

Reasons behind the spanish conquest of mexico essay sample



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During the early parts of the sixteenth century, as the Spanish conquistadors prepared themselves to drop anchor amid the shores of the “ New World,” a myriad different circumstances were beginning to unfold that would allow this small group of ambitious conquistadors to not only discover, but conquer the two main civilizations in the area. While no one main reason can be cited as the cause for the tremendous Spanish victory, several small factors combined to formulate this monstrous conquest. Disease, military technology, religious belief, and internal warfare served as a few of these very factors that allowed a few groups of only a hundred or so Spanish soldiers to massacre the Aztecs and the Incas, who’s populations numbered in the millions.

Possibly the most important reason behind the Spanish’s facility in conquering the New World was the ignorance and the welcoming nature of the native people. The Spanish were seen as god-like visitors at the time of their initial arrival, especially in the case of Hernan Cortés and the conquest of Mexico. Regardless of whether or not Cortés was believed to be the returned Aztec god Quetzalcoatl, the Spanish were still looked upon with great respect and dignity for their advanced ways of life. The Aztecs made offerings to the Spanish and welcomed them into their city, which Cortés used in order to map-out his attack plan on the city. He used the Aztec’s unknowing generosity, religious superstition and naïveté as a facade for his master plan of conquest. The Aztec’s, who were a generally passive group, were bewildered by the ferocity of the Spaniards. In “ Broken Spears,” after the Spanish massacred a town on their way to Mexico, “ The people were

downcast; they went about with their heads bowed down and greeted each other with tears.”

Another of the primary factors in the conquest of the New World was the introduction of European diseases, such as smallpox, into the areas surrounding the Aztec and Inca Empires. This disease, which was nothing more than a childhood sickness in Spain, served as one of the Spanish’s most deadly weapons, decimating a great number of native warriors and leaving the cities’ defenses severely weakened. First introduced to the New World several years prior to Cortés’ arrival Columbus’ voyages to the area and the subsequent intertribal contact, smallpox, along with other bacteria native to Spain, unwittingly accounted as one of the leading causes behind the fall of the two great New World civilizations.

One clear advantage that the Spanish troops had over the indigenous peoples was their advanced weapons technology and military training. The Aztecs and the Incas had a developed military, trained for intertribal warfare, but it was minuscule compared to the cannons, armor, horses, guns, and years of refined military tactics of the Spanish. As the Spanish marched on the various cities in the New World, they met little resistance from the primitive weapons of the natives, who furnished bows and arrows and spears. The Spanish horses were like tanks in comparison and therefore allowed a quick and effortless victory, even though the Spanish were drastically outnumbered. Also, the Spanish knowledge of seafaring was an enormous benefit, especially in the case of Cortés’ attack on Tenochtitlan, when he was faced with near defeat, but he regrouped and built a fleet of ships that he used to finally crush the Aztec capital.

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The small numbers of the Spanish invaders were increased in part by their alliances with neighboring tribes who held the Inca and Aztec empires with contempt. On their respective journeys to the capitals of the two empires, both Cortés and Pizarro began to recruit native warriors whose tribes were involved in civil war with the empire. This tactic had several beneficiary factors because it not only increased the size of the Spanish force, but also provided them with knowledge of the land that they would not have otherwise had. Pizarro's conquest of the Inca's was the primary example of this advantage, as he was able to conquer an empire that covered much of South America with a crew of only two hundred men simply by arriving at a time of great civil war amongst the empire. " In what is now Peru, the conflict between two claimants for the throne and their followers played directly into the hands of Pizarro's hands."

The final reason behind the Spanish's ability to overwhelm an entire civilization was the strong hierarchy that was in place among the New World nations. Due to this, as soon as the capital city and the king fell under Spanish control, the rest of the empire fell soon thereafter. This made conquest much easier, for it was not necessary to take over each individual tribe, the Spanish simply needed to strike at the heart and the rest would take its course naturally. Also, the indigenous people of the New World were familiar with being ruled, so the implement of the Spanish into the position of King was not that great of a change for them.

Whether it was by chance or by destiny, the Spanish arrived on the banks of the New World at exactly the right time. It seemed as though everything went right for the Spanish conquistadors, for they were somehow able to <https://assignbuster.com/reasons-behind-the-spanish-conquest-of-mexico-essay-sample/>

overwhelm a civilization that outnumbered their fleets by millions. While some of their tactics may have been deceitful and relentless, the Aztecs and the Incas were subject to some of the finest military prowess ever seen.