



Columbus Then and Now: A Life Reexamined (Michigan Monograph Series in)

Miles H. Davidson

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Who was Christopher Columbus? Discoverer of the New World or murderer of the innocent people whose lands he invaded? Whether viewed as hero or villain, Columbus has achieved near-mythical status in the popular imagination. In this provocative study, Miles H. Davidson explores the myth of Columbus as it is reflected in numerous recent biographies. Measuring these biographies against a vast record of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century sources, Davidson exposes flaws, omissions, and biases in modern accounts.

The author traces the events of Columbus's life in chronological order, drawing on manuscripts, diaries, private correspondence, court and naval records, and shipping logs to provide a historically credible portrait. He uses sources never before incorporated in a book-length study, most notably the recently discovered *Libro copiador* (a collection of letters written by Columbus himself) and Columbus's holographs (over two thousand notes written in the margins of four of his books). Separating fact from fiction, Davidson sheds new light on crucial junctures in Columbus's life: the original contract given him to seek island in the west, the claimed influence of Marco Polo on Columbus, the supposed sinking of the *Santa María*, and the role played by Jews in connection with the first voyage.

At once a retelling of Columbus's life and critique of other versions, *Columbus Then and Now* will be of value to Columbists, Latin American scholars, and biographers in general.

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