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[Subject]

[Date]

Reflection Paper

The civilizations living in northern Mexico and SW US weren't very advanced at all. They were nomadic tribes living usually in towns moving from one place to another. The Apaches, Tarahumaras, Tepehuanes, Navajos and almost all the tribes that lived in the called Aridoamerica, were semi-nomadic tribes that didn't have big cities or towns. Their villages were usually formed by two or three families and they were hunters and gatherers that lived in the south of the US and north of Mexico. As you say, they were advanced settled peoples in Mesoamerica, but this is the center and south of modern Mexico. The climate there is amazing, being almost tropical, supporting the development of sedentary cultures and, later, advanced civilizations.

The people who lived there wanted more of this kind of territory, that's why the Aztec empire settled in all center Mexico and was in its way to conquer Yucatan and Central America when Spaniards arrived. Mayan empire covered Yucatan and Central America. The Olmec civilization controlled what today is Veracruz and Tabasco. The Toltecs lived in modern Hidalgo and Pachuca.

The northern parts of the Mexican territory (and the south of the US), weren't very attractive for them. The climate here is arid or semi-arid, the tribes that lived north were nomadic, were very used to raiding and moved from one place to another, so conquering them was almost impossible. The same happened to Spanish people who tried to conquer the north of Mexico and south of the US, that's why our cities aren't as old as the ones in central Mexico or the East coast of the US.

The region between Mexico and the USA is kind of inhospitable which in my opinion would have deterred contact between rival tribes. However, the ancestors of the Mexicans (the Aztecs and Mayans) do share a creation myth with the Native American tribes of the USA and Canada involving entering this world through a system of caves, but there are details that don’t match on their stories. The Native American myths talk about fleeing a dragon whose waters flooded every world they fled. The Aztec/Mayan myths talk about receiving idols of their Bacabs (protective gods). Furthermore, the Mojave Indians have gods that are more Mayan than Native American. I don’t doubt there was SOME contact in antiquity, but I don’t think the Aztecs were simply interested in migrating that far North.

There was a sophisticated civilization in the US that is called Cahokia but the admittedly fragmentary Aztec records that we possess make no reference to them, and considered all tribes north of Mesoamerica to be Chichimecas (roughly ‘barbarians’ or 'savages’). This despite them believing themselves to have come from the north, possibly in what is today New Mexico.

Judgment call certainly and more advancements that were overlooked, buried, overgrown, unexplored, unnoticed, or intentionally obscured by massive burning of books by the primitive, superstitious, and backward Spanish (compared to some other Europeans, Persians, Chinese, Sikhs, etc.). Why we treat those dumb bastards as the advanced ones, like Somali pirates wandering through a container ship they’ve seized by luck, and bloodthirstiness continues to baffle me.

The cluster of civilizations over 8–10,000 years in Bolivia particularly had the most advancements, particularly in developing thousands of new vegetables, and crops adapted to well understood soil science, advanced irrigation, natural pesticides and herbicide approaches, and nutritional science (knowing what to boost and what to reduce in the plants themselves) that was roughly 500 years ahead of anyone else in the world then. Life sciences, of course, don’t count compared to having adopted the Chinese and Indian inventions the Mongols brought West of gunpowder, cannons, and muskets that the Spanish adopted, like crediting a peasant farmer with modern electronics because he bought a prepaid smartphone at the market. The Olmecs-Toltecs-Mayan civilization would be a close second.

Groups south of the Aztecs like the Mixtecs, Zapotecs, Maya, etc were of course even less likely to be aware of groups in the USA. As to groups north of the Aztecs, they were generally less sophisticated and looked to the south rather than the north. So, the advanced civilization in Mesoamerica have nothing of interest in the northern arid territories, the only important thing was controlling the raids of the northern tribes and you would be able to expand all the way south, were important.