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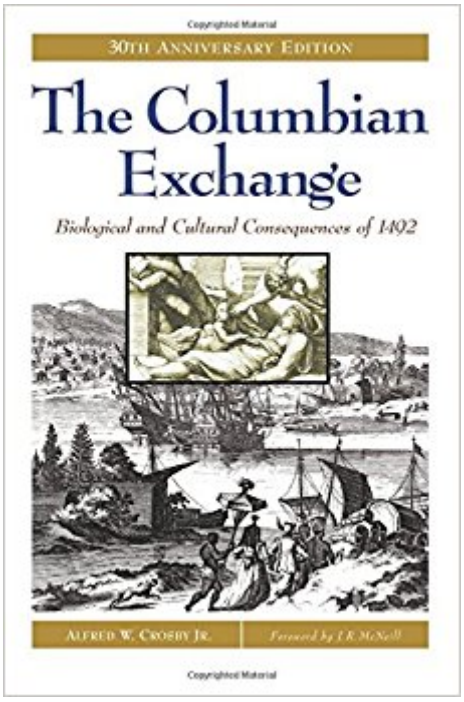
The Columbian Exchange: Biological And Cultural Consequences Of 1492, 30th Anniversary Edition



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Synopsis

Thirty years ago, Alfred Crosby published a small work that illuminated a simple point, that the most important changes brought on by the voyages of Columbus were not social or political, but biological in nature. The book told the story of how 1492 sparked the movement of organisms, both large and small, in both directions across the Atlantic. This Columbian exchange, between the Old World and the New, changed the history of our planet drastically and forever.The book The Columbian Exchange changed the field of history drastically and forever as well. It has become one of the foundational works in the burgeoning field of environmental history, and it remains one of the canonical texts for the study of world history. This 30th anniversary edition of The Columbian Exchange includes a new preface from the author, reflecting on the book and its creation, and a new foreword by J. R. McNeill that demonstrates how Crosby established a brand new perspective for understanding ecological and social events. As the foreword indicates, The Columbian Exchange remains a vital book, a small work that contains within the inspiration for future examinations into what happens when two peoples, separated by time and space, finally meet.

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Customer Reviews

Crosby put ecological history on the map. His pioneering text has awakened, inspired, and challenged a generation of readers. It will, undoubtedly, become more relevant as the pace of global exchange increases. - The Sixteenth Century JournalThe Columbian Exchange is a seminal, educational, and uniquely insightful contribution to Native American, Medical History, and World History Studies reference collections and reading lists. - Library Bookwatch

Alfred W. Crosby, Jr. is professor emeritus of American studies, history, and geography at the University of Texas, Austin. He is the author of Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900Ã¢â ¬â œ1900 (1986), America's Forgotten Pandemic: The Influenza of 1918 (1989), The Measure of Reality: Quantification and Western Society, 1250Ã¢â ¬â œ1600 (1997), and most recently Throwing Fire: Projectile Technology through History (2002).

This book is VERY good for Educational purposes. I used it for one of my college classes and it was wonderful. I would definitely recommend it.

After being deluged in recent years with Jared Diamond's "Guns, Germs, and Steel" theory of history in books and on TV, its refreshing to go back to the original thinker. One only need consider the "Great Man" theory of history, and its utter inadequacy to account for the dynamics of old world meets new world history to realize how much history has changed and the seminal part in that change of this author and this book. Crosby shows that a knowledge of epidemiology and botany informs our history more than belief, culture, or technology. That the spanish slaughtered and enslaved in pursuit of gold, ignoring a harvest of potatoes and tomatoes; since valued much higher than all the gold ever mined, puts in doubt both any "great man" theories of history not to mention any "rational self interest" based economic theories. We're just now beginning to perceive the greater gifts of agricultural diversity that the native americans left us but we have rejected, possibly to our peril. The first flickers of recognition of the depths of their gift and sacrifice starts here. A book that's a joy to read and changes the way you see the world - more than one can reasonably ask of any book.

This was an excellent book in excellent condition. It was what I expected it to be. It arrived in time for me to use for a class assignment.

very boring book, a few interesting concepts. i would not read it for fun, but it was useful for a class once.

Spectacularly written and a perspective changer. I had to read this book in graduate in a seminar entitled "Environmental History of Latin America." It obliterated many of the previous notions I had concerning the method in which the Spanish conquered the Americas. Crosby brute-fully and

ingeniously asserts that the conquerors from the old world, accompanied by their weapons, animals, ideals, and most importantly (with their most devastating cohort) disease, that their landing on the shores of the New World were akin to an asteroid slamming into it and catastrophically modifying it for the rest of human history. Whoa.

Although only a large essay, Columbian Exchange was a paradigm shift in how Western historians view biological exchanges between Old & New World after 1492. Besides the exchange in human (mostly African) slaves which was the intended 1st leg of a nefarious Triangular Trade cycle between Old & New Worlds, Crosby also examines the unintended consequences of food crops, pathogens, domesticated animals, and commodity crops (rubber, cotton, etc.)It concerns not only the cash crops (tobacco, sugar,coffee, rubber, cotton).It also suggests the effect of pigs & horses which readily adapted to the New World. Horses transformed many Amerindian cultures into horse-centered cultures.Many Old World plants & animals transformed the Americas(and Africa). Unintended 'hitchhikers' like smallpox & flu had the effect of a genocidal pandemic upon native Amerindian tribes.New World species, especially potato, once they gained acceptance in Europe, became a staple of the poor, (Ireland & Russia).Not emphasized by Crosby, many exotic New World specimens were returned to the Old World by natural scientists and the idea of natural selection was devised based upon evidence & specimens gathered in New World by European naturalists (i.e., Darwin's studies of finches of Galapagos)These are a few of the effects of the Columbian Exchange. Crosby's work changed the way that historians and scientists understand the Age of Discovery.I read this book 'after the fact', having become familiar with the exchanges by secondary, later sources. I am surprised that more scholarship hasn't pursued the effect of Dutch exchanges in Indonesia, British exchanges in India, etc which I would expect to have been as transformative as the Old World / Americas exchanges.Note: This summary of important exchange species gives a sense of scale of exchanges (wikipedia)Old World to New WorldDomesticated animalsbeecatcamelCHICKENCOWgoatgoosehoney beesHORSErabbit (domestic)PIGrock pigeonsheepsilkwormwater buffaloNew to Oldalpacaguinea pigllamaTURKEYDomesticated plants Old to NewalmondAPPLEapricotartichokeasparagusbananabarleybeetblack peppercabbagecantaloupecarrotCOFFEECITRUS (orange, lemon, etc.)cucumbereggplantflaxgarlichempkiwifruitkola nutlettucemangomilletoatokraoliveONIONOPIUMpeachpeapearpistachioradishrhubarbRICEryesoybeanSUGARCANEtaroTEAturnipWHEATwalnut (English)watermelonNew to Old plants /cropsamaranth (as grain)avocadocommon beans (pinto, lima, kidney, etc.)black raspberrybell

pepperblueberrycashewchiachiclechirimoyachili pepperscranberries (large cranberry, or bearberry species)cocaCOCOACOTTON(long staple species)CORNguava (common)huckleberryjicamamaize (corn)manioc (cassava, tapioca, yuca)marijuanapapayapeanutpecanpineapplePOTATOpumpkinquinoaRUBBERsquashstrawberry (commercial varieties)sunflowersweet potatoTOBACCOtomatovanillazucchiniInfectious diseases Old to Newbubonic plaguechicken poxCHOLERAFLUsleprosyMALARIAmeaslesscarlet feverSMALLPOXtyphoidtyphusYELLOW FEVERyawsNew to Old pathogensSYPHILLISyaws

Wish I had read this book many years ago. Crosby lays out the influence, flowing in both directions, of the meeting of Europe/Africa with the Western hemisphere. It was and is way more of a give and take than you might imagine. Fascinating.

This book is pretty interesting at parts, boring at others. I have learned a lot about the Colombian exchange.I needed it for my college history class. Its very detailed and confusing language is used at times.

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