

Columbian exchange



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THE COLUMBIAN EXCHANGE The global social structures, economic systems and cultural customs all began a motion of drastic change as soon as Columbus landed in the new world. A new source of gold, silver, food and other supplies was unleashed by the Columbus discovery, which shifted the global industrial and financial power to where it is now today.

Both the old and new worlds were affected, and every cargo carried something new. Traditional spices and condiments were not produced by the Native Americans. Instead, new products such as tomatoes, potatoes and corns were found. Initially, the Europeans thought that they were either a poison or an aphrodisiac. But later, tomatoes became a part of the Italian identity and food culture, and the nutritious value of potatoes and corns was fully appreciated, thus, broadening the scope of the European cuisine. On the opposite side, the new world was also introduced to new foods.

Sugarcane was perhaps the most prominent and damaging introduction. However, the relatively meatless culture was transformed once pork, beef, milk and cheese were introduced. The new comers were trying to create a familiar environment and so they brought with them different crops and animals such as rice, wheat, sheep, goats and chickens. Thus adding new species to the new world and dramatically changing its socioeconomic and cultural identity.

The new comers also introduced their own military hardware, such as swords, armor and guns, in the new world. Those superior military equipments and weapons were used to control the Native American population. The horse, for example, was alien to the new world. In fact, it was even bigger than any of the locally available domesticated animals. It was used by the invaders to terrify the natives in battle. However, the local

Americans quickly adopted the animal, and learned to use its power effectively against the very same people who introduced it. By the end of the 16th century, the horse became one of the symbols of the Native American culture.

Humans, animals and Agricultural products were the obvious agents of change. However, they were not the only players on the field. Along with all new arrivals, different pathogens and diseases traveled across the Atlantic to the new world. Malaria, smallpox, influenza and measles all attacked the natives who were lacking the necessary biological defenses. As a result of this unexpected micro-biological invasion, thousands lost their lives.

Disease was not the only invisible entity that accompanied the European invasion. The new comers also brought their own culture and lifestyle along. That had a notable effect on the local customs and social structure. The years following the European contact witnessed an increase in the rates of tuberculosis among all generations in the new world. That was related to the prevailing social conditions. Suffering from war, social disorder, and the spread of smoking and alcoholism contributed to the spread of chronic diseases among the natives, and that effectively reduced their reproduction ability. Although the Colombian exchange was beneficial to Europe, It had a destructive effect on the new world civilizations and their social and economic systems.

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