1502. Many of the names he gave to geographical features—particularly islands—are still in use. He also gave the name *indios* ("Indians") to the <u>indigenous peoples</u> he encountered. The extent to which he was aware that the Americas were a wholly separate landmass is uncertain; he never clearly renounced his belief that he had reached the Far East. As a colonial governor, Columbus was accused by his contemporaries of significant brutality and was soon removed from the post. Columbus's strained

# Admiral of the Ocean Sea Christopher Columbus



Posthumous portrait of Columbus by Sebastiano del Piombo, 1519. There are no known authentic portraits of Columbus.<sup>[1]</sup>

#### 1st Governor of the Indies

In office

1492-1499

Appointed by Isabella I of Castile

Succeeded by Francisco de

Bobadilla

#### Personal details

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Born	Between 25 August and 31 October 1451	
	Genoa, Republic of Genoa	
Died	20 May 1506 (aged 54) Valladolid, Castile	
Resting place	Seville Cathedral, Seville, Spain	
Spouse(s)	Filipa Moniz Perestrelo (m. 1479, died)	

Beatriz Enríquez de

**Domestic** 

relationship with the <u>Crown of Castile</u> and its appointed colonial administrators in America led to his arrest and removal from Hispaniola in 1500, and later to <u>protracted litigation</u> over the perquisites that he and his heirs claimed were owed to them by the crown.

Columbus's expeditions inaugurated a period of exploration, conquest, and colonization that lasted for centuries, helping create the modern Western world. The transfers between the Old World and New World that followed his first voyage are known as the Columbian exchange. Columbus was widely celebrated in the centuries after his death, [6][7][8] but public perception has fractured in recent decades as scholars have given greater attention to the harms committed under his governance, particularly the beginning of the depopulation of Hispaniola's indigenous Tainos caused by mistreatment and Old World diseases, as well as by that people's enslavement. Proponents of the Black Legend theory of historiography claim that Columbus has been unfairly maligned as part of a wider anti-Catholic sentiment. Many places in the Western Hemisphere bear his name, including the country of Colombia, the District of Columbia, and British Columbia.

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First voyage (1492–1493)

Second voyage (1493–1496)

Third voyage (1498–1500)

Fourth voyage (1502–1504)

Later life, illness, and death

**Location of remains** 

Commemoration

#### Legacy

Originality of discovery of America

America as a distinct land

Flat Earth mythology

Criticism and defense

Brutality

partner	Arana		
Children	Diego		
	<u>Fernando</u>		
Parent(s)	Domenico Colombo		
	Susanna		
	Fontanarossa		
Relatives	Brothers:		
	Giovanni Pellegrino		
	Giacomo (also		
	called Diego) <sup>[2]</sup>		
	Bartolomeo		
	Sister:		
	Bianchinetta		
	Columbus		
Occupation	Maritime explorer		
Signature	Serverns Halingus		
Military service			
Rank	Admiral of the		
	Ocean Sea		

<u>Depopulation</u>

Navigational expertise

**Physical appearance** 

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# Early life

Columbus's early life is obscure, but scholars believe he was born in the Republic of Genoa between 25 August and 31 October 1451. [11] His father was Domenico Colombo, a wool weaver who worked in Genoa and Savona and who also owned a cheese stand at which young Christopher worked as a helper. His mother was Susanna Fontanarossa. [12] He had three brothers—Bartolomeo, Giovanni Pellegrino, and Giacomo (also called Diego), [2] as well as a sister named Bianchinetta. [13] His brother Bartolomeo ran a cartography workshop in Lisbon for at least part of his adulthood. [14]

His native language is presumed to have been a <u>Genoese dialect</u> although Columbus probably never wrote in that language. 

[15] His name in the 16th-century Genoese language was *Cristoffa Corombo* [16] (Ligurian pronunciation: [kri'ʃtɔffa ku'Juŋbu]). 

[17] His

Christopher Columbus House in Genoa, an 18-century reconstruction of the house Columbus grew up in, which was likely destroyed during the 1684 bombardment of Genoa. [9][10]

name in <u>Italian</u> is *Cristoforo Colombo*, and in <u>Spanish</u> *Cristóbal Colón*.[18][19]

In one of his writings, he says he went to sea at the age of fourteen. In 1470, the Colombo family moved to  $\underline{Savona}$ , where Domenico took over a tavern. Some modern authors have argued that he was not from Genoa but, instead, from the  $\underline{Aragon}$  region of  $\underline{Spain}^{[20]}$  or from  $\underline{Portugal}$ . These competing hypotheses generally have been discounted by mainstream scholars.

In 1473, Columbus began his apprenticeship as business agent for the wealthy <u>Spinola</u>, Centurione, and Di Negro families of Genoa. Later, he made a trip to <u>Chios</u>, an <u>Aegean</u> island then ruled by Genoa. In May 1476, he took part in an armed convoy sent by Genoa to carry valuable cargo to northern Europe. He probably visited <u>Bristol</u>, England, and <u>Galway</u>, <u>Ireland</u>. He may have also gone to <u>Iceland</u> in 1477. It is known that in the autumn of 1477, he sailed on a Portuguese ship from Galway to Lisbon, where he found his brother Bartolomeo, and they continued trading for the Centurione family. Columbus based himself in Lisbon from 1477 to 1485. He married <u>Filipa Moniz Perestrelo</u>, daughter of <u>Bartolomeu Perestrelo</u>, a Portuguese nobleman of <u>Lombard</u> origin, who had been the <u>donatary captain</u> of Porto Santo.

In 1479 or 1480, Columbus's son <u>Diego</u> was born. Between 1482 and 1485, Columbus traded along the coasts of <u>West Africa</u>, reaching the Portuguese trading post of <u>Elmina</u> at the <u>Guinea coast</u> (in present-day Ghana). [33] Before 1484, Columbus returned to Porto Santo to find that his wife had died. [34] He returned

to Portugal to settle her estate and take his son Diego with him. [35] He left Portugal for Castile in 1485, where he found a mistress in 1487, a 20-year-old orphan named Beatriz Enríquez de Arana. [36]

It is likely that Beatriz met Columbus when he was in <u>Córdoba</u>, a gathering site of many Genoese merchants and where the court of the <u>Catholic Monarchs</u> was located at intervals. Beatriz, unmarried at the time, gave birth to Columbus's <u>natural son</u>, <u>Fernando Columbus</u> in July 1488, named for the monarch of Aragon. Columbus recognized the boy as his offspring. Columbus entrusted his older, legitimate son Diego to take care of Beatriz and pay the pension set aside for her following his death, but Diego was negligent in his duties. [37]

Being ambitious, Columbus eventually learned Latin, Portuguese, and Castilian. He read widely about astronomy, geography, and history, including the works of Claudius Ptolemy, Pierre Cardinal d'Ailly's *Imago Mundi*, the travels of Marco Polo and Sir John Mandeville, Pliny's *Natural History*, and Pope Pius II's *Historia Rerum Ubique Gestarum*. According to historian Edmund Morgan,

Columbus was not a scholarly man. Yet he studied these books, made hundreds of marginal notations in them and came out with ideas about the world that were characteristically simple and strong and sometimes wrong ...<sup>[38]</sup>



Columbus's copy of <u>The Travels of</u> <u>Marco Polo</u>, with his handwritten notes in Latin written on the margins

# **Quest for Asia**

# **Background**

Under the <u>Mongol Empire</u>'s hegemony over Asia and the <u>Pax Mongolica</u>, Europeans had long enjoyed a safe land passage on the <u>Silk Road</u> to <u>Maritime Southeast Asia</u>, parts of <u>East Asia</u>, and <u>China</u>, which were sources of valuable goods. With the <u>fall of Constantinople</u> to the <u>Ottoman Empire</u> in 1453, the Silk Road was closed to Christian traders. [39]

In 1474, the Florentine astronomer <u>Paolo dal Pozzo</u> <u>Toscanelli</u> suggested to King <u>Afonso V of Portugal</u> that sailing west across the Atlantic would be a quicker way to reach the <u>Maluku</u> (Spice) Islands, China, and Japan than the route around Africa, but Afonso rejected his proposal. [40][41] In the 1480s, Columbus



<u>Toscanelli</u>'s notions of the geography of the Atlantic Ocean (shown superimposed on a modern map), which directly influenced Columbus's plans

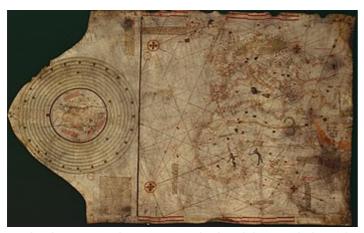
and his brother proposed a plan to reach the East Indies by sailing west. Columbus supposedly wrote Toscanelli in 1481 and received encouragement, along with a copy of a map the astronomer had sent Afonso implying that a westward route to Asia was possible. Columbus's plans were complicated by the opening of the Cape Route to Asia around Africa in 1488.

<u>Carol Delaney</u> and other commentators have argued that Columbus was a <u>Christian millennialist</u> and <u>apocalypticist</u> and that these beliefs motivated his quest for Asia in a variety of ways. Columbus often wrote about seeking gold in the diaries of his voyages and writes about acquiring the precious metal "in such quantity that the sovereigns... will undertake and prepare to go conquer the <u>Holy Sepulcher</u>" in a fulfillment of <u>Biblical prophecy</u>. Columbus also often wrote about <u>converting</u> all races to Christianity. Abbas Hamandi argues that Columbus was motivated by the hope of "[delivering] Jerusalem from Muslim hands" by "using the resources of newly discovered lands".

## **Geographical considerations**

Despite a popular misconception to the contrary, nearly all educated Westerners of Columbus's time knew that the Earth is spherical, a concept that had been understood since antiquity. The techniques of celestial navigation, which uses the position of the Sun and the stars in the sky, had long been in use by astronomers and were beginning to be implemented by mariners. [48][49]

As far back as the 3rd century BC, <u>Eratosthenes</u> had correctly computed the circumference of the Earth by using simple geometry and studying the shadows cast by objects at two remote locations. [50][51] In the 1st century BC, <u>Posidonius</u> confirmed Eratosthenes's results by comparing stellar observations at two separate locations. These measurements were widely known among scholars, but Ptolemy's use of the smaller, old-fashioned units of distance led Columbus to underestimate the size of the Earth by about a third. [52]



"Columbus map", drawn c. 1490 in the <u>Lisbon</u> workshop of Bartolomeo and Christopher Columbus [53]

From Pierre d'Ailly's *Imago Mundi* (1410), Columbus learned of Alfraganus's estimate that a degree of latitude (or a degree of longitude along the equator) spanned 56.67 Arabic miles (equivalent to 66.2 nautical miles or 122.6 kilometres), but he did not realize that this was expressed in the Arabic mile (about 1,830 meters) rather than the shorter Roman mile (about 1,480 meters) with which he was familiar. Columbus therefore estimated the size of the Earth to be about 75 percent of Eratosthenes's calculation, and the distance westward from the Canary Islands to the Indies as only 68 degrees, or 3080 nautical miles (a 58 percent margin of error).

Furthermore, most scholars accepted Ptolemy's estimate that <u>Eurasia</u> spanned 180° longitude,. <u>[56]</u> rather than the actual 130° (to the Chinese mainland) or 150° (to Japan at the latitude of Spain). Columbus, for his part, believed an even higher estimate, leaving a smaller percentage for water. In d'Ailly's *Imago Mundi*, Columbus read <u>Marinus of Tyre</u>'s estimate that the longitudinal span of Eurasia was 225°. <u>[57]</u> Some historians, such as Samuel Morison, have suggested that he followed the statement in the <u>apocryphal</u> book <u>2 Esdras</u> (6:42) that "six parts [of the globe] are habitable and the seventh is covered with water." <u>[58]</u> He was also aware of Marco Polo's claim that Japan (which he called "Cipangu") was some 2,414 kilometres (1,500 mi) to the east of China ("Cathay"), <u>[57]</u> and closer to the equator than it is. He was influenced by Toscanelli's idea that there were inhabited islands even farther to the east than Japan, including the mythical Antillia, which he thought might lie not much farther to the west than the Azores. <u>[59]</u>

Based on his sources, Columbus estimated a distance of 2,400 nautical miles (4,400 km) from the Canary Islands west to Japan; the actual distance is 10,600 nautical miles (19,600 km). No ship in the 15th century could have carried enough food and fresh water for such a long voyage, and the dangers involved

in navigating through the uncharted ocean would have been formidable. Most European navigators reasonably concluded that a westward voyage from Europe to Asia was unfeasible. The Catholic Monarchs, however, having completed the *Reconquista*, an expensive war in the <u>Iberian Peninsula</u>, were eager to obtain a competitive edge over other European countries in the quest for trade with the Indies. Columbus's project, though far-fetched, held the promise of such an advantage. [61]

#### **Nautical considerations**

Though Columbus was wrong about the number of degrees of longitude that separated Europe from the Far East and about the distance that each degree represented, he did take advantage of the <u>trade winds</u>, which would prove to be the key to his successful navigation of the Atlantic Ocean. He planned to first sail to the Canary Islands before continuing west with the northeast trade wind. [62] Part of the return to Spain would require traveling against the wind using an arduous sailing technique called <u>beating</u>, during which progress is made very slowly. [63] To effectively make the return voyage, Columbus would need to follow the curving trade winds northeastward to the middle latitudes of the North Atlantic, where he would be able to catch the "westerlies" that blow eastward to the coast of Western Europe. [64]

The navigational technique for travel in the Atlantic appears to have been exploited first by the Portuguese, who referred to it as the <u>volta do mar</u> ('turn of the sea'). Columbus's knowledge of the Atlantic wind patterns was imperfect at the time of his first voyage. By sailing due west from the Canary Islands during <u>hurricane season</u>, skirting the so-called <u>horse latitudes</u> of the mid-Atlantic, Columbus risked being becalmed and running into a <u>tropical cyclone</u>, both of which he avoided by chance. [65]

### Quest for financial support for a voyage

By about 1484, Columbus proposed his planned voyage to King John II of Portugal. [66] The king submitted Columbus's proposal to his advisors, who rejected it, correctly, on the grounds that Columbus's estimate for a voyage of 2,400 nautical miles was only a quarter of what it should have been. [67] In 1488, Columbus again appealed to the court of Portugal, and John II again granted him an audience. That meeting also proved unsuccessful, in part because not long afterwards Bartolomeu Dias returned to Portugal with news of his successful rounding of the southern tip of Africa (near the Cape of Good Hope). [68]

Columbus sought an audience from the monarchs Ferdinand II of Aragon and Isabella I of Castile, who had united several kingdoms in the Iberian Peninsula by marrying and were now ruling together. On 1 May 1486, permission having been granted, Columbus presented his plans to Queen Isabella, who, in turn, referred it to a committee. The learned men of Spain, like their counterparts in Portugal, replied that Columbus had grossly underestimated the distance to Asia. They pronounced the idea impractical and advised the Catholic Monarchs to pass on the proposed venture. To keep Columbus from taking his ideas elsewhere, and perhaps to keep their



Columbus offers his services to the King of Portugal; Chodowiecki, 17th century

options open, the sovereigns gave him an allowance, totaling about 14,000  $\underline{maravedis}$  for the year, or about the annual salary of a sailor. [69] In May 1489, the queen sent him another 10,000  $\underline{maravedis}$ , and the same year the monarchs furnished him with a letter ordering all cities and towns under their dominion to provide him food and lodging at no cost. [70]

Columbus also dispatched his brother <u>Bartolomeo</u> to the court of <u>Henry VII of England</u> to inquire whether the English crown might sponsor his expedition, but he was captured by pirates en route, and only arrived in early 1491. By that time, Columbus had retreated to <u>La Rábida Friary</u>, where the Spanish crown sent him 20,000 *maravedis* to buy new clothes and instructions to return to the <u>Spanish court</u> for renewed discussions. [72]

#### Agreement with the Spanish crown

Columbus waited at King Ferdinand's camp until Ferdinand and Isabella conquered <u>Granada</u>, the <u>last Muslim stronghold</u> on the Iberian Peninsula, in January 1492. A council led by Isabella's confessor, <u>Hernando de Talavera</u>, found Columbus's proposal to reach the Indies implausible. Columbus had left for France when Ferdinand intervened, <u>[d]</u> first sending Talavera and Bishop <u>Diego Deza</u> to appeal to the queen. <u>[74]</u> Isabella was finally convinced by the king's clerk <u>Luis de Santángel</u>, who argued that Columbus would take his ideas elsewhere, and offered to help arrange the funding. Isabella then sent a royal guard to fetch Columbus, who had traveled 2 leagues (over 10 kilometers) toward Córdoba. <u>[74]</u>



The <u>Alhambra</u>, where Columbus received permission from the <u>Catholic Monarchs</u> for his first voyage<sup>[73]</sup>

In the April 1492 "Capitulations of Santa Fe", King Ferdinand and

Queen Isabella promised Columbus that if he succeeded he would be given the rank of Admiral of the Ocean Sea and appointed Viceroy and Governor of all the new lands he might claim for Spain. He had the right to nominate three persons, from whom the sovereigns would choose one, for any office in the new lands. He would be entitled to 10 percent ( $\underline{diezmo}$ ) of all the revenues from the new lands in perpetuity. He also would have the option of buying one-eighth interest in any commercial venture in the new lands, and receive one-eighth ( $\underline{ochavo}$ ) of the profits. [76][77][78]

In 1500, during his third voyage to the Americas, Columbus was arrested and dismissed from his posts. He and his sons, Diego and Fernando, then conducted a lengthy series of court cases against the <u>Castilian crown</u>, known as the <u>pleitos colombinos</u>, alleging that the Crown had illegally reneged on its contractual obligations to Columbus and his heirs. The Columbus family had some success in their first litigation, as a judgment of 1511 confirmed Diego's position as viceroy but reduced his powers. Diego resumed litigation in 1512, which lasted until 1536, and further disputes initiated by heirs continued until 1790.

# **Voyages**

Between 1492 and 1504, Columbus completed four round-trip voyages between Spain and the Americas, each voyage being sponsored by the Crown of Castile. On his first voyage he independently discovered the Americas for early modern Europeans, [81] initiating the beginning of the European exploration and colonization of the Americas, as well as the Columbian exchange, and are thus important to the Age of Discovery, Western history, and human history writ large. [82]

Columbus always insisted, in the face of mounting evidence to the contrary, that the lands that he visited during those voyages were part of the <u>Asian</u> continent, as previously described by <u>Marco Polo</u>



Captain's Ensign of Columbus's Ships

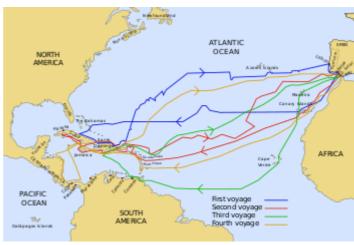
and other European travelers. [83] Columbus's refusal to acknowledge that the lands he had visited and

claimed for Spain were not part of Asia might explain, in part, why the American continent was named after the <u>Florentine</u> explorer <u>Amerigo Vespucci</u>—who received credit for recognizing it as a "<u>New World</u>"—and not after Columbus. [84][e]

#### First voyage (1492-1493)

On the evening of 3 August 1492, Columbus departed from Palos de la Frontera with three ships. The largest was a carrack, the Santa María, owned and captained by Juan de la Cosa, and under Columbus's direct command. The other two were smaller caravels, the Pinta and the Niña, [89] piloted by the Pinzón brothers. Columbus first sailed to the Canary Islands. There he restocked provisions and made repairs then departed from San Sebastián de La Gomera on 6 September, [90] for what turned out to be a fiveweek voyage across the ocean.

On 7 October, the crew spotted "[i]mmense flocks of birds". [91] On 11 October, Columbus changed the fleet's course to due west, and sailed through the night, believing land was soon to be found. At around 02:00 the following morning, a lookout on the *Pinta*, Rodrigo de Triana, spotted land. The captain



The voyages of Christopher Columbus (conjectural)



First voyage (conjectural). [1] Modern place names in black, Columbus's place names in blue

of the *Pinta*, Martín Alonso Pinzón, verified the sight of land and alerted Columbus. [92][93] Columbus later maintained that he had already seen a light on the land a few hours earlier, thereby claiming for himself the lifetime pension promised by Ferdinand and Isabella to the first person to sight land. [43][94] Columbus called this island (in what is now the Bahamas) *San Salvador* (meaning "Holy Savior"); the natives called it Guanahani. [95][g] Christopher Columbus's journal entry of 12 October 1492 states:

I saw some who had marks of wounds on their bodies and I made signs to them asking what they were; and they showed me how people from other islands nearby came there and tried to take them, and how they defended themselves; and I believed and believe that they come here from *tierra firme* to take them captive. They should be good and intelligent servants, for I see that they say very quickly everything that is said to them; and I believe they would become Christians very easily, for it seemed to me that they had no religion. Our Lord pleasing, at the time of my departure I will take six of them from here to Your Highnesses in order that they may learn to speak. [97]

Columbus called the inhabitants of the lands that he visited *Los Indios* (Spanish for "Indians"). [98] He initially encountered the <u>Lucayan</u>, <u>Taíno</u>, and <u>Arawak</u> peoples. [99] Noting their gold ear ornaments, Columbus took some of the Arawaks prisoner and insisted that they guide him to the source of the

gold. [100] Columbus observed that their primitive weapons and military tactics made the natives susceptible to easy conquest, writing, "the people here are simple in war-like matters ... I could conquer the whole of them with fifty men, and govern them as I pleased." [101]

Columbus also explored the northeast coast of <u>Cuba</u>, where he landed on 28 October. On the night of 26 November, Martín Alonso Pinzón took the *Pinta* on an unauthorized expedition in search of an island called "Babeque" or "Baneque", [102] which the natives had told him was rich in gold. [103] Columbus, for his part, continued to the northern coast of <u>Hispaniola</u>, where he landed on 6 December. [104] There, the *Santa María* ran aground on 25 December 1492 and had to be abandoned. The wreck was used as a target for cannon fire to impress the native peoples. [105] Columbus was received by the native <u>cacique</u> <u>Guacanagari</u>, who gave him permission to leave some of his men behind. Columbus left 39 men, including the interpreter <u>Luis de Torres</u>, [106][h] and founded the settlement of <u>La Navidad</u>, in present-day <u>Haiti</u>. [107][108] Columbus took more natives prisoner and continued his exploration. [100] He kept sailing along the northern coast of Hispaniola with a single ship until he encountered Pinzón and the *Pinta* on 6 January.

On 13 January 1493, Columbus made his last stop of this voyage in the Americas, in the <u>Bay of Rincón</u> in northeast Hispaniola. There he encountered the <u>Ciguayos</u>, the only natives who offered violent resistance during this voyage. The Ciguayos refused to trade the amount of bows and arrows that Columbus desired; in the ensuing clash one Ciguayo was stabbed in the buttocks and another wounded with an arrow in his chest. Because of these events, Columbus called the inlet the *Golfo de Las Flechas* (Bay of Arrows). [113]

Columbus headed for Spain on the  $Ni\tilde{n}a$ , but a storm separated him from the Pinta, and forced the  $Ni\tilde{n}a$  to stop at the island of Santa Maria in the Azores. Half of his crew went ashore to say prayers of thanksgiving in a chapel for having survived the storm. But while praying, they were imprisoned by the governor of the island, ostensibly on suspicion of being pirates. After a two-day standoff, the prisoners were released, and Columbus again set sail for Spain. [114]

Another storm forced Columbus into the port at <u>Lisbon</u>. [43] From there he went to *Vale do Paraíso* north of Lisbon to meet King John II of Portugal, who told Columbus that he believed the voyage to be in violation of the 1479 <u>Treaty of Alcáçovas</u>. After spending more than a week in Portugal, Columbus set sail for Spain. Returning to Palos on 15 March 1493, he was given a hero's welcome and soon afterward received by Isabella and Ferdinand in Barcelona. [115]

<u>Columbus</u>'s letter on the first voyage, dispatched to the Spanish court, was instrumental in spreading the news throughout Europe about his voyage. Almost immediately after his arrival in Spain, printed versions began to appear, and word of his voyage spread rapidly. Most people initially believed that he had reached Asia. The <u>Bulls of Donation</u>, three papal bulls of <u>Pope Alexander VI</u> delivered in 1493, purported to grant overseas territories to <u>Portugal</u> and the Catholic Monarchs of Spain. They were replaced by the Treaty of Tordesillas of 1494.

# **Second voyage (1493–1496)**

On 24 September 1493, Columbus sailed from <u>Cádiz</u> with 17 ships, and supplies to establish permanent colonies in the Americas. He sailed with nearly 1,500 men, including sailors, soldiers, priests, carpenters, stonemasons, metalworkers, and farmers. Among the expedition members were <u>Alvarez Chanca</u>, a physician who wrote a detailed account of the second voyage; Juan Ponce de León, the first governor of <u>Puerto Rico</u> and Florida; the father of Bartolomé de las Casas; <u>Juan de la Cosa</u>, a cartographer who is credited with making the first <u>world</u> map depicting the New <u>World</u>; and Columbus's youngest brother

Diego. [120] The fleet stopped at the Canary Islands to take on more supplies, and set sail again on 7 October, deliberately taking a more southerly course than on the first voyage. [121]

On 3 November, they arrived in the <u>Windward Islands</u>; the first island they encountered was named <u>Dominica</u> by Columbus, but not finding a good harbor there, they anchored off a nearby smaller island, which he named <u>Mariagalante</u>, now a part of <u>Guadeloupe</u> and called <u>Marie-Galante</u>. Other islands named by Columbus on this voyage were <u>Montserrat</u>, <u>Antigua</u>, <u>Saint Martin</u>, the <u>Virgin Islands</u>, as well as many others. [121]



Columbus's second voyage[I]

On 22 November, Columbus returned to Hispaniola to visit La Navidad, where 39 Spaniards had been left during the first voyage. Columbus found the fort in ruins, destroyed by the Taínos after some of the Spaniards antagonizing their hosts with their unrestrained lust for gold and women. Columbus then established a poorly located and short-lived settlement to the east, La Isabela, in the present-day Dominican Republic.

From April to August 1494, Columbus explored Cuba and Jamaica, then returned to Hispaniola. By the end of 1494, disease and famine had killed two-thirds of the Spanish settlers. Columbus implemented encomienda, Spanish labor system that rewarded conquerors with the labor of conquered non-Christian people. Columbus executed Spanish colonists for minor crimes, and used  $\underline{dismemberment}$  as punishment. Columbus and the colonists enslaved the indigenous people, including children. Natives were beaten, raped, and tortured for the location of imagined gold. Thousands committed suicide rather than face the oppression.

In February 1495, Columbus rounded up about 1,500 Arawaks, some of whom had rebelled, in a great slave raid. About 500 of the strongest were shipped to Spain as slaves, [134] with about two hundred of those dying en route. [100][135]

In June 1495, the Spanish crown sent ships and supplies to Hispaniola. In October, Florentine merchant Gianotto Berardi, who had won the contract to provision the fleet of Columbus's second voyage and to supply the colony on Hispaniola, received almost 40,000 <u>maravedís</u> worth of enslaved Indians. He renewed his effort to get supplies to Columbus, and was working to organize a fleet when he suddenly died in December. On 10 March 1496, having been away about 30 months, the fleet departed La Isabela. On 8 June the crew sighted land somewhere between Lisbon and <u>Cape St. Vincent</u>, and disembarked in Cádiz on 11 June.

# Third voyage (1498-1500)

On 30 May 1498, Columbus left with six ships from <u>Sanlúcar, Spain</u>. The fleet called at Madeira and the Canary Islands, where it divided in two, with three ships heading for Hispaniola and the other three vessels, commanded by Columbus, sailing south to the Cape Verde Islands and then westward across the Atlantic. It is probable that this expedition was intended at least partly to confirm rumors of a large continent south of the Caribbean Sea, that is, South America. [139]

On 31 July they sighted Trinidad, [140] the most southerly of the Caribbean islands. On 5 August, Columbus sent several small boats ashore on the southern side of the Paria Peninsula in what is now Venezuela, [141][142] near the mouth of the Orinoco river.[139] This was the first recorded landing of Europeans on the mainland of South America, [141] which Columbus realized must be continent.[143][144] The fleet then sailed to the islands of Chacachacare and Margarita, reaching the latter on 14 August, [145] and sighted Tobago and Grenada from afar, according to some scholars. [146][141]



Third voyage

On 19 August, Columbus returned to Hispaniola. There he found settlers in rebellion against his rule, and his unfulfilled promises of riches. Columbus had some of the Europeans tried for their disobedience; at least one rebel leader was hanged. [147]

In October 1499, Columbus sent two ships to Spain, asking the Court of Spain to appoint a royal commissioner to help him govern. By this time, accusations of tyranny and incompetence on the part of Columbus had also reached the Court. The sovereigns sent Francisco de Bobadilla, a relative of Marquesa Beatriz de Bobadilla, a patron of Columbus and a close friend of Queen Isabella, 149 to investigate the accusations of brutality made against the Admiral. Arriving in Santo Domingo while Columbus was away, Bobadilla was immediately met with complaints about all three Columbus brothers. He moved into Columbus's house and seized his property, took depositions from the Admiral's enemies, and declared himself governor.

Bobadilla reported to Spain that Columbus once punished a man found guilty of stealing corn by having his ears and nose cut off and then selling him into slavery. He claimed that Columbus regularly used torture and mutilation to govern Hispaniola. Testimony recorded in the report stated that Columbus congratulated his brother Bartolomeo on "defending the family" when the latter ordered a woman paraded naked through the streets and then had her tongue cut because she had "spoken ill of the admiral and his brothers". The document also describes how Columbus put down native unrest and revolt: he first ordered a brutal suppression of the uprising in which many natives were killed, and then paraded their dismembered bodies through the streets in an attempt to discourage further rebellion. Columbus vehemently denied the charges. The neutrality and accuracy of the accusations and investigations of Bobadilla toward Columbus and his brothers have been disputed by historians, given the anti-Italian sentiment of the Spaniards and Bobadilla's desire to take over Columbus' position. [157][158][159]

In early October 1500, Columbus and Diego presented themselves to Bobadilla, and were put in chains aboard *La Gorda*, the caravel on which Bobadilla had arrived at Santo Domingo. They were returned to Spain, and languished in jail for six weeks before King Ferdinand ordered their release. Not long after, the king and queen summoned the Columbus brothers to the <u>Alhambra</u> palace in <u>Granada</u>. The sovereigns expressed indignation at Bobadilla's actions, who was then recalled and ordered to make restitutions of the property he had confiscated from Columbus. The royal couple heard the brothers' pleas; restored their freedom and wealth; and, after much persuasion, agreed to fund Columbus's fourth voyage. However, Nicolás de Ovando was to replace Bobadilla and be the new governor of the West Indies.

New light was shed on the seizure of Columbus and his brother Bartolomeo, the <u>Adelantado</u>, with the discovery by archivist Isabel Aguirre of an incomplete copy of the testimonies against them gathered by Francisco de Bobadilla at Santo Domingo in 1500. She found a manuscript copy of this *pesquisa* (inquiry) in the Archive of Simancas, Spain, uncatalogued until she and Consuelo Varela published their book, *La caída de Cristóbal Colón: el juicio de Bobadilla* (*The fall of Christopher Colón: the judgement of Bobadilla*) in 2006. [165][166]

#### Fourth voyage (1502-1504)

On 9 May 1502 Columbus, with his brother Bartolomeo as second in command and his son Fernando, [167] left Cádiz with his flagship *Santa María* and three other vessels, crewed by 140 men (Some scholars, including Sauer, say the fleet sailed 11 May; Cook says 9 May). He sailed to <u>Arzila</u> on the Moroccan coast to rescue Portuguese soldiers said to be besieged by the <u>Moors</u>. The siege had been lifted by the time they arrived, so the Spaniards stayed only a day and continued on to the Canary Islands. [168]



Columbus's fourth voyage

On 15 June, the fleet arrived at Martinique,

where it lingered for several days. A <u>hurricane</u> was forming, so Columbus continued westward, [167] hoping to find shelter on Hispaniola. He arrived at <u>Santo Domingo</u> on 29 June, but was denied port, and the new governor Francisco de Bobadilla refused to listen to his warning that a hurricane was approaching. Instead, while Columbus's ships sheltered at the mouth of the Rio Jaina, the first <u>Spanish treasure fleet</u> sailed into the hurricane. Columbus's ships survived with only minor damage, while 20 of the 30 ships in the governor's fleet were lost along with 500 lives (including that of Francisco de Bobadilla). Although a few surviving ships managed to straggle back to Santo Domingo, Aguja, the fragile ship carrying Columbus's personal belongings and his 4,000 *pesos* in gold was the sole vessel to reach Spain. [169][170] The gold was his *tenth* (*décimo*) of the profits from Hispaniola, equal to 240,000 maravedis, [171] guaranteed by the Catholic Monarchs in 1492. [172]

After a brief stop at <u>Jamaica</u>, Columbus sailed to Central America, arriving at the coast of <u>Honduras</u> on 30 July. Here Bartolomeo found native merchants and a large canoe. On 14 August, Columbus landed on the continental mainland at Punta Caxinas, now Puerto Castilla,



Coat of arms granted to
Christopher Columbus and the
House of Colon by Pope
Alexander VI motu proprio in
1502

<u>Honduras</u>. He spent two months exploring the coasts of Honduras, <u>Nicaragua</u>, and <u>Costa Rica</u>, seeking a strait in the western Caribbean through which he could sail to the Indian Ocean. Sailing south along the Nicaraguan coast, he found a channel that led into Almirante Bay in <u>Panama</u> on 5 October. [174][175]

As soon as his ships anchored in Almirante Bay, Columbus encountered <u>Ngäbe</u> people in canoes who were wearing gold ornaments. [176] In January 1503, he established a <u>garrison</u> at the mouth of the <u>Belén River</u>. Columbus left for Hispaniola on 16 April. On 10 May he sighted the Cayman Islands, naming them "*Las*"

*Tortugas*" after the numerous <u>sea turtles</u> there.  $\frac{[177]}{}$  His ships sustained damage in a storm off the coast of Cuba. Unable to travel farther, on 25 June 1503 they were beached in Saint Ann Parish, Jamaica.  $\frac{[178]}{}$ 

For six months Columbus and 230 of his men remained stranded on Jamaica. Diego Méndez de Segura, who had shipped out as a personal secretary to Columbus, and a Spanish shipmate called Bartolomé Flisco, along with six natives, paddled a canoe to get help from Hispaniola. The governor, Nicolás de Ovando y Cáceres, detested Columbus and obstructed all efforts to rescue him and his men. In the meantime Columbus, in a desperate effort to induce the natives to continue provisioning him and his hungry men, won their favor by predicting a lunar eclipse for 29 February 1504, using Abraham Zacuto's astronomical charts. Help finally arrived, no thanks to the governor, on 28 June 1504, and Columbus and his men arrived in Sanlúcar, Spain, on 7 November.

# Later life, illness, and death

Columbus had always claimed that the conversion of non-believers was one reason for his explorations, but he grew increasingly religious in his later years. [184] Probably with the assistance of his son Diego and his friend the <u>Carthusian</u> monk Gaspar Gorricio, Columbus produced two books during his later years: a <u>Book of Privileges</u> (1502), detailing and documenting the rewards from the Spanish Crown to which he believed he and his heirs were entitled, and a <u>Book of Prophecies</u> (1505), in which passages from the Bible were used to place his achievements as an explorer in the context of <u>Christian eschatology</u>. [185]

In his later years, Columbus demanded that the Spanish Crown give him his tenth of all the riches and trade goods yielded by the new lands, as stipulated in the <u>Capitulations of Santa Fe</u>. [77] Because he had been relieved of his duties as governor, the crown did not feel bound by that contract and his demands were rejected. After his death, his heirs sued the Crown for a part of the profits from trade with America, as well as other rewards. This led to a protracted series of legal disputes known as the <u>pleitos colombinos</u> ("Columbian lawsuits").[80]

During a violent storm on his first return voyage, Columbus, then 41, had suffered an attack of what was believed at the time to be <u>gout</u>. In subsequent years, he was plagued with what was thought to be <u>influenza</u> and other fevers, bleeding from the eyes, temporary blindness and prolonged attacks of gout. The attacks increased in duration and severity, sometimes leaving Columbus bedridden for months at a time, and culminated in his death 14 years later.

Based on Columbus's lifestyle and the described symptoms, some modern commentators suspect that he suffered from reactive arthritis, rather than gout. [186][187] Reactive arthritis is a joint inflammation caused by intestinal bacterial infections or after acquiring certain sexually transmitted diseases (primarily chlamydia or gonorrhea). In 2006, Frank C. Arnett, a medical doctor, and historian Charles Merrill, published their paper in The American Journal of the Medical Sciences proposing that Columbus had a form of reactive arthritis; Merrill made his case in the same paper that Columbus was the son of Catalans and his mother possibly a member of a prominent *converso* (converted Jew) family. [188] "It seems likely that [Columbus] acquired reactive arthritis from food poisoning on one of his ocean voyages because of poor sanitation and improper food preparation," says Arnett, a rheumatologist and professor of internal medicine, pathology and laboratory medicine at the University of Texas Medical School at Houston. [186]

Some historians such as H. Micheal Tarver and Emily Slape, [189] as well as medical doctors such as Arnett and Antonio Rodríguez Cuartero, believe that Columbus had such a form of reactive arthritis, but according to other authorities, this is "speculative", [191] or "very speculative".

After his arrival to Sanlúcar from his fourth voyage (and Queen Isabella's death), an ill Columbus settled in Seville in April 1505. He stubbornly continued to make pleas to the crown to defend his own personal privileges and his family's. [193] He moved to Segovia (where the court was at the time) on a mule by early 1506, [194] and, on the occasion of the wedding of King Ferdinand with Germaine of Foix in Valladolid in March 1506, Columbus moved to the aforementioned city to persist with his demands. [195] On 20 May 1506, aged 54, Columbus died in Valladolid. [196]

## **Location of remains**

Columbus's remains were first buried at a convent in Valladolid, [197] then moved to the monastery of La Cartuja in Seville (southern Spain) by the will of his son Diego. [198] They may have been exhumed in 1513 and interred at the Cathedral of Seville. In about 1536, the remains of both Columbus and his son Diego were moved to a cathedral in Colonial Santo Domingo, in the present-day Dominican Republic. By some accounts, in 1793, when France took over the entire island of Hispaniola, Columbus's remains were moved to Havana, Cuba.[199] After Cuba became independent following the Spanish-American War in 1898, the remains were moved back to the Cathedral of Seville, Spain, [197] where they were placed on an elaborate catafalque. In June 2003, DNA samples were taken from these remains [200] as well as those of Columbus's brother Diego vounger son Fernando. and observations suggested that the bones did not appear



Tomb in Seville
Cathedral. The remains in the casket are borne by kings of Castile,
Leon, Aragon, and
Navarre



Tomb in <u>Columbus</u>
<u>Lighthouse</u>, <u>Santo</u>
<u>Domingo Este</u>, Dominican
Republic

to match Columbus's physique or age at death. DNA extraction proved difficult; only short fragments of mitochondrial DNA could be isolated. These matched corresponding DNA from Columbus's brother, supporting that both individuals had shared the same mother. Such evidence, together with anthropologic and historic analyses, led the researchers to conclude that the remains belonged to Christopher Columbus.

In 1877, a priest discovered a lead box at Santo Domingo inscribed: "Discoverer of America, First Admiral". Inscriptions found the next year read "Last of the remains of the first admiral, Sire Christopher Columbus, discoverer." The box contained bones of an arm and a leg, as well as a bullet. These remains were considered legitimate by physician and U.S. Assistant Secretary of State John Eugene Osborne, who suggested in 1913 that they travel through the Panama Canal as a part of its opening ceremony. These remains were kept at the Basilica Cathedral of Santa María la Menor before being moved to the Columbus Lighthouse (inaugurated in 1992). The authorities in Santo Domingo have never allowed these remains to be exhumed, so it is unconfirmed whether they are from Columbus's body as well. [202][208][0]

# **Commemoration**

The figure of Columbus was largely ignored in the United States during the colonial era, being "rediscovered" in the wake of the quest for independence. [210] The use of Columbus as a founding figure of New World nations spread rapidly after the American Revolution. This was out of a desire to develop a national history and founding myth with fewer ties to Britain. [211][212][213] His name was the basis for the

female national personification of the <u>United States</u>, <u>Columbia</u>, [214] in use since the 1730s with reference to the original <u>Thirteen Colonies</u>, and also a historical name applied to the <u>Americas</u> and to the <u>New World</u>. The federal capital (<u>District of Columbia</u>) was named for her, as well as Columbia, South Carolina, and Columbia Rediviva, the ship for which the Columbia River was named. [215]

Columbus's name was given to the newly born <u>Republic of Colombia</u> in the early 19th century, inspired by the political project of "Colombeia" developed by revolutionary <u>Francisco de Miranda</u>, which was put at the service of the emancipation of continental Hispanic America. [216]

To commemorate the 400th anniversary of the landing of Columbus, [217] the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago was named the World's Columbian Exposition. [218] The U.S. Postal Service issued the first U.S. commemorative stamps, the Columbian Issue, [219] depicting Columbus, Queen Isabella and others in various stages of his several voyages. [220] The policies related to the celebration of the Spanish colonial empire as the vehicle of a nationalist project undertaken in Spain during the Restoration in the late 19th century took form with the commemoration of the 4th centenary on 12 October 1892 (in which the figure of Columbus was extolled by the Conservative government), eventually becoming the very same national day. [221] Several monuments commemorating the "discovery" were erected in cities such as Palos, Barcelona,



Replicas of *Niña*, *Pinta* and *Santa María* sailed from Spain to the

<u>Chicago Columbian Exposition</u> in

1893

Granada, Madrid, Salamanca, Valladolid and Seville in the years around the 400th anniversary. [222][p]

For the <u>Columbus Quincentenary</u> in 1992, a second Columbian issue was released jointly with Italy, Portugal, and Spain. [223] Columbus was celebrated at Seville Expo '92, and Genoa Expo '92.

The Boal Mansion Museum, founded in 1951, contains a collection of materials concerning later descendants of Columbus and collateral branches of the family. It features a 16th-century chapel from a Spanish castle reputedly owned by Diego Colón which became the residence of Columbus's descendants. The chapel interior was dismantled and moved from Spain in 1909 and re-erected on the Boal estate at Boalsburg, Pennsylvania. Inside it are numerous religious paintings and other objects including a reliquary with fragments of wood supposedly from the True Cross. The museum also holds a collection of documents mostly relating to Columbus descendants of the late 18th and early 19th centuries. [224]

In many countries of the Americas, as well as Spain and Italy, <u>Columbus Day</u> celebrates the anniversary of Columbus's arrival in the Americas on 12 October 1492.

# Legacy

The voyages of Columbus are considered a turning point in human history, [225] marking the beginning of globalization and accompanying demographic, commercial, economic, social, and political changes. [226]

His explorations resulted in permanent contact between the two hemispheres, and the term "pre-Columbian" is used to refer to the cultures of the Americas before the arrival of Columbus and his European successors. [227] The ensuing Columbian exchange saw the massive exchange of animals, plants, fungi, diseases, technologies, mineral wealth and ideas. [228]

In the first century after his endeavors, Columbus's figure largely languished in the backwaters of history, and his reputation was beset by his failures as a colonial administrator. His legacy was somewhat rescued from oblivion when he began to appear as a character in Italian and Spanish plays and poems from the late

#### 16th century onward. [229]

Columbus was subsumed into the Western narrative of colonization and empire building, which invoked notions of *translatio imperii* and *translatio studii* to underline who was considered "civilized" and who was not. [230]

The Americanization of the figure of Columbus began in the latter decades of the 18th century, after the revolutionary period of the United States, [231] elevating the status of his reputation to a national myth, *homo americanus*. [232] His landing became a powerful icon as an "image of American genesis". [231] The American Columbus myth was reconfigured later in the century when he was enlisted as an ethnic hero by immigrants to the United States who were not of Anglo-Saxon stock, such as Jewish, Italian, and Irish people, who claimed Columbus as a sort of ethnic



Landing of Columbus at the Island of Guanahaní, West Indies (1846), by John Vanderlyn. The landing of Columbus became a powerful icon of American genesis in the 19th century.

founding father. Catholics unsuccessfully tried to promote him for canonization in the 19th century. [235][236]

From the 1990s onward, new depictions of Columbus as the environmental hatchet man or the scapegoat for genocide compete with the hitherto prevalent discourses of Columbus as the Christ-bearer, the scientist, or the father of America. More recently, however, the narrative has featured the negative effects of the conquest on native populations. Exposed to Old World diseases, the indigenous populations of the New World collapsed, and were largely replaced by Europeans and Africans, who brought with them new methods of farming, business, governance, and religious worship.

# Originality of discovery of America

Though Christopher Columbus came to be considered the European discoverer of America in Western popular culture, his historical legacy is more nuanced. [240] After settling Iceland, the Norse colonized the uninhabited southern part of Greenland (a North American island) beginning in the 10th century. [241] Norsemen are believed to have then set sail from Greenland and Iceland to become the first known Europeans to reach the North American mainland, nearly 500 years before Columbus reached the Caribbean. [242]

In the late 19th century, following work by <u>Carl Christian Rafn</u> and B. F. De Costa, <u>Rasmus Bjørn Anderson</u> sought to deconstruct the Columbus discovery story. In his book *America Not Discovered by Columbus* (1874), he argued that Columbus must have known of



Discovery of America, a postage stamp from the Faroe Islands commemorates the voyages of discovery of <u>Leif Erikson</u> (c. 1000) and Christopher Columbus (1492)

the North American continent before he started his voyage of discovery. [30] The 1960s discovery of a Norse settlement dating to c. 1000 CE at L'Anse aux Meadows, Newfoundland, partially corroborates accounts within the Icelandic sagas of Erik the Red's colonization of Greenland and his son Leif Erikson's subsequent exploration of a place he called Vinland, disproving that Columbus was the European discoverer of America. [243][242]

The encountering by <u>Europeans</u> of the peoples who inhabited the Americas and their increasing knowledge of those peoples led them to devise explanations for the origins of the Native Americans and their geographical distribution. The narratives they created more often than not served to reinforce their own

preconceptions built on ancient intellectual foundations. [244] In modern Latin America, the non-Native populations of some countries often demonstrate an ambiguous attitude toward the perspectives of the native peoples regarding the Columbian "discovery" and the resultant era of colonialism. [245]

For generations, use of the word "discovery" in reference to Columbus's finding of what Europeans called the "New World" has been normalized in education on both sides of the Atlantic. Although perceptions of the world have changed since that time, the encounter between two hemispheres is an historical fact. The word *discovery* emphasizes the "discoverers", i.e., the agents of the European enterprise, whereas the word *encounter* gives more emphasis to those peoples who "encountered" each other and embodied the New World. [246]

#### America as a distinct land

Historians have traditionally argued that Columbus remained convinced until his death that his journeys had been along the east coast of Asia as he originally intended. [247][213] On his third voyage he briefly referred to South America as a "hitherto unknown" continent, while also rationalizing that it was the "Earthly Paradise" located "at the end of the Orient". [143] Columbus continued to claim in his later writings that he had reached Asia; in a 1502 letter to Pope Alexander VI, he asserts that Cuba is the east coast of Asia. [42] On the other hand, in a document in the Book of Privileges (1502), Columbus refers to the New World as the Indias Occidentales ('West Indies'), which he says "were unknown to all the world". [248]

The <u>Columbus Monument</u> in <u>Columbus Circle</u>, New York City

### Flat Earth mythology

Washington Irving's 1828 biography of Columbus popularized the idea that Columbus had difficulty obtaining support for his plan because many Catholic theologians insisted that the Earth was

<u>flat</u>, [249] but this is a popular misconception which can be traced back to 17th-century Protestants campaigning against Catholicism. [250] In fact, the spherical shape of the Earth had been known to scholars since antiquity, and was common knowledge among sailors, including Columbus. [251][q] Coincidentally, the oldest surviving globe of the Earth, the <u>Erdapfel</u>, was made in 1492, just before Columbus's return to Europe. As such it contains no sign of the Americas and yet demonstrates the common belief in a spherical Earth. [253]

#### Criticism and defense

Columbus is criticized both for his brutality and for initiating the depopulation of the indigenous Americans, whether by disease or intentional genocide. Some defend his actions or allege that the worst of them are not based in fact. Scholars of Native American history George Tinker and Mark Freedman write that Columbus was responsible for creating a cycle of "murder, violence, and slavery" to maximize exploitation of the Caribbean islands' resources, and that Native deaths on the scale at which they occurred would not have been caused by new diseases alone. Further, they describe the proposition that disease and not genocide caused these deaths as "American holocaust denial". [254] Some commentators defend Columbus's actions or allege that the worst of them are not based in fact while others claim that "he has been blamed for events far beyond his own reach or knowledge".

As a result of the protests and riots that followed the <u>murder of George Floyd</u> in 2020, many public monuments of Christopher Columbus have been removed. [255]

#### **Brutality**

Some historians have criticized Columbus for initiating colonization and for abusing natives. [256][100][257][258] On St. Croix. Columbus' friend Michele da Cuneo-according to his own account-kept an indigenous woman he captured, whom Columbus "gave to [him]", then brutally raped her. [259][r][s] The punishment for an indigenous person, aged 14 and older, failing to pay a hawk's bell, or *cascabela*, [262] worth of gold dust every six months (based on Bartolomé de las Casas' account) was cutting off the hands of those without tokens, often leaving them to bleed to death. [254][100][263] Columbus had an economic interest in the enslavement of the Hispaniola natives and for that reason was not eager to baptize them, which attracted criticism from some churchmen. [264] Consuelo Varela, a Spanish historian who has seen Bobadilla's report, states that "Columbus's government was characterized by a form of tyranny. Even those who loved him had to admit the atrocities that had taken place."[152]

<u>Kris Lane</u> disputes whether it is appropriate to use the term "genocide" when the atrocities were not Columbus' intent, but resulted from his decrees, family business goals, and negligence. Other historians have argued that some of the accounts of the brutality of Columbus and his brothers have been exaggerated as part of the <u>Black Legend</u>, a historical tendency



The remains of the pedestal base of the Columbus statue in the Baltimore inner harbor area. The statue was thrown into the harbor on 4 July 2020, as part of the <u>George Floyd</u> protests.

towards anti-Spanish sentiment in historical sources dating as far back as the 16th century, which they speculate may continue to taint scholarship into the present day.  $\frac{[265][266][267]}{[265][266][267]}$ 

Historian William J. Connell has argued that, while Columbus "brought the entrepreneurial form of slavery to the New World," this "was a phenomenon of the times," further arguing that "we have to be very careful about applying 20th-century understandings of morality to the morality of the 15th century." In a less popular defense of colonization, Spanish ambassador María Jesús Figa López-Palop has argued, "Normally we melded with the cultures in America, we stayed there, we spread our language and culture and religion." [269]

British historian <u>Basil Davidson</u> has dubbed Columbus the "father of the <u>slave trade</u>", citing the fact that the first license to ship enslaved Africans to the Caribbean was issued by the Catholic Monarchs in 1501. [270][271]

#### Depopulation

Around the turn of the 21st century, estimates for the pre-Columbian population of Hispaniola ranged between 250,000 and two million,  $\frac{[134][272][273][t]}{[134][272][273][t]}$  but genetic analysis published in late 2020 suggests that smaller figures are more likely, perhaps as low as 10,000–50,000 for Hispaniola and Puerto Rico combined. Based on the previous figures of a few hundred thousand, some have estimated that a third or more of the natives in Haiti were dead within the first two years of Columbus's governorship. Contributors to depopulation included disease, warfare, and harsh

enslavement. [276][277] Indirect evidence suggests that some serious illness may have arrived with the 1,500 colonists who accompanied Columbus' second expedition in 1493. [276] Charles C. Mann writes that "It was as if the suffering these diseases had caused in Eurasia over the past millennia were concentrated into the span of decades." [278] A third of the natives forced to work in gold and silver mines died every six months. [279][280] Within three to six decades, the surviving Arawak population numbered only in the hundreds. [279][134][281] The indigenous population of the Americas overall is thought to have been reduced by about 90% in the century after Columbus's arrival. [282] Among indigenous peoples, Columbus is often viewed as a key agent of genocide. [283] Samuel Eliot Morison, a Harvard historian and author of a multivolume biography on Columbus, writes, "The cruel policy initiated by Columbus and pursued by his successors resulted in complete genocide."

According to Noble David Cook, "There were too few Spaniards to have killed the millions who were reported to have died in the first century after Old and New World contact." He instead estimates that the death toll was caused by smallpox, [285] which may have caused a pandemic only after the arrival of Hernán Cortés in 1519. [286][287][288] According to some estimates, smallpox had an 80–90% fatality rate in Native American populations. [289] The natives had no acquired immunity to these new diseases and suffered high fatalities. There is also evidence that they had poor diets and were overworked. [125][290][291] Historian Andrés Reséndez of University of California, Davis, says the available evidence suggests "slavery has emerged as major killer" of the indigenous populations of the Caribbean between 1492 and 1550 more so than diseases such as smallpox, influenza and malaria. [292] He says that indigenous populations did not experience a rebound like European populations did following the Black Death because unlike the latter, a large portion of the former were subjected to deadly forced labor in the mines. 
[280] Historian David Stannard says that their destruction "was neither inadvertent nor inevitable," but the result of microbial pestilence and purposeful genocide working in tandem.

The diseases that devastated the Native Americans came in multiple waves at different times, sometimes as much as centuries apart, which would mean that survivors of one disease may have been killed by others, preventing the population from recovering. [294]

#### **Navigational expertise**

Biographers and historians have a wide range of opinions about Columbus's expertise and experience navigating and captaining ships. One scholar lists some European works ranging from the 1890s to 1980s that support Columbus's experience and skill as among the best in Genoa, while listing some American works over a similar timeframe that portray the explorer as an untrained entrepreneur, having only minor crew or passenger experience prior to his noted journeys. [295] According to Morison, Columbus's success in utilizing the trade winds might owe significantly to luck.

# Physical appearance

Contemporary descriptions of Columbus, including those by his son Fernando and Bartolomé de las Casas, describe him as taller than average, with light skin (which was often sunburnt), blue or hazel eyes, high cheekbones and freckled face, an aquiline nose, and blond to reddish hair and beard (until about the age of 30, when it began to whiten). One Spanish commentator described his eyes using the word *garzos*, now usually translated as "light blue", but it seems to have indicated light grey-green or hazel eyes to Columbus's contemporaries. The word *rubios* can mean "blonde", "fair", or "ruddy". Although an abundance of artwork depicts Christopher Columbus, no authentic contemporary portrait is known.



<u>The Virgin of the</u>
<u>Navigators</u> by <u>Alejo</u>
Fernández (1531–1536)



Close-up for Fernández's depiction of Columbus

The most well-known image of Columbus is a portrait by Sebastiano del Piombo, which has been reproduced in many textbooks. It agrees with descriptions of Columbus in that it shows a large man with auburn hair, but the painting dates from 1519 and cannot, therefore, have been painted from life. Furthermore, the inscription identifying the subject as Columbus was probably added later, and the face shown differs from that of other images. [301]

Sometime between 1531 and 1536, Alejo Fernández painted an altarpiece, *The Virgin of the Navigators*, that includes a depiction of Columbus. The painting was commissioned for a chapel in Seville's Casa de Contratación (House of Trade) in the Alcázar of Seville and remains there. [303]

At the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893, 71 alleged portraits of Columbus were displayed; most of them did not match contemporary descriptions. [304]

# See also

- Christopher Columbus in fiction
- Egg of Columbus

#### **Notes**

- a. In other relevant languages:
  - Italian: Cristoforo Colombo [kri'stɔːforo ko'lombo]
  - Ligurian: Cristoffa C(or)ombo [kriˈ[tɔffa kuˈruŋbu, ˈkuŋbu]
  - Spanish: Cristóbal Colón [kris'toβal ko'lon]
  - Portuguese: Cristóvão Colombo [kriʃˈtɔvew kuˈlõbu]
  - Catalan: Cristòfor (or Cristòfol) Colom [kris'tɔfur ku'lom, -ful k-]
  - Latin: Christophorus Columbus.
- b. Though the modern state of <u>Italy</u> had yet to be established, the Latin equivalent of the <u>term</u> <u>Italian</u> had been in use for natives of <u>the region</u> since antiquity. [4] Most scholars believe that Columbus was born in the <u>Republic of Genoa</u>. [5]
- c. In an account of his fourth voyage, Columbus wrote that " $\underline{\text{Jerusalem}}$  and  $\underline{\text{Mount Sion}}$  must be rebuilt by Christian hands". [44]

- d. Ferdinand later claimed credit for being "the principal cause why those islands were discovered." [74]
- e. Felipe Fernández-Armesto points out that Columbus briefly described South America as an unknown continent after seeing the mainland for the first time. Vespucci seems to have modeled his naming of the "new world" after Columbus's description of this discovery. Further, mapmaker Martin Waldseemüller eventually retracted his naming of the continent after Vespucci, seemingly after it came to light that a claim that Vespucci visited the mainland before Columbus had been falsified. In his new map, Waldseemüller labelled the continent as Terra Incognita ('unknown land'), noting that it had been discovered by Columbus.[85]
- f. This map is based on the premise that Columbus first landed at <u>Plana Cays</u>. The island <u>considered</u> by <u>Samuel Eliot Morison</u> to be the most likely location of first contact [87] is the easternmost land touching the top edge of this image.
- g. According to <u>Samuel Eliot Morison</u>, <u>San Salvador Island</u>, renamed from Watling's Island in 1925 in the belief that it was Columbus's San Salvador, [96] is the only island fitting the position indicated by Columbus's journal. Other candidates are the <u>Grand Turk</u>, <u>Cat Island</u>, Rum Cay, Samana Cay, or Mayaguana.[87]
- h. Torres spoke  $\underline{\text{Hebrew}}$  and some  $\underline{\text{Arabic}}$ ; the latter was then believed to be the  $\underline{\text{mother tongue}}$  of all languages. [106]
- i. Omitted from this image, Columbus returned to  $\underline{\text{Guadeloupe}}$  at the end of his second voyage before sailing back to Spain. [119]
- j. The tribute system had all but collapsed by 1497.[133]
- k. Bobadilla's 48-page report, derived from the testimonies of 23 people who had seen or heard about the treatment meted out by Columbus and his brothers—had originally been lost for centuries, but was rediscovered in 2005 in the Spanish archives in <u>Valladolid</u>. It contained an account of Columbus's seven-year reign as the first governor of the Indies. Consuelo Varela, a Spanish historian, states: "Even those who loved him [Columbus] had to admit the atrocities that had taken place." [152]
- I. DNA from Columbus's presumed remains in Seville will be used to conduct further ancestral studies, with results expected in 2021. [204]
- m. This same year, dust collected from these remains was placed in a locket, which was placed inside the stern of a <u>silver model caravel</u>. Two tiny portions of dust from the same source were placed in separate vials. [206]
- n. Osborne cited the bullet as evidence the remains belonged to Columbus, [207] but its significance is unclear. [205]
- o. These remains are displayed in their crypt (behind a sheet of glass) once a year on Columbus Day. [209]
- p. See: Columbus Monument, Barcelona (1888), Monument to the Discoverers (1892), Monument to Columbus (Madrid) (1892), Monument to Isabella the Catholic (Granada) (1892), Monument to Columbus (Salamanca) (1893), Monument to Columbus (Valladolid) (inaugurated in 1905, but whose inception dates to an earlier date and a tentative location in Spanish Havana).

- q. On his third voyage, Columbus formulated a new model of the Earth shortly after observing that the North Star is not fixed. Making observations with a quadrant, he "regularly saw the plumb line fall to the same point," instead of moving along as his ship moved. He thought that he had discovered the entrance to Heaven, from which Earth's waters extend, the planet forming a pear shape with the insurmountable "stalk" portion of the pear pointing towards Heaven. [251] In fact, the Earth ever so slightly is pear-shaped, with the "stalk" pointing north. [252]
- r. Cuneo wrote,

While I was in the boat, I captured a very beautiful Carib woman, whom the said Lord Admiral gave to me. When I had taken her to my cabin she was naked—as was their custom. I was filled with a desire to take my pleasure with her and attempted to satisfy my desire. She was unwilling, and so treated me with her nails that I wished I had never begun. But—to cut a long story short—I then took a piece of rope and whipped her soundly, and she let forth such incredible screams that you would not have believed your ears. Eventually we came to such terms, I assure you, that you would have thought that she had been brought up in a school for whores. [260]

- s. Author <u>Tony Horwitz</u> notes that this is the first recorded instance of sexuality between a European and Native American. [261]
- t. <u>Bartolomé de las Casas</u> estimated that there were three to four million Taínos in Hispaniola, and said 500,000 Lucayans were killed in the Bahamas. Most modern historians reject his figures. [273]

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### **External links**

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- Works by or about Christopher Columbus (https://archive.org/search.php?query=%28%28su bject%3A%22Columbus%2C%20Christopher%22%20OR%20subject%3A%22Christopher%20Columbus%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22Columbus%2C%20Christopher%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22Christopher%20Columbus%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22Columbus%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22Columbus%22%20OR%20Columbus%22%20OR%20description%3A%22Christopher%20Columbus%2C%20Christopher%22%20OR%20description%3A%22Christopher%20Columbus%22%20OR%20Christopher%22%20OR%20description%3A%22Christopher%20Columbus%22%29%20OR%20W28%221451-1506%22%20AND%20Columbus%29%29%20AND%20%28-mediatype:software%29) at Internet Archive
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