

Interaction with the Natives

Columbus and his men soon learn that the natives will trade cotton and gold for small or even worthless things. Columbus forbids his men to follow a short-sighted policy of cheating the natives, as he has in mind both converting them to Christianity and leading them to a favorable opinion of the visitors. Moreover they have valuable commodities that the explorers need, and he does not want to cultivate ill will.

Dant quaeque magna pro parvis, minima licet re, nihilove
 contenti. Ego attamen prohibui, ne tam minima et nullius
 pretii hisce darentur, ut sunt lancis, parapsidum, vitrique
 fragmenta, item clavi, ligulae; quamquam, si hoc poterant
 5 adipisci, videbatur eis pulcherrima mundi possidere iocalia.
 Accidit enim quendam navitam tantum auri pondus
 habuisse pro una ligula, quanti sunt tres aurei solidi, et
 sic alios pro aliis minoris pretii, praesertim pro blanquis
 novis [et quibusdam nummis aureis]. Pro quibus habendis
 10 dabant quicquid petebat venditor, puta unciam cum
 dimidia et duas auri vel triginta et quadraginta bombacinis
 pondera, quam ipsi iam neverant. Item arcuum amphorae,
 hydriae dolique fragmenta bombice et auro tamquam
 bestiae comparabant. Quod quia iniquum sane erat, vetui
 15 dedique eis multa pulchra et grata, quae mecum tuleram,
 nullo interveniente premio, ut eos mihi facilius conciliarem
 fierentque christicolae, et ut sint proni in amorem erga
 Regem, Reginam principesque nostros et universas gentes
 Hispaniae ac studeant perquirere et coacervare eaque nobis
 20 tradere, quibus ipsi affluunt et nos magnopere indigemus.

Nullam hi norunt idolatriam. Immo firmissime credunt
 omnem vim, omnem potentiam, omnia denique bona esse
 in caelo, meque inde cum his navibus et nautis descendisse:
 atque hoc animo ubique fui susceptus, postquam metum
 25 repulerant.

VOCABULARY

- adipisc•or** –**i adeptus** *dep* to gain, get possession of
amphor•a –**ae** *f* pitcher
arcus arcus *m* bow, anything curved (*dat* and *abl pl* –**ubus**)
attamen *adv* however
besti•a –**ae** *f* beast, inhuman creature
 –**ce** *enclitic* (syllable added to strengthen attached word)
clav•us –**i** *m* nail, key
dimidi•a –**ae** *f* a half
hydri•a –**ae** *f* water-jug
iocal•ia –**ium** *n* trinkets, jewelry
lance•a –**ae** *f* lance
ligul•a –**ae** *f* shoe strap
navit•a –**ae** *m* sailor
nev•o –**ere** –**i netum** to weave, spin
nil (**nihil** or **nihilo**) *indecl n* nothing
numm•a –**ae** *f* coin
paraps•is –**idis** *f* fruit dish
pondo *adv* by weight
preti•um –**i** *n* price, value
put•o (1) to think, consider, imagine; “**puta . . .**” = “imagine, for example . . .”
quantum *adv* how far, how much, so much, as much
solid•us –**i** *m* coin
tantum *adv* as far as, as much as
unci•a –**ae** *f* ounce
vitr•um –**i** *n* glass