

Columbus and Cortes encounters native and Meso Americans



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

In the Age of Exploration these are two of the recorded encounters of Native Americans and here is my comparison of those encounters. Each encounter was by a different explorer and were 27 years apart as well as many miles apart. With each encounter comes a difference in sophistication and how technologically advanced the Native Americans by Hernando Cortes in the Meso-America to those of the Native Americans encountered by Christopher Columbus on the islands of the Caribbean. The main differences revolved around how their weapons were made, what constituted housing for each group, the sophistication of their architectural structures, any religious practices or beliefs as well as how the Spanish were treated upon arrival and if there was evidence of animosity between the two groups or if the natives were warlike.

Christopher Columbus sailed across the Atlantic Ocean in 1492 in hopes of finding a route to India for trade purposes. Some of the Native Americans that he encountered on the island of Guanahani in the Caribbean were the Taino .

The natives were friendly and welcomed the Spanish peacefully and passively and aided the Europeans' in recovery from the long voyage by bringing them water and food. They came to the Spaniards ready to barter for anything the Spaniards would give them in return for whatever the Natives could bring for trade.

Columbus referred to them as " simple in war-like matters" and that they had no weapons to speak of just a javelin made of wood with a sharpened end yet they were at war with other inhabitants and carried scars from

defensive wounds made from people from the other islands who wanted to make them their prisoners. I do not believe that there was any evidence of animosity between these two groups encountered by Columbus and Cortes. Columbus also believed "that they would very readily become Christians, as they appear to have no religion" and be converted by gentle means to the Spaniards' faith yet they had tobacco they smoked in cigar form during religious ceremonies and everyday occasions.

To Columbus the Natives did not seem to be sophisticated or technologically advanced in his encounters with them. Some of them lived in villages with houses built in the shape of tents and the only architectural structures that I can recall being described were these houses and the very high chimneys. They did know how to make cotton thread and traded these twenty-five pounds of thread with the Spaniards and they wore pieces of gold in their noses, wearing it in bracelets on their arms and legs.

They traveled by canoes on the water and by foot on land and lived off the fruits from the land as well as fish, shellfish and birds. Most did not wear clothes and if they did it was determined who wore what by status and age. At some island they saw cotton cloth covering some of the women. Some of the people did have the same language and customs as from the other islands visited on this voyage and appeared more civilized than others.

Hernando Cortes landed in Mexico in 1519 and entered Tenochtitlan, city of the Aztecs. The Native Americans here welcomed the Spaniards into the city with the belief that the Sun god had returned to save the people and allowed them to stay for some time there and apparently to move about most areas

of the city freely. These Natives did display a much more sophisticated and technologically advanced society than the natives encountered by Columbus.

The Province was in the form of a circle surrounded by mountains of all sides. They had a water strait that connected two lakes and was used as a means of traveling by canoes and trading between the cities. The city had four entrances and each of these were formed by artificial causeways and bridges made of timber. The city had public areas for market, buying and selling and areas that sold food and drink like a restaurant, barbers' shops, and an herb street where roots and medicinal herbs could be obtained. Many kinds of game, vegetables, fruits and merchandise of earthenware for burning coal, jewels of gold, silver and mats of various kinds for beds, seats, halls, and bedrooms could be obtained there as well as bricks, stones and timber of different sorts.

Public buildings, public squares, magnificent houses for the wealthy citizens and large apartments, upper and lower for the people were built and located in different districts and suburbs. A large number of towers and temples were built for their idols indicating how advanced their architectural structures were. Some of the towers were constructed of stone and wood with plaster ceilings and carved wood works and painted figures. A temple with large halls and corridors for religious persons attached to the temple to live. One of the largest towers described as having fifty steps leading to its main body. There were marble columns, a court-yard of stone laid out like a chess board, balconies that overlooked pools of water and water pipes for feeding in two types of water. Reservoirs for the fresh water to be collected.

There was much evidence of religious beliefs and practices from temples that housed males until they entered into priesthood to chapels that held images of idols for which human sacrifices were made in fear of the idols becoming angry with the Natives if not for these human offerings and that they would be deprived of food and perish. They had an idol for war even. They kept guards at the gates and were considered barbarous people, so yes they were war-like and at war with others. One of the weapons was a macana, a sword-like weapon made out of wood and very sharp. Some macanas would be studded with pieces of stone to create a blade.

After reading the letters written by Columbus and Cortes and comparing the two very different encounters of the explorers there is a vast difference of social sophistication in how each lived, and the technological advances in their housing differences, the way their weapons were made, religion and their reaction to the arrival of the Spaniards. The Aztecs lived on a grander scale of sophistication with a better body of government in place, a more civilized culture and wondrous housing in a wondrous city when each of these encounters are compared.

Works Cited

Halsall, Paul. ed. Internet History Sourcebooks Project.

“ Christopher Columbus, Extracts From Journal”

“ Hernando Cortes: from Second Letter to Charles V, 1520”

“ An Aztec Account of the Conquest of Mexico”

C.

A.

W.

September 2013

<https://assignbuster.com/columbus-and-cortes-encounters-native-and-meso-americans/>