

## Anthro Reading 1

### Columbus

#### **Gold**

- heavily mentioned
- used to reassure sailors
- appease rulers of Spain
- greed is not his true motive

#### **True purpose**

- Grand Khan
- Spread of Christ
- conquest of Jerusalem
- Absolute ideal & pleasure from discovery
- tell unheard of stories

### Columbus as interpreter

- declares that new continent, not island
  - fresh water river (natural) - natural
  - writing of prior explorer (divine) - god
  - cannibal Indians (human) - wealth
- not just Christianity, but the force of his faith
- believed in mermaids and mythical creatures
- belief in an earthly paradise
  - nipple on a pear
- his beliefs impact his interpretations
  - doesn't bother understanding natives b/c he knows what's coming
  - doesn't reject notion of mermaids but rather modifies their appearance
  - pearls
- ultimate meaning given from the start, must create links
- constant attention to natural phenomena
- pig vs monkey
- interpret signs of nature in terms of his own interest
- finalist strategy
  - signs of land 20 days before actually reaching
  - predetermined conviction
    - black people, parrots, and heat
  - eliminates all evidence contrary to his beliefs
- maps, reason, maps of no use, all prior knowledge
- good for certainty - discovery of South America
- exaggeration of natural beauty
  - beauty > interpretations or search of gain
- attention to nature has three purposes:

1. Pragmatic - navigational
2. Finalist - confirm hopes/ beliefs
3. Submission to beauty

addicted to his name and image

renames islands

takes possession in the process

proper nouns have direct associations with nature

disregards native terms for things and instead looks for Spanish equivalents

little attention to foreign language

first refuses to believe that they are speaking in a language, then cannot accept that they are different -> imaginary dialogues

Columbus does not succeed in human communications because he is not interested in them

Columbus and the Indians

he sees the Indians as part of the nature

first observation of Indians as naked

deprived of culture, seen as savages

no religion or law

observations, no comprehension

similar to description of nature, sees beauty in natives

feeling of superiority due to trading of items of no value

protectionalist: forbids sailors from trading

sees natives as generous - noble savages

Indians have no private property

Columbus now views them as thieves and enacts punishments

views them as cowards

Admiration from Indians - perhaps Spaniards came from heavens

They bring Christianity and take gold/wealth

Regards Indians in two contradictory ways:

1. As equal, leads to assimilation through projection of values
2. As different, leads to superiority and stealing of wealth

Shift from assimilation to enslavement

Rape

Sees Indians as specimen

The Reasons for the Victory

Cortés works his way to the Aztec empire

first gains support of Tlaxcala

Takes Montezuma prisoner and goes to fight compatriots

Has to retreat to Tlaxcala after war breaks out

Montezuma is hesitant

Montezuma tries to avoid warfare

May feel that Spaniards are rightful descendants of Toltecs

Other tribes all detest Aztecs, the original colonizers