

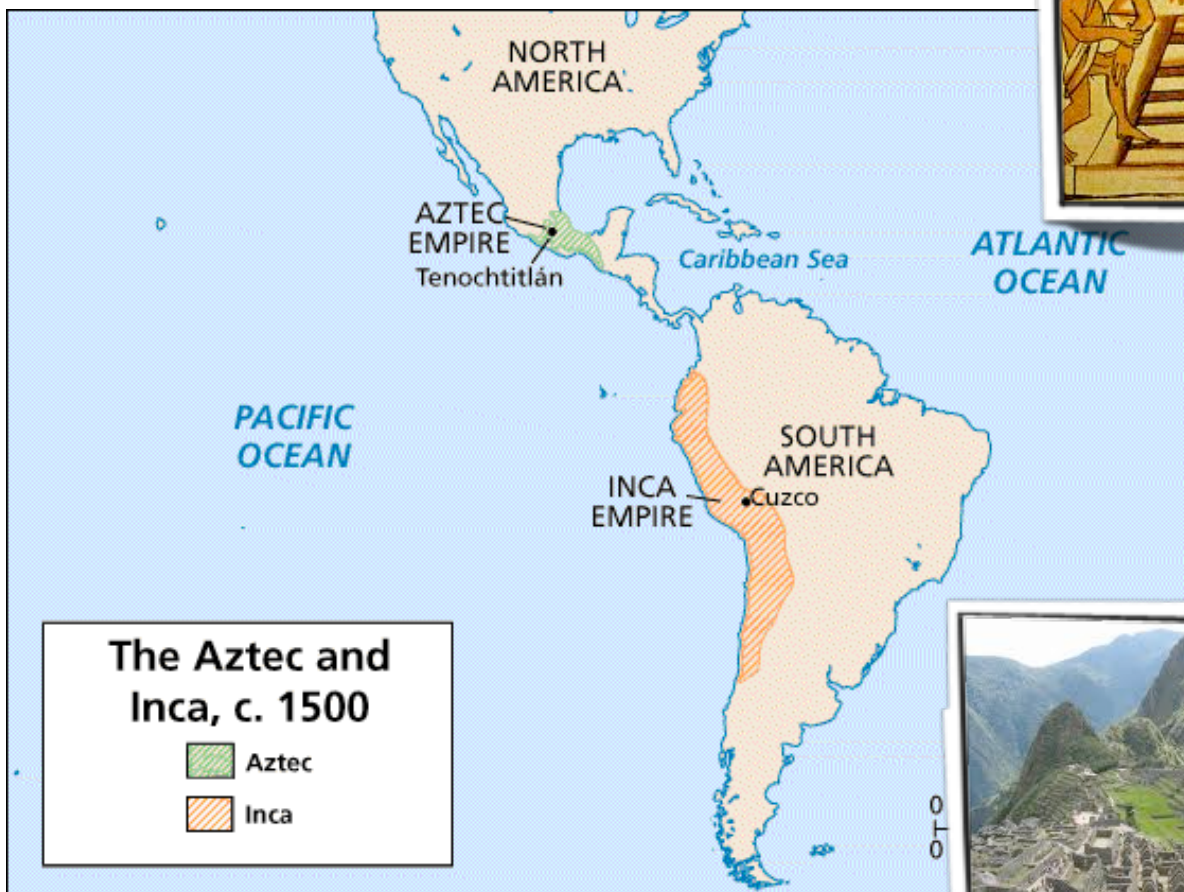
THE DEVIL YOU DON'T

*'Tis better to deal with the Devil you know, then deal with
the Devil you don't.*

Indigenous People

When the Spanish begin to explore West for India, the land that will become known as the America's was unknown to the Europeans. Indeed, it did not appear on any map of the world. The last known people to cross from Asia to the Americas had been around 1200BC.

While these lands were "unknown," does not mean they were "unfilled." In 1500 AD, there existed two indigenous, or native, empires: the Aztec and Incas. Each of these empires were sophisticated and controlled vast lands. The Aztecs were known for their warrior brutality, offering thousands of human sacrifices a year to their sun gods to keep the world from coming to an end. The Inca required a service tax each year, requiring its citizens to do hard labor through the Andes mountains building roads and temples through the Andes Mountains.



The Aztec Prophecy

To understand the next section of history, the reader must first understand the prophecy and legend surrounding the Aztec god Quetzacoatl. Quetzacoatl was the feathered serpent whom the Aztecs believed was present at the creation of the world and is the rightful ruler. Legend holds that in a battle with other deities, Quetzacoatl was humiliated and fled across the waters to the East. Quetzacoatl promised that one day he would return and would restore order, being a generous leader to all the Mexica. Quetzacoatl was to come as a light skinned, bearded man, coming across the Eastern waters.

Those who suffered under the ruthless rule of the Aztecs waited anxiously for Quetzacoatl's return.

Conquistadors

After Columbus successfully found the Caribbean Islands in 1492, Spain was excited about the possibilities of gaining new land and riches. Ferdinand and Isabella sent twelve missions to explore this land between 1492 and 1504. When it was clear that this land was indeed a "New World," Spain began to send the Conquistadors. The Conquistadors were conquerors. Their job was to setup settlements or colonies in the world. This process was called Colonization. These Conquistadors were typically poor individuals who had little to gain by staying in the traditional Spanish society. The Conquistadors went to explore and conquer for three main reasons: Glory, God and Gold.



Cortez & the Aztecs

In February, 1519, Hernan Cortez arrives in Mexico with 400 men in search of gold, slaves, and to evangelize to the natives (convert them to Christianity). Upon Cortez' arrival, he connected with a shipwrecked Spaniard who has learned the local language, as well as a woman known as La Malinche. La Malinche knew the area well and was fluent in the language of the Aztecs. These two people were an important key to Cortez' success they allowed him to communicate with the natives.

La Malinche helped Cortez to build alliances with local tribes along the coast and in the mainland.

These tribes were unhappy with the Aztecs because of their requirement to pay taxes and because of the yearly raids capturing people to be used in the human sacrifices. They also thought that this white bearded man who came across the seas was the long hoped for Quetzacoatl. Thus, Cortez was quite literally treated like a god by most he met and it kept him from getting attacked.



In November, 1519, Cortez met with the Aztec leader, Montezuma II. Montezuma II treated Cortez like a god, with references to Quetzacoatl. Montezuma II presented the Spanish with gold jewelry and treasures and invited the men to the capital, Tenochtitlan. The Spanish quickly melted the gold into bars to make them easier to carry and became greedily excited about this land filled with precious metals.

The Spanish were amazed at Tenochtitlan. The city was greater than any European city they had ever seen before. Indeed, Tenochtitlan was one of the five largest cities in the world. It was built on an island in the middle of Lake Texcoco. The island city was connected to the land by a series of bridges. The Aztecs fed themselves with chinampas, or gardens that floated on top of the lake. The city layout, architectural designs, and innovative technologies made the Tenochtitlan truly impressive.



When the Spanish saw the massive amounts of gold in the temples, things began to go south. The Spanish demanded more gold. When the Aztecs refused, the Spanish took Montezuma II as their prisoner until the gold demands were met. The Aztecs (who deep down were not happy with Montezuma) selected a new leader and attacked the Spanish, killing Montezuma II in the process. The Spanish fled Tenochtitlan, trying to carry off their stolen treasure with them. The Aztecs were shooting at the Spaniards with poison tipped arrows while also removing the bridges.

Cortez barely escaped. Many of the Spaniards with him died, drowning in the lake from being weighed down with all the treasure. Cortez and the few remaining Spaniards went to a neighboring city to resupply and craft a new strategy.



Unbeknownst to both the Cortez and the Aztecs, the seeds for Aztec destruction had already been sown. In September, 1520, a Smallpox outbreak devastated the people in Tenochtitlan. Smallpox was a disease that causes a high fever and a severe rash to appear all over the skin, mouth and throat. It also can attack the lungs. It killed and debilitated large numbers of Aztecs. When the Spanish attacked in May, 1521 the Aztecs had little hope of holding out. The Spanish surrounded the city

with boats, took control of the chinampas and starved them into surrendering. The Spanish took full control of the area, setting up a colony and treating all the native tribes ruthlessly.

Pizzaro & the Inca

By 1532, news about the fabulous wealth of the Aztec Empire spread quickly (thanks to the printing press) and encouraged adventurers to seek their fortunes in the other unexplored areas. Many of the natives of Central America were soon attacked by groups of Spaniards. As the Spaniards expanded, they learned of another great empire to their south: the Inca Empire.

The Inca controlled an impressive empire centered in modern-day Peru that included parts of Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, and Ecuador. The empire was tied together with roads, designed for foot traffic, but equivalent in quality and distance to those of imperial Rome. The Inca Empire was highly centralized.

The emperor had complete authority and was viewed as a god. The empire also had a fully functioning bureaucracy to keep order and justice. Interestingly, the Inca did not have a system of writing, but instead a series of knots that would be tied into string to help the person remember important events or to keep accounts.

The Incan army was robust, including a total of 90,000 Incan men that could be mobilized at any moment. The army was supported by strategically placed storehouses of food and weapons. The greatest weakness of the Incas was in their weaponry. More specifically, the Inca did not use any metal weapons, guns or effective slashing weapons, like swords.

In 1531, a Spanish expedition headed by Francisco Pizarro sailed to South America, via Panama. It consisted of 180 men, 37 horses, and 2 cannon. In 1532, the small army landed on the coast of Peru. Pizarro led his men inland, and they climbed up into the Andes until they reached the city of Cajamarca, built on a plateau on the eastern slopes of the Andes. On November 16, 1532, the Incan Emperor, Atahualpa came to meet Pizarro. Atahualpa was accompanied by 30,000 warriors.



Upon meeting, Pizarro proclaimed his friendship and lured Atahualpa and 3,500 mostly unarmed followers into a meeting in the great square at Cajamarca. A Spanish priest met the Incan Emperor and told him and his followers to accept Christianity and submit to the authority of the Pope. Atahualpa, who was considered a god by his people and could not read, threw the Bible to the ground. The Spaniards, who were in hiding, opened fire on the Incas and cut them down from all sides. Pizarro seized Atahualpa and took him prisoner. The steel armor of the Spanish could not be penetrated by the weapons of the Incas and the Incas had no answer for the Spanish guns. After the Battle of Cajamarca, Pizarro demanded and received a huge ransom of gold and silver for Atahualpa. The Inca provided Pizarro with the ransom. Instead of releasing him, Pizarro had Atahualpa executed for conspiracy and heresy.

Pizarro was joined by additional Spaniards under the Conquistador, Diego de Almagro. The two moved against the Inca capital city of Cuzco. The Incas were virtually paralyzed by the loss of their god emperor. In November 1533 Cuzco fell with barely any bloodshed. The Spanish were able to assume control over the Inca Empire and crowned a puppet emperor, taking most all the gold and silver back to Spain. The Incas later revolted and tried to retake Cuzco in 1536. When the Inca failed to retake the city, the Inca gave up and returned to their homes and crops.

Aftermath

The clash between the Conquistadors and the indigenous people was brutal. First, the Conquistadors brought with them a cocktail of diseases including small pox. These deadly diseases had never been experienced in the New World before because they did not have any domesticable large mammals, which were the source of most deadly diseases. Because of this, the indigenous people did not have immunity to these diseases, nor did they have any of their own diseases to infect the Europeans. Indigenous people quickly caught the European diseases and died. It spread rapidly to rich and poor alike, whipping out massive portions of the population.

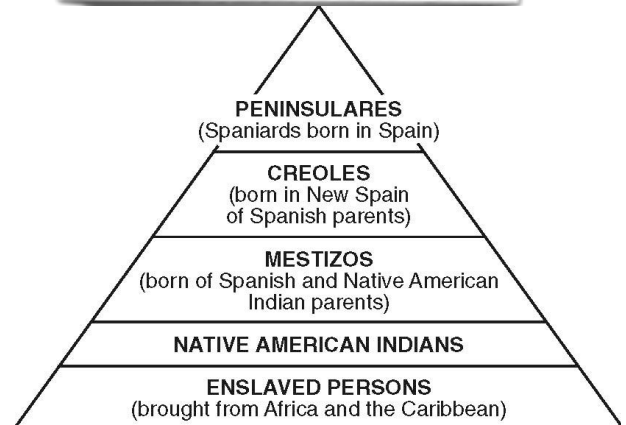
Second, when the conquistadors did not find the gold promised to them by their captains, they became angry. The conquistadors took out their anger on the indigenous populations. This would take the form of mass killings and torture. This anger intensified when the indigenous people did not convert to Christianity or willingly become slaves. A new version of the Spanish Inquisition spread, where those who did not convert would be hung or burned alive, and mothers would have their babies torn from them and killed.

Third, a new social order was put into place called "Encomiendas." This was a legal system for controlling the colonies in the New World. The encomiendas.

These events caused the rapid dying and displacement of the indigenous populations. As the native populations dwindled, the Europeans began to look for new sources of free/cheap labor...

Conclusion

These events led to the Spanish rapidly developing the first truly global empire. The Spanish used the wealth from the New World to develop the Spanish Armada, the most powerful navy in the world. It allowed the Spanish to safely trade across the Atlantic Ocean, leverage their newly acquired wealth and resources to create the first global economy.



QUESTIONS

Basic Questions

- 1) Were the Aztecs and Incas nice or harsh societies? Explain why you believe this.
- 2) What is a Conquistador?
- 3) What were the three reasons the Spanish began exploring? How did the Conquistadors' react when they were denied any of these three reasons?
- 4) Why did Atahualpa not accept Christianity?
- 5) What was the most important cause of Cortez' success? What was the most important cause of Pizarro's success?

Advanced Questions

- 6) The Aztecs treated Cortez like a god. Do you believe the outcome of the story would have been different if the Aztecs had treated Cortez differently? Explain.
- 7) There were three reasons the Spanish began exploring. Based on the story, which of the three reasons was the strongest motivator for the actions of the Spanish?
- 8) Did the Spanish show any respect for the Inca or Aztec civilizations/cultures? Why or why not?
- 9) Describe the Encomienda. How was it similar/different to other social structures we have learned about in this course? (*Caste System, Feudal System...*)
- 10) Identify three consequences of the Spanish beginning to explore/colonize.
- 11) Explain the beginning quote about the Devil.
- 12) Essay: In reflecting on upon the reading, which "Devil" was worse, the Aztecs & Inca or the Spanish? Explain in an 8-10 sentence paragraph.