

Transatlantic Contact (New Wolfe Listing on Amazon)

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 04 Sep 2008

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John Smith — 04 Sep 2008, 14:59

Dave Tallman wrote:

"Obviously they did not evolve the wheel. They got it from somebody who had already evolved. And this somebody could not put a cart or chariot aboard the ship. It took up too much room. You could put a hundred little wheeled toys aboard the ship and trade them. Right? "

Not obvious to me. Rather, I think the fact that American Indians had wheeled toys (but did not put wheels to practical use) points to the opposite conclusion: Indians invented the wheel on their own.

Wheels are very useful, and once people see the uses they adopt them. Traders from the old world could easily have transported wheeled tools such as the wheelbarrow, the potter's wheel, and the pulley. If the Indians had been introduced to such tools, their use would have quickly spread.

Traders could have brought wheeled toys, of course, but I wonder if toys would have been valuable for trading. Trade goods are typically practical items, and a wheeled tool seems better for trade than a wheeled toy.

But transatlantic contact doesn't have to be all or nothing. The question probably should be how extensive the contacts were and how much influence was exerted.

Phoenicians or Greeks or Romans may well have visited Central America. But did they have a large impact on indigenous civilizations?

Some writers have asserted that American Indians got their civilizations from the old world. For example, Mayan pyramids are seen as evidence that Egyptians settled in America. But it is more probable that two peoples came to a similar solution to building large structures with primitive technology. Native Americans most likely invented most of their civilizations on their own.

Best wishes,

Jack