

COLUMBUS AND NATIVE MUTILATION

Question: Did Columbus mutilate the natives?

Answer: The mutilation of indigenous people by European colonists actually happened under a governor named Nicolas de Ovando, who was the governor of the Indies from 1502-1509. Ovando was sent by the Spanish crown to investigate the administration of Francisco de Bobadilla and re-establish order following complaints from Columbus about Bobadilla's administration. Ovando's administration in Hispaniola became notorious for its cruelty toward the native Tainos. In 1501, Ovando ordered the first importation of Spanish-speaking black slaves into the Americas. Many Spanish aristocrats ordered slaves to work as servants in their homes. Columbus completed his fourth voyage during Ovando's administration and died in Spain in 1506, before Ovando's administration was complete.

What you should know:

- Columbus actually prohibited his men from harming the native population and executed two of his men who did. War, slavery, cannibalism, and sexual immorality were all common practices among some native tribes. As the Spanish would later find out, human sacrifice and infanticide were the norm among tribes such as the Aztecs. The Aztecs slaughtered upwards of 20,000 in a single year, sacrificing many of their enemies by removing their still-beating hearts.
- On Columbus's second voyage, he brought the first of many Catholic missionaries. These men tried to convert the native tribes from their barbaric pagan practices. Many missionaries were martyred for their faith.
- Human sacrifices were common practice among the Mexican tribes—which are



commonly lumped in with the tribes Columbus encountered— at the time of the arrival of the European explorers. Explorer Hernán Cortés even wrote that these tribes had slaves of their own and that they commonly practiced human sacrifice.

- Mutilations were a form of corporal punishment in ancient societies for some crimes, not only by Europeans, but also by the indigenous peoples. The Spaniards punished theft by cutting people’s ears. The Tainos impaled people for theft, and the Aztecs cut out people’s tongues for slander.
- The only times Columbus did act harshly was when he punished colonists who mistreated the Tainos under the orders of Queen Isabella. He did have to flog colonists and had to have one hanged due to mutiny.
- Columbus’s contemporary, Bartolome de las Casas, was the person responsible for creating the Spanish Black Legend and the Myth of the Noble Savage. That is, the idea that all Spaniards were evil, while all natives were angels. His works were translated into other languages and were used as political propaganda against Spain.
- The problem with Las Casas was that he did not distinguish what was war and what was abuse. Eventually Las Casas books were banned by Spain and the Catholic church. The few times Columbus fought native tribes, he did it at the request or with the assistance of other tribes, who were allied with him.

SOURCES:

Christopher Columbus

The Hero: Defending Columbus From Modern Day Revisionism by Rafael Ortiz, Create Space, 2017.

Columbus Day vs Indigenous

Peoples’ Day: The Truth Behind the Anti-Columbus Movement by Rafael Ortiz, Create Space, 2018.

Christopher Columbus and the Christian Church:

And Why He Matters to Believers Today by Rafael Ortiz, Create Space, 2019.

