

Africans and Native Americans

*The Language of Race
and the Evolution of Red-Black Peoples*

SECOND EDITION

Jack D. Forbes

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It is my desire to dedicate this study to Professor L. H. C. Hulsman of the Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam.

Jack D. Forbes

Introduction

Thousands of volumes have been written about the historical and social relations existing between Europeans and the Native Peoples of the Americas and between Europeans and Africans, but relations between Native Americans and Africans have been sadly neglected. (The entire Afro–Native American cultural exchange and contact experience is a fascinating and significant subject, but one largely obscured by a focus upon European activity and European colonial relations with 'peripheral' subject peoples.)

Africans and Americans must now be studied together without their relations always having to be obscured by the separations established through the work of scholars focusing essentially upon some aspect of European expansion and colonialism.

(It is especially important to note here, at the very beginning of this study, that those relations do not begin only in the Americas. On the contrary, they also take place in Europe and in Africa and perhaps also in the Pacific.)

Contacts in Europe can be seen as significant because both the African and Native American ancestry there has tended to be absorbed into the general European society, and whatever earlier cultural developments have occurred have now become part of modern European culture. The impact of non-European peoples upon European societies directly *within Europe* has not, as of yet, been fully explored; and, of course, there is now a large new group of Native Americans and people of African background in Europe.

Contacts in the Americas have been studied to some extent but much work remains to be done. Contacts in Africa have been studied very little.

The fact of a relatively small but steady American presence in Africa from at least the early 1500s onward may well prove to be a vital area for future research, since one would expect to find Native American cultural influences in regions such as Angola–Zaire and Ghana–Guinea–Cape Verde especially.

It is, of course, interesting to note that some Africans were already exposed to American cultural influences before leaving Africa. The cultures brought by

Africans to the Americas may already have been influenced, especially by Brazilian Native Americans. The extent of such cultural exchange will obviously have to be worked out in careful field research in Angola, Ghana, Guinea, Cabo Verde, and other places, as well as in archival records.

This study has a modest objective, in that it seeks to introduce the subject and to primarily deal with a series of basic issues or questions which have to be resolved before proceeding to a detailed analysis of the precise nature of African-American relations. Raymond Williams, in *Keywords* (1976), has shown the importance of confronting the issue of meaning as a fundamental aspect of scholarship. I propose to apply his example to the basic terms which inform our understanding of African-American contact and mixture, terms which are part of a nomenclature developed under colonialism and racism.

Long ago, when first working with my own Powhatan-Renápe people of Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, and surrounding areas, I discovered that the meaning of racial terms was a controversial issue.

I learned that terms such as 'mulatto' and 'colored' were used, or had been used, in Virginia in a quite different way from their usage in most books including modern dictionaries. I also discovered that many questions were not answerable within the context of the latter, such as: 'what do you call a person of mixed American, European and African ancestry?' No one provided any answer, because, it seems, the American mixture with the African was generally subordinated to a focus upon (or a fascination with) only the black-white nexus.

The modern dictionaries all stated that a mulatto was the child of a black and a white or someone of mixed black and white ancestry. But where did that leave those who were also part-Indian?

In any case, I discovered that Native American descendants had been legally defined as mulattoes in Virginia in 1705, without having any African ancestry. Thus I knew that the dictionaries were wrong and that there was a lot that was hidden from view by the way most authors had written about the southern United States, about slavery, and about colored people. I later discovered also that the same thing was true as regards the Caribbean, Brazil, and much of the rest of the Americas.

The unraveling of *mis-conceptions* is almost as important as the creation of new conceptions, it would seem, and this is nowhere more true than in the realm of race relations. So before one can seriously reconstruct Black African-Native American contacts one must clear away a lot of mistakes, mistakes arising out of the very nature of discourse in a racist-colonial setting as well as mistakes arising from the assumption that the current meanings assigned to racial terms have an equal validity for the past.

As the reader will see, there is hardly a racial term which has a clear and consistent meaning over time (and space). For example, the term 'Indian' (or *indio*) has been applied to many peoples including the Indians of South Asia as well as all groups found in the 'West' Indies (the Americas) and the 'East' Indies (Filipinos, Chinese, Japanese, etc.). The term 'negro' has been applied to Black Africans, the Indians of India, Native Americans, Japanese, and slaves

of whatever ancestry. 'Black' has been used for all of the above and for non-whites in general.

By way of illustration, in attempting to grapple with the problem of Black African-Native American mixture and especially with the question of to what extent African-Americans throughout the Americas are part American Indian, it is first necessary to focus upon a clarification of such racial or ethnic terms as were used in the colonial and early national periods. (Key terms include: mulatto, *pardo*, colored, free colored, negro, zambo, or sambo, mustee and mestizo.)

As noted, many modern writers, whether popular or scholarly, have simply assumed that they could transfer sixteenth-, seventeenth-, or eighteenth-century racial terms to contemporary usage without any critical examination of meaning. For example, it has been assumed generally that a mulatto of, let us say, 1600, would be of the same racial background as a mulatto of 1865 or of 1900; or that a 'colored person' of 1830 would be the same as a 'colored person' of 1930.

Moreover, it has also been assumed that terms such as 'free negro' and 'free colored' can be used interchangeably and that one could, in more recent usage, substitute 'free Black' for either of these.

Many prominent writers have, it seems, been very lax in their failure to consider that the 'meaning' of a word is never a timeless, eternal constant but rather is a constantly evolving changing pointer. Thus the word 'coach' as used in the nineteenth-century (stage coach or other horse-drawn vehicle, then later a railway coach) has today become something different (for example, motor coach). And while we can trace the obvious connection between stage coach, railway coach, and motor coach it is still quite clear that we would be badly mistaken to interpret 'get on the coach' of 1840, for example as meaning 'get on the bus' of 1960! And, of course, the term 'coach' has other meanings today, aside from motor coach.

We may think we know what the word 'negro' means today but do we know what it meant in 1800 in Virginia? And did it mean the same as 'colored'? The answer to these questions is not and cannot be an exercise in deductive logic or *a priori* reasoning. It is, rather, an empirical problem which can only be solved by discovering through documentary and other evidence exactly how such terms were used. This is not an easy task, for reasons which will become clearer later.

In short, we cannot move, historiographically, from word to word or concept to concept across the centuries. We must instead actually engage the primary data in order to 'touch reality'. When we discover that one of Sir Francis Drake's pilots (not an airline pilot, incidentally) in 1595 was 'ysleño de nación mulato' and sailed from Plymouth, England (although being an 'islander' in origin), we should not picture him as if he were a *mulato* of 1981 or of 1900. *His precise racial background is not established by the use of the term 'mulato'*, as we shall see. We must ascertain from other evidence, if we can, what the Spanish author meant by his usage of this category.

During the summer of 1981 newspapers in the United States carried stories

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in context
Britain

about 'blacks' rioting in British cities. What they failed to tell their readers was that in Britain today the term 'black' is applied not only to Africans or West Indians (of whatever shade or mixture) but also to people from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and even to Latin Americans. (For example, a very light-skinned Chilean lady refugee living in Oxford was surprised to be referred to as a 'black'. Her dark hair, Spanish accent, and immigrant status had caused her to become 'black', at least to some English contacts.)

I have before me an appeal to 'Drop All Charges against Black Youth' which refers to the arrest of some 'young Asians' in Bradford during the summer of 1981.¹

This modern British usage (which usage extends well back into earlier years) reflects very vividly the problem of assuming that English terms such as 'black', 'negro', 'mulatto', or 'colored', can be interpreted easily when found in documents of earlier eras.

When the Europeans first established intensive contacts with Africans and part-Africans, they met people with a great variety of physical characteristics. This was especially true in the Iberian peninsula and Mediterranean area, but undoubtedly many of the 'Moors' and 'Blackamoors' who came to England in Shakespeare's day were of north African as well as sub-Saharan background and from many distinct nations. Later in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, diversity was also encountered, as when most English vessels sailing to the Caribbean dropped anchor at the Cabo Verde Islands. One writer in 1647 commented on the extreme variability of physical types met there and the great beauty of the mixed Cabo Verde women.²

We must realize, therefore, that at the very beginning of the modern period racial terms as used by Iberians and as acquired by the English were going to refer to part-African peoples who might not only have the features of the Gulf of Guinea (variable as they are) but also every conceivable combination of central African, Ibero-African, Afro-Arabic and American-African mixtures.

And for our purposes it is important to stress that many Africans from the Sahel or 'savannah' belt (Hausa etc.), as well as from parts of East Africa, sometimes resemble American-African hybrids (with various combinations of high cheekbones, prominent aquiline noses, semi-wavy or 'bushy' hair, 'oriental' eye shapes, etc.). Why is this important? Simply because many part-American, part-African persons (with no European ancestry) could easily be subsumed under a racial term applicable to 'pure-blood' Africans, and would not, in any case, be especially recognizable to most observers as being part-American. The predominant physical type of the slaves brought in from Africa may have been that of coastal West Africa, but enough variability existed so that terms such as 'Blackamoor', *negro*, and 'black' cannot *a priori* be assumed to be useful for determining precise genetic identity.³

Many color terms, such as 'dark', 'swarthy' and 'brown' are also quite ambiguous, as should be obvious. In a 1756 list of militia-men in King and Queen County, Virginia, for example, one finds, in addition to fair-complexioned persons, Thomas Delany as 'dark', Benjamin Wilson as 'dark', James Willimore as 'Brown', John Major as 'Brown', John Kemp as 'swarthy'

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(but with light hair and freckles), John Evans as 'dark', and Richard Riddle as 'dark'. All or most of these men were born in Virginia and several were 'planters'. Were they part-American or part-African? Certainly we cannot judge their 'race' from such color-referents alone.

Similarly, in 1768, an advertisement appeared in New Jersey for 'an apprentice lad named John Foster, born in the Jerseys, about 5 feet 8 inches high, of a dark complexion, and pitted with the small-pox, wears his hair with a false que to it.'³

In any case, the colonial and state courts in the United States frequently had difficulty in determining exact racial status. In 1859 a North Carolina court called in a planter as an expert who could distinguish between 'the descendants of a negro and a white person, and the descendants of a negro and an Indian.' He could also, allegedly, differentiate between a pure African and a 'white cross' or an 'Indian cross'.⁴ Unfortunately, most of us today lack that kind of certain expertise, whatever phenotypical features are seized upon as evidence providing 'proof'.

In our efforts to reconstruct the story of Black African-Native American relations (it is necessary, then, to begin with an analysis of the evolution of the meaning of racial terms, for only in this way can we hope to identify people of American and African ancestry in the past. But the study of words alone does not, in fact, reveal the subtleties of actual usage. And thus I have had to delve into many aspects of Native American-Black African history in order to reconstruct the environments in which racial and color terms have evolved and been given a new or different content.)

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The reader will find a great deal of the social and cultural history of Afroamericans and Native Americans in this work, woven together with broad social history as it relates to colonialism, slavery and racism. *But the primary purpose of this study is not to write a comprehensive account of Native American-African relations but rather to establish a sound empirical and conceptual basis for further study in this area and, more importantly, to demonstrate beyond any doubt that old assumptions must be set aside.* This latter is especially true as regards the extent of Native American-African mixture and the significant genetic contribution of Americans to present-day 'black' or 'Afroamerican' populations in the Caribbean, Brazil, the United States, and elsewhere.

task

This work will, I hope, make a major contribution to the field of the history of race relations and, more specifically, to the study of the formation of plantation, creole, and colonial cultures in the Americas and elsewhere. Because of the data presented herein, a great deal of revision will have to be made in these areas, as well as in the fields studying the evolution of modern African, Afroamerican, and Native American cultures.

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Finally, I hope that this study of interethnic contact and racial classifying will lead to progress in the field of human rights by highlighting and clarifying a major area of abuse: the arbitrary and often racist practice of defining the identities of other human beings by powerful outsiders, as well as by governments and institutions.

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Africans and Americans: Inter-Continental Contacts Across the Atlantic, to 1500

AMERICANS CROSSING THE ATLANTIC BEFORE COLUMBUS

The meeting of Native Americans and Africans, of people from two great continents of the earth, can be described in many ways. A fitting mode in which to begin is to cite a Native American story from Guyana, presented by Jan Carew, in which Nyan, an African sky-spirit, along with the African earth-mother, the African river-mother, and Anancy the Spider-trickster met the Great Spirit, the Father Sun, and other spirit-powers of the Americans.¹

The next day, all the peoples of the earth complained to Father Sun and for the first time, the ebony people, who were neighbors of Tihona, made themselves heard. . . . The Great Spirit invited Nyan, the anthracite-coloured Sky-God . . . to share his domains. . . . They [the African spirits] agreed on condition that the Great Spirit, in turn, shared the distant kingdoms of earth and sky that Nyan ruled.²

Pia, an American child of the Sun and of Tihona, the Mist-woman, became a brother to Anancy the Spiderman, and both agreed to live among human beings.

Thus the spirit-powers of the Black Africans are said to have established a close cooperative relationship with the spirit-powers of the Americans. This same cooperation and reciprocal relationship can also be seen in Brazil, where Tupinamba and Guaraní *candomblés* exist side by side with those of Congo-Angola and Nago orientation and where Native American and African spiritual powers are called upon for assistance in various contexts.³

The dimensions of African-American contact can also be seen in a painting by the Dutch artist Jan Steen (1645) in which the making of a marriage contract in the Netherlands area is depicted. The future bridegroom is of African ancestry while a man of American race is an active onlooker on the right-hand side of the scene. The bride is of European Dutch background.⁴

Thus in spiritual as well as secular contexts, the American and African peoples have interacted with each other in a variety of settings and situations. These interactions may well have begun in very ancient times.

J. A. Rogers, Leo Wiener, Ivan Van Sertima, and others have cited evidence, including the "Olmec" stone heads of Mexico, pointing towards early contacts between American and African cultures.⁵ I do not propose here to explore the early archaeological evidence which, in essence, requires a separate study, but instead, I will cite briefly some tantalizing data which suggests contacts in *both* directions.

It is now well known that the Atlantic Ocean contains a series of powerful 'rivers' or currents which can facilitate the movement of floating objects from the Americas to Europe and Africa as well as from the latter to the Americas. In the North Atlantic the most prominent current is that of the 'Gulfstream' which swings through the Caribbean and then moves in a northeasterly direction from Florida to the Grand Banks off Terra Nova (Newfoundland), turning then eastwards towards the British Isles and the Bay of Biscay. This current has carried debris from Jamaica and the Caribbean to the Hebrides and Orkneys of Scotland. Moreover, Jean Merrien tells us that valuable hardwood was commonly washed ashore along the coasts of Ireland and Wales: 'This timber from the ocean, borne by the Gulf Stream, really came from the rivers of Mexico.' Merrien, a student of trans-Atlantic navigation by small vessels, also states that

the first attempt – the first success – [of crossing the Atlantic by one man] could only come from the American side, . . . because the crossing is much less difficult in that direction. A French writer has said (justly, in all probability) that if America had been the Old World its inhabitants would have discovered Europe long before we did, in fact, discover America.

This is because of the prevailing winds from the west as well as the currents. One can, says Merrien, sail in a 'straight line' from Boston via Newfoundland to Ireland or Cornwall 'with almost the certainty of fair winds'. The other direction requires 'twice the distance, thrice the time, and four times the sweat'.

In the 1860s a 48-foot-long sloop, *Alice*, was navigated from North America to the Isle of Wight in less than 20 days with very favorable winds; and in recent times a wooden raft was propelled from Canada to northern Europe by means of this ocean river. Moreover, Stephen C. Jett cites the 68-day passage of one William Verity from Florida to Ireland in a 12-foot sloop as well as the crossing by two men from New York to the Scilly Islands in 55 days in a 17-foot dory powered only by oars. Thus the Gulfstream demonstrably can propel small craft successfully from the Americas to Europe.

Perhaps this is the explanation behind the local Dutch tradition that holds that in AD 849 one Zierik arrived by boat to found the coastal city of Zierikzee and why the local people believed that he had arrived in an Inuit (Greenland) kayak which was on display there for several centuries. The kayak may, indeed, not have been Zierik's original craft but it very possibly points toward a genuine folk tradition of a crossing of the Atlantic from the west.⁶

In this context it is also worth noting a report that Columbus had information about strange people from the west who had reached Ireland prior to 1492, doubtless via the Gulfstream. Merrien tells us that Bartholomew or Christopher Columbus had made marginal notes in their copy of Pius II's *Historia* (1477) to the effect that 'some men have come from Cathay by heading east. We have seen more than one remarkable thing, especially in Galway, in Ireland, two people tied to two wrecks, a man and a woman, a superb creature.' Merrien also believes that the first documented case of a single navigator crossing the Atlantic consists in the record of a Native American who reached the Iberian peninsula long before Columbus' day.

In the Middle Ages there arrived one day on the coast of Spain a man "red and strange" in a craft described as a hollowed tree. From the recorded description, which specifically states that he was not a Negro, he might well have been a native of America in a *piragua* – a dug-out canoe . . . the unfortunate man, ill and enfeebled, died before he had been taught to make himself understood.

To return to our own discussion of the Gulfstream, it should be noted that this eastward-flowing current has a southern extension which swings southwards along the west coast of Europe to the Iberian peninsula and on to the Canary Islands. From the latter region it turns southwestwards and then westwards, returning to the Americas in the vicinity of Trinidad and rejoining the Caribbean segment of the Gulfstream. Thus it would be theoretically possible to float in a great circle from the Caribbean to Europe and northwestern Africa and then back again to the Caribbean.

A North American archaeologist, E. F. Greenman, has argued that the crossing of the North Atlantic was 'feasible' before the end of the Pleistocene period (about 11,000 years ago) 'for a people with kayaks and the Beothuk type of canoe [from Newfoundland], if at that time the ocean was filled with floating ice from the Scandinavian and Labrador glaciers, and from freezing of the sea itself.' The same author attempts to show many parallels between Pleistocene European and American cultures, but sadly neglects African comparisons. In any case, his argument is based solely upon hypothetical European movements towards the Americas, movements which would have had to fight against the currents (and winds) rather than flowing with them.⁷

Bartolomé de las Casas, in his monumental *Historia de las Indias*, cites examples of rafts or canoes (*almadías*), dead Americans, and debris reaching the Azores Islands before 1492. This evidence will be discussed below. Here it is only necessary to note that the Azores lay in an area of weak currents but that, even so, with the help of winds from the west and northwest some boats could reach the islands from the Americas.⁸

In the South Atlantic, as noted, a strong current runs from the west coast of North Africa towards Trinidad. Below that a counter-current is sometimes shown, running eastwards from South America to the Gulf of Guinea. Then a strong current runs westwards from the mouth of the River Zaire (Congo), to the north of the Amazon, where it divides, part joining the northwesterly

current which becomes the Gulfstream and part swinging southwards along the coast of Brazil until it veers eastwards across the Atlantic to Africa again, reaching southwestern Africa, from whence it curves northwards to rejoin the Zaire-Amazon current. Thus, as farther north, a great circle is formed.

Fundamentally, what we see are two great circular rivers in the ocean, the northern circle running in a clockwise direction and the southern circle in a counter-clockwise direction, with a smaller counter-current in between, running eastwards. In the South Atlantic Americans might have reached Africa via the counter-current or, more likely, via the Brazil to southwest Africa current. Africans could have used either the southern (westwards) swing of the North Atlantic circle or the northern (also westwards) swing of the South Atlantic circle, coming from the Sierra Leone-Senegal region or the Congo-Angola region respectively.

Of course, one of the problems with the argument for early trans-Atlantic crossings is that in the modern period such islands as Iceland, Bermuda, the Azores, the Madeiras, the Cabo Verdes, Tristan da Cunha, Ascension, and even São Tomé (off Nigeria and Cameroun) were uninhabited prior to documented Irish, Norse, and Portuguese occupations. On the other hand, some of these islands are small or far from major currents. Bartolomé de las Casas states that the Azores were the *islas Cassitérides* mentioned by Strabo in his *Geography* and which islands were repeatedly visited by the Carthaginians. Allegedly, there lived in the Azores a people who were of *loro* or *baço* color, that is to say, people of the color of Native Americans or intermediate between white and black.⁹ The Canary Islands were inhabited in the fifteenth century by a people who were isolated from nearby Africa and whose cultures somewhat resembled those of some Americans. Moreover, the personal names of the many *canarios* enslaved by the Spanish have a decidedly American 'ring' about them (although such resemblances do not always mean a great deal).¹⁰ The *canarios* are sometimes described as a *loro* or brownish-colored people in the slave registers.

The fact that the islands of Cabo Verde and Madeira were uninhabited in the fifteenth century does indeed pose a problem for African navigation to the Americas; however, that will be discussed later. Now it is necessary to consider briefly evidence relating to the maritime capabilities of Americans in the late fifteenth century, to see whether voyages across the Atlantic might have been feasible.

The Americans of the Caribbean region were outstanding navigators and seamen, as noted by the Spaniards and other Europeans. Christopher Columbus was impressed everywhere by their skill. He noted, for example, that their boats (*barcos y barquillos*) 'which they call *canoas*', were excellently made from a single tree, were very large and long, carrying sometimes 40 or 45 men, two or more *codos* (perhaps a man's breadth) in width. The American boats were unsinkable, and if in a storm they happened to capsize, the sailors simply turned them back over while swimming in the sea, bailing them out with goards carried for that purpose.¹¹ Andrés Bernaldez recorded (from Columbus) that the

Americans navigated in their *canoas* with exceptional agility and speed, with 60 to 80 men in them, each with an oar, and they went by sea 150 leagues or more. They were 'masters of the sea'. (A canoe was later discovered in Jamaica which was 96 feet long, 8 feet broad, made from a single tree.)¹²

Columbus found that the Lucayo people of the Bahamas were not only very well acquainted with Cuba (one and a half days away via canoe) but also knew that from Cuba it was a 'ten days' journey' to the mainland (doubtless Mexico or South America since Florida would have been closer than that). He also saw a boat which was 95 palms long in which 150 persons could be contained and navigate. Others were seen which were of great workmanship and beauty, being expertly carved. A canoe was also seen being navigated successfully by one man in high winds and rough sea.

At Haiti, Columbus learned that that island, or Jamaica, was ten days' journey distant from the mainland and that the people there were clothed (thus referring to Mexico or Yucatan most likely). In another place he learned of a land, 100 leagues away, where gold was mined.¹³

The Arawak and Carib-speaking peoples of the Caribbean were well informed geographically. Columbus captured Caribs in the Antilles (such as Guadeloupe) from whom he learned of the South American mainland, but he also learned of the mainland from Americans living on St Croix and Borinquen (Puerto Rico). Americans who were taken into Europe drew maps there which showed Haiti, Cuba and the Bahamas, as well as 'many other islands and countries' which were named in the native language.¹⁴

It seems quite clear that the geography of the Caribbean basin and the Bahamas, including that of the adjacent mainland, was accurately known to the Americans. Moreover, it seems clear that voyages of 60 to 150 leagues were undertaken (about 180 to 450 miles, figured conservatively at three miles per league although the Spanish nautical league often exceeded that distance).

When Spaniards reached the area of Yucatan in 1517 and again in 1518 they found that the Maya people were already aware of what had transpired on the islands invaded earlier by the Europeans. The Maya were uniformly hostile and, at Campeche, 'they then made signs with their hands to find out whether we came from the direction of the sunrise, repeating the word "Castilan" "Castilan" and we did not understand what they meant by Castilan.' In the latter year the Spaniards met an American woman from Jamaica on the island of Cozumel. She told them

that two years earlier she had started from Jamaica with ten Indians in a large canoe intending to go and fish near some small islands, and that the currents had carried them over to this island where they had been driven ashore, and that her husband and all the Jamaica Indians had been killed and sacrificed.

It seems more likely that the Jamaicans had fled from their home to avoid Spanish slave-raiders and that they did not want to fall under European control; hence her story. In any case, all of the Maya towns along the coast in 1517 were well aware of the threat posed by the Spaniards. This news could have been

conveyed by two Spaniards living among them, but whatever the source the 'news' had spread very widely.

Even more significant, for our purposes, is the fact that when the Spaniards reached Yucatan in 1517 they

saw ten large canoes, called *piraguas*, full of Indians from the town, approaching us with oars and sails. The canoes were large ones made like hollow troughs cleverly cut out from huge single logs, and many of them would hold forty Indians.

The fact that these boats were equipped with sails is indeed interesting, because it means that wind-power could be used to run against currents or to navigate rapidly even where currents were lacking. Clinton R. Edwards also cites other evidence documenting the use of sails by Carib and other American peoples in the Caribbean and by Ecuadorian-north Peruvian sailors in the Pacific, both at the time of initial Spanish contact.

As an example of the navigational capabilities of the Caribbean natives, we can cite the case in 1516 when 70 or 80 Spaniards in a caravel and a *bergantine* (brig) sailed from Santiago de Cuba to the Guanaxa Islands off Honduras (now Roatan). There they enslaved many Guanaxa people and carried them in the caravel to Havana, Cuba. The Americans were subsequently able to overcome their Spanish guards, seizing the sailing ship 'y haciéndose a la vela, cual si fueran expertos navegantes, volvieron a su patria que distaba más de doscientas leguas.' In short, the Americans were such 'expert navigators' that they were able to sail from Havana to Honduras, a distance of more than 200 leagues, in a European vessel with no assistance from any non-Americans; and this after having been kept below decks during their journey to Havana.

The navigational capabilities of the Americans of the Caribbean-Mexican coastal area extend back well into pre-Columbian times, as attested to by pictures of boats found in various codices, murals, and sculptured walls in the Mexico-Yucatan region. In about the tenth century AD also the Mexican leader Quetzalcoatl is recorded as having sailed with a raft to the east (rising sun) from the Gulf coast of central Mexico.¹⁵

Along the Atlantic coast of North America, Americans also went out to sea. On the South Carolina coast, for example, the Sewee outfitted boats with sails and on one occasion a group of natives decided to visit England. They outfitted a canoe with sails and went out into the Atlantic but were picked up by a British vessel and sold as slaves.¹⁶

In 1524 Verrazano saw dugout boats outside Chesapeake Bay which were 20 feet long, while canoes were seen in Narraganset Bay, going out to sea, with 14 or 15 men in them.¹⁷ One report of a later date states that Americans navigated between New Jersey and Chesapeake Bay, using canoes specially fitted out with sails and decks.

But when they want [to go] a distance over the sea, as for instance to Virginia or New Holland, then they fasten two punts [canoes, dugouts] together broadwise with timbers over them, right strongly put together, the deck made completely tight and side board of

planks; sails of rugs and freze [cloth] joined together; ropes and tackle made of bast and slender spruce roots; [and they] also mason for themselves a little fireplace on deck.¹⁸

To the south, along the Brazilian coast, the Portuguese and other Europeans also witnessed American navigation at sea. An Italian traveling with Magellan in 1519 noted that the Brazilians' boats were made from the trunk of a tree, and were so large that each boat held 30 to 40 men. In the 1550s Hans Staden noted that the dugout boats of the Santos–Rio de Janeiro area could hold up to 30 men, were four feet in width, with some being larger and some smaller.

In these they move rapidly with oars, navigating with them as far as they wish. When the sea is rough they take the canoes ashore until good weather comes again. They do not go more than two leagues straight out to sea but along the coast they navigate far.¹⁹

In 1565 the Jesuit José de Anchieta stated that the Americans of the same region had dozens or more *canoas* made from a single tree, with other pieces of the same cutting used as 'boards' well attached with vines. They were large enough to carry 20 to 25 persons with their arms and supplies, and some held up to 30 persons. With these boats they were able to cross 'such fierce [*bravas*] seas that it is a frightful thing and not to be imagined or believed without seeing'. Anchieta also noted that if the canoes turned over, the navigators simply bailed out the boat, turned it right side up, and carried on.

Thus the Brazilian boats were also very well made, were very fast and manoeuvrable and could be righted at sea if necessary. They were used to carry warriors and supplies over considerable distances along the coast, as, for example, from Santos (São Vicente) to Rio de Janeiro.²⁰

In general, it would appear that the Americans of the Caribbean built the biggest boats and were most accustomed to going far out to sea, while the Atlantic coastal groups were more oriented to staying within a certain distance of land (six miles or so). On the other hand, all were capable of being carried out to sea by strong winds and currents and yet surviving rough water.

It should also be noted that several groups along the Pacific coast manufactured seaworthy craft and were capable of reaching Polynesia by means of favorable currents. It is beyond the scope of this study to discuss such voyages but one must note that many Pacific island peoples may very well be of American ancestry mixed with varying proportions of 'Oceanic Negroid' (African?) and Malayo–Indonesian stocks.²¹

Returning to the Atlantic, it is interesting to note that there is some additional evidence to support the notion that Americans crossed in an easterly direction. For example, Pliny, in his *Natural History*, reported that

Nepos de septentrionali circuito tradit Quinto Metello Celeri, Afrani in consulatu collegae sed tum Galliae proconsuli, Indos a rege Sueborum dono datos, que ex India commercii causa navigantes tempestatibus essent in Germaniam abrepti.

Thus we learn that Cornelius Nepos, an author of several works in the last century BC, and virtually a contemporary observer, recorded that as to the northern circuit of the seas (from France northwards)

that Quintus Metellus Celer, colleague of Afranius in the consulship [of Rome] but at the time pro-consul of Gaul [south of the Alps] received from the [Suevi] king . . . a present of Indians, who on a trade voyage had been carried off their course by storms to Germany.

In order to interpret this event, which occurred about 60 BC, we must keep in mind that for Pliny Germany commenced far to the south of Denmark (that is in the Belgium–Netherlands region most likely). Pliny states that in the time of Augustus 'Germaniam classe circumvecta ad Cimbrorum promunturium' (a fleet 'sailed round Germany' to the promontory of the Cimbri, in Denmark).²²

Also Pliny believed that the *Indos* had reached a Germanic-speaking zone by way of a fictitious sea which was thought by him to have connected India with the Baltic. We know, however, that the only way that people looking like 'Indians' could have been driven by a storm to northern Europe would have been across the Atlantic from America. It should also be noted that the *Suevi* group of Germanic-speaking tribes is thought by some to have included the Angles, a people living at a later date along the North Sea shore of Germany.

Several later writers, citing the Nepos account, assume that the 'Indians' were driven across the Atlantic. Certainly there is no reason to doubt that the builders of Teotihuacan and the Olmecs were engaged in widespread trade or that they possessed navigational capabilities, to mention only two American groups active in the 60 BC time-period.²³

Archaeological evidence may also support later eastbound voyages, since Inuit (Eskimo) type harpoon-heads have been found at two locations in Ireland and Scotland. For example, a harpoon-head of very worn condition was found in County Down, Ireland of which it is 'absolutely certain, that it is of Archaic Eskimo origin'.

Specifically, this harpoon-head is of 'Thule type', dated probably between the tenth and thirteenth centuries. It was very unlikely to have been carried to Ireland by a seal or a walrus and most likely was taken there by a living Inuit hunter, perhaps on a Norse vessel. The authors of the report on this find state that 'so far no harpoon-head of the mesolithic period has been recovered from Ireland, and the present specimen has no parallels among prehistoric European finds.'²⁴ The harpoon-head found in Scotland may be of 'old Thule' type and is perhaps earlier in date than the Irish discovery. It was found before 1876 in Aberdeenshire, in sandy ground.²⁵

Inuit navigation will be discussed below, but here it is worth noting that the Angmagssalik people of east Greenland in the eighteenth century used umiaks to journey all the way around the southern tip of Greenland to barter on the west coast. Often they did not beach the umiaks but moored them in the water, having no need to dry them out. Such boats *might* have survived the kind of strong easterly winds which in 1347 drove a small Norse boat all the way from Markland (Labrador) to Iceland.²⁶

Las Casas and other writers report that Columbus knew before his 1492 voyage of Americans reaching the Azores, along with 'reeds', pine trees and other debris driven by westerly and northwesterly winds. Certain Azorean

settlers had told him that the sea had tossed up on the island of Las Flores the bodies of two dead persons, 'who seemed to have very wide faces and features unlike those of Christians'. Moreover, on another occasion, it was said that in the Cabo de la Verga and its vicinity *almadías* or canoes were seen outfitted with a sort of 'house'. These canoes were driven from place to place or island to island by the force of winds, and the occupants had apparently perished or disappeared while the vessels drifted for a time in the Azores region.

Also it was known that a Portuguese pilot had seen an 'ingeniously carved piece of wood' some 450 leagues to the west of Portugal, which wood was being driven from the west and had not been carved with iron tools.²⁷

AFRICANS CROSSING THE ATLANTIC BEFORE COLUMBUS

Columbus was also aware that Africans may well have utilized ocean currents to navigate to the Americas. His 1498 voyage specifically used the southern route from the Cabo Verde Islands to Trinidad, an easy crossing travelled consistently thereafter by Spaniards, Portuguese, Britons and others. Columbus was especially intrigued to see what lands lay in the South American direction, since the king of Portugal had said that there was *tierra firme* in that direction and was greatly inclined to make discoveries to the southwest 'y que se habían hallado canoas que salían de la costa de Guinea, que navegaban al Oeste con mercaderías.' In short, the Portuguese had found boats (*canoas*) which left from West Africa to navigate to the west with merchandise.²⁸

In the Gulf of Paría area, near Trinidad, Columbus found that the Americans trajeron pañezuelos de algodón muy labrados y tejidos, con colores y labores como los llevan de Guinea, de los ríos a la Sierra Leona, sin diferencia, y dice que no deben comunicar con aquéllos, porque hay de aquí donde él agora esta, mas de 800 leguas; abajo dice que paracen almaizares.

Thus he saw well-made multi-colored scarves or sashes, identical with those of Sierra Leone, but because of the distance he thought that the two peoples 'ought not' to be in communication. Later Columbus stated that each American wore scarves which resembled *almaizares* (Moorish sashes), one for the head and one for the rest of the body.²⁹

Nonetheless, one of Columbus' motives in examining the area around Trinidad was to

experimentar lo que decían los indios desta Española, que había venido a ella de la parte del Austro y del Sueste gente negra, y que trae los hierros de las açagayas de un metal a que llaman guanín, de lo cual había enviado a los reyes hecho el ensaye, donde se halló que de trienta y dos pantes, las diez y ocho eran de oro y las seis de plata y las ocho de cobre.

Thus, Columbus wanted to verify the truth of what the Americans of Haiti had stated previously, to the effect that 'black people' had come from the south and

southeast and that their *azagaya* (spear) heads were made of *guanín*, a brass or bronze-like mixture of gold, silver and copper.

Las Casas doubted the truth of one of Columbus' stories, about an island with only women,

como lo que aquí dice que entendía haber isla que llamaba Guanín donde había mucho oro, y no era sino que había en alguna parte guanín mucho, y esto era cierto especie de oro bajo que llamaban guanín, que es algo morado, el cual cognoscen por el olor y estímanlo en mucho.

Thus the existence of an island of Guanín where much gold was to be found was also doubted. Probably in some region there was much *guanín*, which was a base type of gold (*oro*), somewhat 'purplish' (*morado*), esteemed much by the Americans and known by its smell. Significantly, the Americans of the Gulf of Paría area possessed pieces of gold but it was 'muy bajo, que parecía sobredorado' (very low-grade, appearing to be alloyed with, or gilded over silver or base metal). No evidence of 'black people' was found in the Trinidad-Paría region, the Americans being either of *indio* color or near-white, many being 'tan blancos como nosotros y mejores cabellos y bien cortados' ('as white as us and better hair, well-cut')³⁰

Thus it seems likely that *guanín* was a base alloy or gilding of gold which was quite common in the Caribbean region. It may well be that the 'black people' who brought spears tipped with it to Haiti were only Americans painted black (a common practice) and not Africans. (One must also remember that Columbus' knowledge of American language was virtually non-existent.)

In 1464-5 Alviso da Ca'da Mosto wrote a description of his visit of a few years before to the West African coast. He noted that the West Africans of the kingdom of Senegal (to Cape Verde) were using *azagaie* (spears) with worked and barbed iron heads, and that the Wolofs of Senegal obtained from Gambia curved *alfanges* (swords) made of iron 'sem nenhum aco (azzale)', without steel.

He also noted that they did not have ships, nor were any seen, but those Africans living along the river of Senegal and by the sea had some *zoppoli*, called *almadie* (*almadías*) by the Portuguese (dugout boats), the largest of which carried only three or four men and which were used for fishing, as noted:

Non hanno navilii né mai li viddero, salvo dapoi che hanno avuto conocimiento de' Portogallesi. Vero è che coloro che abitano sopra questo fiume, e alcuni di quelli che stanno alle marine, hanno alcuni zoppoli, cioè almadie tutte d'un legno, che portano da tre in quattro uomini al piú nelle maggiori, e con queste vanno alle volte a pescare, e passano il fiume e vanno di loco a loco.³¹

Only very small *almadías* were seen beyond Cabo Verde also and this, coupled with the fact that the Cape Verde Islands were found to be uninhabited, without any trace of occupancy, would seem to argue against much West African marine navigation, at least in the years 1455-63.³² The use of iron spear-points also tends to argue against the accuracy of Columbus' information relative to 'black people' reaching Haiti with spear-points of a softer metal.

(One should note that the Africans of the Cape Verde mainland were reported as using bows and arrows, rather than spears, in the Ca'da Mosto narrative.)

It is possible that Columbus, who probably never did understand what the Americans of Haiti were saying, was confused and that the *guanín*-using people were different from the black people mentioned. On the other hand, the evidence is perhaps unconvincing by and of itself.

There are, however, bits and pieces of data tending to at least provide some support for West African voyages to the Americas. For example, Pedro Mártir de Anglería obtained information (at second hand), to the effect that in 1513 Vasco Núñez de Balboa met members of a 'tribe of Ethiopians' in Panama. While crossing the peninsula, Balboa reached the native village of Cuarecua on the Caribbean side of the summit of the mountain and

encontraron allí esclavos negros de una región que dista de Cuarecua sólo dos días, en cual no se crían más que negros, y estos feroces y sobremanera crueles. Piensen que en otro tiempo pasaron de la Etiopia negros a robar y que, naufragando, se establecieron en aquellas montañas. Los de Cuarecua tienen odios intestino con esos negros, y se esclavizan mutuamente o se matan.

Thus the Spaniards actually are said to have seen black slaves belonging to the Americans but they learned that these slaves came from a totally black village located two days' journey away, and they conjectured that the blacks had come from Ethiopia (Black Africa) at some earlier date.

López de Gómara also reports that when Núñez de Balboa reached Cuarecua he found *algunos negros* (some blacks) who were slaves of the American ruler. The Spaniards could only learn that there were 'men of that color close to there, with whom they have frequent war'. López goes on to state that 'these were the first *negros* which they saw in Indias, and I think that no more have been seen since'. The *negros* were 'as of Guinea'. López never visited the Americas and his 1552 work is based on reports received in Spain.³³

Since Panama lies along the current coming westwards from Africa via Trinidad, such a journey is quite possible. On the other hand, it is perhaps more probable that these Africans were runaway slaves from Haiti who conspired with their American hosts to fool the Spaniards about their origins. (It was very common for Americans to concoct stories designed to fool the Europeans, once the latter's avariciousness and imperialistic designs were understood.) Runaway Africans had already joined the Americans on Haiti by 1502 and doubtless some would have tried to leave the island. (Nonetheless, prevailing currents would probably have taken them towards Florida rather than towards Panama, unless they knew how to take advantage of American navigational skills.)

A Jesuit also makes reference (in 1554) to his judgement that some Ethiopians were living beyond the Amazon River region, 'in alia parte maris' (Latin) or 'na outra banda do mar' (Portuguese) but this was secondhand information. Moreover, Black Africans are recorded as having escaped to the forest from Bahia with the help of Americans who captured a Portuguese slave

ship prior to July 1559.³⁴ The 1554 account may indicate that Brazilian Americans knew of the existence of Africa, rather than that Africans were in America.

Thus we are left with intriguing possibilities, but with no hard evidence. Thor Heyerdahl has noted that a rubber boat was able to travel from the Canary Islands to the West Indies in recent times, but early sources tell us that the Canary Islanders had 'no means of navigation'.³⁵ Thus, one sort of evidence tends to balance out the other.

We are, however, still left with a number of significant problems, such as how plants of the banana-plantain family reached the Americas and West Africa, how certain species of cotton spread, whether the yam was present in the pre-Columbian Caribbean, and so on. The spread of banana-plantain-pacoba is of special significance, since it could not remain viable if carried in salt water. The *pacoba*, a banana, was clearly indigenous to South America.

A Brazilian author states that 'if the banana was known in Asia and Africa, what the first chroniclers called the *pacoba*, i.e., the "golden" banana, was not'.³⁶ About 1535 a Portuguese pilot described the bananas of São Tomé Island, Africa. He states that 'they have commenced to plant' there and they are called *abellana*: 'vi hanno cominciato a piantar quella erba che diventa in un anno cosi grande che par arbore, e fa quelli raspia modo di fichi che in Alessandria di Egitto, como ho inteso, chiamano *muse*; in detta isola la domandano *abellana*.' In the 1520s Leo Africanus described the *muse* of Egypt, the same plant as above.³⁷ A report on the Mina area (Ghana) in 1572 stated that bananas were also planted there, 'which in the Indies of Castilla were called *platanos*', and also that near 'Agri' the bananas grew in thickets so that it seemed that no one had to plant them there.³⁸

In Brazil bananas and pacobas were quite important in the food supply. *Bananas asadas* (roasted bananas) were eaten by the Jesuits in 1561 when the wheat supply failed at Bahia, while the Jesuits at Espirito Santo in 1562 had many fruits, 'especially that which is called bananas, which last all the year' and is 'a great aid to the sustenance of this house'.³⁹ When lands were donated for the college of Bahia in 1563 one of the first tasks was to plant *bananas* on them.⁴⁰

In the 1580s Gabriel Soares de Sousa stated of Brazil:

Pacoba é uma fruta natural d'esta terra, a qual se dá em uma arvore muito molle e facil de cortar . . . na India chamam a estas pacobeiras figueiras e as fruto figos . . . e a estas pacobas chama o gentio pacobuçú, que quer dizer pacoba grande.

Ha outra casta, que as indios chamam pacobamirim que quer dizer pacoba pequena.⁴¹

Thus Brazil had several types of native bananas, called pacobas, some large and some small, the latter being the size of fingers and called *pacobamirim*. The large pacobas were said to be known in India as 'figs' and in Brazil as *pacobuzú*.

Brazil also had, by the 1580s, bananas derived from São Tomé of Africa, which in India were said to be called *figos de horta*. 'Os negros de guiné são mas

afeição das bananas que ás pacobas, e d'ellas usam mas suas roças . . . The *negros* of Guinea preferred the São Tomé bananas to the pacobas. In the 1640s George Marcgrave, the young naturalist, described the Brazilian varieties botanically.⁴²

Varieties of the banana-plantain family were widely dispersed throughout the Caribbean region and descriptions of them date back to at least the 1530s. An early English visitor to Barbados (1650s) has drawn pictures of the native varieties on that island, while an English traveller among the Miskito people of Nicaragua found in 1681 that one of their main agricultural plants was the plantain (along with the yam).⁴³

The problem of the dispersal of the banana-pacoba by human action demands more thorough study, but, in any case, it stands as a strong argument for ancient maritime contact between the Americas and either Indonesia, southeast Asia, Africa, or all of these. The dispersal of the sweet potato and other crops from the Americas through the Pacific stands as a related phenomenon. It should be noted that with the exception of American plants being dispersed in the Pacific, virtually all writers dealing with the ancient diffusion of crops and other cultural influences exhibit an extraordinary anti-American bias. If a trait is, for example, found on both sides of the Atlantic most diffusionists *a priori* favor an east-to-west dispersal and simply ignore any possible influences from west to east.⁴⁴

KIDNAPPED AMERICANS IN EUROPE BEFORE 1492

In any case, Americans did not reach Europe and Africa solely by means of voluntary voyages or storm-driven adventures. European expeditions to the Americas are known to have taken thousands of Americans to the east, and some of these involuntary journeys preceded the time of Columbus.

By the ninth century AD, the European frontier was advancing northwards and westwards with Irish and Scottish hermits or monks reaching Iceland. Close behind them were Norse-speaking settlers and raiders from Norway and the various islands north of Scotland. Our knowledge of what happened in this region is shrouded in mystery because the earliest detailed sources, the Icelandic sagas, are of a much later date and are oriented towards the adventures of particular individuals only.

According to the sagas, Greenland was not reached by the Norse until very late in the tenth century, being named at that time by Eric the Red. On the other hand, several bits of information might indicate earlier contact.

First, a papal bull attributed to 834-5 reportedly already mentions both Iceland and Greenland. Secondly, a pale-colored woman with chestnut hair was reportedly seen among the Americans of Vinland (Newfoundland) in c. 1006. Thirdly, when the Norse reached Greenland in c. 985-6 they found

both towards east and west, traces of human dwellings as well as fragments of small boats made of skin and such instruments of stone which made it clear that the same kind

of people had lived [or had journeyed] there, who had peopled Vinland and whom the Greenlanders [Norse] call Skraelings.

Archaeology does not, thus far, support Inuit occupation of the south of Greenland in the 900s although Inuits of the Dorset culture were there in earlier times. Nonetheless, the remains seen by the Norse were clearly of recent origin. This suggests that the abandonment of south Greenland by Dorset people could have been due to raiding by Norse or Celtic pirates in the years prior to 985. If so, it is conceivable that captives were carried back to Europe since both the Norse and Irish possessed slaves in that era.⁴⁵

The Norse who settled in Greenland before AD 1000 made several journeys westward to Markland (Labrador) and Vinland (Terranova or Newfoundland). In 1009 they captured two young Americans in Markland and carried them away to Greenland and, in all probability, to Norway. The Norse sagas state: 'Those boys they kept with them, taught them their language and they were baptized. They gave their mother's name as Vætilldi, that of the father as Uvaegi.'⁴⁶ Thorfinn Karlsefni, the owner of the captives, did not stay long in Greenland but sailed with all of his belongings directly to Norway in c. 1009, later returning to Iceland. Since the Americans were his property and since the information about their learning to speak Norse and being baptized is recorded in an Icelandic saga, we must assume that they were taken to Norway with Karlsefni and perhaps from there to Iceland.⁴⁷ Thus in the year 1010 or thereabouts we have record of the first Americans to reach northern Europe involuntarily in the late pre-Columbian period.

The Norse of Greenland and Iceland thereafter made visits to Markland to obtain timber and other goods, one voyage being as late as 1347 (when their very small vessel was blown from Markland to Iceland). The Greenland Norse also began having military contacts with Inuit people in Greenland in the early 1300s and sporadic hostilities continued for a century or more. Since the Norse had a history of using Irish and Scots as slaves, we can assume that a small number of Inuit or other American captives would also be taken, even as several Norse were captured by the Inuit.⁴⁸

It should be noted here that the 1347 wind-driven voyage of 17 or 18 Norse Greenlanders in a very small boat from the coast of Markland to Iceland, a boat that was not even equipped with an anchor, tends to reinforce the possibility that Americans in similar-sized craft could also be storm-driven to Europe. Prevailing winds in the North Atlantic also sometimes drove Norse vessels eastwards to Ireland.

In this connection, it is worth noting also that in old Shetlandic folk tales 'Finns' (Inuits) often arrived in those islands in the form of seals, and then casting their skins aside, became human beings. It has been suggested that this refers to the arrival of people in skin-covered kayaks. (Some folklorists prefer other symbolic interpretations.) In any case, the presence of Inuits in kayaks around the islands north of Britain will be discussed below.⁴⁹

Very little information exists from the fifteenth century but it appears that Norwegians captured Inuits perhaps on more than one occasion, along with one or more kayaks. Claudius Clavus Swart, a Danish geographer who drew his maps in the 1420s, places in the Greenland area

the little pygmies, no more than one ell tall; I have seen them myself after they had been caught at sea in a skin boat which now hangs in Nidaros Cathedral. In the cathedral there is also a long boat of skin which was taken with the same kind of pygmies in it.⁵⁰

A Norse report of the early 1200s also refers to the Inuit as 'very small people'.⁵¹ For many years an Inuit boat was on display in Trondheim Cathedral in Norway.

Thus, most certainly, we have a record of Inuits being in Europe in the early 1400s.

A century after Clavus Swart, a German Jacob Ziegler met some Danes and Swedes in Rome and learned about the *Pigmei predatores*, or Inuit predators.⁵²

Other European nationalities also seem to have come into contact with Americans before 1492. One author mentions a voyage to the Greenland-Labrador area in the early 1000s allegedly made by some mariners of Friesland. They were

cast on the rocks and took refuge on the coast. They saw some miserable looking huts hollowed out in the ground, and around these cabins heaps of iron ore. . . . But as they returned to their vessels, they saw coming out from these covered holes deformed men as hideous as devils [sic], with bows and slings and large dogs following them.⁵³

One Frisian was slain while the others escaped.

Between c. 1418 and c. 1500 there is no official record of a Scandinavian ship reaching Greenland, partly due to the depopulation of Norway and Iceland carried out by the Black Death of 1348-9 (which may well have spread to Greenland). After 1349 English and Scottish pirates began to raid Iceland and Norwegian-Icelandic navigation fell into decline. Soon Basque and Portuguese vessels were joining in the exploitation of Icelandic waters. They alternately raided and traded with the Icelanders.⁵⁴ It appears also that some ships (probably Basque or Breton) visited the surviving Norse in Greenland between 1400 and 1500 (since European goods of that period have been found in south Greenland Norse archaeological sites). It is also believed by at least one historian of Greenland that Basque 'pirates' may well have exterminated or carried off the last Norse Greenlanders in c.1500. On the other hand, European reports had it simply that a 'pagan and barbarous' fleet from neighboring shores had carried them off, suggesting perhaps a move to Newfoundland or Labrador.⁵⁵

Certain Basque traditions point towards their having made contact with Newfoundland in the 1370s and Iceland by 1400. Maps of 1436 and 1448 definitely show a 'Stocfish Island' (Codfish or Bacalao Island) west of Iceland, which undoubtedly is the same island which later came to be known as Terranova or Newfoundland. Extensive pre-Columbian contact cannot be

doubted, even though there are arguments as to whether Basques, Bretons or others first reached the area.⁵⁶

The subject is extremely interesting for several reasons, one being the possibility that captives from Newfoundland and/or Greenland were carried back to the coasts of France and Spain.

It seems highly likely that vessels from Denmark and England reached Newfoundland in the 1470s and 1480s but as there is no mention of Americans being abducted we shall proceed to evidence relating to captives actually being taken.⁵⁷

In November 1494 a German, Dr Jerónimo Münzer, wrote a letter about his impressions of Lisbon, Portugal. He reported that there were many *nigri* (blacks) in Lisbon and that the king of Portugal had sons of Ethiopian kings with him for educational purposes. He also stated: 'Habet item rex nigros varii coloris: rufos, nigros et aubnigros, de vario idiomate . . . O Rei possuía pretos de varios côres: acobreados, pretos e anegrados, e de linguas diferentes.'

Thus by late 1494 there were in Lisbon *pretos* or *nigros* (blacks, non-whites) of various colors, including reddish or copper-colored people.⁵⁸ These latter were probably Americans, perhaps brought from the West Indies by Columbus, from Brazil by an unknown Portuguese navigator, or, most likely, from Newfoundland.

Interestingly, on January 11, 1503 a sailor from Lisbon presented for sale in Valencia, Spain, five *negros*. One of them was 'Miguel, de 20 años, de Terranova, aspresado cuando era pequeño y llevado a Lisboa, donde lo bautizan.' In 1505 was presented also (as a slave) 'Juan de 16 años de Terranova, no sabe si aun vivirán sus padres; cautivado cuando pequeño, fue llevado a Portugal y luego a Castilla.'⁵⁹ Thus Miguel was born in 1483 and was taken from Newfoundland to Lisbon when he was small, so probably before 1493. Juan was born in 1489 and was captured when small, so before 1499. They are among many slaves from Terranova sold in Lisbon, Seville, and Valencia after 1500.

It is well documented that in October 1501 some 50 or 60 Americans from the Newfoundland region were brought as slaves to Lisbon. This was followed by another shipload in 1502. These could be the origin of the Terranova slaves referred to above, except for the dates of their probable capture.⁶⁰

TAKING THE CARIBBEAN TO EUROPE AND AFRICA: COLUMBUS AND THE SLAVE TRADE

In any case, by the 1490s Americans were appearing once again in European cities. Although Terranova (Newfoundland) and Greenland continued to be a source of captives from 1501 on, it is best at this point to turn away from northern waters to examine the activities of Columbus and the catastrophic slave trade in American flesh which he initiated in the Caribbean region.

Columbus seems not to have been the first bearded white navigator to have

reached the Caribbean region, but his immediate predecessor's name is unknown and no record of any return voyage to European or North African waters exists.⁶¹ Moreover, Columbus' impact was singular in that he was, from the first, a dedicated slaver and exploiter with an extremely callous and indifferent attitude towards culturally different human beings.

Columbus on his first voyage kidnapped at least 27 Americans, two of whom escaped, leaving a total of 25 in his hands. His attitude is expressed as follows, when, after abducting seven males, he says: 'when your highnesses so command, they can all be carried off to Castille or held captive in the island itself, since with fifty men they would be all kept in subjection and forced to do whatever may be wished.' Thus, at the very first island reached (Guanani), Columbus already was able to express his willingness to depopulate the entire island in order that the Americans might be sold as slaves in Europe, or held as captives in their own land. This, it should be noted, is long prior to any disappointment about the failure to find gold or other riches in quantity.

A month later, after capturing five boys, Columbus says:

afterwards I sent to a house which is near . . . and they brought seven head of women, small and large, and three boys. I did this, in order that the men might conduct themselves better in Spain, having women of their own land . . . because *already it has many times been my business to bring men from Guinea*, in order that they might learn the language of Portugal, and afterwards when they had returned and they thought that use might be made of them in their own land . . . when they reached their own land this result never appeared . . . So that, having their women, they will be willing to do that which is laid upon them, and also these women will do much to teach our people their language, which is one and the same throughout these islands of India. (Italics added)

After two boys escaped, Columbus stated: 'and I have no great confidence in them, because many times they have attempted to escape.' His philosophy of conquest and colonialism was extremely well developed: 'And they are fitted to be ruled and to be set to work, to cultivate the land and to do all else that may be necessary, and you may build towns and teach them to go clothed and to adopt our customs.' Also: 'They would make good and industrious servants.'⁶²

After learning of the existence of so-called 'Cannibal' (Carib) groups in the Indies, Columbus began to emphasize the enslavement of the latter. While still at sea, on his first return voyage, Columbus advocated the capture of Caribs: 'very fierce people and well proportioned and of very good understanding, who, after being removed from their inhumanity, we believe will be better than any other slaves whatsoever.' On January 30, 1494 he addressed to the Spanish monarchs a plan for sending men, women, and children to Spain to learn the Castillian language and to be trained in service, with more care 'than other slaves' receive, saying that this plan would save a great number of souls while at the same time providing the colonizing Spaniards with the profit needed to supply themselves with goods. In other words, Columbus proposed (after his first voyage) that American slavery be used to finance the conquest.⁶³

Subsequently, Columbus began to enslave Taino (Arawak) people who were

definitely not cannibalistic and it would appear that the idea of punishing Caribs (for being allegedly so) was simply an expedient financial strategy. The logic of his activities was well expressed by Las Casas who noted that

el acabará en muy poco tiempo de consumir toda la gente desta isla [Haiti], porque tenía determinado de cargar los navios que viniesen de Castilla de esclavos y enviarlos a vender a las islas de Canarias, y de los Azores y a las de Cabo Verde y adonde quiera que bien se vendiesen; y sobre esta mercadería fundaba principalmente los aprovechamientos para suplir los dichos gastos y excusar a los reyes de costa, como en principal granjería.

Thus Columbus, according to las Casas, was determined to 'consume' the entire population of Haiti by filling every ship with slaves to be sold in the Canary, Azores and Cabo Verde islands or wherever, and planned that these slaves would finance the conquest.

As Las Casas points out, for Columbus the lives of Americans were obviously 'nothing' and the continuous wars to obtain slaves were simply necessary to fill the ships.⁶⁴ Columbus wrote to the monarchs that from Haiti

it is possible, in the name of the Holy Trinity, to send all the slaves which it is possible to sell . . . of whom, if the information which I have is correct, they tell me that one can sell 4,000. . . . And certainly, the information seems authentic, because in Castille and Portugal and Aragon and Italy and Sicily and the islands of Portugal and Aragon and the Canaries they utilize many slaves, and I believe that those from Guinea are not now enough. . . . In any case there are these slaves and brazilwood, which seem a live thing [profitable], and still gold.

Thus, even as Columbus was loading five ships with slaves, he was proposing to sell 4,000 in various parts of the Mediterranean and along the coast of Africa.

Columbus was also unconcerned that many Americans would die in the slave trade because, as he said, the blacks and the native Canary Islanders when first enslaved also had died in great numbers. For Columbus the Americans were *piezas* (pieces) or *cabezas de cabras* (heads of goats), and it did not matter if only ten per cent lived to reach a market, according to Las Casas (who, incidentally, possessed Columbus' diaries, letters and notes).⁶⁵

The shipment of Americans to Europe and Africa by Columbus (and by other Spaniards) was, then, not an accident, nor was it a result of armed resistance or alleged cannibalism. It was a direct extension of the style of commercial slavery long practiced by the Genoese and Venetians in the Mediterranean and used by the Portuguese along the west coast of Africa. Columbus' voyages, in a very real sense, were mere extensions of the old galley routes from Italy to North Africa and the Black Sea or of Portuguese routes along the African coast.

What was the result? First, many thousands of Americans were shipped to Spain during Columbus' period of dominance in the Caribbean. It is difficult to calculate the exact number because many ships departed from Haiti without leaving any record of their cargo, but we may be sure that they did not leave empty. On the very first voyage, although Columbus only carried 25, it is

likely that Martín Alonso Pinzón (who sailed to Galicia and then to Palos separately) may have carried more. It is possible that Pinzón actually landed the first Americans in Spain, a few days before Columbus arrived in Lisbon.

In any case, at least 3,000 Americans are known to have been shipped to Europe between 1493 and 1501, with the likely total being possibly double that. Most were sent to the Seville area, where they seem to show up in the slave markets as *negros* without a place of origin being mentioned. Others were probably sold in the Azores and other islands, partly to avoid the wrath of Queen Isabel (who, on occasion, expressed hostility towards the dividing up of 'her' vassals without her prior permission).⁶⁶

Columbus reached Lisbon in early March 1493. Many people came to see the captive Americans and it is very likely that some of the latter were taken nine leagues into the interior to see the king of Portugal. There it was that two Americans drew maps which showed the Lucayos (Bahamas), Cuba, Haiti, and other islands. It may be also that Columbus left some Americans with the Portuguese, as discussed earlier.⁶⁷

Shortly thereafter some of the Americans were taken to Seville, perhaps seven to ten being still alive and together. Some were left in that area, while about six or seven were taken overland across Spain to Barcelona where they were displayed before the monarchs in mid-April. In the fall of 1493 some Americans were taken on Columbus' second westward voyage, but only two of these reportedly arrived alive. One was able to run away immediately upon landing in Haiti.⁶⁸

The process whereby Columbus began loading ships with slaves need not concern us here, in any detail. The flavor of it is conveyed by a report of Miguel de Cuneo, a member of the second expedition:

When our caravels . . . were to leave for Spain, we gathered . . . one thousand six hundred male and female persons of those Indians, and of these we embarked in our caravels on Feb. 17, 1495, five hundred and fifty souls among the healthiest. . . . For those who remained, we let it be known in the vicinity that anyone who wanted to take some of them could do so, to the amount desired, which was done. And when each man was thus provided with slaves, there still remained about four hundred, to whom permission was granted to go where they wished. Among them were many women with children still at suck. Since they were afraid that we might return to capture them once again, . . . they left their children . . . and began to flee like desperate creatures.

About two hundred died on the voyage and were cast into the ocean, the rest being disembarked in Spain.

Columbus gave to Cuneo 'a very beautiful Carib woman'. Cuneo says, 'I conceived the desire to take my pleasure' with her. She valiantly resisted Cuneo's efforts at rape but eventually he had his way, after thrashing her mercilessly.⁶⁹

Thus the veil of evil descended upon the Caribbean and many long years of rape and genocide commenced. As Todorov has stated:

the sixteenth century perpetrated the greatest genocide in human history . . . in 1500 the

world population is approximately 400 million, of whom 80 million inhabit the Americas. By the middle of the sixteenth century, out of these 80 million, there remain ten.

If the word genocide has ever been applied to a situation with some accuracy, this is here the case.⁷⁰

But the tens of millions of Americans who disappeared after 1492 did not all die in the 'holocaust' inflicted within the Americas. Many thousands were sent to Europe and Africa where their descendants still live.