The columbian exchange

The Columbian Exchange and its Effects In 1492 C. E., Christopher Columbus, an Italian sailor, set sail hoping to find a sea route to India for King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain (Spielvogel 410). Instead of finding the land of spices, Columbus found the Americas, landing first in the Bahamas (Crosby 3). On these lands, Columbus and his crew found indigenous people inhabiting the lands.

Along with civilization, Columbus also found new plants and animals that he had never seen before. His curiosity was sparked and he set sail back to Spain to tell his employers of his discoveries. Columbus' findings marked the beginning of the Columbian Exchange, a phenomenon that still occurs today. The king and queen of Spain were inquisitive, so they sent Columbus and his crew back to the Americas to further search the land there. Other sailors and conquistadors, hearing of the new land, also set sail in hopes of finding new discoveries or riches for themselves. Those who sailed to the Americas found interesting fauna and animals, just as Columbus did, that they had never seen before.

The Old World sailors were not aware, though, of the diseases that the indigenous peoples of the Americas carried. Likewise, the Europeans brought with them animals and plants the Native Americans had never before seen. They, too, were unaware of the diseases that Europeans carried that would soon wipe out much of their population. Over time, other parts of the Old World- namely Asia- heard of this new land and began their quest for the goods found there. The Old World nations' desire for the items found in the New World allowed for the beginning of a trade network between the Americas and the Old World- the Columbian Exchange. The Columbian

Exchange included the trade of different types of plants, animals, and (unintentionally) diseases between the Old and New World.

The trade that occurred between the Americas and Europe had many good and many disastrous effects that would both aid and scar the Native Americans and Europeans for years to come. Within the Columbian Exchange between the Old and New World plants caused dietary change leading to population growth, domesticated animals were used to increase agricultural productivity and strengthen armies, and diseases were exchanged which led to population decreases and eventual immunity to them. Within the Columbian Exchange between the Old and New World, plants caused dietary change leading to population growth.

The plants found in the Americas were none that any explorer had ever seen. Many of these New World plants effectively changed the diets of the Old World inhabitants. The potato" indigenous to the Americas" has been cultivated and eaten all over the world for hundreds of years since its discovery by European explorers (Crosby 170). Potatoes were easy to grow and able to flourish on small plots of land (Crosby 170). This characteristic made potatoes ideal for growth in Ireland where many poor farmers struggled to provide sustenance for their families on their small plots of earth (Crosby 182-183). Potatoes thrived in Ireland and became a staple of the Irish diet; some people ate ten pounds of potatoes in a day with little of anything else (Crosby 183). The potato directly caused the doubling of the Irish population (John Green). The Irish were so dependent on the potato that, when the great potato blight hit in 1845, more than a million people

died of starvation as the Irish grew little other than the potato itself (Spielvogel 610).

The sweet potato was also a valuable New World crop that benefited the Old World. The sweet potato became a staple for the poor lower classes in China as it was one of the only foods that peasants could afford (Crosby 200). Even being called a sweet potato was an insult because they were commonly attributed to the lower classes (Crosby 200). The usefulness of the sweet potato in China resonated throughout the nation; China manufactured large amounts of sweet potatoes, producing 18. 5 million metric tons of sweet potatoes a year between 1931 and 1937 (Crosby 200). China, today, is the world's leading producer of sweet potatoes (Crosby 198). Indonesia also ranks as one of the world's largest sweet potato producers; in 1962, they manufactured 2. 6 metric tons of sweet potatoes (Crosby 196). When rice was scarce in Indonesia after the rice season ended, sweet potatoes were necessary to sustain the population (Crosby 196). In India, the sweet potato was one of many New World crops that contributed to the Indian population growth from 120 million to 255 million between 1800 and 1871 (Crosby 191, 194). The American chili pepper became a mandatory ingredient in the Indian diet, used to make curry" an Indian staple (Crosby 194).

The pepper was additionally used to make the only seasoning that the poor in India could eat with their rice (Crosby 194). The peanut is, additionally, a New World plant commonly used in the Old World. In the 1900s, India was the world's leading producer of peanuts, manufacturing 5. 3 metric tons of peanuts in 1963 alone; peanuts are common in the diets of those in Southern India (Crosby 193). China was the world's second largest producer of

peanuts in the 1900s, having manufactured 2. 4 metric tons of peanuts in 1962 and 1963 (Crosby 200). Peanuts were used in Chinese crop rotation and were grown by Chinese peasants, adding to their diet (Crosby 200). The New World contained many various crops that were useful to those of the Old World; similar to this fact, many Old World crops were beneficial to the New World. Like the New World, the Old World transported various plants that were incorporated into the diets of the Native Americans, thus boosting their population.

Old World plants transported to the New World tripled the number of cultivatable food plants in the Americas (Crosby 107). Wheat from Europe was planted in Mexico, Peru, and the Central Caribbean; it was used constantly among Native Americans because of the various foods that it was used in such as in bread and in baking (Wheat From the Old World). Wheat was raised in Mexico and Peru, both participated in exporting wheat; in 1535, Mexico was exporting wheat to the Antilles and Tierra Firme (Crosby 70). Wheat makes flour, a base for many foods; wheat gave rise to various foods commonly eaten in Latin America- such as tamales and tortillas. These foods, common in Mexico and the United States still today, sustained the Native American population in Latin America.

Bananas were also brought on European ships to the southern islands of the Caribbean; banana trees multiply quickly so there was an abundance of them for the Natives to eat (Crosby 68). Sugar was grown on plantations by the Spanish and the Portuguese in the Spanish Antilles and Brazil; sugar became a staple for the diets of those in Espanola (Crosby 69). Rice was introduced to the New World by the Europeans (who received rice from the

Moors); the Spanish brought rice to Mexico in the 1520s and the Portuguese presented rice to Colonial Brazil (History of Rice Cultivation). Rice produces larger yields than the grains originating in the New World meaning that rice yields copious quantities of food for the American Natives to sustain themselves on; rice’s high protein content promoted health and wellness, thus leading to an increase in the Mexican and Brazilian population (Crosby 107; History of Rice Cultivation).

Therefore, Old World crops brought to the New World effectively raised the native population, but animals, as well as plants, were used for the betterment of the American population. Numerous animals were brought from the Old World and instilled into the New World. Works Cited Crosby Jr., Alfred W. The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492. Praeger Publishers, 2003. CrashCourse, director. The Columbian Exchange: Crash Course World History #23. YouTube, 28 June 2012, www. youtube. com/watch? v= HQPA5oNpfM4. Spielvogel, Jackson J. Western Civilization. Cengage Learning, 2015. Lila. What From the Old World. Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Plants and Animals, https://blogs. stockton. edu/plantsanimals/wheat-from-the-old-world/#comment-285. Accessed 9 December 2018. History of Rice Cultivation. Ricepedia, https://ricepedia. org/culture/history-of-rice-cultivation. Accessed 9 December 2018.