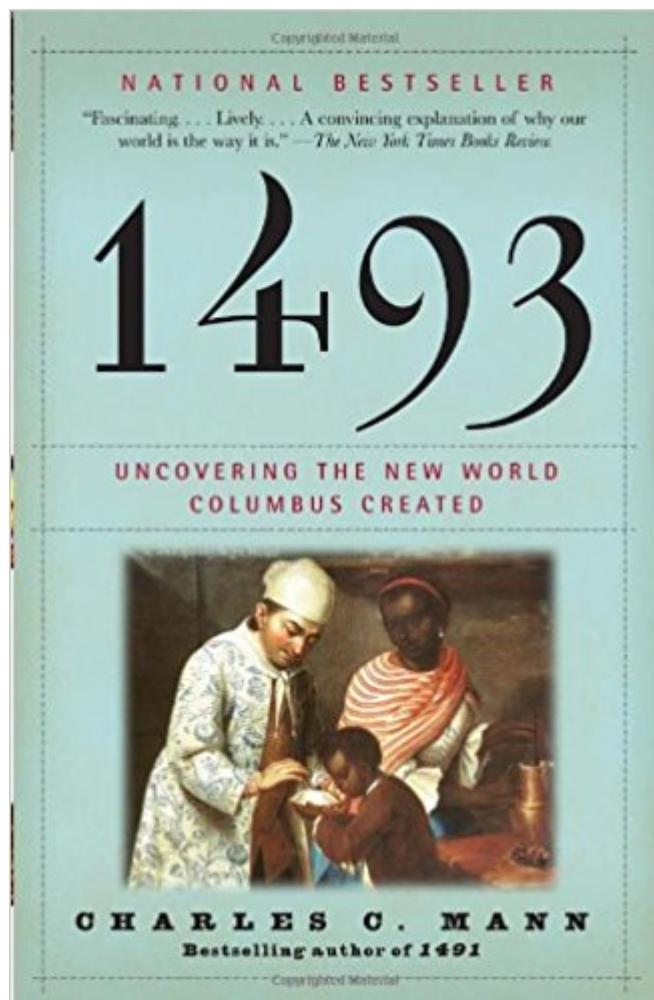


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1493: Uncovering The New World Columbus Created



Synopsis

A deeply engaging new history of how European settlements in the post-Colombian Americas shaped the world, from the bestselling author of 1491. Presenting the latest research by biologists, anthropologists, archaeologists, and historians, Mann shows how the post-Columbian network of ecological and economic exchange fostered the rise of Europe, devastated imperial China, convulsed Africa, and for two centuries made Mexico City "where Asia, Europe, and the new frontier of the Americas dynamically interacted" the center of the world. In this history, Mann uncovers the germ of today's fiercest political disputes, from immigration to trade policy to culture wars. In 1493, Mann has again given readers an eye-opening scientific interpretation of our past, unequaled in its authority and fascination.

Book Information

Paperback: 720 pages

Publisher: Vintage; Reprint edition (July 24, 2012)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0307278247

ISBN-13: 978-0307278241

Product Dimensions: 5.2 x 1.5 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

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Customer Reviews

I thought 1491, Mann's earlier book on pre-Columbian America, was fabulous. This one has a lot of very interesting information but it doesn't quite come together as well as the original. The discussion of the immediate impact of European exploration covers some very familiar ground (importing European diseases, sending tobacco to Europe, etc.) and a lot of information that was completely new to me (the transformative impact on the Americas of earthworms and bees, for example). I've been a longtime student of US history and much of what he wrote (the broad-ranging impacts of the importation of malaria, for example) was new to me. He branches out well beyond the immediate trans-Atlantic Columbian Exchange, which is where he gets in a bit of trouble. A major segment of

the book is on the ecological and economic disaster in China following the beginnings of the importation of Spanish silver and American agricultural products (sweet potatoes and tobacco, most notably). While some of this discussion is interesting, it also seems too long and somewhat disorganized. He totally loses focus when he gets to the importation of the potato into Europe. He does a good job of showing how the potato transformed nutrition and it seems well within the book's stated topic (the worldwide impact of the Columbian Exchange). But then his discussion of the great Irish potato famine wanders here, there, and everywhere. It's really more about English cultural imperialism and the replacement of tried and true peasant agriculture with "scientific agriculture" (monoculture, intense use of fertilizer, etc.) By the time he gets to the potato beetle in the American midwest, the book has become a general discussion of problems caused by industrial agriculture and world trade.

Charles Mann knows how to write. He also knows how to make history interesting and come alive. The title "1493" refers to all that time since Christopher Columbus, for whom Mann has had a fascination with, first discovered the new world. With that new discovery came changes and exchanges that have transferred the world. The great trade routes that developed from the new American continent to Europe and Asia--The Columbian Exchange-- created both beneficial and devastating results and altered what people ate around the world. The changes most of us learned about in high school social studies classes: new diseases were introduced into the indigenous peoples of the Americas and many died. Columbus came looking for gold and silver but found also sugar, corn, tobacco, beans, tomatoes and so much more. Coffee, chocolate, rubber all followed. The Spaniards in turn brought in the horse and sheep and we all know the legend of the horse in the American West. Little did Columbus realize, Mann states, that he and the men who followed to America began what was known as globalization. Coveted items were used as trading items for other equally coveted items. Wars were fought over these items because every monarchy wanted to have the most power over the control of earth's resources, and this thirst for power spilled into Asia as well. There may not be too much new to learn from Mann's book. I had been aware of the "Columbian Exchange" but terms such as "Homogenocene" and the dawn of globalization is new to me. Mann then uses his writing and research skills to create detailed and interesting chapters to show how the movement of animals, plants and humans have created new species, varieties and that this movement was not always bad.

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