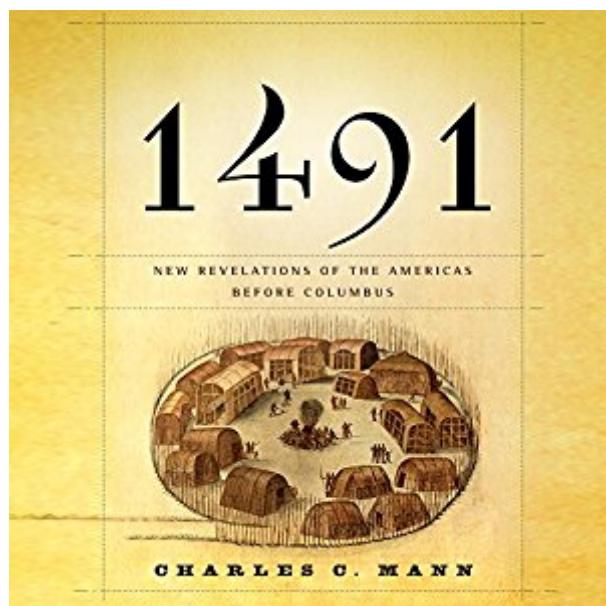


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# 1491: New Revelations Of The Americas Before Columbus



## Synopsis

A groundbreaking study that radically alters our understanding of the Americas before the arrival of the Europeans in 1492. Traditionally, Americans learned in school that the ancestors of the people who inhabited the Western Hemisphere at the time of Columbus' landing had crossed the Bering Strait 12,000 years ago; existed mainly in small nomadic bands; and lived so lightly on the land that the Americas were, for all practical purposes, still a vast wilderness. But as Charles C. Mann now makes clear, archaeologists and anthropologists have spent the last 30 years proving these and many other long-held assumptions wrong. In a book that startles and persuades, Mann reveals how a new generation of researchers equipped with novel scientific techniques came to previously unheard-of conclusions. Among them: In 1491 there were probably more people living in the Americas than in Europe. Certain cities - such as Tenochtitlán, the Aztec capital - were far greater in population than any contemporary European city. Furthermore, Tenochtitlán, unlike any capital in Europe at that time, had running water, beautiful botanical gardens, and immaculately clean streets. The earliest cities in the Western Hemisphere were thriving before the Egyptians built the great pyramids. Pre-Columbian Indians in Mexico developed corn by a breeding process so sophisticated that the journal *Science* recently described it as "man's first, and perhaps the greatest, feat of genetic engineering". Indian Indians learned how to farm the rain forest without destroying it - a process scientists are studying today in the hope of regaining this lost knowledge. Native Americans transformed their land so completely that Europeans arrived in a hemisphere already massively "landscaped" by human beings. Mann sheds clarifying light on the methods used to arrive at these new visions of the pre-Columbian Americas and how they have affected our understanding of our history and our thinking about the environment. His book is an exciting and learned account of scientific inquiry and revelation.

## Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 16 hours and 17 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Random House Audio

Audible.com Release Date: August 29, 2016

Language: English

ASIN: B01K7WQIVI

Best Sellers Rank: #7 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Nonfiction > Nature #10 in Books > History > Americas > Native American #17 in Books > Science & Math > Biological Sciences > Ecology

## Customer Reviews

bought this a few years back before going to Peru. It greatly enhanced my experience. I have thought about it a lot since then in several aspects- what if they were not conquerors, but the interaction was more like when Europe met China? How much more the world would now know. How something (the wild ) we think is so natural, is in fact not at all natural and that we are not so smart as we think we are and need to value other cultures. Just a great, thought-provoking book. I ordered this issue for a neighbor who is from Peru and was happily surprised to see an updated edition.

Really interesting. I've been to Peru to see Manchu Picchu and wish I read this before going! Highly recommended! Fascinating

Wow ! Who'd think there was so much going on here in the "new world" before the Europeans came over and wiped everyone out with small pox and other diseases. I read this with fascination as Mann carefully walks us through generations of indigenous, industrious and civilized peoples that populated North and South America going back to the ice age. I had never heard that the Aztecs used a strings and knots as a written language. Based on all of this excellent research, I would really like to see High school and college courses and text books updated to look at this time period from the perspective of the Native Americans instead of the current European viewpoint. I know that in my education, I was taught that there were only a few ignorant natives running around in loin cloths eating raw meat and killing virgins until the Europeans showed up to "set them straight". What a prejudice way to view what were civilizations that accomplished so much during their time. I highly recommend this anyone who really wants to know what was going on in America before the Europeans arrived and turned the place upside down !!

I very much enjoyed this book. The author brings up a very interesting and well researched scenario that, although different than Western European civilization, the Indian cultures populating North America were as intricate and as advanced as those who 'discovered them'. The key difference was their lack of immunity which caused wholesale devastation to Indian populations with even the

slightest interaction with Western man. It would be interesting to speculate how different history would have been if the Indian population of the Americas had survived their first contact with the 'aliens' who brought this disease.

An excellent introduction into the fundamental question of the demographics of the Americas prior to the Columbian Exchange. Mann seeks to inform readers whose K-12 textbooks presented obsolete information on this topic, as was the case for both him and his son. Examining narratives from the Andean, Yucatan, and New England regions, the view of the Americas as a "wilderness" is challenged with the most current and widely accepted research. Well written in content with a smooth delivery style, this book is an excellent primer on questions many people find unresolved when they graduate high school.

I have read history books and discussed history for 50 years; I've seen good, bad, indifferent, specious, stupid, uninformed, and, on rare occasions, good and thoughtful histories. I am familiar with the good and the bad. I really like this book; it's well-written and informative without being 'preachy'. The author doesn't try to persuade the reader to adopt a political viewpoint - the book doesn't advance an agenda. This book and its' companion, "1493" are an example of history-writing at its' best. While reading '1493', I read pages that told of matters and thoughts I had never known before. I totally recommend these two books.

This book, a revised edition of the earlier publication by the same name, is the first of two regarding the world as it existed before and following (1493) Columbus's discovery of the Western Hemisphere. The author is meticulous in his research, examines several alternative academic points of view, and then recounts the narrative in a concise, informative perspective. The book flows logically, (as does the sequel) and both provide the reader with a well-balanced perspective on 15th century through the present day human anthropology. It is particularly good at placing current political-anthropological issues in a balanced manner so that the science underlying them can be seen in its proper light - not always easy to do in the charged journalistic atmosphere in which we live today.

So many "history" books lack a true narrative, which can be essentially necessary to understanding such huge swaths of intellectual territory. In other words, correctly true to their discipline. I am a historian by training, and understand the natural tendency of the can't see the forest for the trees

approach. This is like a Fodors to the subject; you understand a bit of the territory before studying the cathedrals and going to the museums. Ergo, it satisfies the journalistic impulse of drawing you in and interesting you right off. It is kindling for forest of dead dedicated trees ripe for burning. In this sense, Mann achieves his objective well. I end this book trying to decide what to read next - probably a history of the Mississippi civilizations, who knows where to start. Very well done and mainly, interesting.

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