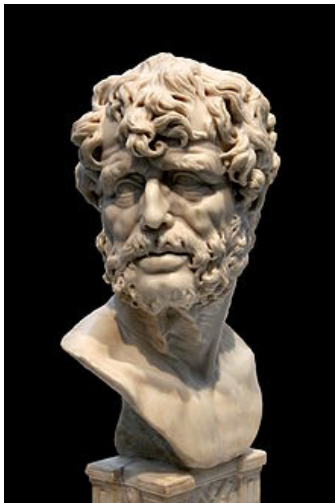


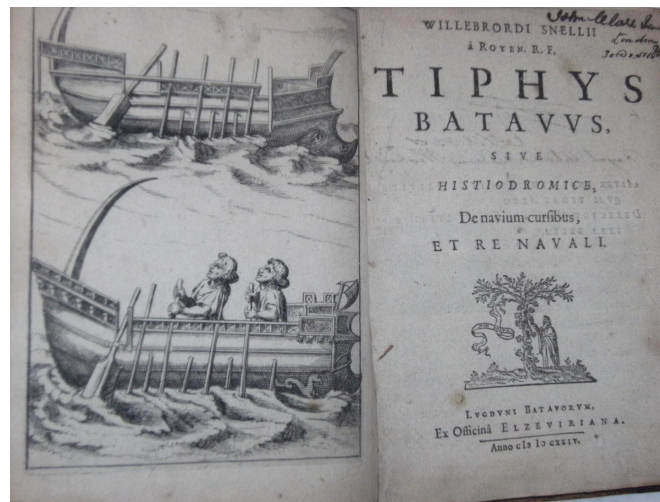
The Power of the Winds

Columbus may have been persuaded by an axiom attributed to Aristotle, that “one could cross from Spain to the Indies in a few days.”

Or by the oft-repeated prophecy of Seneca, "An age will come after many years when the Ocean will loose the chain of things, and a huge land lie revealed; when Tiphys will disclose new worlds and Thule no more be the Ultimate."



Seneca,
Roman Statesman,
Philosopher,
Playwriter



Tiphys, legendary leader of the Argonauts



Thule (Tile on the map), the most northern known extent, thought to be an island by the Romans. Thule was likely Scandinavia.

ERDKARTE NACH CLAUDIUS PTOLEMAEUS (c. 160 n. Chr.)



Europa Asien Libyen

Mistakes by Ptolemy that motivated Christopher Columbus

- Asia stretched 180 degrees around the globe, where as its actual extent is 130 degrees
- The size of Ptolemy's nautical mile was 57 miles per degree of longitude, where as the real number is 69
- Didn't know about the American continent
- Africa's southern extent was landlocked with a great southern continent, making an eastward passage impossible

Columbus also thought that, as stated in the Bible, the earth was $\frac{6}{7}$ (86%) land.

The first two led Columbus to conclude the eastern extent of Asia was a lot closer (and on the order of the actual distance to the American Continent it turns out).

Not all scholars adopted Columbus' numbers however.

The Enterprise of the Indies

Genoa, where Columbus spent the first 22 years of his life, had struggled against Venice for maritime dominance of the Mediterranean. In Columbus' youth, Genoa was a flourishing center of shipbuilding and seafaring. After a ship wreck at sea, he ended up in Portugal, where he spend most of his adult life.

To follow his dream, Columbus, who had no formal education, taught himself Portuguese, Italian, Spanish, and Latin so he could read, study and then write proposals to Kings about navigation.



Columbus' successful enterprise would be almost as much a feat of salesmanship as of seamanship, as he spent seven years peddling his “Enterprise of the Indies” in the courts of western Europe.

In late 1484, when Columbus offered what he called his "Enterprise of the Indies" to King John II of Portugal, it still seemed that a westward sea passage might be not only the shorter but perhaps the only maritime route to the Indies. The King's committee of experts estimated a distance from the Canaries to Japan of about ten thousand nautical miles. They dared not encourage their king to invest in so speculative an enterprise.

In 1485, Columbus' wife died, and with his five-year-old son, Diego, he left the Portugal, where he had spent most of his adult life. **He moved on to Spain.**

In Spain, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella let a year pass before they would receive Columbus in audience. Then Isabella, too, appointed a commission to assess Columbus' proposal in detail, and to make recommendations.

As the Spanish negotiations dragged on he recalled that King John II of Portugal had been personally friendly to him back in 1484-85, and so **Columbus decided to go back to Lisbon and try again.** Columbus could not have chosen a worse time. For, **when he arrived in 1488**, he was just in to witness Bartholomeu Dias and his three caravels triumphantly sail into Lisbon with the good word that he had rounded the Cape of Good Hope and found that an open eastward sea passage to India existed.

Dias' success and all that it promised naturally killed King John's interest in Columbus.

Columbus returned from Lisbon to Seville, where he found Ferdinand and Isabella still vacillating. In disgust, **he was actually en route to take ship for France persuade King Charles VIII when Queen Isabella**, urged on by her keeper of the privy purse, suddenly **decided to support Columbus**. Columbus' advocate had pointed out that support of **this enterprise would cost no more than a week's royal entertainment** of a visiting dignitary.

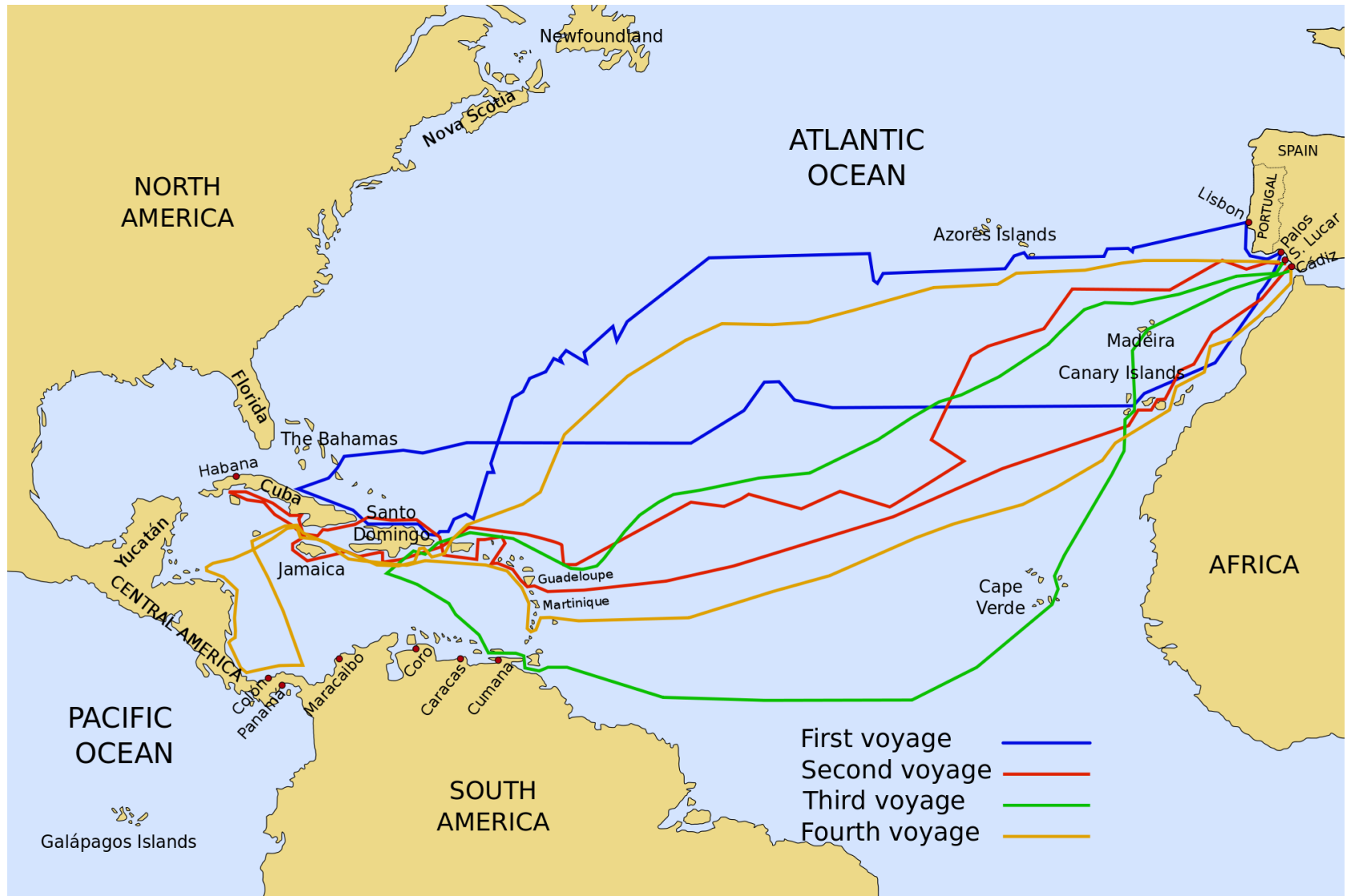
Perhaps Isabella was persuaded by the fact that Columbus had shown his intention to offer the bargain enterprise to her rival sovereign next-door (France).

She even pledged her crown jewels if needed to finance the trip.



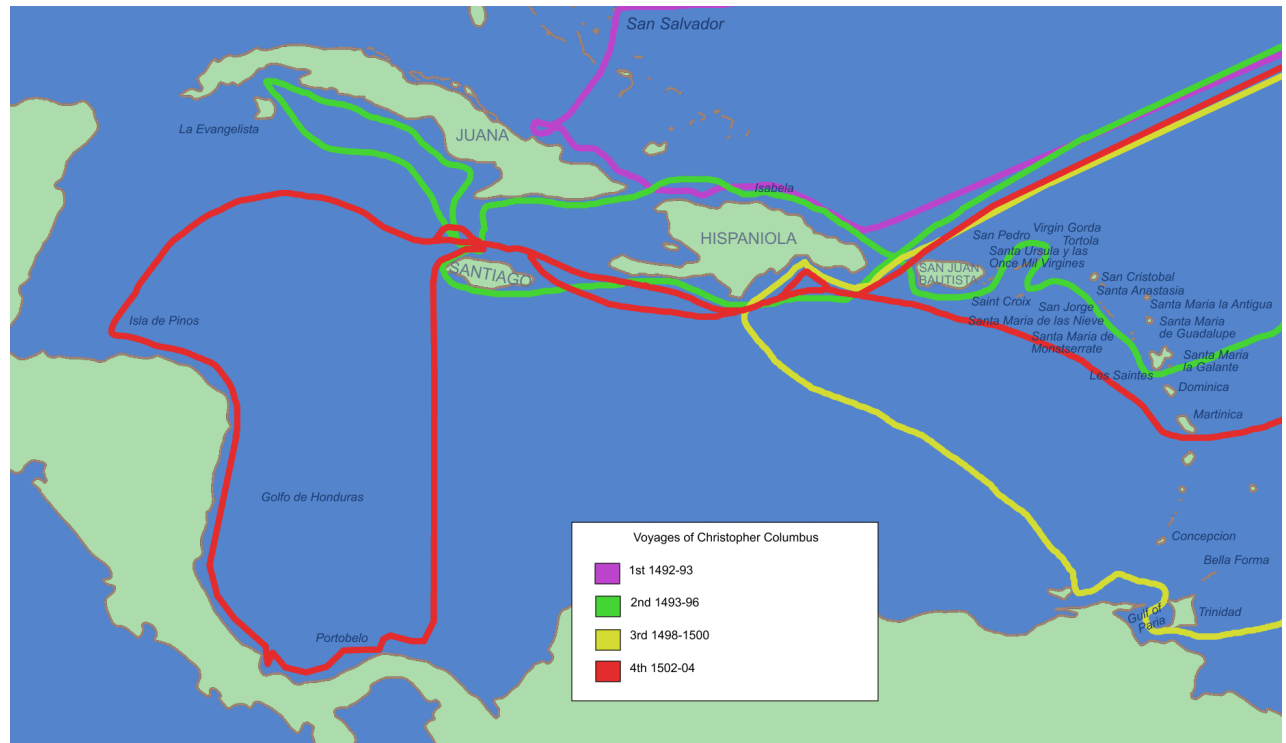
[Christopher Columbus at the Court of the Catholic Monarchs by Juan Cordero, 1850.](#)

Columbus' Four Voyages



During the next twelve years Columbus undertook three more voyages to "the Indies." They were called voyages of discovery, but more precisely they should have been called voyages of confirmation. For someone less committed they might have produced tantalizing puzzles, planting seeds of doubt.

When these successive voyages still failed to connect with the Great Khan or to discover Oriental splendors, it became harder to persuade others back home.



The return of Columbus' ships to Spain in March 1496 was anything but a triumph. He was warmly received at court, but the discovery of islands of the Indies in the Western Ocean no longer created a sensation. He did not bring back the promised riches or clear contact the east.

Like a second moon landing, Columbus' feat had somehow been minimized by showing that it could be repeated. Except among a few men of learning, word of this voyage was received with indifference.

After four voyages, Columbus died believing that while he had incidentally found some Asiatic islands and peninsulas that had not yet appeared on the maps, all along he had been following the east coast of Asia.

Naming the Unknown

While the name and the person of Christopher Columbus were to be celebrated throughout the Americas, and his birthday would become a holiday, **Amerigo Vespucci** has been scarcely recognized and surely has not become a folk hero.

Amerigo Vespucci was born of an influential family in Florence in 1454 in the heart of the Italian Renaissance. There he spent the first 38 years of his life, there he acquired the voracious curiosity and intellectual ambitions which governed his life.

By 1499 **Vespucci** decided he would try to fulfill **Columbus'** hopes of reaching Asia.

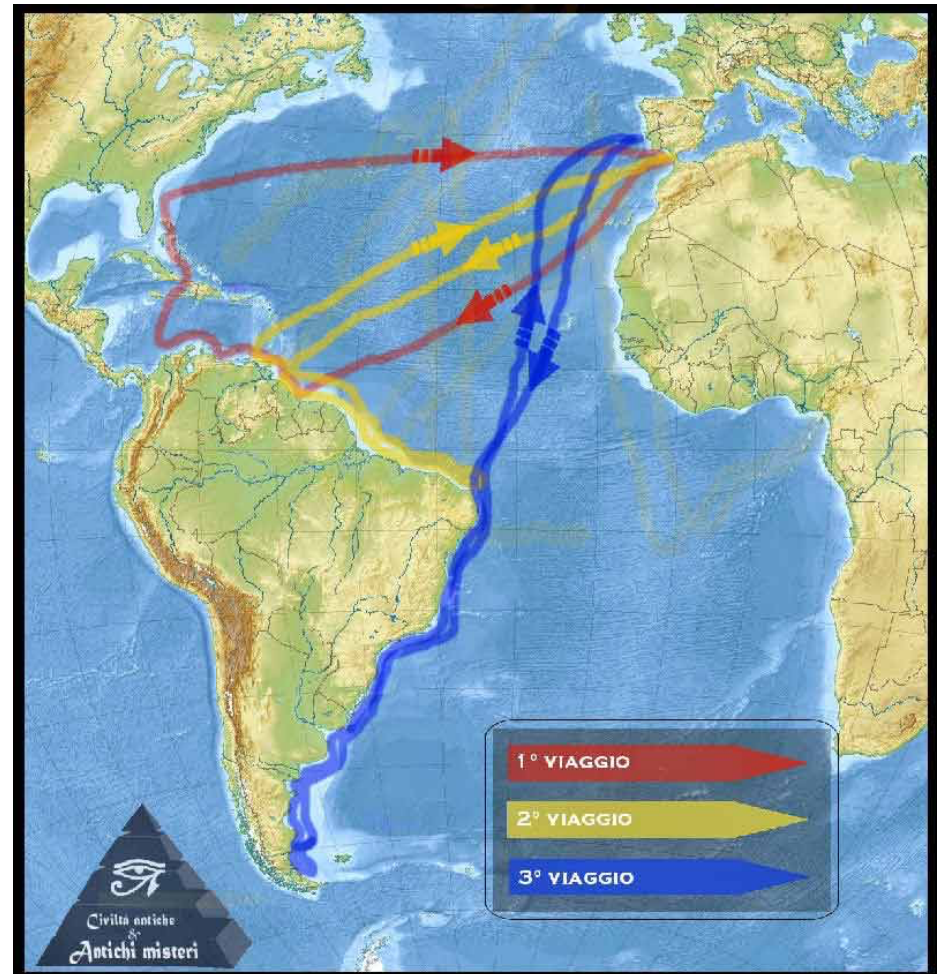


Vespucci made four voyages

"After we had sailed about four hundred leagues continually along one coast, we concluded that this was mainland; that the said mainland is at the extreme limits of Asia to the eastward and at its beginning to the westward."

"Sailing along the coast, we discovered each day an endless number of people with various languages."

"Very desirous of being the author who should identify the polar star of the other hemisphere, I lost many a night's sleep in contemplation of the motion of the stars around the South Pole, in order to record which of them had the least motion and was nearest to the pole."



Busting out of the Middle Ages.... Carving out a New Age

Vespucci's 2nd passage "across the ocean wastes in search of new land" required sixty-four days. "We arrived at a new land which, for many reasons that are enumerated in what follows, we observed to be a continent."

Vespucci had followed the South American coast for about eight hundred leagues, about twenty-four hundred English miles, "always in the direction of southwest one-quarter west,

" We navigated in the Southern Hemisphere for nine months and twenty-seven days never seeing the Arctic Pole or even Ursa Major and Minor. My navigation extended through one-quarter of the world. . . . **The inhabitants there were numerous**, yet the infinite variety of trees, the sweet-smelling fruits and flowers and display of brilliantly plumed birds stimulated "fancies" of the Terrestrial Paradise. **"What should I tell of the multitude of wild animals, the abundance of pumas, of panthers, of wild cats, not like those of Spain; of so many wolves, red deer, monkeys, and felines, marmosets of many kinds, and many large snakes?"**

Vespucci was led to the **heretical conclusion** that "so many species could not have entered Noah's ark."

Cosmographiae Introductio 1507



When Gerardus Mercator published his large **map of the world in 1538**, he doubled its application. Mercator's map showed both a "North America" and a "South America".



Publications about Vespucci's travels exceeded those of Columbus threefold. In those years, of all the works we can find printed in Europe describing the New World discoveries, about one-half dealt with Amerigo Vespucci. Vast audiences were now being equipped to receive messages of new worlds.