



Geog 126: Maps in Science and Society

Enter the Americas: The Legacy
of Columbus

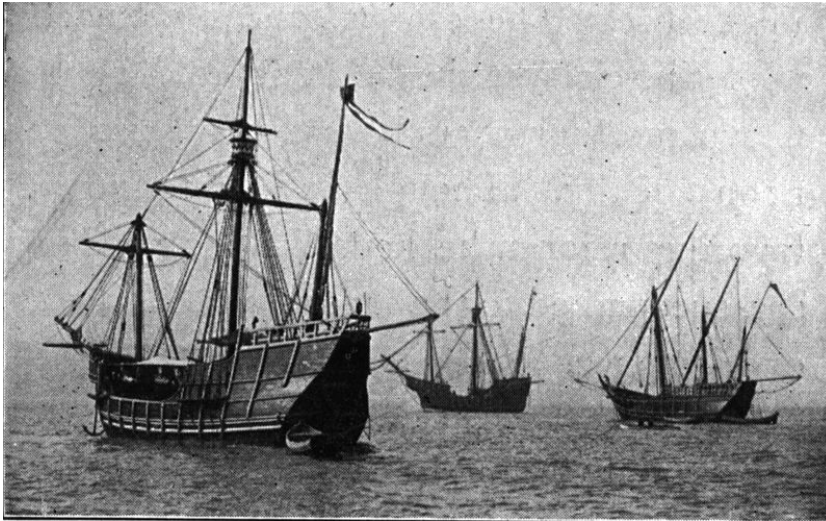
Columbus Day Poem

In fourteen hundred ninety-two
Columbus sailed the ocean blue
<etc>

Christopher Columbus

31 October 1451 – 20 May 1506

Italian from Genoa, but sailing for Spain



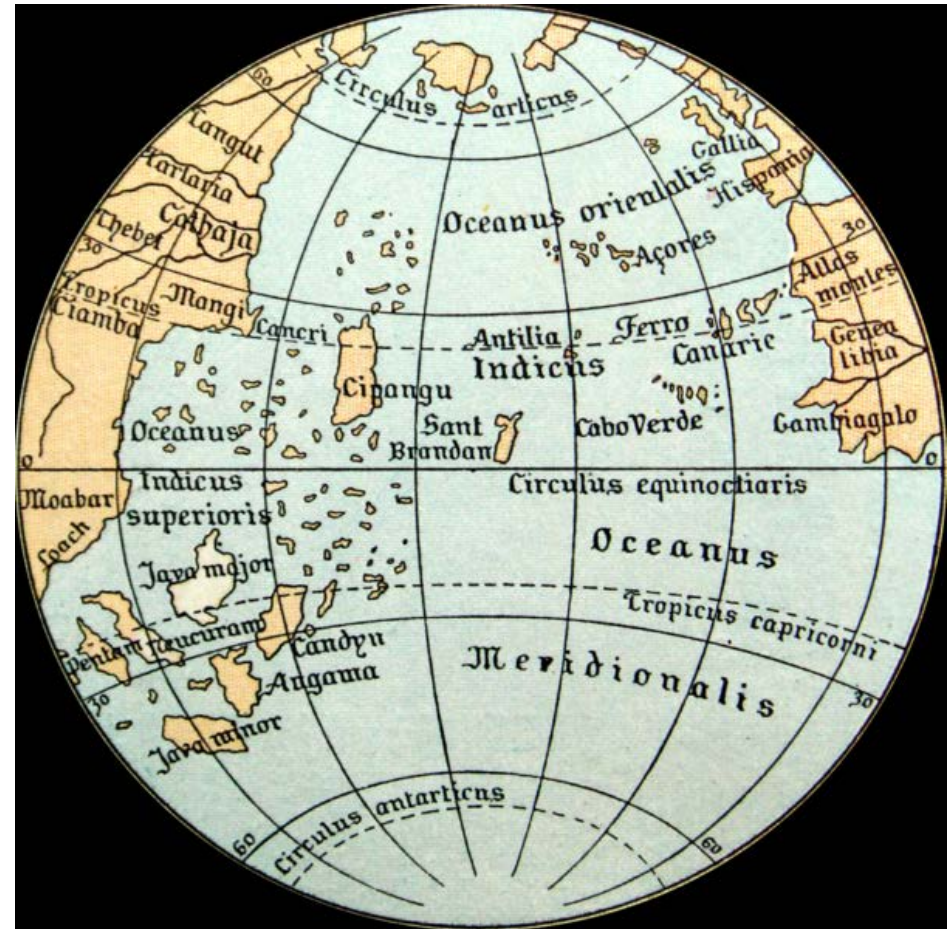
Columbus Map: circa 1490 workshop of Bartolomeo and Christopher Columbus in Lisbon



Juan de la Cosa (1490)



The Temptation: Behaim's 1492 Globe





"Conceptions Colomb map-en" by Mindriot - Own work. Licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0 via Commons - https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Conceptions_Colomb_map-en.svg#/media/File:Conceptions_Colomb_map-en.svg

The context

- Portugal “Reconquista” peaks in 1212 Battle of Las Navas de Tolosa, then independent
- Spain far from unified, each kingdom has power
- **Capitulation of Granada** January 1492 Spain took the Moorish Emirate of Granada
- Catholic church starting the Spanish Inquisition (established in 1478 by Catholic Monarchs Ferdinand II of Aragon and Isabella I of Castile)
- Expulsion of the Jews from Spain also 1492
- Columbus faced years of attempting to raise support, all over Europe, while fortune and power changed hands

Outside besieged Granada, Ferdinand relents in 1491
10% of profits, and “Admiral of the Ocean Sea” formal April 17, 1492

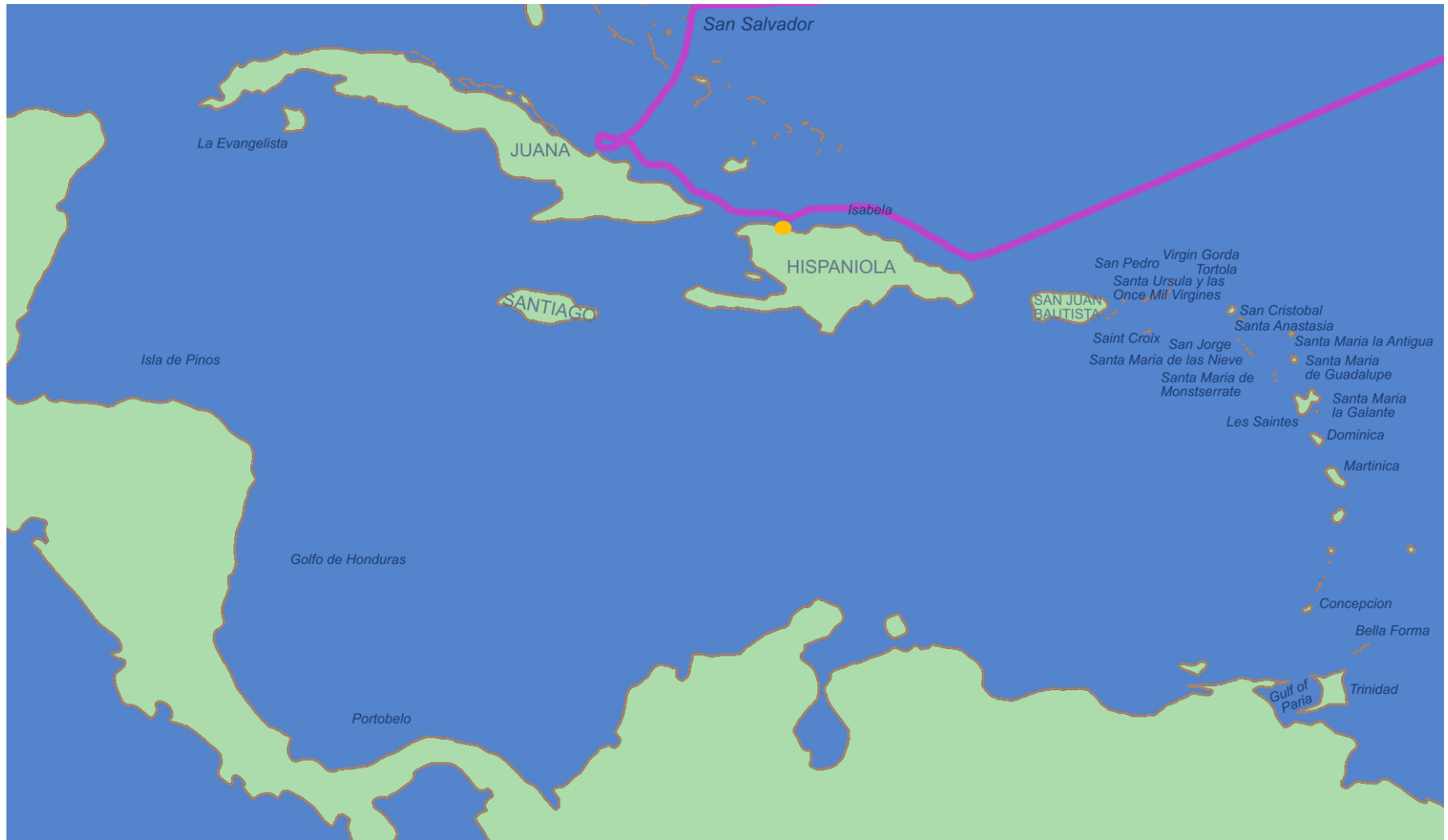


First voyage

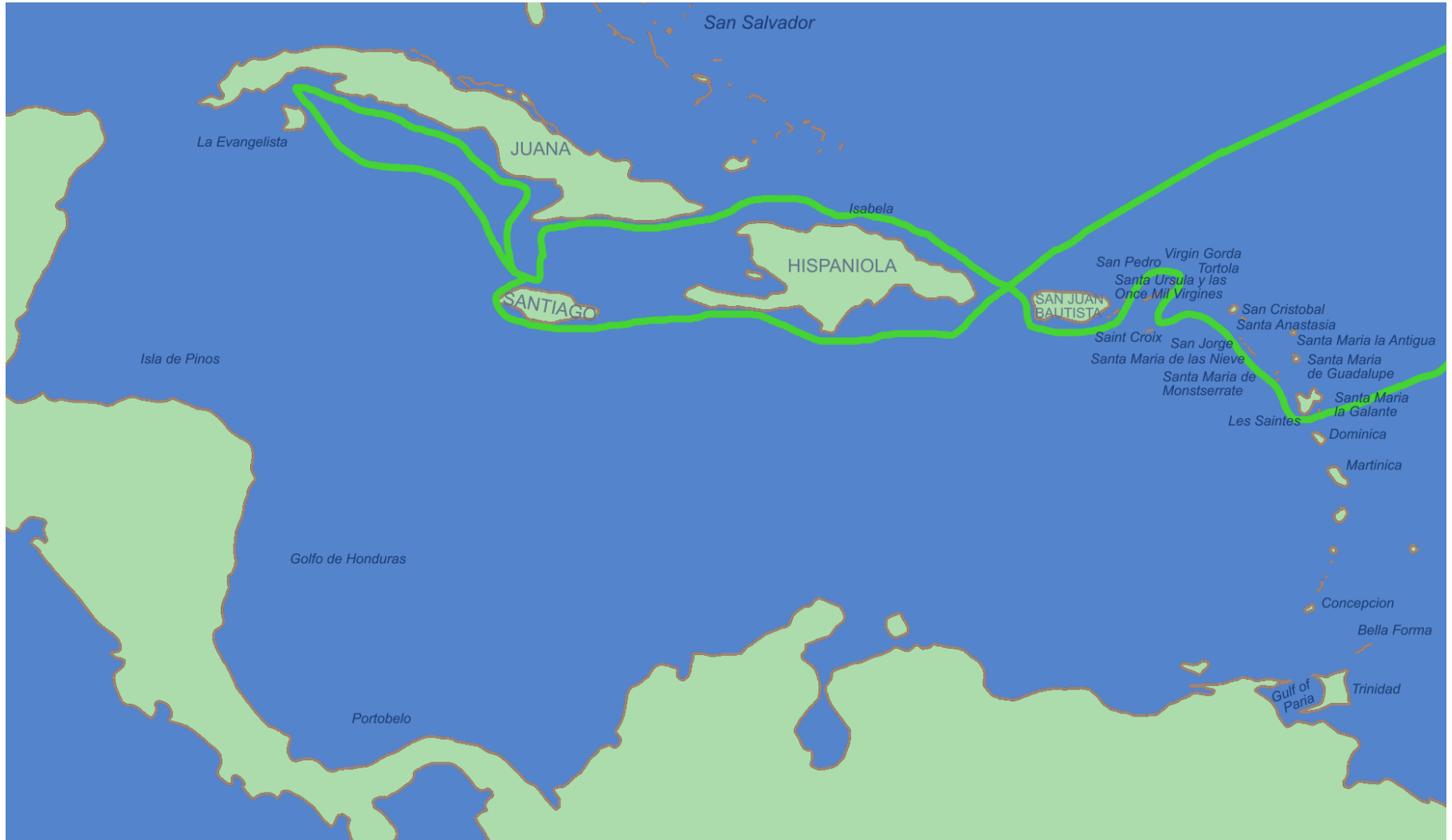
- 3 ships, August 3, 1492.
- Sailed southward to the Canary Islands
- Pick up the northeast trade winds; could trust to the westerlies for their return.
- After nearly a month in the Canaries the ships set out from San Sebastián de la Gomera on September 6.
- Land sighted October 12 from the Pinta (Columbus, on the Niña, later claimed the privilege for himself).
- Landfall at Guanahani, is hotly disputed, but most believe San Salvador (Watlings) Island in the Bahamas

First Voyage August 3, 1492:

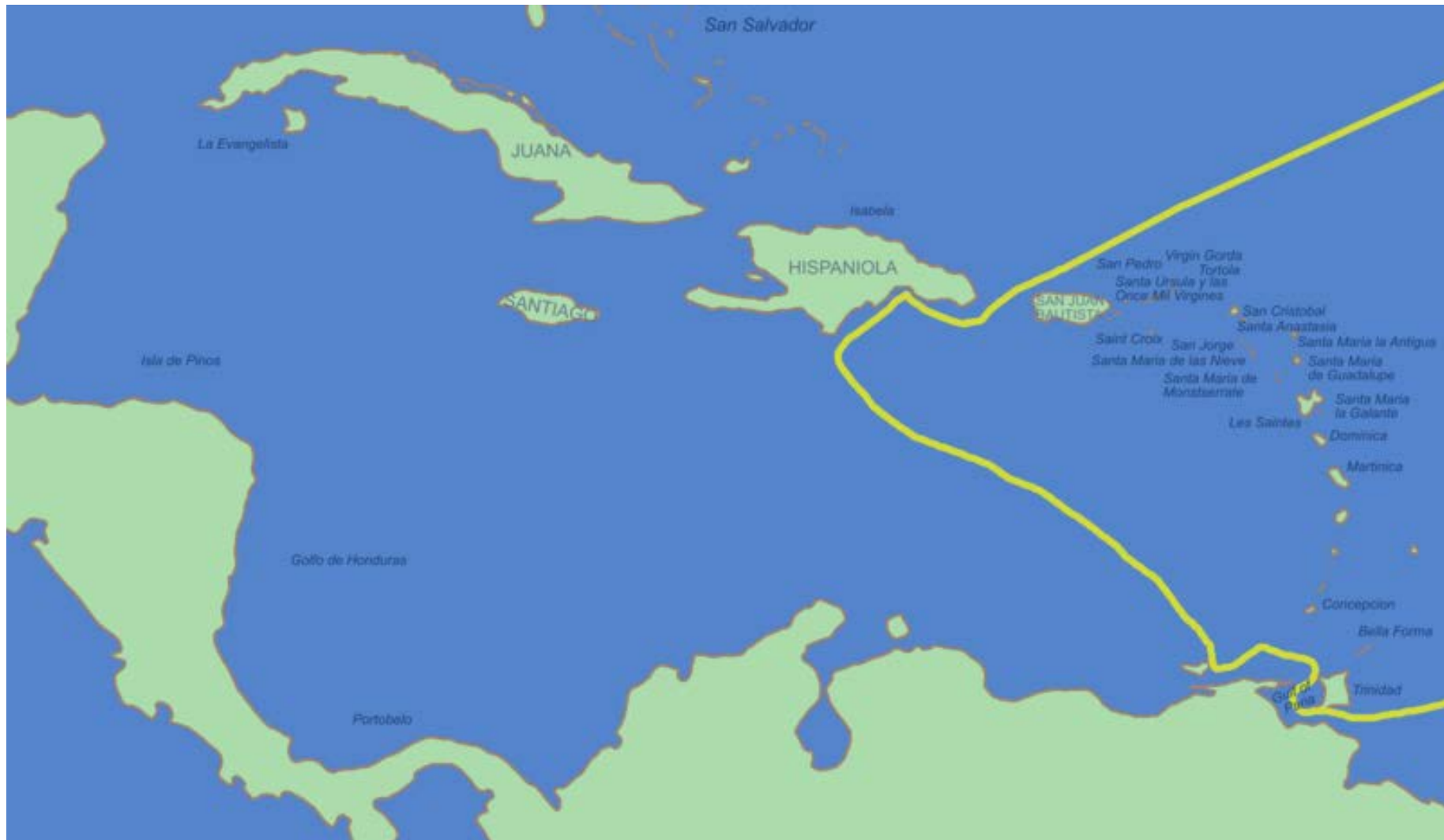
Santa Maria lost: Fort built at La Navidad



Second voyage 1493-4

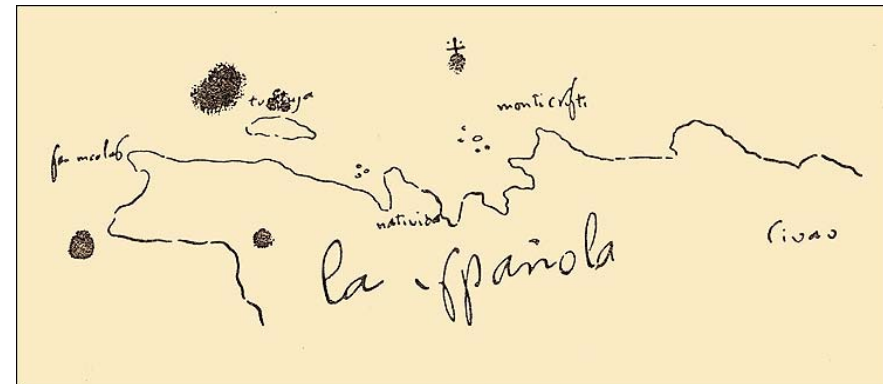


Third voyage 1498



Problems with the third voyage

- In Hispaniola on August 19 many of the Spanish settlers of the new colony were discontented, having been misled by Columbus about the supposedly bountiful riches of the new world.
- Small amount of gold found becoming short, mines dug
- Journal from September 1498 reads, "From here one might send, in the name of the Holy Trinity, as many slaves as could be sold..."
- A fierce supporter of slavery, Columbus ultimately refused to baptize the native people of Hispaniola, since Catholic law forbade the enslavement of Christians



The Tainos 3M to 200

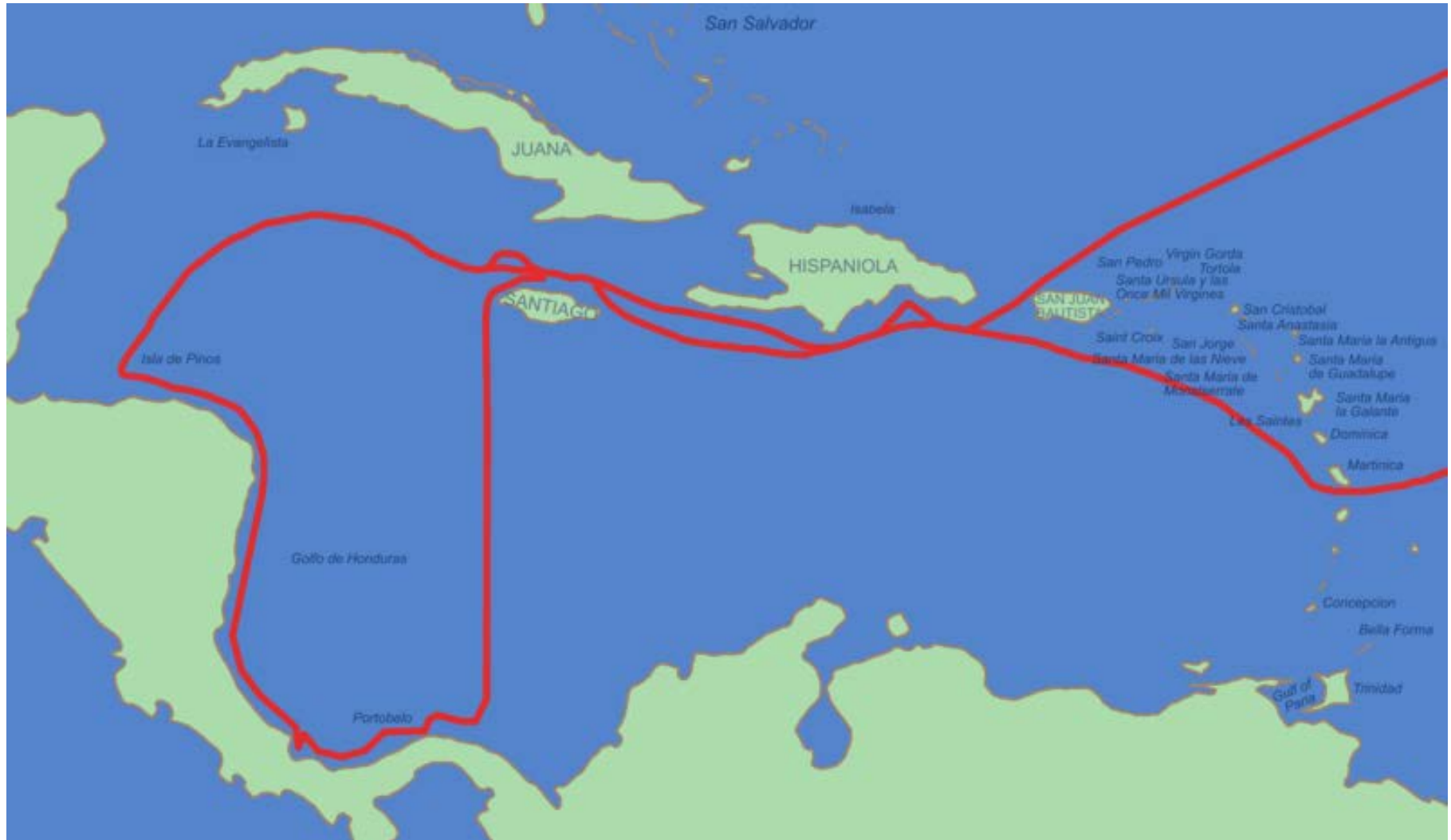


“The men left behind at La Navidad brutally mistreat the Taínos. They steal, take slaves and abused women. In response, the Taíno cacique, Caonabó, kills all the Spaniards on the island.”

Columbus' 3rd Voyage

- Columbus repeatedly had to deal with rebellious settlers and natives.
- He had some of his crew hanged for disobeying him.
- A number of returning settlers and sailors lobbied against Columbus at the Spanish court, accusing him and his brothers of gross mismanagement.
- On his return he was arrested for a period.
- Consuelo Varela, a Spanish historian, states: "Even those who loved him [Columbus] had to admit the atrocities that had taken place."
- Pardoned by the King after 6 weeks, and put in charge of a 4th journey (but relieved of role as Governor)

Fourth Voyage 1502-1504



Fourth Journey

- Spain to Jamaica, then Columbus sailed to Central America, arriving at Guanaja (Isla de Pinos) in the Bay Islands off the coast of Honduras on July 30.
- Bartolomeo found native merchants and a large canoe, which was described as "long as a galley" and was filled with cargo.
- On August 14, he landed on the American mainland at Puerto Castilla, near Trujillo, Honduras.
- He spent two months exploring the coasts of Honduras, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica, before arriving in Almirante Bay, Panama on October 16.
- In Panama, Columbus learned from the natives of gold and a strait to another ocean.
- After much exploration, in January 1503 he established a garrison at the mouth of the Rio Belen.

The Fourth Voyage

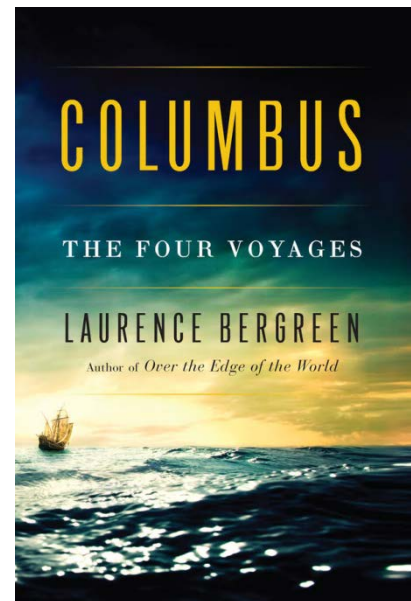
- On April 6 one of the ships became stranded in the river. At the same time, the garrison was attacked, and the other ships were damaged.
- Columbus left for Hispaniola on April 16, heading north. On May 10 he sighted the Cayman Islands, naming them "Las Tortugas" after the numerous sea turtles there.
- His ships next sustained more damage in a storm off the coast of Cuba.
- Unable to travel farther, on June 25, 1503, they were beached in St. Ann's Bay, Jamaica.

The 4th and last voyage

- For a year Columbus and his men remained stranded on Jamaica.
- A Spaniard, Diego Mendez, and some natives paddled a canoe to get help from Hispaniola. That island's governor detested Columbus and obstructed all efforts to rescue him and his men
- Columbus, in a desperate effort to induce the natives to continue provisioning him and his hungry men, successfully intimidated the natives by correctly predicting a lunar eclipse for February 29, 1504, using the *Ephemeris* of the German astronomer Regiomontanus
- Help finally arrived, no thanks to the governor, on June 29, 1504, and Columbus and his men arrived in Spain on November 7

Myths

- Association with flat earth
- Commemoration and promotion by Italian Americans in the C19th
- Columbus day, D. C. etc.
- Simplified account promoted by American historians, led to statues, commemorative naming etc.
- Lawrence Bergreen *Columbus: The Four Voyages* is a recent impartial account



The endgame

- Wrote two books during his later years, largely arguing to support his claims
- In his later years, Columbus demanded that the Spanish Crown give him 10% of all profits made in the new lands
- Because he had been relieved of his duties as governor, the crown did not feel bound by that contract and his demands were rejected.
- After his death, his heirs sued the Crown leading to legal disputes known as the [pleitos colombinos](#) ("Columbian lawsuits").
- Died 20 May 1506, at age 54, in Valladolid, Spain of a heart attack caused by reactive arthritis

Reassessment

