ANTH318
Nautical Archaeology of the Americas

Class 11

Timeline
1492, Columbus 1st voyage
1493, Columbus 2nd voyage
1494, Treaty of Tordesillas
1497, Giovanni Caboto sails to Newfoundland
1497, Vasco da Gama sails to India (1497-98)
1497, Amerigo Vespucci 1st voyage (Caribbean)
1498, Columbus 3rd voyage
1499, Amerigo Vespucci 2nd voyage (South America)
1500, Pedro Alvares Cabral discovers Brazil
1502, Columbus 4th voyage
1513, Ponce de Leon discovers Florida
1513, Vasco Nuñez de Balboa sees the Pacific Ocean
1514, Portuguese arrive in China
1519, Cortez starts the conquest of Mexico
1519, Magellan circumnavigation (1519-22)
1523, Giovanni da Verrazano sails along the coast of North America to Newfoundland
1524, Pizarro makes his first attempt to explore Peru.
1524, Pizarro's second attempt to explore Peru.
1531, Pizarro starts the conquest of Peru.

Introduction
A Genoese living in Portugal for so many years, Columbus had a mercantile strategy in mind: to establish commercial outposts and trade with the natives. This meant to set in place a flexible and inexpensive administrative structure. It was a short term strategy.

Spain had something much different in mind: conquest and settlement. This had been the past experience of the Reconquista, and they knew very well how to set up a heavy and highly efficient administrative structure to govern, tax, and organize the new
territories politically and economically. They thought about long term occupation. The Spanish view prevailed.

Spanish settlers were given a grant of land with a number of indigenous slaves and promised to christianize them. However, the indigenous population did not resist the disease, heavy work, and brutal mistreatment inflicted on them and soon the settlers were forced to capture slaves in the neighboring islands. Puerto Rico, Jamaica and Cuba were occupied between 1508 and 1511.

**Cortez and the conquest of Mexico**

Hernan Cortéz was born in Spain around 1485 into the minor nobility, studied law at the University of Salamanca for a short period, and left to the New World in 1504.

Settling in Hispaniola he moved to Cuba in 1511 working for the new governor, Diego Velasquez.

In 1519 he was appointed to lead an investigative exploration of the Yucatan Peninsula.

He sailed to the island of Cozumel, and then to the Bay of Campeche.

After a short fight with the natives he was offered peace and received provisions, gold and women from the local chiefs. Cortez took a noblewoman named Malinche to be his mistress and interpreter.

Then he sailed north and west, around the Yucatan, to a sheltered bay where he founded a settlement which he named Vera Cruz.

At Vera Cruz he received several delegations from the Aztec emperor Moctezuma, who wanted to know if the Spaniards were gods or mortals.

In view of the amount of gold offered by Moctezuma’s ambassadors Cortez decided to invade the Aztec Empire.

He had his ships destroyed so that nobody could retreat to Cuba, fortified his base at Vera Cruz, and prepared for the invasion.

His army consisted of about 600 infantry armed with crossbows and arquebuses, and a dozen of cavalry.

After defeating the Tlaxcala and making them his allies he moved into the interior, seeking the heart of the empire, the city of Tenochtitlan.

On November 8, 1519 he entered Tenochtitlan unopposed less than 3 months after he started his conquest.

After exchanging presents Cortez was housed in the palace of Axayacatal, and tensions grew between both parts. Cortez was trapped in Tenochtitlan, surrounded by thousands of Aztecs. Moctezuma housed an army of foreigners armed with horses and advanced weapons.

When two Spanish envoys were killed outside the city Cortez took Moctezuma prisoner and moved to control the empire.
However, political unrest and previous problems between Cortez and Velazquez had lead Panfilo de Narvaez to Mexico with a small force, to arrest Cortez and restore order and obedience in the new colony.

Cortez left Tenochtitlan, managed to attack and arrest Narvaez, and moved back with Narvaez’ soldiers, who had joined his side.

Once back he found the city in revolt and his troops besieged.

He forced Moctezuma to appear in public, but one of the stones intended for the Spanish hit the emperor and killed him in a few days.

Cortez and his troops had no option but to force themselves out of the city on June 30, 1520 and return to his allied city of Tlaxcala. Many died during this retreat that has even been called “noche triste” (night of sorrow). Cortez lost almost half of his men.

The following winter a violent outbreak of smallpox decimated the Aztec population and in May 1521 Cortez marched to Tenochtitlan and conquered the city after a short siege.

Destroying much of the old city Cortez built his new capital in place, called Mexico City.

The newly conquered territory was called Nueva España (New Spain) and Cortez was appointed governor after solving his questions with Velasquez.

As a governor Cortez never ceased to extend the territories, exploring Guatemala, Honduras, (he established the settlement of Trujillo), Baja California and the Pacific coast.

In 1540 he returned to Spain and died in 1547, after campaigning against the Barbary Corsairs.

**Pizarro and the conquest of Peru**

Born around 1547, Pizarro was the son of a soldier and that fact left no hope for social mobility in Spain.

In 1502 he sailed to the New World and settled on Hispaniola. In 1509 he joined Alonso de Ojeda’s expedition to the coasts of Venezuela and Colombia, and was left in charge of the San Sebastian colony. After failing to settle in San Sebastian he joined Balboa’s expedition to the Pacific in 1513 and established himself in the newly founded colony of Panama.

There he heard of a rich empire to the south, in Birú.

He sent Almagro to Panama for supplies, but the governor tried to shut down the expedition.

Rebelling against his governor Pizarro and sailed to Spain to obtain permit to conquer Peru.

Named Captain General of Peru he returned to Panama from where he set sail with a small army in December 27, 1530.

After landing in San Mateo Bay and forcing his way through the jungle to the city of Tumbes, Pizarro found the city in ruins and learned of a civil war in the Inca Empire.
During the next year 130 men, including Hernando de Soto, moved to Tumbes with munitions and supplies to prepare the invasion.

Finally in 1532 Pizarro launched his attack.

After the death of the last Inca, Huayna Capac, the empire had been split between his two sons, Huascar, based in Cuzco, and Atahualpa, based in Quito.

Profiting from the superb road network of the Inca empire he moved to Cajamarca where he made Atahualpa prisoner.

He asked a large ransom for his release: a room full of gold and silver, to be divided in equal parts among the conquistadores, after paying the fifth to the Spanish crown.

As the promised treasure was arriving the Spaniards realized how rich the Inca empire was. News of Huascar’s death reached Cajamarca as the room filled with golden artifacts of all sorts.

With one Inca dead and the other in prison he had a strong position to conquer the empire. But he had to move quickly before all the Inca generals assembled their troops and organized the empire, waiting for Atahualpa to be released as soon as the room was full of gold.

Pizarro had no choice but to kill the last emperor.

After Atahualpa’s execution, Pizarro moved to Cuzco in 1533, where he met and defeated the Inca army in four consecutive battles.

When he entered Cuzco the Inca Empire had been conquered, although pockets of resistance continued causing trouble until 1572.

Pizarro established his capital in Lima, in 1535, and appointed Manco Capac, a brother of Huascar, as a compliant emperor.

However, less than one year later, a quarrel with Almagro over the distribution of land and wealth degenerated into a civil war and Pizarro crushed him.

The persecutions of his allies that followed did nothing to appease the colony and Pizarro was murdered in Lima on June 26, 1541 by a son of Diego de Almagro.

At length, Pizarro, unable, in the hurry of the moment, to adjust the fastenings of his cuirass, threw it away, and, enveloping one arm in his cloak, with the other seized his sword and sprang to his brother’s assistance. It was too late; for Alcantara was already staggering under the loss of blood and soon fell to the ground. Pizarro threw himself to his invaders, like a lion roused in his lair, and dealt his blows with has much rapidity and force, as if age had no power to stiffen his limbs. “What ho!” he cried, “Traitors! Have you come to kill me in my own house?”

William Prescott, History of the Conquest of Peru. Book 4, Chap. 5

**Pizarro's bones**

Francisco Pizarro and his half brother Francisco Alcántara were buried behind St. Agustin Cathedral in Lima by Alcántara’s wife that same night.
Four years later, in 1545, his body and swords were exhumed and deposited in a wooden box under the main altar of the cathedral, according to his will.

Six years later, his mistress Ines Yupanqui and their daughter Francisca had a chapel built in the cathedral and reburied Pizarro in a box covered in black velvet and decorated with a cross of Santiago.

Much later, in 1606, the cathedral was reconstructed and the bones reburied once again.

In 1609, a violent earthquake damaged the church. Reconstruction works lead the bones to be moved around sometime between 1623 and 1629.

In 1661, a search for the bones of St. Toribio, Peru’s first saint, lead to the discovery of a box covered with brown velvet and enclosing a lead box containing an inscription: “AQVÍ ESTÁ LA CABEZA DEL SEÑOR MARQVÉZ DON FRANCISCO PIZARRO QVE DESCOBRIO Y GAÑNO LOS REYNOS DEL PIRV Y PVSO EN LA REAL CORONA DE CASTILLA.”

A new earthquake damaged the cathedral in 1746 and an almost full reconstruction was carried out, ending by 1778.

Finally, in 1891, a commission charged with the commemoration of the 350th anniversary of the conquest of Peru, decided to exhume the body of the conquistador. Heading straight to the main altar, they found under it a desiccated body with no hands, no genitals, and no skin around the skull.

The anthropological analysis carried out at that time was published in the *American Anthropologist* (1894) 7.1 by W. J. McGee and pictures the skull as belonging to “a typical criminal of to-day.”

However, in 1977, four workers cleaning the crypt behind the main altar found two wooden boxes behind a brick wall, between two wooden floorings. These boxes contained human bones and a lead box with the inscription “AQVÍ ESTÁ LA CABEZA DEL SEÑOR...”


See: Additional texts in the Readings Volume.