1. Introduction

In 1512 Pope Julius II tried to explain why the Christian Bible failed to mention the American Indians and their continent. He declared that although the Indians were descendants of Adam and Eve, and therefore human, their ancestors were Babylonians who had been expelled from the Old World on account of their sins. God had apparently lost sight of them, and somehow they had managed to survive the flood.

The theory of the peopling of the Americas that became scientific orthodoxy in the mid-20th century is no less fabulous: the Americas were empty of humans until about 14,000 years ago when migrants from Northeast Asia trekked over the Bering land bridge, and with the exception of a brief visit by the Vikings in the 11th century, the first person to subsequently discover the Americas was Christopher Columbus in 1492.

More recently, the possibility of migrations up to several tens of thousands of years earlier than 14,000 BP has been accepted by many scientists. There is evidence, however, that North, Central, and South America were settled by migrants from different parts of the world over the course of millions of years, and that even in the past 5000 years explorers and traders from various continents visited the Americas before Columbus.

2. Columbus was last

History books tell us that Christopher Columbus – also known a Cristóbal Colón – ‘discovered’ America in 1492. His voyage across the Atlantic was financed by Queen Isabella of Spain, as he had failed to win the backing of King John II of Portugal. Columbus landed on one of the Bahama islands in the Caribbean, but was convinced he had reached the Indies (or ‘Spice Islands’). On his way home, he visited King John II to boast of his success in discovering a shortcut to Japan, China, and King Solomon’s gold mines, but he was told that his voyage had only taken him to ‘Antillia’ (the Antilles), which was already known to the Portuguese, and that there was mainland located directly south of these islands – a continent not shown on any publicly available European map of the time.

According to the 1st-century geographer Diodorus Siculus, Iberians in the Spanish Peninsula and the Phoenicians of North Africa had learned about a huge paradise in the far western Atlantic about 1000 BC. By some accounts, the western isles
The 13th-century explorer and spy Marco Polo was involved in many epic voyages during the 35 years he spent in the service of Kublai Khan, the Mongol ruler who established the Yuan dynasty and eventually became the first emperor of all China. There are indications that Marco Polo may even have visited the west coast of North and South America. When he finally returned to the Venetian Republic, his maps were confiscated and he was prohibited from writing about most of his travels and from publishing information on the new technologies he had witnessed. In 1428 Prince Pedro of Portugal came to travels and from publishing information on the new technologies he had witnessed. In 1428 Prince Pedro of Portugal came to

Fig. 2.1 Behaim’s globe (1490-92) represents the prevailing geographical misconceptions of explorers such as Columbus.

Likewise, the globe produced by Portuguese cartographer and navigator Martin Behaim between 1490 and 1492 showed mainland China (Cathay) only 3000 miles west of Europe, and in front of it Cipango (Japan) and the Indies; the Americas are entirely absent. When Columbus visited Portugal around 1482 to try and win King John II’s patronage, Behaim gave him a map showing the same flawed geography. Gunnar Thompson sees this as part of a deliberate strategy to confuse rivals, and also to avoid arousing the anger of the Catholic Church, which recognized only three continents: Europe, Africa, and Asia. Behaim’s 1492 map failed to show a continent below the Antilles, yet an account in the Nuremberg Chronicle for 1493 reported that Behaim, accompanied by Jacobus Carnus of Portugal, had crossed the equator to the Antipodes, a Roman term for a southern continent opposite Africa.

After examining copies of Behaim’s maps, colonial statesman Benjamin Franklin concluded that Behaim was the true discoverer of America. Behaim, a German expatriate, began working for the Portuguese in 1482. But Andrea Bianco’s 1448 map confirms that the Portuguese had already begun mapping the South American continent. However, it was not until the voyages of Amerigo Vespucci (Americus Vespucius) from 1499 to 1502, working for King Ferdinand of Spain, that the existence of what Vespucci called the ‘New World’ was made public in Europe. Soon afterwards, the German cartographer Martin Waldseemüller named the southern continent ‘America’ in honour of Amerigo,* and Flemish cartographer Gerhard Mercator later applied the same name to the northern continent.

Columbus admitted that he carried a map with him on his 1492 voyage showing the route to the ‘Indies’. Many other explorers admitted that they had maps showing the places they ‘discovered’: the Strait of Magellan below South America in the case of Ferdinand Magellan; Brazil in the case of Pedro Álvares Cabral; the cape of South Africa in the case of Vasco da Gama; and Australia in the case of Abel Janszoon Tasman. It seems that the whole world had been charted in at least some detail before the Europeans set out on their ‘voyages of discovery’.

A world map was published in China in 1418, during the Ming dynasty. Its existence suggests that the famous Chinese admiral Zheng He (a Muslim) and his mariners had not only sailed in the Indian Ocean but had also circumnavigated the earth. A comparison of the 1418 map with the slightly later Shanhai Yudi Quantu map (c. 1430) shows that in the meantime the Ming navy had established the peninsular nature of California, improved the west coast outline of South America, and added key east coast features such as Labrador, Florida, and the Gulf of Mexico. The similarities (including errors) that the secret European maps shared with the Ming maps suggest that the maps used by European explorers were partly derived from the Chinese. Portuguese spies such as Niccolo da Conti (c. 1425) and Pero de Covilha (in 1487-1493) had managed to purloin copies of Ming maps.

The map includes details from early Ming explorers, explorers from the preceding Yuan dynasty, and Muslim navigators. (www.marcopolovoyages.com)

The 13th-century explorer and spy Marco Polo was involved in many epic voyages during the 35 years he spent in the service of Kublai Khan, the Mongol ruler who established the Yuan dynasty and eventually became the first emperor of all China. There are indications that Marco Polo may even have visited the west coast of North and South America. When he finally returned to the Venetian Republic, his maps were confiscated and he was prohibited from writing about most of his travels and from publishing information on the new technologies he had witnessed. In 1428 Prince Pedro of Portugal came to
From the 9th to 12th centuries the Norse Vikings were the masters of the Atlantic. The settlement of Greenland was begun by Eric the Red in the late 10th century, when most of the earth, including the Arctic, was warmer than today. Around 1000 AD Eric the Red's son, Leif, led an expedition to rediscover lands that were known to exist to the west of Greenland. The region in which they settled was named Vinland, which probably corresponds to modern Newfoundland. The Norse discovery of America is the only claim, other than Columbus', to be fully accepted by modern historians. It was only after excavations at L'Anse aux Meadows in Newfoundland provided physical proof that academics stopped dismissing the Viking sagas about such voyages as fairytales. However, they continue to dismiss any evidence that the Vikings travelled further than Newfoundland, or that they initially discovered America hundreds of years before 1000 AD.

Norse runic inscriptions have been found in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Tennessee, West Virginia, Oklahoma, Colorado, and even Paraguay. Some lore suggests that a Norse expedition sailed through the maze of islands and passages that form Canada's Northwest Passage, south through the Bering Strait and all the way down to Mexico. The Seri Indians on the island of Tiburón in the Gulf of California have a tradition about men with blue eyes and blond hair arriving in a longboat. The remains of an Inca Indian, dated to the turn of the 10th century, were found in Norway in 2007. This suggests that Viking explorers reached the Pacific shores of Ecuador or Peru 500 years before the Spanish arrived in the New World, either captured or befriended an Indian, and took him back to Norway.

There are Norse tales about the Vikings using a 'sun stone' to navigate – a notion that mainstream scholars have traditionally dismissed as 'comic-book archaeology'. However, it seems to be a reference to a natural crystal (corderite or selenite) whose colour changes from blue to light yellow when pointed in the sun's direction, allowing the sun's position to be precisely located on an overcast day. Optical calcite, known as Iceland spar, works just as well. In the 1940s a sky compass was developed based on the same principle of polarization employed by Viking mariners.

There are stories about a Welsh Prince by the name of Madoc, whose grandfather was half-Norse, sailing west in 1170 and discovering America. Most sources place his landfall in the region of the Gulf of Mexico. Columbus may have known of Madoc's voyage, as on one of his charts he wrote 'these are Welsh waters' in the direction of the West Indies. For centuries European travellers and administrators in America told of meeting Indians who claimed ancestry with the Welsh, could understand Welsh, and spoke in a language very like it. The story of Welsh visitors was confirmed by a Cherokee chief in the 18th century. The Mandan Indians may be descendants of Madoc's people.

The *Navigatio Sancti Brendani Abbatis* or The *Voyage of St. Brendan the Abbot* a bestseller during the Middle Ages, tells of a great Irish saint named Brendan who sailed to a land across the Atlantic with a party of monks in the middle of the 6th century. The narrative, while highly embellished, seems to contain a hard kernel of fact. He set sail in 564 AD, travelled to the Azores, and eventually reached Barbados, before sailing north as far as Iceland. The Isle of St. Brendan appears on Behaim's globe of the world, completed in 1492 before Columbus returned to Spain (fig. 2.1); Behaim wrote that St. Brendan had reached the island in 565. Irish and Norse reports indicate that further Irish voyages to America took place in later centuries. Tim Severin demonstrated in 1976-77 that it was possible to sail across the Atlantic in an oxhide boat built with mediaeval materials.

Evidence of even earlier voyages to the Americas is outlined in the next three sections. It appears that voyages to the Americas have been taking place from all parts of the world for countless thousands of years. The predominant aim seems to have been trade and exploration or the establishment of local colonies, rather than large-scale military conquest and the subjugation and conversion of 'inferior' races, as was the case with the European invasions in the 16th and 17th centuries.

However, orthodox historians and archaeologists are still clinging to their isolationist preconceptions, and refuse to accept the evidence for widespread cultural diffusionism and intercontinental trade. They tend to vigorously defend their own specialist fields against ‘interference’ from outsiders, and generally feel no incentive, or lack the knowledge, to recognize common cultural traits. Where similarities are acknowledged, they are automatically attributed to ‘independent invention’.

References


4. Ibid., pp. 75-111.
Fell writes:

England prefer to use Celtic Ogam! out, they failed to explain why ploughs in Pennsylvania usually write in Basque or Iberian Punic, whereas those of New by plough blades, tree roots or natural erosion, or as doodles left by Native Americans and early colonists. But as Fell pointed

academics, particularly in Europe, most have displayed irrational hostility. They tend to reject the inscriptions as marks made

rocks, tablets, and stone monuments all across the American continent. Epigrapher and prehistorian Barry Fell played a

Numerous Celtic, Basque, Iberian, Phoenician, Egyptian, Berber, Libyan, Minoan, and Viking inscriptions have been found on

Graffiti

Three thousand years ago bands of roving Celtic mariners crossed the North Atlantic to discover, and then to colonize, North America. They came from Spain and Portugal, by way of the Canary Islands, sailing the trade winds as Columbus also was to do long afterward. ... They built villages and temples, raised Druids’ circles and buried their dead in marked graves. ...

In the wake of the Celtic pioneers came the Phoenician traders of Spain, men from Cadiz who spoke the Punic tongue, but wrote it in the peculiar style of lettering known as Iberian script. Although some of these traders seem to have settled only on the coast, and then only temporarily, leaving a few engraved stones to mark their visits or record their claims of territorial annexation, some Phoenicians remained here and, together with Egyptian miners, became part of the Wabanaki tribe of New England. Further south, Basque sailors came to Pennsylvania and established a temporary settlement there, leaving however no substantial monuments other than grave markers bearing their names. Further south still, Libyan and Egyptian mariners entered the Mississippi from the Gulf of Mexico, penetrating inland to Iowa and the Dakotas, and westward along the Arkansas and Cimarron Rivers, to leave behind inscribed records of their presence. Norse and Basque visitors reached the Gulf of St. Lawrence, introducing various mariners’ terms into the language of the northern Algonquian Indians. Descendants of these visitors are also to be found apparently among the Amerindian tribes, several of which employ dialects derived in part from the ancient tongues of Phoenicia and North Africa.2
Near the Canadian city of Peterborough an inscription was left by a Norseman on a trading mission to America about 3500 years ago. He stayed for five months and traded his cargo of textiles for copper ingots obtained from the local Algonquians. Barry Fell identified the inscription as Old Norse written in two ancient alphabets. One alphabet was Tifinag, used by the Tuaregs, a race of white Berbers living in the Atlas Mountains of North Africa. In the 12th century BC, Pharaoh Rameses III repelled an attack by ‘sea people’ – who resembled Norsemen – who then took refuge in Libya, and may have left behind the Tifinag script. The other alphabet is Ogam consaine, used primarily by ancient Celts. A zodiac depicted at the site shows the spring equinox in Aries, dating the Norse visit to around 1700 BC.

The Dighton Rock is a 40-ton sandstone boulder bearing an inscription in Iberian-Punic as it existed around 500 BC. Iberian-Punic is a variant of the Phoenician language adopted by the natives of Spain. A word in the Numidian/Tifinag script from the Roman era also appears on the boulder, along with about 20 constellations. Sceptics dismiss the Dighton Rock as a hoax, but generations of local Indians insist that the inscriptions were on the boulder long before the Puritans arrived in 1630. Other examples of Iberian-Punic script can be found on West Virginia’s Adena Stone, the Aptuxcet Rock in Central Vermont, and the Davenport Tablet in Davenport, Iowa. Fell and other researchers have dated these inscriptions to between about 600 and 200 BC.

The Romans

Roman ships sailed east to India, China, Cambodia, and Vietnam. They also appear to have visited the New World. There is no mistaking the shorelines of Florida, Brazil, the Gulf of Mexico, and Peru on ancient maps dating back to the Roman era. On the 5th-century Macrobius map the northern region of the Antipodes (South America) is called ‘perusta’, a name referring to the hot, dry climate. On the Albertin de Virga map of 1414 the Peruvian coast is referred to as Ca-paru, and on the Andrea Bianco map of 1436 this region is called the Land of Per. Clearly Peru was named before the arrival of Pizarro in 1521, who supposedly named the country after a local river.

In 1971 a scuba diver found two 1st-century Iberic Roman amphorae – storage jars with large oval bodies – at a depth of 40 feet in Castine Bay, Maine. A third amphora was recovered from the Atlantic shore near Jonesboro, Maine. In 1972 scuba divers found an ancient hull with a cargo of amphorae off the coast of Honduras; the vessel was probably of Carthaginian origin. The Honduran government prevented further investigation on the grounds that it would be an affront to the reputation of Columbus. In 1976 a Brazilian diver recovered three Roman amphorae on the seabed in the Bay of Guanabara, 15 miles off the coast of Rio de Janeiro, and reported seeing several more. Five years later Rio de Janeiro’s Maritime Museum asked underwater archaeologist and shipwreck historian Robert Marx to investigate, knowing that fishermen had located similar jars in the same general area since the 1960s. Marx found that one local diver had 14 of the large jars in his garage. Two of the experts he consulted estimated that the amphorae were manufactured on the coast of Morocco in the 3rd century AD. In 1982 scuba divers located another sunken ship dated to the 1st century BC containing several hundred Roman urns in the waters off Rio de Janeiro. Some marble objects and a Roman bronze fibula (a clasp for fastening a coat or shirt) were also recovered. The Brazilian authorities banned any further investigation in order to protect the reputation of Pedro Álvares Cabral, the official Portuguese discoverer of Brazil. Roman urns were also discovered off Venezuela two years later.

A 1st-century AD Roman oil lamp was found at a site on the Coosa river in Alabama. A 4-inch fertility figurine made in 3rd-century Roman Egypt was recovered from the seabed off New Jersey in 2004. Scores of Roman, Greek, and Jewish coins have been dug up or found in fields from Venezuela to New York, but orthodox historians commonly dismiss these artefacts as having been discarded by coin collectors. In 1977 eight Roman coins were found within one square yard of beach near Beverly, Massachusetts. They were all minted during the reigns of four successive emperors who ruled between 337 and 383 AD, and may have come from the money-chest of a merchant ship. A jar containing several hundred Roman coins was found washed up on the north coast of Venezuela, spanning the period 63 BC to 350 AD.
dated 312 or 313 AD. The coins were removed from public display in the Ohio Museum, because the museum belongs to the state of Indiana, whose archaeological policy is that there is no documented evidence of pre-Columbian contacts.

Gunnar Thompson says that the Romans sailed to the New World in search of King Solomon’s mines, but instead found civilizations eager to trade indigenous products, metals, and plants for Old World tools, textiles, and wines.

Roman merchants brought back New World plants in addition to supplies of gold, copper, lumber, dried fish, and furs. We see ample evidence of New World plants at Roman archeological sites. Mosaic murals at Pompeii dating to the 1st century include New World pineapples. Archeologists removed maize or corn kernels from Roman grain silos built in ancient Spain. A Roman herbal or book of plants included New World pumpkins. And New World tobacco was identified in Roman-era smoking pipes excavated from the ruins of bathhouses near the ancient Roman city of London.

**Greeks**

Enrico Mattievich argues that various Greek and Roman myths reflect a knowledge of South America. In addition to their other layers of meaning, myths and legends about heroes such as Heracles and Odysseus travelling to the underworld (Hades or Tartarus), located beyond the western ocean or below the earth, contain geographical details that could be derived from journeys to the Andean highlands along the Amazon river, and also the Marañón and Ucayali rivers from whose confluence it springs. These rivers correspond to the Styx (or Stige) or Acheron of Greek mythology, and the rainforest corresponds to the swamps of Hades. The gorge known as the Pongo de Manseriche (‘gateway of fear’), where the Marañón joins the Amazon, contains a landmark of white limestone rocks, which corresponds to the ‘white rock’ where the two great rivers of the underworld meet. Mattievich contends that transatlantic voyages by Mediterranean peoples such as Minoans, Creto-Mycenaenae, and Achaeans/Pelagians ceased or became extremely rare around the start of the 1st millennium BC.

Mattievich also argues that many elements of Greek mythology point to contacts with ancient American cultures. For instance, in the ruins of the main temple at Chavín de Huántar in the Andean highlands of Peru, which may date from around 1300 BC, there is a cruciform chamber containing a 4.5-m-tall diorite pillar (known as the Lanzón due to its lance-like shape) on which is sculpted the principal deity of the temple. It used to be suspended from the ceiling between two slabs of granite forming part of the floor of the room above, where victims were sacrificed and whose blood probably ran down over the frightful image. The head portrayed on either side of the Lanzón is remarkably similar to that of the Greek Gorgon (Medusa), who was often depicted with fangs, claws, and hair of snakes. Other images at Chavín de Huántar resemble Cerberus, the hound that guarded Hades.

![Fig. 3.4 Left: The Lanzón, Chavin de Huantar. Right: The head on the opposite side of the statue.](image-url)

![Fig. 3.5 Gorgon from Syracuse (Sicily), 6th century BC. The facial features and the hair (with its six spirals) are very similar to those on the Lanzón.](image-url)

**Hebrews**

Tennessee and Kentucky appear to have become a haven for Jewish refugees after their revolts against pogroms during early Christian times. In Kentucky several inscribed Hebrew coins have been found dating to a rebellion against Rome in 132-135 AD. Several artefacts have turned up bearing the Hebrew script, the most important being the Bat Creek Stone.

![Fig. 3.6 The Bat Creek Stone, excavated in Tennessee in 1889, measures about 5 inches long and 2 inches wide, and is inscribed with eight palaeo-Hebrew characters from about the 1st or 2nd century AD.](image-url)

The Grave Creek Stone is an oval sandstone tablet 4.8 cm wide and 3.6 cm high, excavated in 1838 at a depth of 60 feet from West Virginia’s Grave Creek Mound, together with a skeleton and copper arm rings. In 1922 a farmer working his field near Morristown, Tennessee, ploughed up a stone similar in size to the Grave Creek tablet, covered with the same...
inscription. Since then, two more stones – one in Ohio county, and the other near Braxton Creek, West Virginia – have been found which bear identical characters. The text may represent a form of palaeo-Hebrew dating from around 250 BC.3

**Fig. 3.7 Cast of the Grave Creek Stone.**

*Egyptians*

In 1976 nicotine was found in the mummified body of Egyptian pharaoh Rameses II (ruled 1279-1213 BC), and also in the mummy wrappings. In 1992 an examination of nine Egyptian mummies in the Munich Museum, dated approximately 1070 BC - 395 AD, found cocaine and hashish in all nine, and nicotine in the hair, soft tissue, and bones of eight. Since then 3000 similar tests have been carried out on other preserved bodies, between 800 and 7000 years old, from countries such as Germany, China, Sudan and Egypt. Many of these samples have shown the presence of nicotine and/or cocaine.1

The coca leaf is native only to the Americas, and its presence in Egyptian mummies points to trading contact between the two continents. The tobacco plant is likewise indigenous to the Americas, but a wild form of tobacco also grows in parts of Africa. The words for tobacco smoking are similar on both continents, suggesting that, before the age of Columbus, either American visitors brought the tobacco plant to Africa or African visitors brought it to the Americas. In America the two oldest smoking pipes so far found were discovered in Brazil and Louisiana and date from about 1500 BC, just 300 years before stone smoking pipes appeared in northern Syria. As for hashish/marijuana, it originated in Central Asia.

An ear of maize (known as 'corn' in America) and a pineapple have been identified on a mural from Hatshepsut’s temple at Deir el Bahri – both are typically regarded as New World plants. Nearly a hundred years ago Muslim field workers found maize kernels in an Egyptian sarcophagus, prompting a French plant historian to accuse the Arabs of trying to confuse Western historians! Egyptian hieroglyphs have been found on ancient ruins in southern Chile near the Atlantic coast, a stone carving of a griffin-sphinx was found near Cuzco in Peru, and a statuette of the goddess Isis and one of an unknown pharaoh have been excavated near San Salvador. During Hatshepsut’s reign, expeditions were sent to the Land of Punt. The first reported voyage to this region was organized by pharaoh Sahure around 2480 BC. Gunnar Thompson argues that Punt was a Phoenician trading base near the equator on the American mainland. The New World was a major source of copper, which is found mainly in the Andes in Peru and Isle Royale in Lake Superior. Paul Galbez argued that the Land of Punt was the Puno region of Peru, on the shores of Lake Titicaca, where there are many old gold and antimony mines – metals that were brought back from Punt. The reed boats used on Lake Titicaca are almost identical to those used in ancient Egypt.2

**Fig. 3.8 Egyptian statuettes found in El Salvador.**

As already mentioned, Barry Fell uncovered evidence for an ancient Egyptian influence on certain Native American languages. In the early 20th century a ritual grave object was found in an ancient burial mound in Libertyville, Illinois, that appears to have been made during the 26th (Saite) dynasty in Egypt, which began around 685 BC. The well-crafted object stands 9 inches high and is made of soapstone. It portrays a man wrapped in a kind of bodystocking, holding a shepherd's crook in his left hand and a flail in his right hand.3

**Fig. 3.9 Egyptian statuette found at Libertyville, Illinois.**

*Phoenicians*

Much of Egypt’s trade was handled by the Phoenicians, who were known in the Old Testament as Canaanites; they lived in Canaan, the 'land of purple', a title that translates into Greek as Phoenicia. The name is a reference to the purple dye that the Phoenicians extracted from shellfish. Shellfish purple was also used in the pre-Columbian New World, from Mexico to Ecuador. As in the Mediterranean, the colour purple was equated with wealth, status and fertility in Mesoamerica and northern South America. Extracting and processing the dye was an extremely laborious process, and the Phoenicians may have introduced it to the New World.1

After the Spanish had invaded Peru in the 1530s, the Spanish historian Joseph de Acosta became convinced that the Spaniards had found the lost site of King Solomon’s mines. Gunnar Thompson argues that the empty mine shafts they found had been made by the Phoenicians. The Peruvians gained a portion of the gold extracted in addition to imported metal tools and textiles. They learned the Phoenician secrets of alloying copper and tin to make bronze, and acquired a variety of metal
casting techniques for manufacturing weapons and jewellery. The Phoenicians also left behind a few inscriptions.\textsuperscript{2}

In 1787 workmen unearthed a hoard of coins in Massachusetts, minted in the 3rd century BC, which bore short inscriptions in Kufic, a script used by the Carthaginians (Phoenicians who settled in the western Mediterranean). Further early Carthaginian coins have been found in more recent times. In New Hampshire an eastern Mediterranean oil lamp, dated to the 3rd century BC, was found at an Amerindian site, and an ancient Iberian short iron sword blade was uncovered bearing an Iberian inscription.\textsuperscript{3}

\subsection*{Copper mining}

Extensive copper mining took place in the Great Lakes region in the remote past. On Isle Royale, an island in Lake Superior, some 2000 ancient, open-pit copper mines are to be found, with over 5000 more extending for 1000 miles along the southern shores, on the Keweenaw Peninsula of Michigan. It is thought that mining may have begun as early as the 7th to 5th millennium BC, and that the major period of exploitation occurred between 3000 and 1200 BC. The later Indians, by contrast, were essentially a stone-age culture with few, if any, metal tools. Estimates of the total amount of copper mined range from 9000 to 680,000 tonnes, whereas all the Indian copper artefacts found in North American burials and caches do not exceed 4.5 tonnes. This suggests that a considerable volume of the high-grade copper was shipped overseas, perhaps to Bronze Age Europe.\textsuperscript{1} The Phoenicians/Egyptians, Minoans, Celts, and Norse could have taken some of the copper.

The Smithsonian Institution has a display of a few primitive-looking Indians in loin cloths breaking up copper chunks with rocks. Over 200,000 ancient hammerstones have in fact been discovered. A copper boulder weighing over 2.6 tonnes was found near the shores of Lake Superior, which bore marks showing where chunks had been battered off with hammerstones, but it is not clear how such enormous specimens were extracted and transported. British experts confessed they knew of no methods capable of working boulders weighing 1.8 tonnes or more. Furthermore, although the average mine pit was about 20 feet in diameter and 30 feet deep, in some cases huge trenches 100 feet across were sunk up to 60 feet into solid rock. Also noteworthy is that the grain size in most of the copper objects indicates that annealing temperatures of 700-800°C or possibly even 1000°C were used – far higher than is necessary to soften the metal for future working.\textsuperscript{2}

\subsection*{Flora and fauna}

Extensive research by John Sorenson and Carl Johannessen shows that 98 species of plants (mostly cultivars) were present in both the eastern and western hemispheres prior to Columbus' first voyage to the Americas. In addition, 21 species of microfauna and 6 larger species of fauna were shared by the ‘Old’ and ‘New’ Worlds. This may also be true of up to 70 other organisms, but further study is required. Sorenson and Johannessen argue that this bi-hemispheric distribution could not have been due merely to natural transfer mechanisms, or to human migrations to the New World via the Bering Strait: ‘The only plausible explanation for these findings is that a considerable number of transoceanic voyages in both directions across both major oceans were completed between the 7th millennium BC and the European age of discovery.’\textsuperscript{1}

The discovery of nicotine (\textit{Nicotiana tabacum}) and coca (\textit{Erythroxylon}) in Egyptian mummies has already been mentioned; it points to the pre-Columbian transfer of these plants from the Americas. Some of these mummies also contained traces of hashish (\textit{Cannabis sativa}), which has long been used as a psychoactive drug in Asia. Chemical residues of hashish, along with tobacco and coca, have also been identified in Peruvian mummies dated from about 100 to 1500 AD. Hashish must therefore have been transferred to the Americas no later than 100 AD, either from India (via the Pacific) or the Middle East (via the Atlantic).\textsuperscript{2} Given these facts, it is not surprising that the lesser mealworm (\textit{Alphitobius diaperinus}) and the drugstore beetle (\textit{Stegobium paniceum}) – both from Eurasia – have been found in Peruvian mummies dated to the 13th century AD.\textsuperscript{3}

The distribution of different species of cotton (\textit{Gossypium}) points to a long history of transoceanic voyages. Chromosomal evidence indicates that a cotton species was carried from South Asia (probably India) to the Americas at an early date, perhaps the 5th millennium BC, where it hybridized with a native species. Before Columbus’ time, American cottons were carried across the ocean to Africa, and an African cotton was carried to Mesoamerica. American cottons also found their way to eastern Polynesia. The use of cotton in South America goes back to the 4th millennium BC. The two types of loom used by Peruvians were also used in Egypt, and one probably originated in Mesopotamia.\textsuperscript{4}

\section*{References}

\begin{enumerate}
\end{enumerate}
3. *Columbus Was Last*, pp. 57-64.


Romans


3. www.faculty.ucr.edu/~legneref/ethnic/jpg/fig76.jpg.


5. Lloyd Hornbostel, ‘A Roman-era figurine recovered off New Jersey’, in *Unearthing Ancient America*, pp. 141-3; *Columbus Was Last*, pp. 97-8; *Gateway to Atlantis*, p. 152.


7. *Secret Voyages to the New World* p. 43.

Greeks


2. Ibid., pp. 25-7, 62-70.

Hebrews

1. *Columbus Was Last*, pp. 98-100.


Egyptians


Phoenicians


Copper mining


4. Transpacific contacts

Massive cultural transfers between Asia and the Americas seem to have taken place, particularly from the beginning of the 1st millennium BC until the end of the 1st millennium AD. Patrick Huyghe says that these transfers involved ‘everything from art styles and motifs to calendars, from counting devices to board games, to plants, papermaking and more … A mere list of the parallels would take several pages.’ These cultural items tended to make their first appearance in the New World along the west coast of the Americas, from Alaska to Peru.

At the very least, there must have been numerous occasional voyages from Asia to the New World … Many of the visitors came from Southeast Asian countries, including India, Cambodia, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Java, mostly in the modern era, but the earliest, and perhaps major donor, seems to have been China.¹

Chinese

According to Gavin Menzies, Admiral Zheng He landed with a flotilla of Chinese ships along the Pacific coast of North America in 1421.¹ But it appears he was merely the latest in a long line of Chinese voyagers who crossed the Pacific, and that such journeys go back to at least the early 3rd millennium BC. While Chinese scholars are at least open to the possibility of transpacific voyages from their country, North American archaeologists are rather less enthusiastic.

According to the Chinese book Shan Hai Ching (Classic of the Mountains and Rivers), written in 2208 BC, two surveyors named Ta-Chang and Shu-Hai were sent off to explore the world around 4300 years ago in the reign of Emperor Yao. Although the story is usually dismissed as fiction, which parts of it undoubtedly are, some of the information in the Shan Hai Ching and displayed on ancient Chinese maps seems to deal with places, features, and fauna specific to the American continent. One such map indicates that the earth is 84,000 li (45,060 km) in each direction, as compared with the actual mean circumference of 40,041 km.²

By the 3rd century BC, the Chinese were building oceangoing merchant vessels up to 80 feet long and weighing up to 60 tons. According to the Shih Chi chronicle, in 219 BC, during the reign of Emperor Shih Huang, a fleet of ships, led by Captain Tzu Fu, left China for Fu Sang, a far-off land to the east, also known as the Isle of the Immortals. The purpose was to bring back the legendary ling chih mushrooms for the ailing emperor. Fu Sang was a name sometimes applied to the west coast of North America, but in this case it seems to have referred to southern Mexico. The Chinese colony that was established there had a major influence on Mayan civilization (see section 5).³

The 1st millennium BC saw a great deal of activity on the seas of the Far East. By the late Han dynasty (202 BC - 220 AD), the Chinese had four-masted oceangoing vessels that could carry up to 70 people and 260 tons of cargo. According to the Chu I Chuan (Record of the Barbarians), Hui-Shen, a Buddhist monk, left China in 458 AD and travelled across the Pacific Ocean to Fu Sang. He remained there for 40 years, observing the country, its peoples and customs, its flora and fauna, and evangelizing for the Buddha, and finally returned to China at the end of the century. The Chinese treat his account as history, and much of it has been corroborated. The monk probably sailed across the North Pacific by way of the Kuril and Aleutian islands, then down the coasts of Alaska and California, until he finally landed on the shores of Mexico.⁴

Zheng He’s fleet brought Ming influences to the Americas in the early 15th century. The 15th-century Selden Codex from Mixtec Mexico, which turned up in China, may be a relic from Ming overseas trade. A bronze bowl from the Sacramento River Valley in California and a bronze disc from the east coast both have Chinese inscriptions from the time of the 5th Ming emperor. The Inca ruler Tupac Yupanqui (1471-93) claimed to have sailed with a fleet across the Pacific to the East Indies on a round trip – the sort of voyage the Mings were making in the 15th century. At the time of the conquest in 1532, the Spaniards reported that Inca Atahualpa wore silk tunics, which may point to a Chinese connection. A pile of undated Chinese bronze religious artefacts and some Ming coins have turned up on Indian reservations in the American Northwest. Incan jars with Chinese writing have been found, and yin/yang petroglyphs have been discovered in southern California and Peruvian graffiti, but are impossible to date. Florida is clearly shown on the second Ming map, and a Florentine explorer subsequently reported finding orange and almond orchards growing in the Carolinas north of Florida – both are Asian plants. The Spaniards found vast orchards of lemons and pomegranates growing in Peru – these too are Asian domesticates.⁵

Chinese anchor stones were dredged up from the bottom of San Francisco Bay more than 100 years ago. Chinese coins and
bronze Buddhist religious relics traded or given as gifts by passing mariners have been dug up all along west coast of the Americas. In 1882, a miner in British Columbia found 30 Chinese coins 25 feet below the surface. They are thought to have been produced during the reign of Emperor Huungt around 2637 BC.6

The Cherokee rose, Rosa laevigata, is native to China but was found growing wild in the deep south of America by the first European explorers. The rose of China, Hibiscus rosa sinensis, was first found in Asia and thought to be native to China, but it actually originated in America. The Chinese claimed to have exported the flower to Persia around 200 BC, and said they got the flower from Namviet, a region made up of northern Vietnam and southern China. Namviet mariners say they acquired the flower long ago from a great land across the sea, ‘beneath the eastern horizon’.7

**Japanese**

Apart from Norse claims of landfall in Newfoundland around 1000 AD, the only other claim that mainstream science has shown some sympathy towards is a visit to Ecuador by a boatload of Japanese over 5500 years ago.4 Pottery appeared suddenly in the stone-age culture of the Valdivians around 3600 BC. It was a fully formed technology with an elaborate range of decorative techniques. The decorations changed over the next 2000 years, but became simpler rather than more complex. The pottery shows little or no connection with any earlier American pottery style, but is strikingly similar to that produced by the Jomon culture on the southernmost Japanese island of Kyushu during the same period. The number of stylistic similarities rules out independent invention.

Even older pottery sherds have been unearthed below the Valdivia level. This San Pedro pottery, as it is called, falls within the range of variation of the Valdivia pottery and may have been made by the same potters. Excavations on the north coast of Columbia unearthed pottery sherds dated to 3800 BC. These, too, share traits with the Jomon period pottery, but resemble pottery found on Honshu, the largest Japanese island.

![Fig. 4.1](image1.png)

**Fig. 4.1** Pottery shards from the Valdivian culture (left) and Jomon culture (right)5

![Fig. 4.2](image2.png)

**Fig. 4.2** An unusual technique called castellation, or the pointing of the pot rim, is found in both Jomon (top) and the earliest Valdivia (bottom) ceramics.3

The star-holed mace is a weapon consisting of a star-shaped head hafted onto a handle by means of a round hole. It was used in Japan and Korea, and also in Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia. Asiatic star-holed maces with stone heads date to the late Jomon period, about 1000 BC. In the Andes similar maces were made first from stone and later from bronze, and date to 500-1500 AD. Since the weapon is only found in the area of South America influenced by the Jomon Japanese, it may have been brought by them.4

**Polynesians/Oceania**
The Polynesians on Rarotonga in the Cook Islands had a legend about a large expedition that sailed past Easter Island (Rapa Nui) to a land of ‘ridges’ – a possible reference to the Andes. A tradition from Mangareva tells of voyages to places called Taikoko and Ragiriri, representing the region of Cape Horn at the tip of South America and the Strait of Magellan. There is a legend in the Marquesas Islands about a very large double canoe that sailed east to a land called Teffiti – the only land to the east is the American continent.

The sweet potato (*Ipomoea batatas*) is native to South America, and reached Asia by the early centuries AD. The available evidence suggests that it did not enter Polynesia from Asia but from the east. The great variety of sweet-potato species in Polynesia could not have developed in the past 500 years. The sweet potato is called *kumar* in the Quechua language of Peru and Ecuador, and *kumara* in the Maori language of Mangareva, Paumotu, Easter Island, and Rarotonga. The large variety of words for the sweet potato in Polynesia suggests that the plant had been known there for a long time. Evidence indicates that it was transferred from South America to Polynesia sometime between 400 and 700 AD via Hawaii, and may have also reached Polynesia via Easter Island even earlier. Either South Americans brought it to Polynesia or Polynesians made a two-way trip to South America.¹

There may have been contacts between Polynesians and the Chumash and Gabrielino Indians of southern California. The chief evidence is the advanced sewn-plank canoe, which is used throughout the Polynesian islands, but is unknown in North America except among those two tribes. The Chumash language has no linguistic relatives elsewhere in North America, but has many affinities with the Hawaiian language. Examination of a Peruvian mummy at the Bolton Museum showed that it had been embalmed using a tree resin from a variety of conifer only found in Oceania and probably New Guinea. Both the resin and body were carbon-dated to around 1200 AD.²

Archaeological literature rarely mentions that many typical Polynesian stone weapons have been found in North American Indian mounds and at South American sites as well. The discoveries are located along the Pacific Ocean zone of the Americas. Some human skulls and stone tools at the Serra da Capivara archaeological site in northeastern Brazil have features that closely resemble those existing in contemporary Australia and Melanesia 60,000 years ago.³

Some of the arts, habits and religious beliefs of tribes in western South America, along with their features and colour, are very similar to those of the natives of Pacific islands. The Sirionó Indians of eastern Bolivia, of whom only about 500 remain, are hunter-gatherers with typically Oceanic features, including slightly wavy, fine hair, and great bushy beards, and bear no resemblance to any other known Indian tribe. Among nearly all tribes of western South America we find scores of words very like, and often identical to, words of the same meaning in Oceanic dialects.⁴

**Flora and fauna**

The Spanish and Portuguese were not the first to introduce chickens to the Americas. Chicken raising could not have spread through South America within just three decades of being brought there by the Europeans in 1519. The chickens in the possession of Native Americans mostly resembled Asian breeds rather than the Mediterranean type. Moreover, only in areas where the chicken was known to be absent prior to the arrival of the Spanish were the native names for chicken derived from the Spanish terms ‘gallo’ or ‘gallina’. Among the Arawak of the Caribbean and the Guaymi of Panama, it was known as ‘takara’ or ‘karaka’ – names strikingly similar to the Hindu word for chicken, ‘karaknath’. In southern Mexico words for chicken already existed in the 2nd millennium BC. In parts of Central and South America there was a black-boned, black-meated chicken that shares characteristics with Southeast Asian chickens. Contrary to European practices, this type of chicken is not normally eaten but is used in medical treatments, divination or other rites that match customs in China.¹ The bones of early 14th- to mid-15th-century chickens excavated on the south coast of Chile belong genetically to a species of fowl native to Polynesia, with a DNA sequence found in chickens from Tonga, Samoa, Niue, Easter Island, and Hawaii.⁵

Maize/corn (*Zea mays*) appears to have found its way from the Americas to Asia well before the time of Columbus and the European colonizers. The many varieties of Asian maize could not have been developed in the time since maize was supposedly brought from the New World, and some varieties have unusual traits matching those of South American maizes. Sculptures of gods holding maize have been found at over 100 Indian temples. This art mostly dates from the 5th to 13th centuries AD, but some is earlier. Maize is also mentioned in 5th-century literature in India and 13th-century literature in China. A grain much like maize – known as ‘wheat of Asia’ – was being grown around Milan before or just about the time Columbus returned from his first voyage. Maize was also known at that time as ‘grain of Asian Turkey’. The implication is that maize was carried across the Pacific to Asia, from where it reached some European countries.¹
The peanut or groundnut (*Arachis hypogaea*) is native to South America, but early specimens have been found at two archaeological sites in southeastern China dated to around 2800 BC. The peanut has since been discovered in caves on the island of Timor in Indonesia, dating from the end of the 3rd millennium BC to the end of the 1st millennium AD. The nuts were found along with two other American plant species, the custard apple and maize. The kind of peanut found in graves at Ancón on the Peruvian coast was the same as that cultivated in China, Taiwan, and India.\(^4\)

The cashew nut (*Anacardium occidentale*) is native to the Americas, but is clearly represented on a bas-relief at the 2nd-century BC Bharhut Stupa in Madhya Pradesh, India, near carvings of the custard apple (*Annona squamosa*) (figures 4.4 and 4.5). The latter is also depicted at other Hindu and Buddhist temples in India, including the Ajanta caves. Two other annona species were also present in India.\(^5\)

It used to be thought that the kidney bean (*Phaseolus vulgaris*) was introduced to the New World by the Spaniards. However, specimens of this bean are known at c. 4000 BC in Mexico and before 2000 BC in Peru. It was then decided that Portuguese traders must have brought kidney beans to Asia around 1500 AD. But this is untenable because the kidney bean, the lima bean (*P. lunatus*), and the phasey bean (*Macroptilium lathyroides/P. lathyroides*) have all been discovered at multiple archaeological sites in India of the 2nd millennium BC. The evidence suggests that all these beans were transferred from the Americas to the Near East or India sometime before 1600 BC.\(^6\)

The hookworm (*Ancylostoma duodenale* and *Necator americanus*) was probably carried to South America by voyagers from East Asia or the Pacific islands. The parasite has been found in eastern Brazil in remains about 7200 years old. Immigrants who slowly travelled to North America via Beringia would have arrived hookworm-free because the cold conditions would
Other Asian influences

According to Hindu tradition, Arjuna, one of the heroes of the Mahabharata, went to Patala (the Antipodes, i.e. America) 5000 years ago, and married Princess Ulupi, a daughter of Kauravya, the king of the Nagas. 'Naga' is Sanskrit for 'serpent', a name that (like 'dragon') was applied to sages and initiates. The Mexican Indians call their shamans 'nagals', several Central American deities and culture-bearers are depicted as feathered serpents (often dragonlike in appearance), there are Snake tribes among the North American Indians, and a gigantic Serpent Mound 420 metres long was constructed by the moundbuilding peoples of ancient Ohio.

The Hindu Puranas and Jatakas describe epic sea voyages reaching as far as Malaysia and Indonesia. And before the 1st century AD, merchants from India were sailing to Siberia in search of gold. A relief carving from Borobudur's Temple of the Niches in Indonesia shows a three-masted oceangoing galley about 100 feet long. There are Buddhist records of a 5th-century pilgrimage from Sri Lanka to Java on vessels large enough to carry 200 passengers, and it was not unusual for 9th-century crews to sail thousands of miles on the Indian Ocean.

In the 1st millennium, Mesoamerica displayed an astonishing variety of apparent cultural influences from such countries as India, Cambodia, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Java, and China. In North America, a 1.75-inch-diameter medallion was found 2 feet beneath the surface on the Lake Superior island of Isle Royale in 1928. One side shows a Buddha figure seated in the entrance of a pyramid-temple or stupa flanked by palm trees and in front of a congregation. The other side shows a lion holding a scimitar in its right, extended paw at the centre of a heart with a wishbone, surrounded by a difficult-to-decipher Asian script. The object is thought to have been manufactured around 750-1300 AD.

Similarities between the religious and philosophical ideas of different cultures do not necessarily point to direct contact, but sometimes the similarities are so specific that it seems the only explanation. For instance, in the mythology of the Sioux Indians, the world goes through four phases depicted as a buffalo standing first on four legs, then three, then two, then one. The buffalo also undergoes colour changes, the last of which is black. This is remarkably similar to the Hindu theory of four ages or yugas, represented as a bull standing on four, three, two, and finally one leg. The final age in Hindu mythology is called kali-yuga – the dark or black age.

The highly developed Bahia culture of coastal Ecuador, which arose around 500 BC, shows Asian influences. Evidence includes ceramic neck rests, small model houses with un-American-looking saddle roofs, panpipes graduated from both sides to the centre, rather than from one side to the other as in the rest of South America, and figurines seated so that the right foot rests on the left knee, a posture commonly found in depictions of the Buddha.

The blowgun is found in the Americas and Southeast Asia, but it does not seem to have developed independently in the two areas. The split-and-grooved blowgun is found in Malaysia, northern Borneo, and western Luzon in the Philippines. The same weapon was used by the Houma of Louisiana, natives in the upper Amazon, and the indigenous people near Barranquilla in Colombia. The hemispherical mouthpiece is common in America and is also used in Malaysia. Indonesian and South American blowgun hunters obtain their poison from different trees, but tap them in the same way and call them by similar names. Both Malaysian and Amazonian hunters use salt and lime juice as antidotes to poison despite the lack of evidence that either actually works.

Another cultural complex found in both Southeast Asia and South America is the making of bark cloth. It is a highly intricate process involving 121 steps, of which 92 are the same in the Old World and New World. Of those 92, 42 do not depend on the prior step and are carried out in an arbitrary sequence, yet they are done in the same order in both areas. That such a coincidence could arise from independent invention is outside the realm of chance.

References

1. Huyghe, Columbus Was Last, pp. 82-3.

Chinese


2. Columbus Was Last, pp. 36-45.
3. Thompson, *Secret Voyages to the New World* pp. 53-73.

4. *Columbus Was Last*, pp. 113-23.


7. *Columbus Was Last* pp. 36, 93-4.

Japanese

1. *Columbus Was Last*, pp. 28-35.

2. Edward Moreno, *Chris you were late! – Part 2*, www.discovernikkei.org/en/journal/2010/2/5/chris-you-were-late.


Polynesians/Oceania

1. Sorenson and Johannessen, *Scientific evidence for pre-Columbian transoceanic voyages to and from the Americas*, pp. 12, 116-18; *Columbus Was Last*, pp. 109-10.


Flora and fauna

1. *Scientific evidence for pre-Columbian transoceanic voyages to and from the Americas*, pp. 42-3, 199-200; *Columbus Was Last*, pp. 127-8.


4. [http://geography.uoregon.edu/carljohannessen/research.html](http://geography.uoregon.edu/carljohannessen/research.html).

5. *Scientific evidence for pre-Columbian transoceanic voyages to and from the Americas*, pp. 9-10, 66-8.

6. Ibid., pp. 15-16, 59-60, 64-6, 211, 213.

7. Ibid., pp. 26, 124, 143-5.

8. Ibid., pp. 2-3, 172-4.

Other Asian influences


6. Ibid., pp. 143-4.

7. Ibid., p. 144.

5. The Olmecs and the Maya
Until the 1930s the Maya were thought to be the oldest civilization in Mesoamerica, but nowadays the Olmecs are believed to be the mother culture. The classical period for the Olmecs is said to be 1200 to 400 BC, but early Olmec artefacts date back to at least 1800 BC, and the earliest precursors of the Olmec style of art are observable 4000 years ago. The Olmecs went into decline around 400 BC, and were succeeded by the Epi-Olmecs, Zapotecs, Mixtecs, Maya, Toltecs, and Aztecs, who occupied many of the same sites.

17 colossal heads carved from single pieces of basalt have been found at four Olmec sites and are assumed to have been made by the Olmecs. The Olmecs also built city-temple complexes, pyramids, and sophisticated drainage systems. They invented the number, calendrical, and writing systems later refined by the Maya, and are credited with creating the ball game that played a significant role in all Mesoamerican civilizations, and which is now known to have profound astronomical and mythological meanings.\(^1\) ‘Olmec’ means ‘rubber people’ in the Aztec language, and is a reference to the rubber trees growing in the Olmec core area; the Olmecs are credited with discovering how to make rubber balls. The Olmecs also practised human sacrifice, and this bloodthirsty tradition was passed on to later Mesoamerican cultures, reaching its apex with the Aztecs.

The Olmec heartland was located in the Mexican states of southern Veracruz and Tabasco on the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. But the Olmecs’ cultural influence extended over large areas of Central America, from Guatemala and El Salvador to Nicaragua, Costa Rica and beyond. The isthmus provides the shortest overland trade route between Atlantic and Pacific ports, and since transoceanic trade seems to have been very extensive for millennia, the Olmec homeland may have been a cosmopolitan centre where worldwide cultures intermingled. Olmec art and artefacts feature people with Negroid, Oriental, and European features, but orthodox academics insist that this is not evidence of ancient pre-Columbian explorers and traders. In fact, they believe it is ‘racist’ and ‘insulting’ to suggest that Central Americans were influenced by other cultures. Apparently it is not ‘racist’ and ‘insulting’ to insist that ancient cultures were incapable of transoceanic travel!

The famous basalt heads range in height from 1.5 to 3.4 m and weigh up to 50 tonnes. How they were carved out of such hard rock and transported over 80 km to their final destinations is unknown. Modern attempts to move similar rocks over land with the technology thought to have been available to the Olmecs failed even over quite short distances. And attempts to move such rocks over water failed because the rafts and boats sank. The sculptures have broad faces, wide cheeks, thick lips, flattened noses, braided hair, a distinctive scowl, and are wearing helmets. They once stood in large squares in front of temples and ceremonial platforms and altars. Some researchers say they look like West Africans. Others note that some heads have the characteristic Asian eyefold. The statues faced east, looking toward the nearby Atlantic, and Africa. It is thought they might represent gods, revered ancestors, or priest-kings dressed for the ritual ball game.

Smaller, terracotta statues that also seem to represent black Africans have been found at various sites, belonging not just to the Olmecs but also to other early Mexican cultures. A study of 98 skeletons showed that 13.5% could be compared to the skeletons of African peoples. An examination of 25 skeletons from a much later Olmec cemetery indicated that only 4.5% bore African traits, suggesting that the African influence had declined in the meantime. The evidence implies transoceanic contact between Africa and the Gulf of Mexico between about 1200 and 400 BC. Some researchers believe that black Africans arrived in Mexico from Egypt, and that the heads may represent Nubian kings, who ruled Egypt around 751-656 BC.\(^2\)
Fig. 5.4 This Olmec statue is one of ‘the twins’, from Azuzul, Veracruz. Note the unusual Egyptian-type headdress and curious box on his forehead. This is similar to Hebrew-Phoenician customs, with the box holding magical writings or parts of the Torah.

Patrick Huyghe says that the kettle caps worn by the Olmec basalt heads are helmets of power, and resemble the helmets worn by Nubians and Egyptians of that era.

The cultural impact of the Nubian-Egyptians is especially evident in the royal and priestly dress and emblems of power of the Olmecs. A whole constellation of traits – the double crown, sacred boat, artificial beard, feathered fans, and ceremonial umbrellas – appears in both civilizations. But perhaps the most significant shared trait is the use of the color purple.

The Egyptians, who were supplied with purple dye by the Phoenicians, were among the first to associate purple with religion. They used it to distinguish priests and royalty.

Similar uses of the colour purple have been found in Mexico, and it’s interesting to note that on one basalt head a very distinctive patch of purple dye was found.

A few mummies have been unearthed in Mexico. The mummified figure found in a sarcophagus at Palenque was wearing a jade mask, as was the custom in Egypt. The base of the sarcophagus was flared: Egyptian sarcophagi were also flared, because they were stood upright, but this served no function for the Mexicans, who buried their dead in a horizontal position.

At La Venta, Olmecs built what is regarded as one of the earliest pyramids in Mesoamerica – a step pyramid 33 metres high, containing an estimated 100,000 cubic metres of earth fill, oriented on a north-south axis. At Monte Albán there are carvings closely resembling the Egyptian sphinx and Egyptian god Ra. Several Egyptian-looking statuettes have been found in San Salvador where the Olmec culture eventually spread.

Fig. 5.5 Left: An African-style head from Veracruz. Right: A ceramic head of Mediterranean appearance with beard and moustache from Tres Zapotes, Veracruz.

Fig. 5.6 Oriental-looking statue known as ‘the wrestler’ from Uxpanapan, Veracruz.

There appears to be a strong link between the Olmecs and the Shang civilization of China (1600-1046 BC). The similarities include their writing styles, the use of jade, the use of batons as symbols of rank, their settlement patterns and architectural styles, the possession of feline deities, and the use of cranial deformation (head-flattening). The artificial deformation of infants’ heads was also practised by the Maya, the Aztecs, the ancient Peruvians, the Flathead Indians, the ancient Egyptians, the Easter Islanders, the Cro-Magnon Aurignacian culture, the Basques, and the Indians of the Antilles. The practice was used to denote elite status, to emphasize ethnic differences, or for religious, magical, or aesthetic purposes.

Some Olmec hieroglyphs look very like Chinese characters. One Chinese language scholar has argued that the Olmecs used the early Shang oracle script for a time, which later evolved into the Epi-Olmec script and possibly the Mayan script.

Others argue that the Olmec script was brought from western Africa or developed locally.

Fig. 5.7 Olmec (left) and Shang (right) statues with mohawk haircut in a kneeling (quipu) position. This hairstyle was also worn by the Columbians, Africans, and Mohawk Indians of the St Lawrence river. In China it is associated with ancient magicians.

Fig. 5.8 Olmec art includes frowning babies with no genitals who look like Chinese eunuchs. Shang admirals and ambassadors were often eunuchs.
An artefact measuring 8 by 14 cm, comprising an ingenious mosaic of 325 pyrite tiles, was found at the 3000-year-old Olmec site of Las Bocas in Mexico. It is thought to represent either a lunar or Venus calendar. Cruder mosaics are known from later Olmec history and also from China’s Shang dynasty.\(^2\)

The Olmecs often depicted human heads with a V-shaped cleft in the top of their heads. This may symbolize the crown chakra (linked to the pineal gland) – one of the main points where energies from subtler levels of our being enter the physical body. John Major Jenkins says that it symbolizes a portal to another realm, a birthplace, and – astronomically – the dark rift, a cleft-like feature in the Milky Way near one of the points where it crosses the ecliptic, close to the direction of the galactic centre.\(^3\) The cleft-head motif is also found in Chinese art.

The stones balls discovered in Costa Rica are another intriguing mystery associated with what was once Olmec territory. There are several hundred such balls, ranging from a few centimetres to 2.15 metres in diameter. Nearly all of them are made of granodiorite, a very hard, igneous stone. The balls were cut, trimmed and then polished. The largest balls, which weigh about 15 tonnes, show the finest craftsmanship. The official view is that they were all made with primitive tools, beginning no earlier than 200 BC.\(^11\) Their true purpose and origin are unknown.

### Maya

The voyage led by Tzu Fu that left China in 219 BC resulted in the establishment of a Chinese colony in Mexico. A new artistic style – the Izapan style – emerged in southern Mexico in the period 300-100 BC, characterized by an abundance of intricate, Chinese-looking scrollwork. Gunnar Thompson reports that a remarkable concentration of ancient Chinese-Taoist symbolism has been found in this region, along with Chinese Kangi writing, Chinese ceramic toys and headrests, Chinese pottery, Chinese jade coins, and sculpted faces of Chinese mariners. Genetic research has revealed a high concentration of Chinese genetic traits among the indigenous population in this area.\(^1\)

Izapa stela 5 – the Festival Monument – is a 1.5-ton slab of andesite carved with metal tools, which has been assigned a date of 300-400 BC. It depicts more than a dozen symbols and motifs that are distinctly Asian. Patrick Huyghe writes:

> There is a Taoist teacher with his pointed hat, a Taoist pupil, two fishes (which represented matrimonial harmony in China), the serpent/turtle motif, the rain cloud symbol, a plumed bird with life-force scrolls, a chinless deity with scroll-shaped eyes, a roaring tiger, a parasol, a sacred Buddhist ceiba tree, a peaked scroll cloud, a yin-yang symbol, and the power of heaven motif.\(^2\)

A lunar calendar was introduced in Mesoamerica which, like the Chinese calendar, began in about 3000 BC, more than 2000
years before the Mayan civilization officially began. The Mayan eclipse table in the Dresden Codex is identical to a table that Chinese astronomers produced during the Han dynasty (202 BC - 220 AD). Both tables contained the same errors: they predicted 23 eclipses within a 135-month period, whereas only 18 occur.³

Fig. 5.15 Ceramic figure from Uxmal, Mexico, 400 BC. It shows an ancient mariner with a characteristic Chinese beard and lion dog on the right shoulder.⁴

Flat-bottomed, cylindrical tripod vessels with square moulded legs, horizontal decorations, and conical lids topped with birds or ringed knobs were found at Teotihuacán, Mexico, and dated to the 3rd century AD. These vessels are unrelated to other common pottery shapes used in Mesoamerica at the time, but are highly reminiscent of the ceramic, metal, and lacquer cylindrical tripod vessels of Han China.²

The Buddhist missionary who claimed to have returned from a trip to Fu Sang in 498 AD said he had visited a country 20,000 li (about 6000 miles) to the east of Siberia. That would place it in vicinity of Mexico. He mentioned that the merchants there did not have to pay tax – which was true of Mayan merchants. He also spoke of seeing horses and waggons, which is used to dismiss his account as fiction. But there are native traditions, reports by pre-Columbian visitors, and other pieces of evidence that point to horses being present in the Americas before the arrival of the Spaniards.³

Comalcalco was a major Mayan port built in the 1st and 2nd centuries AD. It is the only site in pre-Columbian America where kiln-fired clay brick was used. A small percentage of the bricks bear motifs and designs, some of which are similar to Roman mason’s marks from the first half of the 1st millennium AD. The dimensions of the bricks and other objects reflect Roman units of measure, and the cement used was similar to that favoured by the Romans. However, no Latin inscriptions have as yet been found at the site.⁸

Fig. 5.16 Mason marks seen on Comalcalco’s bricks (left) strongly resemble those used by Roman masons (right).

Fig. 5.17 Christian motifs common in ancient Europe (top) are similar to motifs at Comalcalco (bottom).

David Eccott has argued that the technology and perhaps the expertise behind the brick-making at Comalcalco could be part of a tradition stretching back thousands of years. He believes that some of the signs represent a form of ancient script familiar to Mesopotamia and the Indus Valley culture of northern India around 3000 BC. It is thought to have gradually spread eastwards to China, Sumatra, Easter Island (rongorongo script), and finally Peru, Panama, and Mexico. Examples of the Indus Valley script have been identified both at Comalcalco and on the adobe bricks used to construct the pyramids at Las Ventanas in northwest Peru, dated to between 300 BC and 880 AD. The Indian Satavahana dynasty (c. 200 BC - 200 AD) is known to have had extensive trade connections with Rome.¹⁰

Fig. 5.18 This ceramic head recovered at Comalcalco suggests a Roman or Afro-Arabian influence.

Fig. 5.19 The Calixtlahuaca head. This terracotta head, with its moustache and neatly trimmed beard, was excavated from an undisturbed ancient grave sealed under the Calixtlahuaca pyramid, 35 miles southwest of Mexico City, in 1933. Several experts believe it to be Roman and to date from the 2nd century AD, but it is officially classified as ‘colonial’.¹¹

Temple I at Tikal, Guatemala, is a classic example of a Mayan pyramid, with its stepped profile, single narrow staircase, and small but massively built temple at the top. The same features are found in the stepped temples in and around Angkor Wat in Cambodia. Mayan pyramids were built around a solid substructure, as were the Buddhist stupas of India, such as those at Sanchi and the stepped temples of Cambodia. Long, narrow corridors and corbelled arches are found in both Mayan pyramids and Southeast Asian temples.¹²
The use of the lotus motif in Mayan temples at Palenque is highly specific and virtually identical to that in Hindu and Buddhist temples. For instance, a bas-relief depicting a Mayan priest holding a lotus blossom by the stem is remarkably similar to one in Khasaparna, India. A relief showing a lotus growing from a conch shell can be found at both Palenque and Borobudur. Mayan and Hindu panels also show fish eating lotus flowers.

The caiman of Mesoamerica corresponds to the mythical makara of India, an amphibious creature variously portrayed as a crocodile-fish, a creature with the head and forelegs of an antelope and the body and tail of a fish, a creature with an elephant’s head and fish’s body, and a dolphin or shark. The makara is associated with the creation of the world, and is often depicted disgorging human heads, deities, lotuses or other elements of creation; alternatively, a hero or deity is sometimes shown defending himself from its jaws. The makara is sometimes depicted vertically, with its head at the bottom. All these motifs are widely found in Mesoamerica. In addition, the makara, caiman and related Mayan kawak (cauac) or ‘earth monster’ sometimes have a curved, upturned snout, and also a trefoil, which has been interpreted as representing the triune qualities of ‘divine breath’.

An impressive piece of evidence for an east Indian presence in Mesoamerica is the 8th-century stela of a Mayan noble from Copán, Honduras. At the top of the stela are what appear to be two elephant figures – which are remarkable because elephants were not indigenous to America. Conventional scholars insist that the long-nosed animals are local tropical birds with enlarged beaks – perhaps tapirs or macaws. The figures mounted on the ‘elephants’ (no longer visible today) are wearing turban-like headdresses resembling the headgear of Hindu elephant riders, or mahouts, of the same period. A long-nosed figure looking like Ganesha, the Hindu elephant-headed god, also appears on the stela. Ganesha was particularly worshipped by Indian traders and merchants.

The board game known as patolli was widely played in Mesoamerica, including by the Teotihuacanos, Toltecs and Aztecs. It resembles the game of pachisi, which was been popular in India from Vedic times until today. Similarities include the board’s cruciform shape, the sequence of moves, and the cosmic associations of the pieces and moves. The game appeared in Mesoamerica around the 7th or 8th century AD and continued to be played until colonial times.

The small animal figures on wheels found in Mesoamerica, mostly dating to the middle to second half of 1st millennium AD, are very similar to the wheeled ‘toys’ found in India, whose history extends from the Vedic civilization of the 1st millennium BC to the present century. Originally, the miniature vehicles/animal figures may have had a religious function. Among the Hindus the oxcart was sacred because it contained the sacred seed (rice) and served as an altar. The ‘toys’ are found in regions of Mesoamerica which display a concentration of other elements of Indian culture, including the patolli board game.
In mural paintings the Maya depicted themselves as lighter skinned than their enemies, and their rulers and nobility were portrayed as having the lightest skin of all. A scene in the Temple of the Warriors at Chichén Itzá depicts people with white, brown, and black skins. The *Popol Vuh*, the sacred text of the Quiché Maya, describes the first ancestors as 'black people, white people, many were the people's looks, many were the people's languages'. Many of the mummies of the Inca nobility of Peru also bear strikingly Caucasoid traits.

In Aztec mythology, Quetzalcoatl, the Feathered Serpent, is a benevolent deity, creator of humanity, and teacher of the arts of civilization. He is described as having Caucasoid features, being tall and bearded, with hair of the same colour as the maize which he taught people to cultivate. He is said to have come from 'the distant east'. When Cortez reached Mesoamerica in the 16th century, the natives believed, due to his fair skin and beard, that he was Quetzalcoatl, who had returned as promised, and so they offered no initial resistance to the Spanish conquerors. The corresponding Mayan god and culture-bearer, Kukulkán, who also brought maize agriculture, is likewise depicted with European features. Among the Quiché Maya of lowland Yucatán, the matching tall, bearded, fair-skinned, light-haired man-god was Votan. Kukulkán appears to correspond to the Celtic hero Cuchulinn (or Kukil Can), who was sometimes depicted as a feathered serpent, while Votan corresponds to the Odin, Wotan, or Votan of the Germanic peoples of northern Europe, who was often portrayed as a dragon or serpent.\textsuperscript{21}

**Mining and metalworking**

The use of metals in Mexico has been pushed further and further back, and is now virtually contemporary with that in South America, where sophisticated metalworking techniques were developed around 1200 BC. The Olmecs had a word for metal as early as 1500 BC, and mined iron, jade, turquoise, obsidian, emeralds, and gold. Many of the Aztec, Toltec, Mayan, and Zapotec mines may have originally been Olmec mines. Jade was the most valuable of all stones to the ancient Chinese and also to Mesoamerican cultures.

Many of the artefacts made by Mesoamerican cultures (or obtained by them from elsewhere) display an incredible level of skill.\textsuperscript{1} The Zapotecs, for instance, were renowned for their incredible artistry and advanced metalworking skills, including smelting, casting, welding, and electroplating. Their artisans were skilled in carving rock crystal, jade, and turquoise – a brittle material that was crafted into mosaics of wafer-thin pieces. Many Zapotec artefacts could only have been made with sophisticated jeweller’s tools. Some of the round stone cups are less than one-eighth of an inch thick – an incredible feat that can only be achieved using a lapidary wheel. The marks left by such wheels can in fact be identified on many museum artefacts. This culture began about 200 BC – around the time that Tzu Fu established his Chinese colony in Fu Sang.\textsuperscript{2}

The Aztecs of Mexico and Incas of Peru made acceptable mirrors from obsidian (volcanic glass). More technically challenging were the concave mirrors that the Olmecs made from magnetite. It is not known how they precision-grinded and polished exact, three-dimensional, symmetrical surfaces – assuming they did this themselves. One scholar commented that it is simply impossible to reconstruct the technique employed to achieve such perfection, which included making concave mirrors with varying radii of curvature.\textsuperscript{3}

**References**

**Olmecs**


3. Huyghe, *Columbus Was Last*, p. 189.

4. Ibid., pp. 186, 188.


The Mystery of the Olmecs, p. 196.


Maya

Thompson, Secret Voyages to the New World pp. 63-5, 70, 73.

Columbus Was Last, p. 90.

Secret Voyages to the New World p. 70

Ibid., p. 71.

Columbus Was Last, pp. 90-1; Secret Voyages to the New World pp. 64-5.

Ibid., p. 70.

Columbus Was Last, p. 123.


Ancient Structures, p. 162.


Columbus Was Last, pp. 125-6.

http://mayaruins.com/copan/a1_1098.html.


Mayan Genesis, pp. 296-7, 962-3.

Ibid., pp. 221-2, 964-6.


Mining and metalworking

The Mystery of the Olmecs, pp. 227-37.

Secret Voyages to the New World p. 66.

Corliss, Archeological Anomalies: Small artifacts, pp. 269-70.
Migration to the Americas took place about 30,000 to 14,000 years ago, and most of the Pacific islands were colonized by 2000 years ago. This ridiculously compressed version of human history is contradicted by abundant archaeological evidence. Genetic studies have given rise to widely conflicting scenarios for the peopling of the Americas. Some researchers have reported genetic evidence for pre-Columbian transoceanic contacts over the past few thousand years. James Guthrie writes: Studies have shown that the number of human lymphocyte antigen (HLA) alleles characteristic of indigenous American populations is relatively small, and that some isolated South American tribes possess only a few types that are common throughout the Americas. The Native American Indians have been said to be descendants of the Lemurians, as are certain tribes in Turkey, the Aboriginals and the population of Madagascar. Believed to be located in either the Indian or Pacific oceans, according to Helena Petrovna Blavatsky the Lemurians are the third root race making them very ancient indeed, proceeded only by the Ethereals and Hyperboreans, each laying claim to no living descendants today. Interestingly according to Madame Blavatsky, the fifth root race the Aryans who do have descendants alive today is now one million years old. Atlantis has also been linked to belonging to Poseidon, God of the sea and the Ancient Egyptians who apparently wrote about it in hieroglyphs. The settlement of the Americas began when Paleolithic hunter-gatherers entered North America from the North Asian Mammoth steppe via the Beringia land bridge, which had formed between northeastern Siberia and western Alaska due to the lowering of sea level during the Last Glacial Maximum. These populations expanded south of the Laurentide Ice Sheet and spread rapidly throughout both North and South America, by 14,000 years ago. The earliest populations in the Americas, before roughly 10,000 years ago