

Study on the spanish conquest history essay



During the 1500-1700 the direction of global history changes dramatically due to Western Europe. Merchants and other colonial powers connected the continents in ways never before realized making this the dawn of a new period of global interchange. The Americas were transformed culturally and demographically due to the influences Europeans. The Aztecs on the other hand conquered and ruled over Central Mexico and their culture was rich and they had a wealthy living. The Spanish and Aztecs had different viewpoints from each other. They had religious differences, technological and of the conquest.

When the Europeans arrived, they were honored as guests by the Mexicas. Upon the arrival, Spaniards were astonished by the advancement of their cities. " Gazing on such wonderful sights...there were great cities, and in the lake ever so many more, and the lake itself was crowded with canoes, and in the causeway were many bridges and intervals, and in front of stood the great City of Mexico." (Stuart B. Schwartz, Victors and Vanquished, 133). The natives were also startled by the Spaniards. " Their war gear was all in iron... And they wrapped their bodies all over; only their faces could be seen, very white. Their faces were the color of limestone and their hair yellow-reddish." (Stuart B. Schwartz, Victors and Vanquished, 97) The natives offered them gold, gifts, food, and even women. The Mexicas viewed them as greedy. The Mexicas offered them gold and this made them hungry for more. This conquest itself had a positive effect. The Spaniards and the Aztecs were able to trade with each other. They exchanged goods such as crops, religion, ideas, domesticated animals, and even diseases. The Europeans viewed the Mexicas as barbaric; the Mexicas disfigured their faces and pierced their

entire body with ornaments. Disease was one major factor that influenced the fall of the Mexica Empire. The Spaniards spread smallpox, which wiped out, half the population in the region because the natives in the region lacked immunity to the diseases brought by the Europeans. These few factors helped Spaniards conquer Tenochtitlan.

The ruler Montezuma and his people viewed the Europeans especially Hernando Cortes as a god (Quetzalcoatl). Religion was a major component in their lives. They had different gods and goddesses who dealt with different areas of their lives. For example they had a god for agriculture , God of war (Huichilobos), Sun god, their main patron deity (Huitzilopochtli) etc. When the Europeans first arrived they viewed their pagan religion as evils. The Europeans despised the huge statues of their gods in the temples. Human sacrifices were major part of their religion. Aztecs made captured victims of war as their slaves and these slaves would later be sacrificed alive and they sacrificed victims for appeasement. The Spanish could not tolerate such cruelties. “ And many hearts of Indians that they had burned in fumigating their idols and everything was so clotted with blood, and there was so much of it, that I cursed all if it...” (Stuart B. Schwartz, *Victors and Vanquished*, 151) Along with slavery and sacrifices they practiced cannibalism. For Aztecs religion explained the unexplainable. Their Astronomical knowledge led to very highly accurate calendars, and higher understanding of mathematics. “ Extensive pantheon was honored through the yearly religious calendar by complex ritual and ceremonial activities of feasting, fasting, dancing, penance, and sacrifice.” (Stuart B. Schwartz, *Victors and Vanquished*, 9) On the other hand the Spaniards practiced Catholicism. The Spaniards believed

in the trinity and in the fact of “ One true God”. They also gave high reference to the Virgin Mary and other saints. The Europeans believed that it was their duty to spread Christianity to these indigenous civilizations and when they tried to convert the Aztecs, Montezuma kindly refused. “ I have understood your words and arguments... here throughout all time we have worshipped our own gods, and thought they were good, as no doubt yours are, so do not trouble to speak to us anymore about them at present.”

(Stuart B. Schwartz, Victors and Vanquished, 139).

The Aztecs were known for construction of the city called Tenochtitlan, a city build on an island in the middle of a lake in Central Mexico. The city was dominated by religious structures like the great stone pyramids and statues of gods and goddesses. They had permanent and safer living structures. The city was constructed with building and great monuments and they had flourishing markets. “ At the great market place, called Tlalteloco, we were astonished at the number of people and the quantity of merchandise...”

(Stuart B. Schwartz, Victors and Vanquished, 147) They were based on an agricultural society. They built irrigation works that increased production and thus supported a very large population. The civilization depended on cultivated foods such as beans, corn, potatoes etc, but they had few domesticated animals (llamas and dogs). Warfare was another important aspect of Aztec society. Their city Tenochtitlan was heavily defended city and they excelled as great warriors. The Aztecs were one of the most powerful Indian groups at the time of Spanish arrival. Spanish at the time was highly structured. The Spaniards were highly advanced than of the Mexicas. The Spanish had a greater advantage when compared to the

Aztecs. They had horses, swords, firearms, explosives, armor, and cannons and on the other hand Aztecs had two handed swords and arrows. The natives were intimidated by their weaponry. “ It especially made him faint when he heard how the guns went off at [the Spaniards’] command, sounding like thunder, causing people actually to swoon, blocking the ears..... he grew concerned and disturbed.”(Stuart B. Schwartz, *Victors and Vanquished*, 97). The Mexicas were greatly afraid of the horses and weaponry they possessed.

In conclusion, the Spanish conquest of Tenochtitlan changed the viewpoint of one another’s culture. Besides from negative effect the conquests also had a number of positive outcomes for example ideas, plants, animals etc. Within couple of years, Spain conquers most of the new world, with the help of native allies, better weaponry, translators, and diseases.