

# The Age of Discovery

- Were the Spanish responsible for an Indian genocide?
- What role did faith honestly play in the discovery and colonization of the new world?
- What was the affect of Christianity on Indian populations during the colonial period and to what extent was the new belief system readily accepted?
- How were the concepts and motivations of colonization and empire for the Catholic monarchies (Spain, France) different from the English?
- Is the common presentation of history in the modern western world purposely anti-Catholic or, in a broader sense, anti-Christian?

# The Catholic New World

- Spanish and French settlement preceded the English colonization of the east coast of modern America by some time and was fundamentally different
- Spain and France were Catholic monarchies and were more consistent in the way they structured their exploration and colonization for that reason
  - Spanish sought to transplant feudal system
- Spain and France also did not have a growing over population problem that would have encouraged them to displace excess people to a new land as did England
- Spain and France sought economic objectives and to spread their culture and religion but not to transplant their population
  - ultimately, this would cause them to lose a demographic war for the control of the Americas but this would have been very difficult to see or understand at the time
- As part of the Colombian exchange between the old and new world, populations would be exposed to diseases that they had not built up immunity to
  - The most significant example being smallpox which took a fairly devastating toll on American Indian groups over an extended period of time.
  - ultimately this would have been unavoidable unless the two geographical regions were permanently separated.
  - The Spanish are held most accountable for this as they were the first and encountered the largest populations of Indian peoples. For this, in post modern history they are frequently accused of genocide.
  - Unless the Spanish are to be held accountable for not having an understanding of germ theory, however, moral condemnation of their role in this process would not be reasonable.

# Overview of American Indian Populations

- Reaching general conclusions about the treatment and effect of the Europeans on the Indians is an exercise in blending unlike things together and has the effect of hiding the guilty and condemning the innocent or at least the less guilty
  - Estimates of population sizes vary greatly (Estimating population size is difficult even if there were attempts at a census)
  - American Indians were by no means a homogeneous population and were constantly at war with each other – frequently Indians would enter European wars and visa versa
- To some extent people groups from roughly the same region would share some common characteristics and could be reasonably grouped together
  - to claim that groups from Meso-America would have anything significant in common with tribes from what is now the North East United States would be a very hard case to reasonably make
- The timeline of European exploration and settlement also stretched over three hundred years encompassing rapidly changing political and economic circumstances
  - low point in the treatment of Indians by Europeans could well have been reached in 19<sup>th</sup> century America and not 16<sup>th</sup> century Mexico
- Indian spirituality was very dark (occult) and they were generally very receptive to all forms of Christianity

# Central America

- Central America at the time of the conquest of Mexico was ruled by a three tribe coalition known as the Aztecs
  - Dominant group were the Mexica from which the term Mexican derived
  - Held power for less than 200 years (term “Aztec” was not common until later)
  - Name meant roughly Dogs of the North, they spoke a dialect known as Azteca-Utakan
  - Capital city was on a marsh connected by causeways and was larger than European cities with a population possibly as large as 140,000
  - Many people groups in the area that spoke many different languages
- Technology
  - Didn’t utilize the wheel – limited use in their environment without pack animals
  - Lacked metallic weaponry but fought in large organized groupings
- Culture / Religion
  - Aztecs are most noted for human sacrifice that was done on a massive scale
  - Claims of the number of victims were unbelievable - Spanish attempted to document (Codex)
  - victims were typically young men, and to a lesser extent, women who were harvested from the surrounding tribes they dominated – frequently held as slaves prior to their death
  - This practice shocked and disgusted the Spanish, much as it would someone from modern society and has stood as their legacy despite attempts by modern historians to overlook or downplay it
- Tribal Relations
  - Continually at war with surrounding groups who hated them
  - In part to harvest sacrificial victims

# Cortez's conquest of the Central America

- Mexica arrived in Central Mexico from the North
  - Acted as mercenaries for a period of time before establishing their capital Tenochtitlan
  - City was built on a marsh because that was the only available land
  - All people groups in Sonoran desert tended to migrate to this large shallow lake region
- First Spanish mission to Mexico was decimated but remnant returned to Cuba
  - One survivor became Maya noble, another was peasant farmer who greeted Cortez later
  - Cortez was given charter to try to recover them but they returned prior to Cortez departing which revoked the support for his mission
  - Cortez went anyway and landed at San Jaun do Uloa near Vera Cruz on April 12, 1519 having only app. 600 infantry, 16 cavalry, 13 cross-bowmen, and 14 cannon as his entire force
  - Quetzalcoatl myth was first documented 40 years later and was largely irrelevant
  - Mexica scouts observed them the entire time
- Maya gave them 20 female slaves including Marina who acted as interpreter
  - She was 14 years old, probably Mayan, had been sold several times, and spoke 7 languages
- First encountered Tlaxcalans who fought the Spaniards for several days
  - Tlaxcalans were entirely surrounded by Mexica controlled territory and continually under siege
  - Spaniards retreated to higher ground and probably would have been eradicated if Tlaxcalans didn't come to see them as potentially useful allies.
  - Tlaxcalans deceived the Spaniards into attacking neighboring city of Chula

# Cortez's conquest of the Central America (cont.)

- Cortez and his men, along with a contingent of Indian allies, entered the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan in November of 1519 but situation gradually worsened
  - Montezuma had observed their capability and treated them carefully but was eventually taken captive in his own capital – Montezuma attempted to communicate with Spanish in Cuba
- In June of 1520 Cortez left Aztec capital for the coast with some of his troops in response to news that a larger force of Spanish had been sent to arrest him
  - Cortez defeated those sent to capture him and the survivors of that group joined up with Cortez to return to Tenochtitlan
  - Defeated them rapidly at night before Mexica could make contact
  - Pedro Alvarado was left in charge and lost control of the situation – Montezuma was killed
- Escape to the Coast
  - After increasing tension over a period of months and running low on supplies while under almost constant attack, Cortez and his chief lieutenant Pedro do Alvarado determined to fight their way out
  - On June 1, 1520, they attempted to make their escape under cover of rain but were noticed before reaching the main causeway
  - A large scale-battle ensued involving possibly as many as 20,000 combined Spaniards and Indians and as many as 50,000 Aztecs (extremely large by European standards of the time)
  - After several days and fairly heavy losses, Cortez and his allies escaped towards the coast, along with a vast amount of treasure, where they planned their return
  - Mexica acquired pikes, crossbows, and some firearms but couldn't effectively use the guns. They did develop effective defensive techniques (barriers, trenches, etc..)

# Final Conquest of Mexico and Peru

- Final conquest of Tenochtitlan
  - In 1521, Cortez, Alvarado, and their Indian allies returned to take the Aztec capital and bring the Aztec empire to an end – militarily this was decisive but it was a large battle with heavy losses
  - Battle of Otumba on July 5<sup>th</sup> and Tenochtitlan fell on August 13<sup>th</sup>
- Over the next several decades the Spanish conquered the remainder of central and upper South America culminating in 1572 with the conquest of the Inca
  - used a combination of more advanced military technology and tactics along with native alliances to make up for drastic numerical disadvantages
  - in each case they extracted a great deal of wealth, largely in the form of precious metals
- If we were to apply modern social standards to the Spanish alone, it would be easy enough to declare them guilty and move on but this considers only one side
  - judging only one never creates an accurate or balanced perspective on events
  - In the case of the Aztecs and Incas, the Spanish defeated and displaced empires that had been in place a short time and were far worse by way of comparison
- Rule in Mexico after conquest
  - When the Spanish and their Indian allies conquered the Aztec kingdom they treated the conquered harshly for a period of time (forced them to dismantel their own capital)
  - Ultimately though the social structures and even most of the nobles were left in place. Indians were governed by their own rulers
  - The foundations of International law were derived from discussion of Catholic Theologians regarding the rights of the indigenous peoples

# Overview of Spanish Colonial Rule

- The development of Spanish (and French) rule in the New World differed greatly from the Anglo-Saxon model of Empire
- Spanish re-conquest of Iberian Peninsula from the Moors acted as model
  - The Iberian Peninsula in 711 was conquered by Muslims who triumphed over Visigoth King Roderick
  - Christian remnant took refuge in a cave in Covadonga under the leadership of Don Pelayo I and began an eight century campaign of reconquest which ended in 1492
  - Starting from the Kingdom of Castile, which was named because of the castles built against the Moors and other centers of resistance, gradually developed including Navarre in the Pyrenees, established by a French count, and Aragon
  - Portugal was freed by a Burgundian nobleman
- As the kingdoms were united to form Spain (or the Spain's as it was referred to into the 19th century), they were a loose confederation where regional differences were accepted and local societal structures were left in place
  - There was no intent to make everyone the same or to transfer populations from one area to another and this was the pattern of Spanish empire
  - This was a model of empire that was common throughout history in other places at other times because it was economically and politically efficient and this was the pattern that was extended to the Spanish colonization of the new world

# Spanish Society Structure in New World

- Economically, the Spanish who came to the new world represented the clergy and the aristocracy or warrior class and were overwhelmingly male
  - This led to extensive intermarriage and interbreeding with native populations and also required the development of a native or imported work force (serfs)
  - appointed officials in the Americas were “peninsulares”, who were natives of Spain (only made up a small minority of the population)
  - The Criollos (this is where the word Creole came from) were the native-born Spaniards. Few rose to high positions in the Spanish administration
  - Mestizos were people of mixed Spanish and Indian blood who tended to form a sort of middle-class, comprised of artisans, farmers, and foot soldiers
  - Indians were originally used as cheap labor in mines and in fields but did not hold up well
- Amongst the Conquistadores there were a small number of blacks from Seville and other Spanish cities
  - One well known Black Conquistador was known as Estavanico
  - Black conquistadores participated in most or all of the major Spanish expeditions in the New World
- Indian Rights (Fr. Bartolome was the chief advocate for the Indians)
  - One of the initial questions the Spanish had to address was whether the Indians were fully human or were an inferior race or species
  - The church concluded that they were fully human but in need of Christian salvation and instruction
  - They were not equals necessarily but had the potential to become equals through “the redemptive work of God”

# Introduction of Slavery to Central and South America

- The Spanish needed a labor source and the Indians were not a good option
  - The Spanish didn't import a European population - there weren't indentured servants or convict labor as there was to be in the English colonies
  - Spanish working class or serfs didn't migrate to the new world
- A slave market had developed in West Africa
  - African Kingdoms had a supply of labor and the Spanish had a demand and no way to fill it
  - Fr. Bartolome advocated the importation of African slaves to replace the Indians as a labor source and this led to the beginning of slavery in the new world
- The form of slavery that developed in the Spanish New World was more consistent than what developed under the English
  - There were protective regulations regarding housing, food, work, and punishment.
  - Slaves could choose their own wives (this was common in the English colonies also) and change masters if they could find their own buyer.
  - They were also able to purchase their freedom at the lowest possible rate.
  - By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, freedman outnumbered slaves in the Spanish colonies.
  - Masters were also required to instruct their slaves in the Catholic faith and to make religious services and rites available to them
- There were also free blacks from Spain who immigrated to the Spanish colonies who identified as Catholic subjects of the king and had the same rights and privileges
  - Juan Garrido (1480-1550), who introduced wheat harvesting to the Americas, was the most well known of these

# Spanish Missionaries

- Catholicism spread rapidly although the drastic religious transition did present challenges
  - Sometimes developed hybrid beliefs and practices that the church tried with varying degrees of success to control
- As the Spanish influence spread both to the south and north through modern Texas, the clergy generally found willing converts
  - there are numerous accounts of miraculous events which can't be proven or disproven
- Through the Spanish colonial period, very few Europeans came here apart from St. Augustine and Pensacola
  - The major towns the Spanish established and settled were Los Angeles and San Jose in California; Tucson, Arizona; Taos and Santa Fe, New Mexico; and San Antonio, El Paso, Laredo, and Nagadoches
- The Spanish and especially the Spanish clergy were not interested in destroying or displacing the native people but in making them Catholic and Spanish
- In comparison to the eventual expansion of Puritan culture in modern America, the Spanish and Catholic culture was not highly prescriptive but left a good deal of room for local cultures and traditions so long as they weren't specifically anti-Christian

# French Exploration in the New World

- Whereas the Spanish were able to build on a semi-civilized foundation the native inhabitants encountered by the French, the Huron and Algonquin Indians, were essentially hunter gathers
  - They were not hostile but had a low population density living in a colder climate that did not offer easy riches in the form of precious metals
  - The main economic product of the French exploration was the fur trade
- Due to European conflicts, the new world was not a priority
  - The French supported Jesuit missionary efforts to Indian tribes across what is now eastern Canada and the Upper Midwest including the Abnaki, the Illinois, the Ottawa and many others in addition to the Huron and Algonquin
- The Iroquois were a coalition of five tribes in Upstate New York consisting of the Mohawk, Cayuga, Oneida, Onondaga, and Seneca that were consistently at war with the Huron and Algonquin and, by association, the French
  - Neither the French nor the Huron were destroyed however, and continued a long guerilla war against the Iroquois
- Starting around 1700, the French determined that controlling the Mississippi would be of strategic advantage in their ongoing struggles with the British
  - by 1712 had established the towns of New Orleans, Nachitoches, Biloxi, Mobile, Kaskaskia, Cahokia, and Vincennes. New Orleans came to rival Quebec as a center of French culture

# The Colombian Exchange

- Brought about such dramatic changes in economics and demographics that it would indirectly impact all aspects of society
- Starting with diseases, Europeans did bring a variety of serious diseases to which the native populations didn't have natural antibodies.
  - These included measles, smallpox, influenza, mumps, typhus, and whooping cough
  - diseases had a disproportionate toll on children but those who survived would carry partial to total immunity except for the flu which would mutate
  - Syphilis and tuberculosis traveled from the New World to the Old
- Horses, pigs, cattle, sheep, and goats all came from Europe and thrived
  - Ranching was readily adopted by Indian groups to the point where these domesticated animals are often seen as an integral part of some Indian cultures
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- The greatest long term impact was provided by crops that went from the new world to Europe and Africa and European crops that grew well in the new world creating large scale exports
  - Primary high caloric density New World crops included the potato, corn, and the sweet potato
  - large-scale adoption of the potato across northern Europe and Russia reduced famine, improved nutrition, fueled economic expansion and generally advanced civilization
  - Corn altered agriculture in Asia, Europe, and Africa. It grew in places unsuitable for other grains and provided multiple harvests per year