

Q1- Give comprehensive account of Spanish explorations of the American continent with special References to the Voyages of Columbus?

Outline
Introduction between Europe and America

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Introduction

The discovery of American continent was not just accidental but a series of demands that transitioned from time to time, thus urged to find a route to its resources for raw materials and to support the growing population in Europe. The discovery of American continent was not just related to religious and political factors but also involved the reasons of personal fame and authority.

1. Linkage between Europe and America

The raw materials which were traded to Europe from Asia, were from the routes of sea, which ran through Cairo, the Red Sea and Indian Ocean. And the other was the land route passing through Turkey. The sea routes were the major trade routes but constant fear and threat of pirates had put a halt to such relations. While the land route which passed through Turkey was closed by Sultan Mehmed II in 1453 after conquering Constantinople, to agree to terms of Turkey and to pay tax. The Europeans now left with two options, either to agree to terms of Turkey or to find another route through sea to begin exploration. Europeans opted for the later one and in this way a new chapter in the voyages of journey and discovery initiated, changing the dynamics of world's political authority also.

Christopher Columbus and his Voyages
Christopher Columbus, an European explorer, born in Italy, was fond of sea voyages and became a seaman at a young age. His inquisitive nature about geography led him to discover American continent and credited him with inaugurating a period of exploration and colonization. The Spanish monarch, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella sponsored him in his expeditions to begin a new chapter of colonization. Thus, leading to four voyages of Columbus to American Islands.

The discovery of Bahamas Islands

August 3rd, 1492 marked the beginning of Columbus' journey. His first voyage with his crew set sail from Spain in three ships - the Nina, the Pinta and the Santa Maria. After sailing for 2 months, he reached Bahamas Island on October 12, the island was named San Salvador by Columbus. He further explored north east of Cuba on 28 October. On 5 December, he discovered northern coast of Hispaniola (present day Dominican Republic and Haiti). Believing he had landed in East Indies, Columbus called the native Tainos. He found these 'Indios', giving rise to the term 'Indians' for any native existing the New World. After leaving 110 men in Hispaniola, Columbus left for Spain on January 4 1493, and reached Spain on March 15, 1493.

The second voyage to Demerara

On September 1493, with a fleet of 17 ships carrying 1200 men & supplies to establish permanent colonies in New World he left for his second voyage. On 3rd of November, an island was discovered named as Dominica.

On 22 November, Columbus left for Hispaniola where he had left 40 men and found them all dead due to animosity and non-acceptance by the natives. In this way his attempt to plant a colony there had failed and he returned to Spain in 1496.

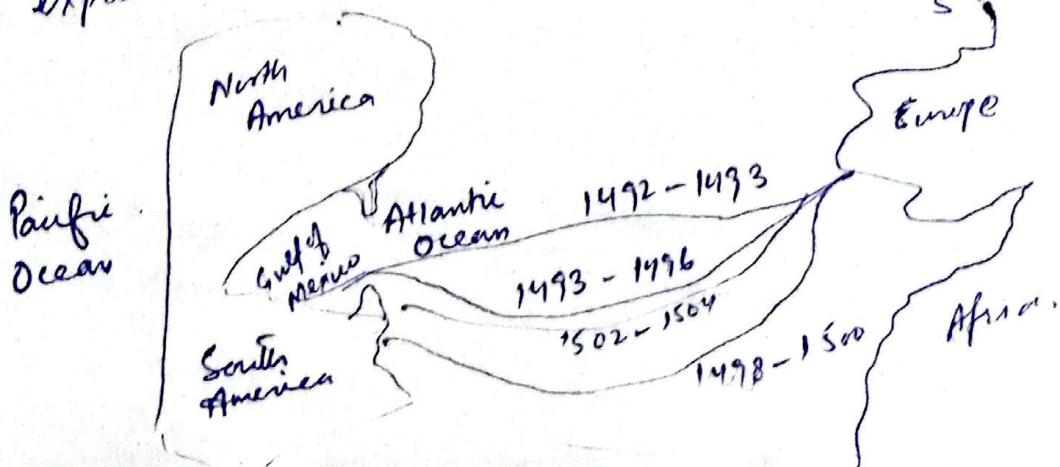
The Third Voyage and the discovery of Trinidad.

In 1498, the objective for Columbus' voyage was to discover the and verify the existence of that continent, which was suggested by King John II of Portugal, to the southwest of the cape Verde Islands.

On May 30, 1498, his voyage began with 6 ships, the three of which started to Hispaniola while the other three he took them to explore the south of Caribbean Islands he had already visited. On July 31 of 1498, Trinidad was discovered but again his plan to plant a colony was failed, leading him to face criticism even by his companions on new found.

Final Voyage and discovery of coasts.

The final voyage of Columbus. Set in 1502 with his brother and son. After spending two months exploring the coasts of Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica, before arriving in Almirante Bay in Panama on 16 October. He returned to Spain in 1504 and in 1506 May died at the age of 54, leaving behind the merits of exploration.



Observations of Columbus in America
Columbus observed the four major civilizations there and upon their resemblance to with Indians he referred to them as "Indies". Not four major civilizations were

- i) Red Indians
- ii) North American Indians
- iii) Cahokia
- iv) Eastern Woodland Indians

i) The Red Indians:
The highly univilized and didn't have any type of political, economic and social relations with anyone. They were worshippers of natural objects like sun, fire etc and grew eatables like maize, beans and peanuts.

ii) North American Indians:
These were much widely spread and did not have any organized social structures. They were named Pueblo by Spanish, living in the South western part of today's United States. The three main groups were:
Mogollon,
Hohokam,
Anasazi.

iii) Cahokia:
The Cahokia, was home to more than ten thousand residents, and lies in North America along the Mississippi River near the present day St. Louis. The Cahokia was hub of political and trading activities along the Mississippi River.

iv) Eastern Woodland Indians:
These people dwelt on eastern sides were in small tribal units, with common warfare and urged to increase their influence. The tribes included Iroquois, Lenape, Muscogee and Cherokee.

Columbus observed these native Americans were having many clashing with views with Europeans especially about land ownership and the use of environment. They were armed with a bow and arrow, the tomahawk and the war club and were ignorant of any military art.

The name given to America

The land discovered by Columbus Christopher was given many names. The most famous among them was the New World till a German professor named it America in the honour of an Italian explorer, navigator and cartographer "Americo Vespucci", who made four voyages to the new world and discovered the main continent of America, starting from the South America and extended much further south than expected.

Focus of Spanish Endeavours in America

In the beginning of the 15th century, Spain built a huge colonial empire in America. In the quest of gold and silver, Spaniards mostly focused on central and South America. In 1565, Spanish government created a permanent settlement in St. Augustine, as a base for warships to protect the Spanish sailing ships. The St. Augustine claimed to be the oldest European settlement in the continental United States. Spain also explored the southwest from Mexico, but no permanent settlement was established there.

During their settlement and colonization, Spaniards not just explored the continent but tried to impose their laws and religion in the new world. And during their colonial period, about 1.86 million Spaniards settled

in America. For more than a decade, Spain remained undisputed king of the new world which lead Britain and France to invade in America to also take a share of such land. Russia

Other Spanish Explorers

Christopher Columbus initiated the explorations of the New world but he also took some men in his fleet who later on continued his legacy. Some other Spanish explorers include Hernan Cortes and Francisco Pizarro among them were more famous.

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Decline of Spanish Power in New World

In the sixteenth century, the Spanish power declined in the new world, thus leading to Britain and France emerged as new masters of the land.

Conclusion

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The discovery of the new world which began with just the exploration of an alternative route to connect Europe and Asia led to the voyage and expedition of a new continent - the American continent discovered primarily by Spaniards, among whom Christopher Columbus was the prominent figure. Spaniards had enjoyed a legacy after discovering and ruling the continent to form a colony there but their improper hold to control the powers in new world led Britain and France to intervene and change the dynamics of political scenario further.