

Cristóbal Colón (Columbus)
Diary and Log of First Trip to Americas
October 12, 1492 (1)

[...] (2) Two hours after midnight, land appeared about two leagues away. All sails were lowered, and there only remained the lateen sail, which is the large sail, without additional canvas, and they were close hauled, waiting until Friday, when they arrived at a small island in the Lucayas (3), which, in the native's language, was called Guanahaní. Then they saw naked people, and the Admiral, Martín Alonso Pinçón, and his brother Vicente Ianes, who was the Niña's captain, landed in an armed boat. The Admiral held the king's flag, and the two captains held the banners of the Green Cross, which were the Admiral's ensigns aboard all his ships. There was an F on one and an I on the other, and above each letter was the crown, one at one end of the † and another at the other end. Upon landing they saw very green trees and many ponds and diverse kinds of fruit. The Admiral called the two captains and the others who had come ashore including Rodrigo d'Escobedo, the scribe for the entire fleet, and Rodrigo Sanches de Segovia, and he told them to certify and witness how he, in the presence of all of them, took possession of that land on behalf of his lords, the King and the Queen, and how he made all the required declarations, all of which is set forth in detail in the sworn documents that were committed to writing then and there. Then many of the islanders were gathered together. What follows are the official words that the Admiral wrote in his book of the first trip of discovery of these Indies. "Because," he said, "they showed they were friendly toward us, because I realized that they would turn themselves over to us and they would convert to our holy faith more easily with love than by force, I gave some of them some red caps, some glass beads that they strung around their necks, and other quite valueless things, all of which pleased them a lot, and they were so at ease with us that it was amazing. Later the natives came to the ship's boats where we were swimming, and they brought us parrots and skeins of cotton threads, javelins, and many other things, and they exchanged them for other things that we gave them, things like little glass necklaces and bells. In short, they received and gave those things willingly, but it seemed to me that they were a very poor people. They all go about naked just as they were born, both men and women, but I did not see more than one very young woman, and the ones I saw were all boys, for I saw none under thirty years old. And they were well shaped, with very handsome bodies and very nice faces; their hair was short and almost as thick as the bristles of horses' tails. They wear their hair above their eyebrows, except for a few who wear it long and in back, for these folks never cut it. Some

wear dark paint; others paint themselves a canary color, neither black nor white; some use white paint; some red; some whatever they find; some paint their faces; others their entire bodies; some only their eyes; and others only their noses. They do not carry weapons nor do they have knowledge of them, because I showed them our swords, but they grabbed them by the edge cutting themselves due to their lack of familiarity with them. They have no iron; their javelins are spears or poles without iron tips, but some of them have a fish tooth at the tip, and others have another kind of tip. They all stand many hands high, and they make fine, well-made gestures. I saw some who showed signs of having wounds on their bodies, and by signs I asked them what they were, and they showed me how people from other nearby islands came there to seize them and how they defended themselves. I thought and I still think that they come here from the mainland to take them captive. They are probably good servants, and they are quite bright, for I see that they responded quickly to everything that was said to them. Furthermore, I think that they could become Christians very easily, for it seemed to me that they have no religion. If it please our Lord, when I leave here I shall take six of them so that they can learn how to speak. On this island I saw no animals of any kind, except for parrots." All these are the Admiral's words.

(1) Translated by William Little, SFCC, 2008. This translation is made from Columbus, *Diario; relación de viajes*. Madrid: Sarpe, 1985, 42-44. This work comes from a handwritten copy of Columbus' travel journals, the originals of which have been lost, made by Bartolomé de las Casas based on archives in the possession of Columbus' son, Diego Colón.

(2) Columbus made this entry in his on-board diary or log under the date of October 11th; however, the event described actually belongs to the morning of October 12th. His next entry is dated October 13, 1492.

(3) Columbus and his sailors understood that the name of these natives as the *lucayos*; therefore, the Lucayas was the first Spanish name for the Bahamas.