

Anthro Lecture 2

1. Aztecs and Cortes: Explanations for victory/defeat

- Colliding worldview

- Signs are convention

- How did the Spanish conquer the Aztecs against overwhelming odds?

 - Montezuma's poor leadership

 - refuses to hear about invasion of Spaniards

 - indecisiveness

 - Cortes ability to gain allies against Aztecs

 - Aztecs themselves were imperialists

 - Spaniard superiority in weapons

 - Firearms, horses

 - Todorov argues for decisive importance of communication

2. Indian communication

- Indian account of the Conquest

 - Focus on loss of communication

 - God fell silent

 - Usage of omens - belief that they already know the order of upcoming events

- Aztec notions of individual action and social orders

 - Calendrical systems and divination

 - past repeats itself, past = future

 - Conception of time and structure of events

 - Finalist interpretation

 - Future is not created, but revealed

 - Social rules and etiquette

 - preordained life

 - Ritual speech

 - memorized closed information set

 - Absence of writing

 - Columbus has a linear timeline that ends in rapture

 - ease in conquest = superiority of christianity

3. Cortes and communication

- Quest for information/control of information

 - To dispel notion that they only came for gold

 - Confusing the enemy through deceit

 - First concern was to find an interpreter

 - strategic use of symbols

 - la malinche

 - Todorov sees her as multicultural

improvisation

pacification, colonization, exploitation

what Cortez means about conquest

4. Aztec and Spanish experience of alterity

Aztecs absorb cultures of conquered

Montezuma suggests placing Christian saints beside Aztec gods

They deny Spaniard humanity, they are too different to be human -> divinity

Aztec incorporation of Spaniards as Gods

Spaniards also deny the natives humanity

They do so by demoting them to beasts

Destroy native religious relics

Christianity only has on god, cannot coexist

5. Information and Colonization

Conquest tactics based on the control of information

Policy of colonization based ideologically on doctrine of inferiority of natives

6. The understanding that kills and possibility of understanding that respects

"Not only did the Spanish understand the Aztecs quite well, they admired them - and yet they annihilated them, why?"

96% reduction in native population

direct, economic, and biological murder

viewed as just punishment