

Africa and the americas 1492 to 1750 dbq

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From 1492 to 1750 in the Americas and Africa, there were social and political changes such as a shift of power in the Americas--- the power going from the natives to European dominance, a change in the demographics of the Americas--- Europeans became a part of the population and the population of natives decreased dramatically, and a change in the demographics of Africa---Africans were taken from their homes and sold for slavery. In the Americas there was a dramatic political shift of power going from the natives to Europeans.

Document two suggests that when the Europeans came in, they destroyed the great cities that the natives had already built and established. Hernan Cortes, in his letter to King Charles V, states “ This great city of Tenochtitlan...”, “ The city is as large as Seville or Cordoba... ”, “ their [the natives] fashion of living was almost the same as in Spain, with just as much harmony and order...” suggesting that the cities the Natives had already established were as great as the Spanish’s, before they took over and destroyed them.

As a European conqueror Cortes would have seen the greatness of these cities and witnessed how they functioned, also being able to compare it to the cities of Spain, from which he was born and lived in. In his letter he seems honest but contradictory because while he says “ their [the natives] fashion of living was almost the same as in Spain, with just as much harmony and order...” he follows that statement with “...considering these people were barbarous... --- hinting that although they lived almost as extravagantly as the Spanish, he still considered them of less worth than Europeans. Natives were used as slaves to mine silver at the Potosi silver mine for the

Spanish (document five). Document Five is an excerpt of Compendium and Description of The West Indies written by Spanish priest, Antonio Vazquez de Espinosa, who would have been able to experience the tough and dangerous working conditions that the natives were forced to endure, so his writings would have been mostly accurate, if not partially influenced by his moral beliefs.

By the 18th century, Europeans had claimed large territories in the Americas, land which had previously been ruled by the natives, and began to colonize the land (document six). There was also a change in the demographics of the Americas. Document one shows where early European explorers began to populate the Americas. Another legal document comparing the native population and the European population in the Americas from the beginning of the 15th century to the end of the 18th century would help in the understanding of the change in the demographics.

Document three displays the effect that the European diseases, such as smallpox, had on the natives, causing death. Another document, such as a diary entry by a native explaining the effects of smallpox on others around him would be particularly helpful in gaining insight of the situation. By 1735 the social ladder in the Americas was completely different--- “ Spaniards or Whites, Mestizos, Indians or Natives, and Negroes” (document eight). This shows how the Europeans took over control of the native population, put themselves above the natives, and saw themselves as a higher rank because of skin color.

Jorge Juan and Antonio de Ulloa were able to experience it themselves and see how the Europeans believed they were better because of “ riches, rank,
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and power". In Africa there was a large social change in the demographics. Africans, even noblemen and their sons, would be taken from their homes in the middle of the night by Whites and forced into slavery; This shows that even their social status had no effect on whether or not they would be enslaved (document four). King Alfonso of Kongo would have seen what was happening to his people.

He explains in his letter to King Joao of Portugal that he knows that his people are enslaving the African men---" out of great desire for the wares and things of your kingdoms, which are brought here by your people and in order to satisfy their disordered appetite, seize many of our people, freed and exempt men. " From the 15th century to the 18th century the number of slaves being shipped from Africa to the Americas increased greatly, as did the number of deaths in transit (document seven).

Document four only speaks of men being enslaved and knowing that while more Africans were enslaved the population remained consistent, it can be concluded that this was a main factor in the increased practice of polygamy in Africa. A document comparing the amount of females to males before and after slavery would be useful in explaining the increase of polygamy in African society.