

event among many within a foreseen and historically ripe process. It was an integral part of the expansive and expansionist movement of his century, it was an integral part of the succession of exploratory journeys, first along the Atlantic Coast of Africa, led by the Portuguese, and next out to sea, further out, towards the inevitable. Nothing was mystical or providential, as Spanish nationalism has proclaimed for so long. Just as there was nothing unusual about the Genoese, trained in Portugal, who made the voyage.

If something about Christopher Columbus' arrival in the Antilles was transcendental it was that it symbolized the culmination of the process of planetary integration of the remaining self-discovered parts. But this act loses all meaning if we do not qualify the nature of this world integration. Because the space that Europe cast overseas was not a neutral space but rather a political geography in profound socio-economic change, in transition from the feudal order to a new order that with time would be called the international capitalist order. And therefore, its expansionist and aggressive dynamic as it would continue being. Thus the Europe that Columbus dragged behind him was not just any Europe; it was a budding capitalist Europe. Far from being abstract and diffuse, it was a force that struggled for sources of metals and exotic fruits, for slaves, and at the same time to impose its political and cultural hegemony as a sign of its newly formed state, also budding, the Absolute Monarchy State. This concrete Europe that thrust itself across the sea to the Antilles and then to America itself, received from our lands the most formidable injections of capital to consolidate and make itself prepotent. This true character of the incorporation of the Americas to the new

international order is the most important disguise of the 500th Anniversary Celebration. For all that, the huge historical success symbolized by the Colomblan voyages, then, is nothing other than the projection of capitalism as a system into the Americas; and by its actual nature, this system, from its beginnings, was an exploiter and generator of social relations of inequality and injustice. Phenomenon such as these are studied, they are understood, they are discussed, but they are not celebrated.

The tell us of the contact with the occidental world hoping to lure us into the mysteries of the classical civilizations forgetting that today the concept of occident and occidentalism, as pointed out by Fernández Retamar, is synonymous with capitalism. What is interesting and less well known, is the historical function that the Caribbean islands played in the process of European expansion. The Spanish historiography, the Puerto Rican historiography, and in this sense the international historiography have ignored the initial contact and the colonization, cloaking possibly one of the most significant episodes of this dynamic Europe.

The Taíno Islands of the Antilles which Columbus explored beginning in 1492 were rich in gold. A fact which the admiral discovered early and exploited. And these reserves of this coveted metal, combined with the

fact that there existed a large native labor force, strong and politically and militarily malleable, he imposed on the island the regrettable fate of being the first colonies of modern exploitation of this expansionist Europe across the sea. In contrast with the trade bases that Portugal had established earlier in Africa, the Antilles constituted a new mode of political control.

Thus the Antilles were a new mode, and infernal mode because this mode would nourish the European colonial model of the first centuries.

What is a colony of exploitation? It is defined as a territory with something highly exploitable, coveted by the "mother country" which then occupies and



Salcedo drowned by Taínos, under orders of Cacique Agüeybaná II