

Which contexts and developments help to explain european expansion (wk 16) and ne...

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Which context and development help to explain the European Expansion and New World conquest? The voyage by Spaniard explorer Christopher Columbus in 1492 sparked the first encounter between the people of Spain and those of the Western Hemisphere. While this was not the virgin voyage for the Spaniards, it was in this year that marked the time of exploration in the “new world. This term was used about the continents of South and North America combined (Greenblatt 11). While the Spaniard explorers concentrated on these areas, the British and French Empire interest was more inclined towards North America.

So, what motivated the explorers as well as their financial and political supporters? First of all, the course for the New World explorations and the European expansion was dented by the unhealthy interactions and relationship that existed between the indigenous people and the explorers. It is through these interactions that pestilence and violence occurred resulting in a significant decline in the population (Greenblatt 11). The religious conflicts witnessed between the Christians and Muslims resulted in crusades that would go a long way in shaping the conquest. As early as the 11th century, the Catholic Church felt it was its duty to redeem the Spaniards and the Holy Land from people it regarded as religious infidels. It is these fervent crusades that opened the way for European inhabitants to take root in North and South America.

^ The religious expeditions into the Middle East exposed the Europeans to the valuable trade goods which came from Asia. These goods namely silks, sugar, spices and other products that were synonymous with India and China were highly regarded in the European households. However, the

transportation of such was a rather tiring process that required the services of Muslim middlemen and sometimes the payments of tributes. To solve this, the Portuguese sailors had to look for an alternative route through the coastline of Africa. This way, colonization, took place and slaves were sold to Europe.

Another contributing factor to this conquest haze was the discovery of gold by the Spaniards. The Spaniards quickly realized that magnanimous profits would not be drawn from the silk and spices but the gold and silver in the "new world." This mania about the mineral ores was generated in part by Columbus' preliminary to Isabella and Ferdinand. All in all, the conquest and expansion was favored or discouraged by the respective natives (Greenblatt 12). While some were subservient, timid, kind and welcoming, others were the direct opposite.

Work cited

Greenblatt, S. *New World Encounters*. University of California Press, New York. 1993. Print