



STOCKCERO TEACHING KIT (172)

TEXT: *Cristobal Colon – Viajes a Las Indias (1492 - 1504s*

AUTHOR: Jean-Paul Duviols (Université de Paris-Sorbonne)

ISBN: 978-1-934768-88-4

PUBLISHER: Stockcero

II. CONTEXT & CRITICAL APPROACHES (by Jean-Paul Duviols)

The Enigma of the Admiral and the "Unknown Pilot":

Analyze the controversies surrounding Columbus's origins and the myth of the *piloto ignoto* (the unknown pilot who allegedly revealed the existence of western lands to Columbus).

Discuss the *Capitulations of Santa Fe*: What do the exorbitant demands granted by the Catholic Monarchs reveal about the political and economic climate of 1492 Spain?

Messianism vs. Materialism:

Examine the dual driving forces behind the enterprise. How does Columbus reconcile his self-proclaimed messianic mission (to fund the recapture of Jerusalem) with the immediate, feverish search for gold and spices?

Analyze the rhetorical strategies Columbus uses in his letters to the Sovereigns to justify his failures and secure continued funding.

Nautical Science and Medieval Geography:

Evaluate Columbus's navigational paradox: his unparalleled mastery of the Atlantic trade winds versus his stubborn geographical miscalculations regarding the Earth's circumference.

Discuss how medieval myths shaped his physical perception of the New World, leading him to identify the Orinoco River delta as the edge of the "Terrestrial Paradise" and to anticipate encounters with mythical creatures.

The Invention of the "Other":

Trace the evolution of Columbus's perception of the Indigenous populations (the Taínos). How does his initial depiction of them as peaceful, Edenic "noble savages" shift toward the justification of subjugation and enslavement following the destruction of La Navidad and subsequent rebellions?

III. ADVANCED DISCUSSION & RESEARCH PROMPTS

The Problem of Transcription: The original log of the first voyage is lost; what we have is Bartolomé de las Casas's transcription and summary. Discuss the historiographical challenges this presents. Whose voice are we truly reading?

The Language of Discovery: Analyze how Columbus struggles to describe an unprecedented reality using a European lexicon. How does he use comparisons and analogies (e.g., comparing Caribbean flora to Andalusia in spring) to "translate" the New World for his European audience?



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Geopolitics of the Encounter: Research the immediate geopolitical consequences of Columbus's first two voyages, specifically the Papal Bulls of Donation (1493) and the Treaty of Tordesillas (1494). How did these texts attempt to legally divide the globe?

The Tragedy of the Fourth Voyage: Contrast the triumphant tone of the 1493 letter to Santángel with the desperate, apocalyptic tone of the *Lettera Rarissima* (Jamaica, 1503). What does this reveal about the human cost of the colonial enterprise?

IV. RELATED STOCKCERO RESOURCES

- **The Age of Discovery: Deluxe Collection:** *Viajes a Las Indias (Colón), El Nuevo Mundo (Vespucci), Maluco.*
- **Colonial Latin America:** *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias, Cristobal Colon – Viajes a Las Indias, Verdadera Historia y Descripción de un País, Usos y Costumbres de los Salvajes de Virginia, Viajes al Río de la Plata y a Potosí.*

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