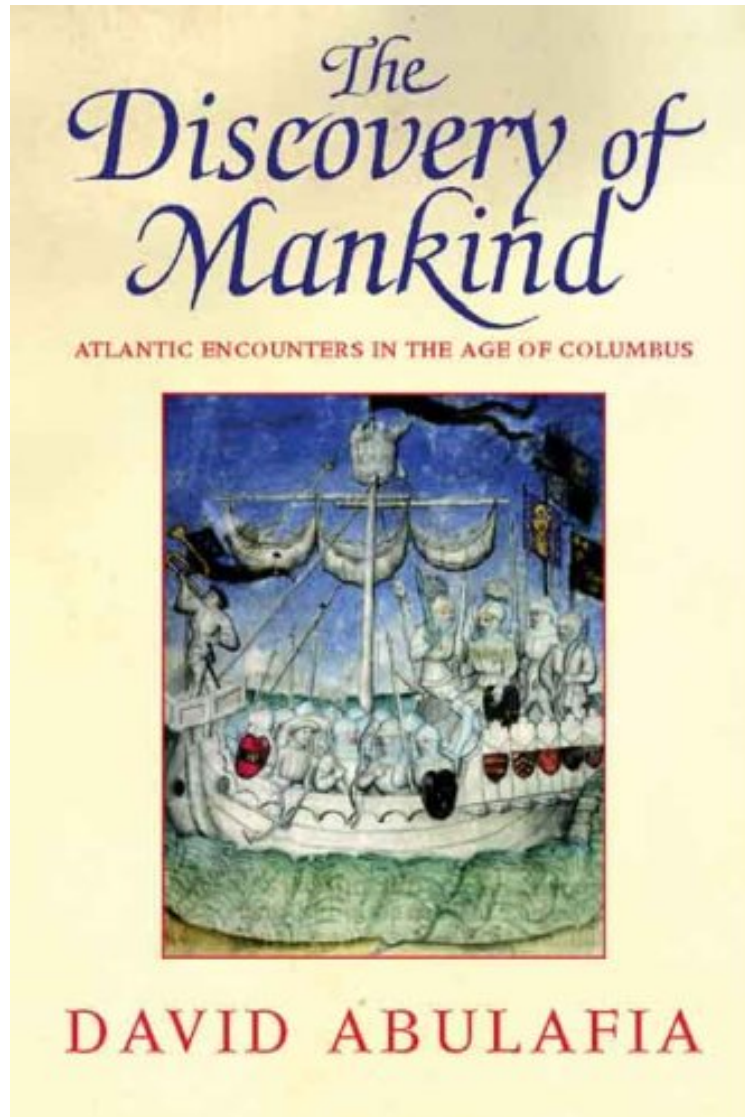


# The Discovery of Mankind: Atlantic Encounters in the Age of Columbus

David Abulafia

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**David Abulafia : The Discovery of Mankind: Atlantic Encounters in the Age of Columbus** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Discovery of Mankind: Atlantic Encounters in the Age of Columbus:

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Excellent account of European encounters with the wider worldBy DiatonicThis is a fine book, by a reknown historian of Cambridge University. His account of Europe's first encounters

with the wider world is extremely well done and distinguished by its good sense. (He eschews the nonsense that is fashionable in Portugal about "secret voyages", etc.). His wide and deep knowledge of the sources is clear throughout. No better introduction to the topic could be had. 0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By FrancescoExcellent 2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Very well-written, very informative By P.H. Along with "1491," this is one of the very best books written about European understandings of the New World before, during, and immediately after its discovery. Abulafia's prose style is vaguely scholarly but still very accessible; there are occasional questionable digressions and the book could have perhaps been a bit shorter (I'm not sure that the reader needs to spend the first 100 pages of the book being led through the minutiae of the century-long conquest of the Canary Islands). The most interesting parts of the book are where Abulafia examines the legal/theological/philosophical implications of the discovery of a "new" type of human being that Europeans could not, at first, figure out how to categorize. Overall, 4.5/5, a very impressive work.

The first landings in the Atlantic World generated striking and terrifying impressions of unknown peoples who were entirely foreign to anything in European explorers' experience. From the first recorded encounters with the native inhabitants of the Canary Islands in 1341 to Columbus's explorations in 1492 and Cabral's discovery of Brazil in 1500, western Europeans struggled to make sense of the existence of the peoples they met. Were they Adam's children, of a common lineage with the peoples of the Old World, or were they a separate creation, the monstrous races of medieval legend? Should they govern themselves? Did they have the right to be free? Did they know God? Could they know God? Emphasizing contact between peoples rather than the discovery of lands, and using archaeological findings as well as eyewitness accounts, David Abulafia explores the social lives of the New World inhabitants, the motivations and tensions of the first transactions with Europeans, and the swift transmutation of wonder to vicious exploitation. Lucid, readable, and scrupulously researched, this is a work of humane engagement with a period in which a tragically violent standard was set for European conquest across the world.

"Age-old exposure to the Bible and the classics left Mediterranean observers poorly prepared to interpret the societies they encountered from the fourteenth to the early sixteenth centuries in the Canary Islands, the Caribbean, and Brazil. Abulafia painstakingly recreates the spiral of violence that overwhelmed and destroyed 'stone-age' societies that had developed largely in isolation. Abulafia also offers a learned account of the emergence of new European anthropologies that sought to transform radically alien others into familiarly pliant Christian laborers." Jorge Canizares-Esguerra, University of Texas at Austin