

# Let's create a stable world home to everyone

By JOHN SOMMER  
Herald Special

The late genetic scientist Allan Wilson of Berkeley, and his disciples there, have given themselves the task to find Eve, the mother of us all. They put forward the proposal that this legendary woman and her tribe lived about 15,000 years ago in Africa. Is this science? Yes, it is.

The mitochondrial cell inheritance (DNA) is inherited from the mother. The more the mitochondrial DNA of different people is alike, the closer they are related. Following this lead, a family tree for man is, at last, a possibility. This complicated research of a group of scientists, too complicated to explain in a short column, can boast of some interesting results already.

For instance, we know that about 100,000 years ago, human tribes from Africa moved out of Africa into Central Asia and beyond. About 50,000 years ago tribes from South-East Asia moved to Australia. About 35,000 years ago tribes from Central Asia moved into Europe. And finally, about 30,000 years ago, Asian tribes wandered over a still existing land bridge, linking Asia to North America, to settle the Americas. An additional help in the research that established these tribal movements all over the globe, were the many languages that exist and have existed, and the relationship of these languages to each other.

This year, 500 years ago on October 12, 1942, Columbus discovered America.

He thought the world smaller than it really is, and was convinced he had landed on the coast of India. Other voyagers had landed here before him. We know now that sailors from Iceland and Greenland came to Labrador and other points in North America long before Columbus. However, the impact of these early landfalls, on the voyagers as well as the native North Americans they encountered, was minimal. Columbus' voyages (he sailed more

than once to the Americas), by comparison, affected the country he came from (Spain) and the native inhabitants he encountered and called Indians, in a traumatic way.

One can say, the people who had parted from each other 100,000 years before to move in different directions, one group to the East and the other group to the West, came together again without knowing they were of the same ancient stock. The rift between the Spaniards, who believed to have God on their side, and these astonished children of nature, was unbridgeable. Here is Columbus' description of the fateful encounter: "I saw two or three villages, and their people came down to the beach calling to us and offering thanks to God. Some brought us water, others food, and still others jumped in the sea and swam out to us. Many men and women came, each bringing a gift and offering thanks to God. They threw themselves on the ground and pointing at the sky, called us ashore."

Having been welcomed by the people of the Caribbean as a celestial messenger, what did Columbus do? He wrote to the King and Queen of Spain, his sponsors: "Should your Majesties command it, all the inhabitants could be taken away to Castile, or made slaves on the island. With 50 men we could subjugate them all and make them do whatever we want".

What Columbus wanted from them was gold. Little gold trinkets they wore made him think there were mines of untold riches somewhere. But the only gold on the islands was in the rivers, and the most ardent sifting resulted in small amounts only.

The Spaniards did not sail to the Americas for the sake of knowledge or to settle there. They hoped to plunder and return home rich. Spaniards of this class (Hidalgos) had a contempt for manual labor. In the midst of the

fertile landscape of the Bahamas, they were not able nor willing to grow any food or use the teeming natural life around them. Everywhere they went in Central and South America, they avidly searched for gold, oblivious to the fabulous cultures they found.

The story of the native people that came under their rule is a sad tale. The first, the Arawaks,

as they called themselves, were, within a few years, decimated by smallpox, slavery and the gun. Twenty-five years later, the entire Arawak nation, unable to live under the stress of subjugation had vanished from the earth. To replace them, hardy black slaves from Africa, where the human enterprise had started 150,000 years before, got shipped to the New

World and history took its course.

And yet, knowing what we have found out through research about ourselves, can we not learn from it? Can we not teach ourselves to respect what is foreign, and to nurture the many positive traits that Eve passed on to her children? Should we not try to create a stable world that is home to us all?

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