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19 June 2022

Research Paper: The Aztecs-Villains or Victims?

 The Aztecs were the first to conquer and settle in the Yucatan Peninsula in Mexico. They were a group from the north of Mexico during the Late Classical period. The Aztecs were a group of people who had many different gods, but all of them shared one thing in common, they were all gods of war and death. The Aztecs used their gods to guide them through their conquests and to give them power over their enemies. They would sacrifice prisoners and human beings to these gods so that they would be able to have more power over those they conquered (White 78). When the Spanish first came into Mexico, they had a very negative view of the Aztecs and saw them as evil because of how much power these people had over others. The Spanish saw how much power these people had over others by seeing how many prisoners and human beings were sacrificed each year and how many times an Aztec ruler would kill his brother or sister for ruling against him. The Spanish also saw how much power these people held over others when it came down to killing captives for sport or not being able to pay ransom for some reason or another.

 The Spaniards who came into Mexico in search of gold lived like kings while they did so, but once they began trying to convert natives, they became miserable slaves working long hours on very little food. This was not unlike what happens today with companies that move their operations overseas, where employees work long hours for little pay and often have to work seven days a week. This was one reason the Spaniards became miserable slaves when they began trying to convert the natives. The natives were unwilling to give up their belief in gods, so they would not convert (White 80). The Spanish saw that the Aztecs had control over others by killing them if they did not follow their rules or did something wrong. This is seen in several Spanish accounts of what happened when Aztecs would torture prisoners or kill them for no reason. The Aztecs used prisoners as sacrifices and many times killed them just because they did not want to be a part of their religion anymore. This is like today with people who are mentally ill or have some illness that causes them to do things that go against what society thinks is right; these people are considered “evil” and are often put on death row. In reality, these people have no control over themselves since they do things that go against the will of God or society, but this does not matter to those who are making the decisions about how these people should live and what should happen to them.

 The Spanish had a very hard time with the Aztecs because they did not want to give up their belief in their gods. The Spanish did not believe that the Aztecs were bad people, but they did not believe that they were good people either. They were just different from them, but not bad. The Spanish had difficulty accepting that the Aztecs were victims of their religion and culture. The Spanish rule over Mexico was known as the “Colonial Period”, which lasted from 1521 until 1821, when Mexico gained its independence from Spain. Many things happened during this period. Mexico was a colony of Spain for about 300 years, but it gained its independence from Spain on September 16, 1821. Mexico became an independent country on September 16, 1821, when it declared itself an independent republic under the rule of Agustín de Iturbide, himself a former viceroy or vice-king. He ruled Mexico until he was overthrown by Antonio López de Santa Anna, who ruled Mexico until Benito Juárez ousted him in 1853. The Mexican War of Independence began when France invaded Spain and took control of part of Northern Mexico, now called “Northern Mexico” or “Northeast Mexico”. At the same time, the rest of today's modern-day México is known as "Southwest Mexico".

Mexican War of Independence

 This is a list of battles and skirmishes fought in the Mexican War of Independence. There were many battles and skirmishes during the War of Independence. There were many battles between Spanish soldiers and the Mexican Army and battles between different factions within Mexico. These include: The Battle of Pueblo de Los Angeles, The Battle of San Pedro, The Battle of San Pascualito, The Battle for Veracruz, The Siege of Tampico, and The Siege of Pueblo de México.

French Intervention

 France was a major player in this war as it invaded Mexico City in 1867 to help its former ally (Spain) defeat its new enemy (Mexico). After Spain was defeated by Mexico at Pueblo de Los Angeles on May 5th 1868, French troops entered Mexico City on May 21st 1868, to help defend against an attack by Benito Juárez’s forces on June 20th 1868. In this battle, they captured Santa Anna’s headquarters and all his documents, including his plans for an invasion into Texas and Louisiana (Chih-Hsuan np). They also captured Santa Anna’s wife, Josefa Ortiz de Domínguez, who was executed in December 1867 after being found guilty on charges such as treason and betrayal. This ended the French Intervention, which began when France invaded Spain with Napoleon III's goal of seizing power from Queen Isabella II. In the end, Mexico City was captured by Juárez’s forces on June 20th 1868, and a year later, he was elected to become the first president of Mexico in 1869.

The Battle of Pueblo de Los Angeles

 The Battle of Pueblo de Los Angeles was fought on May 5th 1867, during the French Intervention between Mexican forces and French troops trying to capture Mexico City from the north. The battle began when Mexican forces attacked the French encampment at Pueblo de Los Angeles, also known as Pueblo del Rio, located near present-day San Diego, California. After a brief battle in which both sides suffered heavy casualties, both sides retreated with no clear victor. This ended up being one of two battles fought between French forces and Mexican troops during this time. The other battle was fought at La Mesa (also known as El Ranchito) near present-day San Antonio, Texas. The Battle for Veracruz was a battle that took place near Veracruz, Mexico, on April 21st 1863, during the American Civil War between Union forces under General Nathaniel Banks and Confederate forces under General Sterling Price after they had seized control of the city from Benito Juárez’s Liberal Government which Napoleon III had installed in 1861. This ended up being one of several battles in this area of Veracruz during the war. The other battles in this area of Veracruz were: The battle for Mexico City (also known as the Battle of Mexico City), which occurred on March 19th 1863, and the Battle for Torreón, which occurred on November 20th 1863.

 The Spanish had a negative view of the Aztecs and the Indians. They did not understand their customs, religions and ways of life, so they believed the Aztecs were evil. The Spanish were there only to take land and resources from them; they were not there to help or make friends. The Spanish also used several different weapons against the Aztecs, such as guns and horses, which made it easier to hunt them down. They also had a long reach with their guns making it easy for them to shoot arrows at the Indians from a distance (Coe 69). These weapons were seen as ungodly by many of the indigenous people who used bows and arrows; they saw these weapons as tools of evil because they would kill people who did not follow their religion correctly or who had no respect for them their gods. Many of these people became victims because they lived in areas that were hard to live in because of diseases, animals (such as snakes), weather conditions, such as hot or cold, or just plain being away from home for long periods.

 The Spanish took over all the lands that belonged to the Aztec empire by force, like many other conquistadors before them. Still, unlike other conquistadors who left after taking control over those lands, most Spaniards stayed in Mexico City, New Spain (Mexico), until death claimed them. Some people came to Mexico City for fun, while others came to stay. The people in Mexico City were not as cruel as the conquistadors who went to the New World and did not take over land by force. The Spaniards were mostly interested in the riches of Mexico, and the Native Americans were happy to be able to trade with them (Robinson 1269). The Spanish came into Mexico because they had heard of great wealth in gold and silver. They also heard of many people who lived there, many thousands, and that they had more food than they could eat or carry away. So many people came into Mexico that it became very crowded; this was also why there was a lot of disease among the Native Americans because it was so hard for them to live together in one place for long periods (White 100). Many died from disease and hunger because too many people lived under such bad conditions in one place. There were also times when famine would strike those who did not have enough food to eat or enough land to grow their food on. The Spaniards made laws which included having slaves, people who did not belong to them. They brought African slaves into New Spain (Mexico), whom they forced into work on plantations where they grew crops like sugar cane and cotton as well as tobacco which helped produce money for the Spanish government (Schendel 10). Historians generally see the Conquest as a departure point for the concept of the Spanish Empire. At this time, Spain was only a small kingdom, and many scholars did not accept the idea that it could be considered an empire in the early 20th century. However, by the 1970s, when historians began to study and write about Latin America during this period, it became clear that Spain had indeed become a world power.

 The first years of Spanish rule were marked by increased conflict among Native Americans. The Spaniards conquered Mexico quickly because they won most battles with native tribes in surprise attacks or ambushes. They knew how to fight against other European armies because of their experience fighting Moors in North Africa, notably at Las Navas de Tolosa, and against Turks in Europe, especially at Lepanto. The Spaniards fought hard battles but usually lost them because they did not have enough soldiers to hold all their conquests together; therefore, many tribes could still live freely under native laws and customs. The Indians had been living in Mexico for thousands of years before the Spaniards arrived; therefore, they knew how to fight against other Native American tribes as well as against foreign invaders like Cortés (Schendel 11). The Indians also had allies among other native people who lived elsewhere in North America and Central America as well as places beyond those borders, such as Brazil and Peru; these allies would sometimes help them win some battles but sometimes attack them during times of war or famine which caused problems for them on both sides.

 The Aztecs were not the only people in pre-Columbian America to have a god-based society. The Mayans and Incas also had gods who were worshipped. However, the Aztecs had a more organized religion with rules everyone had to follow. It was believed that if people did not follow these rules, they would go to their “next life” like an animal or a spirit. This was seen as unfair because it meant that children who did not do well in school or people who did not work hard enough would have no chance of getting into heaven and being rewarded for their good deeds in this life rather than being punished for their bad deeds. The Spanish saw this as unfair because the Aztecs were taking away the chance for good people to be rewarded for their hard work and good deeds if they died before they got to heaven.

 After the conquests, many of the Natives converted to Catholicism, with some still keeping their traditional religion, but others were forced by Spanish law to convert and then could be punished if they did not convert completely; those who refused conversion could be put on death row or banished from town. Many Natives killed themselves rather than convert, but others chose conversion over death; however, most Natives soon reverted to their traditional religion after years of living with Catholic settlers and missionaries. Some Natives converted because they wanted peace; some converts were forced to convert by law, but others did so because they wanted to be accepted into Spanish society. Some Natives were not allowed to keep their traditional religion when they became Spanish citizens; they had to convert completely to Catholicism or face punishment for their disobedience. When Europeans first came to the Americas, many Native Americans were shocked by the foreign culture and religion, which was very different from their own (Schendel 10). Native Americans had no written language or concept of writing down history and stories; therefore, some of the earliest records of Native American life were created by Europeans who wrote down what they saw and heard about the people to share it with other Europeans back home.

The earliest European records of Native American life are based on stories of early explorers who talked with Natives before, during, and after the conquests to try and understand their culture. These early European accounts are often contradictory and incomplete because many Natives did not want outsiders telling them what was happening or happening in their country.

 In the end, the Aztecs were victims of the Spanish. The Aztecs were not perfect people, and there was no way for them to live without causing trouble. They had many beliefs that went against what the Spanish wanted to do with them, but they tried to keep their beliefs a secret from the Spanish as best they could. The Aztec religion was very important to them, and they did not want to give it up even though they knew it would make them unable to live in their home country, which is why they tried to keep their religion a secret from the Spaniards. The Aztecs were victims because of what the Spanish did on top of what the Aztecs did wrong. The Spaniards came with guns and swords, which meant that these weapons killed or injured many innocent people. This caused a lot of tension among both sides and made many people mad at each other for no reason since these were two cultures that had nothing against each other.

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