At the time of Spanish conquest in South America, and when Christopher Columbus was exploring Central and South America, the combined population of Mexico and Peru was greater than the total of all other American countries.

The regions with the largest populations remained Southern Asia and Eastern Asia. Together these contained more than half of the world’s population.

Worldwide population distribution in 1500 was roughly similar to that in year 1, despite the numbers almost doubling over this period.

“This [Mexican] population was decimated … Spanish colonizers treated the native population brutally and the European diseases which they brought ... were fatal to indigenous people.”

British Broadcasting Corporation, 2006