

3-1 ★ MOTIVES FOR EXPLORATION

“Man is usually a wandering and enterprising animal, for whom there exist few insurmountable barriers.”—H.G. Wells

Europeans explored the New World for various reasons:

1. CURIOSITY



2. WEALTH



3. FAME



4. NATIONAL PRIDE



5. RELIGION

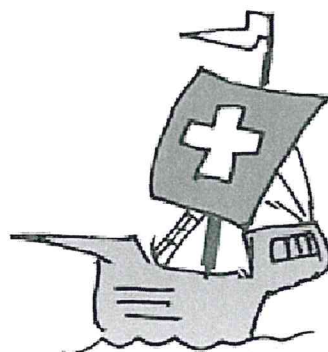


6. FOREIGN GOODS

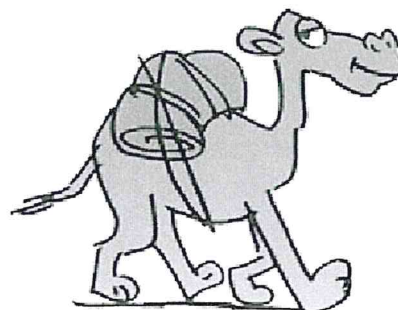


7. FASTER, CHEAPER TRADE ROUTES

THIS...



NOT THIS...



The main source for this chapter is *The Life of the Admiral Christopher Columbus*, a biography by his son Ferdinand Columbus (1488-1539), who, at 13, sailed with his father on Columbus' 4th voyage to America (1502-04).

Ferdinand grew up to be a noted scholar; he had a library of 15,000 books.

Ferdinand began the biography of his father with these words:

I, FERDINAND COLUMBUS, BEING THE SON OF ADMIRAL CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS, A PERSON WORTHY OF ETERNAL GLORY FOR HIS DISCOVERY OF THE WEST INDIES, IT SEEMS FITTING THAT I, WHO SAILED WITH HIM FOR SOME TIME... SHOULD WRITE THE HISTORY OF HIS LIFE. I PROMISE TO TELL THE ADMIRAL'S LIFE ONLY FROM HIS OWN WRITINGS AND LETTERS AND WHAT I MYSELF OBSERVED.



Christopher Columbus was born in 1451 in Genoa, an Italian seaport. The eldest of five children, he helped his father, a wool weaver, but he longed to be a sailor.



He went to sea at 14—a tall, strong, ruddy skinned, blue-eyed blond. (By 50, his hair was prematurely white.) He eventually became one of the most skilled seamen and navigators of all time.



According to Ferdinand, Christopher (a Roman Catholic) was devoted to God and so great an enemy to cursing and swearing that, "I never heard him utter any other oath than 'By San Fernando!'"

Shipwrecked off the Portugal coast in 1476, Columbus settled in Lisbon and worked in his brother Bartholomew's map-making shop.



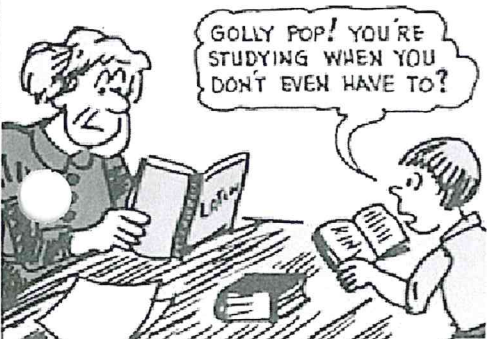
In 1479 he married Felipa Muniz, daughter of a Portuguese nobleman who had discovered the Madeira Islands (and whose exploration charts Columbus read eagerly). The next year they had a son, Diego.



Portugal was a great place for seamen because in 1419 Prince Henry the Navigator had founded a center for studying the new science of navigation, in hopes of finding a sea route to the Indies around the tip of Africa.



In Portugal, Columbus taught himself Latin, the language of geography books, so he could begin the exciting study of geography. He also learned drawing, the tool of a geographer's trade.



Books that sparked his imagination included that of Italian Marco Polo, which described Polo's 1271-95 journey to China (with its wondrous gold, jewels, and spices) and his adventures with the Chinese ruler Kublai Khan. Columbus had an idea!



THE BIG QUESTION: HOW WIDE IS THE OCEAN SEPARATING EUROPE AND ASIA? THIS LETTER FROM TOSCANELLI, THE ITALIAN ASTRONOMER, SAYS THE OCEAN IS ONLY 3,000 MILES WIDE!



In 1484 Columbus gave his idea a big name, ENTERPRISE OF THE INDIES, and tried to sell it to Portugal's King John II. Thinking and his committee of experts said "No!"

IT MAKES PERFECT SENSE! WE CAN REACH THE EAST BY SAILING WEST! THINK OF ALL THE SPICES AND GOLD! PORTUGAL COULD BECOME A WORLD POWER.



I BET OTHER COUNTRIES WOULD JUMP AT THE CHANCE TO BEAT THE PORTUGUESE TO THE ORIENT. BARTHOLOMEW, YOU GO ASK HENRY VIII OF ENGLAND AND CHARLES VIII OF FRANCE IF THEY WILL FINANCE OUR VOYAGE. I'LL GO ASK THE KING AND QUEEN OF SPAIN.

CAN'T WE DRAW STRAWS?



So in 1485 Columbus and little five-year-old Diego (whose mother had died) sailed into the Spanish harbor of Palos and started up the road.

HOW CAN I MEET THE KING AND QUEEN, AND WHO WILL TAKE CARE OF DIEGO?

ARE WE THERE YET?



At La Rabida, a Catholic monastery overlooking the harbor, Fray Juan Perez, a kindly friar, provided help.

SO THAT'S MY IDEA, PEREZ...

SOUNDS GREAT! THE QUEEN IS MY FRIEND. I'LL ASK HER TO SEE YOU, AND I'LL TAKE GOOD CARE OF DIEGO.



In 1486 King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella received Columbus at court in Cordoba. Isabella—at 35 the same age as Columbus—expressed interest, but Ferdinand had his doubts. They asked a committee of geographers to study the Enterprise of the Indies proposal.

YOUR PLAN HAS POSSIBILITIES.

BUT FIRST LET'S HAVE A FEASIBILITY STUDY!



The committee took its time: four years! Meanwhile, Columbus fell in love with Beatriz Enriquez de Arana of Cordoba, who in 1488 bore him a son, Ferdinand. (As young boys, both Ferdinand and Diego served as pages to Queen Isabella.)



In 1490 the committee gave a negative report, observing that, "since creation no learned man has tried such an idea." The men added:

WHAT MAKES COLUMBUS THINK HE IS SO SMART?

YOU'D HAVE TO SAIL UP HILL COMING BACK.

THE OCEAN IS SO WIDE, IT WOULD TAKE 3 YEARS TO CROSS IT.

IT'S NEVER BEEN DONE BEFORE.

IN OTHER WORDS, "NO."



Disappointed, Columbus decided to go ask the French King for support. (Bartholomew had not succeeded there.) But at Palos, where he went to get Diego, Fray Perez advised him:

FORGET FRANCE. GO BACK AND ASK ISABELLA ONE MORE TIME.

YOU'RE RIGHT, FRAY PEREZ. DIEGO, START PACKING.

RATS! YOU MEAN WEAREN'T GOING TO PARIS?



In January 1492, Columbus went to the camp of Santa Fe, where the Catholic monarchs had just defeated the Moors, ending seven centuries of Moslem power in Spain. King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella were in a good mood.

YOUR MAJESTY, I'VE FIGURED OUT THE SECRET OF THE OCEAN TRADE WINDS. HOW WILL YOU SUPPORT MY VOYAGE TO THE INDIES?

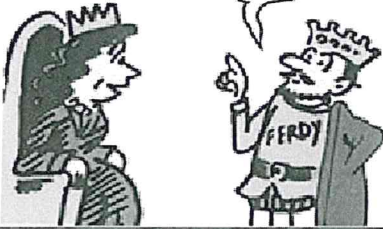
WELL, IT'S MAKING MORE SENSE NOW.



Isabella finally said "Yes," causing Columbus to write later: "Everyone else was disbelieving, but to the Queen, nobody, God gave the spirit of understanding..."

WE CAN CONVERT MANY HEATHENS TO CHRISTIANITY.

ALSO GRAB PLENTY OF ASIAN RICHES BEFORE SOME OF THOSE GREEDY NATIONS CAN GET THERE! SOUNDS FEASIBLE TO ME, MY DEAR.



The Spanish monarchs appointed Columbus "Admiral of the Ocean Sea" and governor of any lands he might discover on the way to the Indies.

PLUS, YOU GET 10 PERCENT OF ANY WEALTH YOU FIND.

WILL THAT BE AFTER TAXES, SIRE?



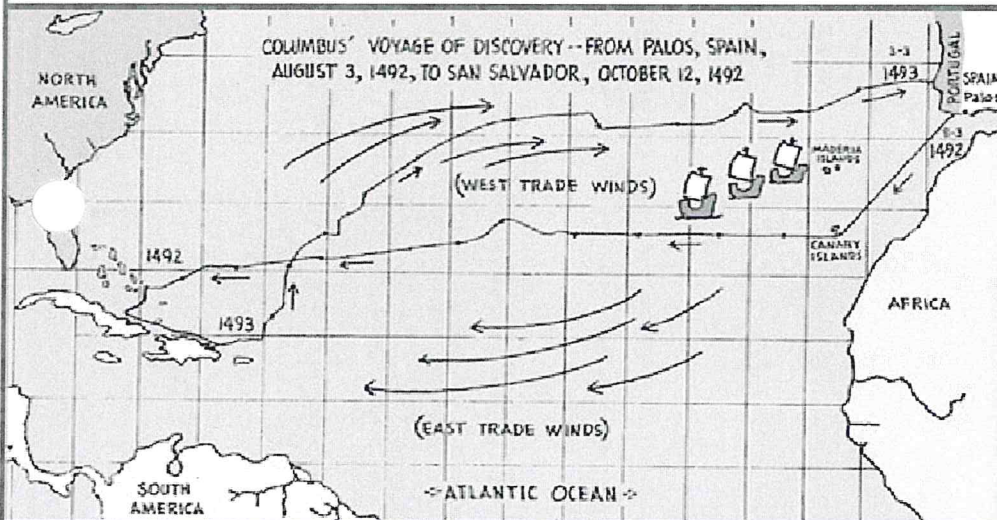
On August 3, 1492, the Nina, Pinta, and Santa Maria sailed with Columbus and ninety crewmen first to the Canary Islands and then due west—to the edge of the unknown.

HEY, I CAN SEE JAPAN ALREADY.

AFRAID NOT SIR -- YOU'RE LOOKING BACK AT THE CANARY ISLANDS. JAPAN IS THAT WAY.



CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS: VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY, 1492



October 10, after seeing no land for a month, the sailors threatened mutiny. But Columbus—true to his dream—convinced them their goal was within reach. They agreed to sail onward three more days.

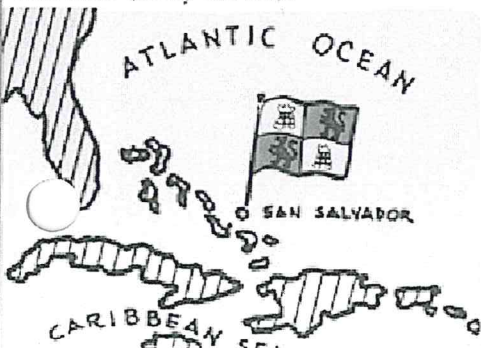
BY SAN FERNAUDO, WE'RE GOING TO FIND THE INDIES! SAIL ON !!

"SAN FERNAUDO" I GUESS HE MEANS BUSINESS.



Two days later Rodriga Triana on the Pinta cried out, "tierra, tierra!" ("land, land!"). And so, on October 12—71 days out of Spain—Columbus and his crew landed on a small island in the Bahamas. Giving thanks to God, Columbus named the island San Salvador (Holy Savior).

Certain he had arrived in the Indies, Columbus named the peaceful natives who greeted him "Indians." They thought the Spaniards were "men from Heaven."



GREETINGS, INDIANS, I CLAIM THIS LAND FOR SPAIN!

CAN HE DO THAT?



Columbus then explored the island of Haiti (which he named Hispaniola) and Cuba (which he thought was China). He searched for gold and the Chinese ruler Kublai Khan. (Isabella had given him a letter for the great Khan.) But all he found were Indians smoking tobacco.

I HAVE AN IMPORTANT LETTER. CAN YOU SEE THAT IT REACHES THE KHAN?

NO KHAN DO, HA! HA!



After ten weeks of exploring, Columbus sailed back to Spain, bringing home seven Indians, p^ots, corn, tobacco, hammocks, and only a little gold.



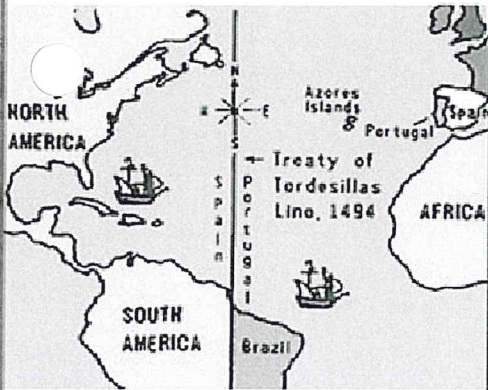
Spain welcomed Columbus as a hero; he had done the impossible! Listening to his triumphant report, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella allowed the Admiral of the Ocean Sea to sit in their presence, a rare tribute.



Portugal tried to claim the islands Columbus had discovered. So in 1493 Spain asked Pope Alexander VI (a Spaniard) to intervene. The Pope drew a line of demarcation 100 leagues (300 miles) west of the Azores Islands, giving Spain all non-Christian lands to the West and Portugal those to the east.



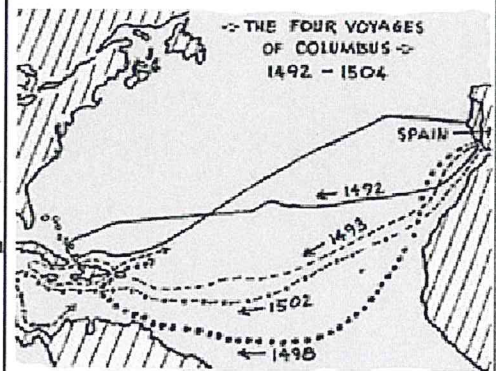
In 1494 the Treaty of Tordesillas confirmed the pope's decision, with one change: Portugal felt cheated out of South America, so the Pope moved the dividing line 270 leagues farther west, giving her Brazil.



Meanwhile, Columbus made a return voyage (with 17 ships and about 1300 men) to establish a trading colony on Hispaniola. The Arawak Indians on Hispaniola—enslaved to work in gold mines and infected with European diseases—suffered terribly at the hands of the Spaniards; within twenty years, only about 250 of 5,000,000 survived.

Columbus, a brilliant seaman, managed poorly on land. Unable to control cruelty toward the Indians, and participating in it, he was accused by rivals of unfitnes and brought to Spain in chains. The monarchs restored his freedom and his status as an explorer but not his titles and glory.

Between 1492 and 1504, Columbus made four voyages to the New World. All his life, however, he remained convinced he had reached Asia.



And so, when the Italian Amerigo Vespucci sailed the South American coast in 1497 and called it a New World, a German mapmaker in 1507 named the New World America.



LATER FERDINAND HONORED HIS FATHER IN A UNIQUE WAY: AFTER READING IN SENECA'S *MEDEA* (2ND CENTURY), "AN AGE WILL COME AFTER YEARS WHEN THE OCEAN WILL LOOSE THE CHAINS OF THINGS, AND A HUGE LAND LIE REVEALED..." FERDINAND WROTE IN THE MARGIN, "THIS PROPHECY WAS FULFILLED BY MY FATHER... THE ADMIRAL IN THE YEAR 1492."



Columbus died in 1506. But his adventurous spirit lives on, inspiring all who read of him to dream big dreams—and with optimism, determination, and courage make them come true.

