Chapter One

Contact, Conflict and Exchange in the Atlantic World to 1590

Asians Migrate to America
- Before the last Ice Age, migration from Asia begins across the Bering Strait.
- Land mass connected by land and/or ice.
- Until recently it was believed migration began 15,000 years ago.
- New evidence suggests it might have been as long as 40,000 years ago
- Ongoing migration continued in waves.

Was Columbus First?
- Augustine of Hippo writing in the 4th century describes the world as being round.
- We know that Vikings were here before Columbus --Viking sagas clearly describe New England with its vineyards.
- Ruins of a Viking community were discovered 60 years ago in Newfoundland
- It appears that we once knew the world was round but during the “Dark Ages” forgot it.

Some Irish scholars believe Irish preceded the Vikings
- Geese that winter in Ireland summer in Newfoundland and Labrador– this was observed
- When Leif Ericson’s father arrived in Iceland he expelled Irish monks living there.
- What might be ancient Irish writing used 1300 to 2000 years ago found in cave in Vermont.
- The Saga of Brendan the Navigator (circa 800 A.D) allegedly describes New England.

More Potential Evidence of Earlier European Visits to America
- Mound-building native American culture thrives in Mississippi Valley
- Mound-building prevalent in Spain, Portugal and Ireland; coincidence or contact.
- Irish game of hurling similar to Native American game of Lacrosse
- Native American arrowheads strikingly similar to arrowheads found in France.

North America
- Unverified and anecdotal evidence of potential contact– not yet historicity.
- Unlike the Romans who built small boats primarily for battle Phoenician ships were capable of sailing across the Atlantic Ocean.
- Mitochondria DNA studies suggests an uncommon fifth lineage in the indigenous people of the Western Hemisphere.

Ruins of Major City on Yucatán
- The Myth of Atlantis might really be the story of Caucasians encountering Mayans
Central America

- Mayans believe they are related to Filipinos
- Swinging down pole by feet done in Borneo and in Mexico by Mayans
- 2000 year old carvings in Mexico depict Caucasians-- Men with beards & long noses
- Mayan oral traditions mention boats without oars, in other words, sailboats
- Some Mayan pyramids have some similar dimensions as some Egyptian pyramids.

Mayan Pyramid at Chichen-Itza

- Archeologists wonder if the similarity between Mayan and Egyptian pyramids is a coincidence or evidence of some form of pre-Columbian contact.

Mayan Boy with Armadillo

- Mayan oral traditions believe that their ancestors came by boat across the Pacific.
- Does this boy look Filipino?

South America

- Archeological research in northern Brazil suggests arrival of people 40,000 years ago
- Some report that DNA shows different pattern that other native peoples of America
- This might suggest that Africans came before they arrived as escaped slaves and slaves.
- Prevailing winds in South Atlantic blow from east to west, that is, Africa to South America

Mayan Man at Lathe

- Do Central & South American indigenous people look more Asian than North American Native Americans?

Indigenous cultures differed widely

- Different cultures
- Different religious beliefs
- A few indigenous peoples were monotheistic
- Most were polytheistic nature worshiping
- Some had believed in a god with lesser gods not unlike our Judeo-Christian notion of a deity served by angels.

Pueblo Town in American West

- Had the European explorers first seen such sophisticated housing would they have reached the same erroneous and bigoted conclusions.

Europeans did not recognize differences among tribes

- Europeans did not see each indigenous culture as different and distinct from one another– though they would do so in Europe
- Europeans did not acknowledge the sophistication of many indigenous cultures
- Saw indigenous people as a race of savages
- Mayans had developed the concept of zero before Europeans had.
Native American Art

• Though different from European realism, could this artist be considered lacking in culture and artistic genius?

Inconsistencies in European Perspective

• Europe had been overrun by barbaric tribes
• This caused the collapse of the Roman Empire and the loss of cultural status.
• Europeans had only gradually abandoned notions of tribal allegiance for nationhood
• Though linguistic, religious and other ethnic identifications remained in Europe, these men cannot comprehend tribal affiliations.

Tribes Existed in Europe

• Nationalism allows notion of family to survive suppression of narrow ethnicity
• Ireland and Scotland resist this trend to nationalism and have clans as basis of their society, which is really just a tribe.
• Where ethnic groups are fragmented, as in the Balkans, ethnicity supplants tribe
• Where religious affiliations were fragmented, those allegiances replace tribe.

Impact of European Ignorance

• The Europeans treated the varied tribes as one people, one culture, or even one nation.
• The indigenous people were diverse with cultures ranging from near ice age to ones more sophisticated than the Europeans.
• Some tribes were belligerent, others were peaceful— the Europeans saw all as one.
• An attack by a belligerent people often produced retaliation on a peaceful tribe.

Were The Europeans Reacting?

• A token argument in defense of the European’s belligerent conduct.
• Roaming bands of Mongols had ravaged the eastern boundaries of Europe for centuries.
• The Mongols raped, looted pillaged and slaughtered eastern Europeans
• The last major attack was just 200 years before Columbus.

Prisoners of Ignorance

• For the better part of one generation most Europeans believed they were on islands off the Asian continent.
• Some rationalized that they must show the Asian peoples they were as powerful and ruthless as Asian attackers had been.
• Misconception lasts until Magellan’s crew circles the world.

The Overland Route to China had been cut off

• The Crusades had spawned an interest in Asian delicacies
• Merchants and explorers like Marco Polo had walked to Asia
• Some of the highways had been built by Alexander the Great & his successors.
• Routinely European traders had been robbed or killed while traveling to China
Who Were the Europeans?

- **Remember**: Caucasian named for Caucasus mountains in Russia.
- Languages of Europe are Indo-European.
- Many “explorers” were unemployed or retired soldiers (e.g. Conquistadors).
- Other explorers were merely entrepreneurs maximizing profits with disregard for humans.
- A few explorers were merely loyalist working for their monarch.

The European’s Motives

- Some reasons bound were products of conventional reasoning of the time
- They conquered indigenous people for a variety of reasons
- They had a different understanding of the human race and human interaction.
- Just as the Europeans were ignorant of medicine, they had other limitations

Amerindian Political Alliances

- The Iroquois of northern New York created a sophisticated confederation to both reduce conflict and provide strength. It was an example to the colonists.

Why were the Europeans Exploring?

- Pressure from Asian peoples cuts off eastward expansion.
- Land routes to Asian sources of delicacies dangerous and expensive
- Constant warfare in Europe had left the monarch’s treasuries depleted.
- Gold becomes a quick solution.

Europeans Are Forced to Expand Elsewhere.

- Population growth
- Constant territorial battles.
- Battles over succession.
- Religious differences.
- Economics of mercantilism.
- Nationalistic Competition.

Like all humans, the indigenous people had vices

- Like the Europeans, the indigenous populations were constantly fighting over territory, scarce resources and other issues.
- Tribes often conquered other tribes.
- They slaughtered one another in battle
- Some cultures believed in human sacrifice
- One tribe would make slaves of a conquered neighbor—generally reserved for women.

Some Tribes were Constantly at War, some were peaceful

- The stereotype of the Native American with focus on such names as warriors, braves, and chiefs obscured the diversity of the indigenous cultures.
Qualities of Indigenous Peoples Ignored

• Europeans refused to believe that this Serpent mound in Ohio could have been created by indigenous people.

Most Prominent Motives for European Conquest

• Bad Motive: Greed for gold
• Bad Motive: Seizing of land.
• Bad Motive: Colonization, enslavement and exploitation.
• Good Motive: (Though Misguided) Offer them salvation through Christianity

Dealing with Competing Myths

• The fundamental injustice of their being conquered did not make the indigenous people saints, they were humans with vices.
• More than 60% of the deaths of indigenous people were due to illnesses introduced by Europeans, that is, unintentionally.
• The nomadic life styles and culture of some of the indigenous peoples did not remotely justify their conquering and exploitation.