



Colonial Mexican Society

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NOTE TO INSTRUCTORS

Traditionally the colonial period has been neglected or misunderstood both in the audiovisual medium and in print. The discovery, exploration and the first 50 years of conquest are topics that are generally discussed in studies of the colonial period. The next 250 years are usually neglected. The goal of this multimedia packet is to provide a mini-history of colonial Mexican society to serve as a complete unit for classroom instruction. The slides included correspond to segments of the text and reinforce the discussion of important aspects of customs, institutions, and daily life. An effort has been made to include slides of items and places that conserve colonial characteristics.

Mexican society during the colonial period was diverse, complex, and dynamic. Since most multimedia packets available for this period deal almost exclusively with art history, the text and slides of this packet focus on socio-economic issues. A bibliography, recommended projects, and a list of suggested further readings complete the unit.

THE CONQUEST AND THE ENCOMIENDA SYSTEM (Slides 1-3)

In 1519 Hernán Cortés and his party of several hundred soldiers encountered many different indigenous groups inhabiting the territory which became known as *Nueva España* (New Spain, the modern-day Republic of Mexico). Among these diverse ethnic groups, the Mexica or Aztecs dominated, exacting tribute and militarily controlling an area from present-day Hidalgo in the North to the isthmus of Tehuantepec in the South. Aztec society was highly organized and stratified under the leadership of the emperor Montezuma II.

Though the Aztecs at first welcomed Cortés into their capital, Tenochtitlan, tensions soon developed, and Cortés' army laid siege to the city (now Mexico City). In the summer of 1521 Tenochtitlan fell to the invading forces as many of its inhabitants lay dead, victims of the newly arrived diseases of smallpox and pneumonia. Cortés and his followers initially adapted the Aztec system, placing themselves in the upper echelon of power. Eventually, however, the arrival of the Spanish reorganized indigenous life and created a new society. [see Slide 1: *Huastec Indian Girl*]

One of the first acquisitions of the Spanish conquistador in New Spain was the *encomienda*, given as a reward for service rendered to the Crown during the conquest of a new territory. After successful campaigns against resistant indigenous groups, the captains distributed *encomiendas* to loyal followers. The *encomienda* system provided that tribute once paid by the Indians to their rulers would now be paid to the Spanish conquistador (called the *encomendero*). The *encomienda* system granted a tribute of goods, preferably agricultural produce, to the *encomendero*, who supervised the selling of the goods in a nearby market and kept the profits. The *encomendero*, in turn, was obligated to Christianize and "civilize" his indigenous charges. The land held communally by an Indian village remained in its possession. The *encomendero* legally owned the tribute but not the Indians or the land. For the Spanish in the Americas, land only gradually become an item of wealth and prestige.

In order to facilitate the implementation of the *encomienda*, indigenous groups were coerced into leaving their traditional villages in sparsely populated rural areas. Colonial

authorities resettled Indians in special Indian towns or *pueblos de indios*, which were separate entities distinct from Spanish towns. This forced movement of the indigenous population was known as the *reducción* (reduction). [see Slide 2: *Maya Village of Ek Balam, Yucatán*]

The *encomienda* system soon resulted in tremendous exploitation of the Indians by the Spanish. In some instances *encomenderos* took Indians from their villages and forced them to work on construction projects or to perform personal services within their homes. Many were placed in silver mines to work in extremely harsh conditions. In some cases the *encomienda* became synonymous with slavery.

The power of the *encomendero* class increased rapidly without effective royal administration to check excesses. Motivated by humanitarian and political concerns, the Spanish Crown attempted to legislate and reform the relations between the two populations in its overseas dominions. The Catholic Church spearheaded the main attack against the *encomienda* system. Many clergymen, most notable among them the Dominican friar Bartolomé de las Casas, effectively petitioned for reform or outright abolition of the *encomienda* system. This reformist zeal led to the New Laws of the Indies of 1542. These laws substantially restricted *encomendero* authority and legislated for better treatment of the indigenous population. In practice, however, the implementation of the laws met firm resistance and rebellion in Mexico City. Gradually, the power of the *encomendero* was moderated and by 1600 a sizeable portion of tribute came from *encomiendas* administered by the Crown. [see Slide 3: *Palacio de Cortés in Cuernavaca*]

A critical factor in the eventual demise of the *encomienda* system in New Spain was

the demographic disaster. Some experts estimate that by 1600 only one-tenth of the indigenous population at the time of contact had survived the European diseases inadvertently brought by the Spaniards. The Crown substituted the forced labor of the *encomienda* with voluntary paid wage labor. This became known as the *repartimiento* of labor. The wages for this labor then supplied tribute payments. Wage labor, however, consistently remained inadequate to meet the demand, and volunteers became increasingly difficult to locate as the population declined. Many of the abuses inherent in the old system were actually perpetuated by the *repartimiento*.

COLONIAL CITIES AND ADMINISTRATION (Slides 4-7)

After pacification of a conquered area, the conquistador founded and named the future site of the new Spanish village in that area. The captain or commander allocated *solares* (plots of land) to his accompanying Spanish soldiers. The plan of the town from the reign of King Philip forward was generally based upon the grid system. Streets branched off from the main plaza in an orderly fashion, forming a grid or checkerboard pattern. The plots of the central plaza were reserved for the main church, the *ayuntamiento* or municipal office, the town jail, and important businesses or the residences of powerful families (such as the viceregal entourage in Mexico City). Allotments located in close proximity to the plaza were designated for wealthier and more prestigious conquistador families. Farther *manzanas* (street blocks) corresponded to individuals and families of less social standing or of mixed Indian/Spanish ancestry. Indians generally lived in *barrios* (neighborhoods) in remote sections of the city or town. [see Slide 4: *Street Scene in Guanajuato*]

In addition, the captain allocated *encomienda* grants at this time to his loyal soldiers. Shortly thereafter, the *cabildo*, or town council, was appointed. Councilmen were chosen based on loyalty and courage in battle. As the Spanish consolidated control of New Spain, the *cabildo* became the seat of local authority and prestige. As the colonial period progressed the *cabildo* increasingly became an institution dominated by *criollos*. (*Criollo* was the term applied to an individual of pure Spanish blood who was born in the New World. *Peninsular* or *gachupín* was the term utilized to designate an individual newly arrived from Spain.) Other government posts were exclusively manned by *peninsulares* or provided for limited *criollo* participation. Though they lived side by side, by the late colonial period, rivalry and open hostility erupted along *criollo-gachupín* lines.

Typical colonial homes of *criollos* or *peninsulares*, were two-story, white washed, tile-roofed houses. The main door located at the front of the home was usually constructed of heavy wood and accented by carved ornamentation. If the inhabitants were of noble distinction, their crest or coat of arms would be displayed above the door. Once inside, a small hallway led to a large indoor patio with a fountain. Rooms surrounded the interior patio on all sides, and the second floor also looked out onto the patio. Although the interior of civil and residential architecture was handsomely and sumptuously decorated, the exterior of these homes generally was sparsely decorated (with the exception of the Puebla baroque style). Sumptuous exterior decoration was almost exclusively limited to religious architecture. [See Slide 5: *Street Scene in Morelia*]

The construction of homes (and municipal and ecclesiastical buildings) was made possible by Indian laborers as part of the *encomienda* or *repartimiento* system. No

Spanish house was complete without several indigenous or *mestizo* servants. (*Mestizo* is a term used to refer to persons of Spanish and Indian parentage.) Domestic servants were primarily women and were often African slaves.

The focal point of colonial life in New Spain was the main plaza. All major religious and governmental events, including theater productions, were celebrated in the town square. For example, the entrance of the ruling viceroy in Mexico City culminated in the *zócalo* (main square). Funeral processions and university students on graduation day also made customary journeys around the plaza. Flowers or cloth ornamentation hung from the balconies of those buildings encircling the square in accordance with the celebration.

On a weekly basis, the plaza housed the Sunday market where vendors from neighboring villages displayed their produce and other wares. Market days formed one of the most significant opportunities for the mingling of European and Indian populations and aided in Indian acculturation and inclusion in the money economy. Also it was customary, particularly in the mature colonial period, for families and escorted young ladies of distinction to take evening strolls around the plaza. This custom was known as the *smaller* and still takes place in some smaller Latin American towns today. [see Slide 6: *Morelia Town Square*]

In Mexico City, the National Palace (so named after Independence) housed the seat of royal authority in the viceroyalty of New Spain. Two European royal houses, the Hapsburgs and the Bourbons, ruled the New World after 1516. Hapsburgs reigned in New Spain from 1521 to 1700; the Bourbons in turn reigned from 1700 to the 1824. [see Slide 7: *Palacio Nacional in Mexico City*]

The most important representative of the Crown was the *virrey* (viceroy). The viceroy and his entourage in New Spain re-created Spanish court life in Mexico City, and prominent citizens vied for his attention and favor. He and his wife set the standard not only for dress but also for cultural and moral behavior.

The viceroy governed over a specific territory designated as the viceroyalty. In the case of the viceroyalty of New Spain, territory stretched from the southwestern portion of the United States to the Republic of Panama. (Panama was placed under the jurisdiction of the viceroyalty of Peru.) Present-day Central America was a special subdivision of the *Reino de Guatemala* within the viceroyalty of New Spain. The king appointed the viceroy for a customary six-year period, and the viceroy was directly accountable to the king for his actions while in office. In all but a few instances viceregal authority was supreme. However, his decisions could be challenged by the *audiencia* (see below for explanation of *audiencia*). Also, all individuals dissatisfied with a particular viceroy's administration could appeal directly to the king for redress. In addition, a viceroy was subject to unannounced review by specially selected royal investigators. This was known as the *visita*. At the end of his term of office, the viceroy was required to submit himself to the *residencia*, a formal inquiry investigating the state of the viceroyalty at the time of his departure. At this time all grievances against him were aired publicly and submitted to the king. The viceroy could be required to pay a substantial fine for misconduct, though this rarely occurred.

The second most important imperial institution in New Spain was the *audiencia*, which had both judicial and legislative functions. The president of the *audiencia* was the viceroy, and *oidores* (judges) were appointed by the king and were directly responsible to

him. By 1700 a large number of judges were *criollos*. In large part the relationship between the *audiencia* and the viceregal administration was one of rivalry over jurisdiction and interpretation of royal *cédulas* (decrees) newly arrived from Spain. Judges and other government officials were instructed to refrain from marrying and engaging in commercial activities while assigned to the colonies. These prohibitions intended to eliminate possible conflicts of interest in the fulfillment of official duties but were often ignored. The *audiencia* did not maintain complete jurisdiction over all citizens in each respective viceroyalty. Occupational guilds (of cattlemen, for example) as well as the clergy established their own court system; the *audiencia*, however, could always serve as the final court of appeals for these special courts.

In Spain the Council of the Indies handled the administrative supervision of the colonies. All requests, complaints, administrative decisions, and other issues regarding the Indies were channeled through this bureaucratic agency. The king appointed Counselors, but in the long history of the Council very few appointees ever actually traveled to the New World. Although the Council was on many occasions inefficient, obsessed with bureaucratic procedure, and criticized for issuing judgments that reflected little knowledge of actual life in the colonies, the Council did effectively maintain control for almost 300 years.

Predating but still connected to the Council of the Indies, was the *Casa de Contratación*. Both were located in Seville. The *Casa de Contratación* was an administrative entity that controlled commerce, trade, and shipping to the Spanish dominions. Strongly represented in the *Casa de Contratación* were members of the *Consulado de Comercio* (merchant guild) of Seville. This guild was the largest and most powerful in

Spain and held an exclusive monopoly over trade to and from the Americas. Throughout the history of the *Consulado* many of the noble commercial families were not necessarily Spanish but of foreign descent, principally Italian, British, and German.

The Crown acquired income from the Indies (which perhaps accounted for 20% of total Spanish governmental revenue) in several ways. No income tax as we know it existed in the colonies. Instead, Indian tribute accounted for a large portion of the revenue. The Crown did not obligate any Spanish colonist to pay tribute of any kind during the entire colonial period, though prominent wealthy colonists were frequently asked to donate funds to the royal coffers for certain administrative projects. The Crown also levied indirect taxes through the *alcabala*. The *alcabala* was an import/export tax paid on all goods leaving and entering the colonies; the revenue from this helped finance the convoy system. Royal income also came from the extraction of silver and gold through the collection of the royal *quinto* or fifth. One-fifth of all minerals extracted had to be shipped to Spain as payment to the royal authorities, and income also came from the royal monopoly on products such as mercury, tobacco, and salt. Under King Philip a disastrous precedent was set as administrative positions were sold in order to enlarge the royal coffers to finance European war endeavors. The result was a bloated and sometimes very inefficient bureaucracy.

THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN NEW SPAIN (Slides 8-12)

The discovery and conquest of the Indies was not only a commercial and military enterprise but also a religious enterprise. Twelve Franciscan friars who later became known as the "Twelve Apostles" soon followed Cortés to New Spain. Other Catholic religious orders such as the Dominicans and

Augustines quickly followed, and in the late 16th century, the first Jesuits arrived. Influenced by reform movements prevalent in Europe at the time (particularly the humanistic thought espoused by Erasmus of Rotterdam), these friars set in motion an extensive campaign of evangelization and Christianization of the indigenous population.

Evangelization techniques varied depending upon the individual priest and the monastic order. Nonetheless, the general method consisted of a select few (usually two) friars settling in an Indian village. Once residing among the natives, the friars attempted to teach the gospel and advocate the Christian lifestyle by example. Village conversion was greatly accelerated if the local chief or *cacique* converted first. With the enthusiastic support of the new converts, the friars and lay people then constructed a church. Early churches were simple thatched roof structures, though by the late 16th century more permanent stone buildings had been erected.

Intense rivalry between the religious orders over territorial jurisdiction, evangelization techniques, and the success of evangelization, characterized the Christianization of New Spain. In addition to inter-religious rivalry, hostility was evident between the *encomenderos* and many clergymen regarding the proper treatment of the Indians. The growing authority of the secular clergy (traditional church hierarchy) at the expense of the regular clergy (the monastic orders) complicated the situation. [see Slide 8: *The Acolman Monastery*]

By the end of the 16th century, the reformist fervor of the religious orders gave way to secular orthodoxy. The advent of the Protestant Reformation in Europe accelerated this transition, and the Holy Office of the Inquisition officially arrived in 1571. Though a religious entity, the Inquisition was

an arm of the royal governmental bureaucracy rather than an administrative unit of the Catholic Church. This infamous institution almost exclusively exercised jurisdiction over Spaniards and *mestizos*, not Indians. Relatively few heretics were ever burned at the stake during the long colonial history of the Inquisition. The Holy Office generally investigated charges of blasphemy, immoral behavior, bigamy, and perversion among the general Spanish and *mestizo* populations, as well as illicit or immoral activities of the clergy. Guilty parties were fined and required to do public penance.

Once Christianization of the indigenous population was completed, the main social function of the Catholic Church was the education of colonial society in Church-run schools and universities. Initially the Dominican order was responsible, but gradually its control diminished, and higher education became the particular charge of the Jesuits until their expulsion in 1767. The Church established orphanages and also founded schools for the Spanish, Indians, and *mestizos*. Universities specialized in theology and law. Although special schools were created for Indian elite males (the institution begun by Pedro de Gante in Mexico is one of the more famous examples), many regular and secular clergy vehemently opposed the schooling of Indians in general and particularly the ordination of Indians into the priesthood.

The Church was important not only in its educational roles but also in its provision of social welfare. Hospitals were the special, though not exclusive, responsibility of the Brothers of Saint John. Other Church-run agencies included homes for widows, homes for unmarried women without dowries, and reform houses for juveniles and women of ill repute.

The Church, with its emphasis on church construction, was one of the major employers of artisans in the New World. Church design tended to be simple and massive, but increasingly church decoration, both interior and exterior, became more and more ornate, culminating in the churrigueresque baroque of the 18th century. The artisans, and in some cases the architects, of many of the churches were Indians and/or *mestizos*. The indigenous artists quickly acquired the skills to construct buildings in the architectural and decorative styles preferred by the Spanish clergy. The ultimate sign of prestige, however, was the procurement of a Spanish architect newly arrived from Spain. Many of the prominent city cathedrals such as the Metropolitan Cathedral in Mexico City were planned and executed by these visiting peninsular artists. [see Slide 9: *The Acolman Monastery, 16th Century Murals*]

The Roman Catholic Church was also the primary patron of the arts in the New World. The Church commissioned artists not only for architectural projects but also for their paintings, *retablos* (a main altar; also, small devotional religious paintings on tin), metal-working, silk-weaving, and woodworking. In addition, poets and composers were commissioned to utilize their talents, not only on special church holidays, but also regularly for Sunday worship services. Convent life, particularly for upper class Spanish women, was not harsh and in some cases was rather luxurious. These finer convents were renowned for their patronage of theatre productions and music recitals. [see Slide 10: *Cupula at the Jesuit College at Tepotzotlan*; Slide 11: *Baroque Retablo from the Jesuit College of Tepotzotlan*; and Slide 12: *Atrium Cross at the Jesuit College of Tepotzotlan*]

In order to serve as both the cultural and educational center of colonial society, the Church required large amounts of capital. Church wealth essentially came from three

sources — donations, tithes, and Church industries. Colonists often bequeathed donations of funds and property to the Church. The Church also collected tithes in order to maintain educational and social services as well as the salaries of the clergy. Tithes also helped pay for any additional ecclesiastical building construction or renovation. The primary type of property bequeathed to the Church was agricultural land; this was either administered or sold by the Church. In New Spain, the clergy and their Indian workers successfully cultivated large tracts of productive agricultural land.

The Church also served as the primary lending institution of the colonial period. No banks existed in colonies until the late Bourbon period (18th century). Funding was available through European commercial houses, but colonists paid high interest rates on loans from these institutions. Therefore, it was more advisable to acquire a loan from the Church, which maintained a 5% interest rate throughout the colonial period and very rarely requested quick repayment of the principle.

RICHES, TRADE, AND THREATS TO THE EMPIRE (Slides 13-19)

One of the primary concerns of the conquistador upon his arrival in the New World was the location of riches, particularly gold. Although the Spanish located and successfully extracted some gold deposits (principally in Colombia and Chile), the bulk of the fortune acquired in the Indies came from the successful mining of silver. In New Spain the discovery of silver deposits at Zacatecas, Taxco, Guanajuato, and other cities dramatically changed colonial life. Silver mining redefined the labor system. Large numbers of Indian miners in New Spain were wage laborers or participated in work consignment groups organized by the Crown under the *repartimiento* system.

Increasingly, in the case of New Spain mining labor was free wage labor. [see Slide 13: *Silversmith at Taxco*]

Work conditions, however, were very harsh within the mines. Mining shafts were poorly ventilated, poorly lit, and extremely cramped. Skilled miners, known as *barreteros*, were the highest paid and in some instances were allowed to retain a percentage of the ore they mined if they maintained their quota. *Tenateros* (carriers of the ore) were paid less than the *barreteros* although their job was much more difficult and perhaps more dangerous. Using leather ladders or steps cut into the shafts, *tenateros* carried up to 300 pounds of silver ore on their backs to the surface. Unable to maintain their balances with such heavy loads, many fell 50 or more feet to their deaths. African slave labor, when utilized in silver mining, was primarily above ground in the refining process. (African slaves were usually forced to work in coastal agricultural plantations or in the mining of gold.)

It is a misconception that mining was solely responsible for the demographic disaster. In the case of the Caribbean, mining did play a particularly fatal role in the depopulation of those islands. On the continent, decline in the native population was already well under way when serious mining production began in the late 16th century; however, mining did contribute more casualties to the fatality rate than any other Spanish industry. Silver mining had tremendous social ramifications, foremost among them the rapid social mobility that it facilitated. Successful Spanish or *criollo* miners became prominent citizens virtually overnight and easily dominated local governments. Particularly in the case of the 18th century mining revival in New Spain, miners were closely associated with many of the most stunning examples of baroque architecture (an example is the Church of Santa Prisca of Taxco built by the miner José de la Borda).

In addition to facilitating the rise certain miners to new levels of social distinction, the tremendous influx of silver into the colonial economy had other ramifications. Silver mines led to the rapid creation of silver boom towns in remote and sometimes sparsely-populated areas. Large numbers of individuals relocated in order to supply services and labor to the silver towns. In addition, the agricultural area surrounding the silver towns diverted and increased production in order to feed this new urban center. Thus, silver mining created with it a subsidiary economy. It also encouraged the indigenous population to leave their independent rural lifestyle and become urban dwellers or food producers for domestic urban consumption, changing forever the human geography of Mexico. [see Slide 14: *Dam with Statue Ornamentation in Zacatecas*]

The overall effect of silver production on the economy was inflationary. It had a similar effect in Spain and consequently other European nations that traded with Spain. It is believed that the dislocations caused by the silver boom of the late 16th and early 17th centuries led to the resulting economic decline that characterized a large portion of the 1600s. A steep decline in silver production that continued until the middle of the 18th century further exacerbated this problem.

In addition to precious metals, other items were exported to Spain from its American dominions, though the duration of the transatlantic passage limited the exportation of agricultural produce to Spain. The journey lasted approximately three months barring storms, poor winds, disease, pirates, and ship malfunction, so often only non-perishable items, such as leather hides, were exported to Spain. Imported goods from the mother country consisted of wine, olive oil, and luxury items such as silk cloth. Goods were transported by horse-drawn wagons to

and from the major eastern seaport in New Spain, Veracruz. A system of roads and bridges was constructed in order to facilitate this travel. [see Slide 15: *Bridge in Zacatecas*]

Just as Veracruz was an important port on the Gulf side, so Acapulco became an important center on the Pacific Coast after the Spanish acquisition of the Philippines. The famous Manila Galleon arrived once a year, bearing a cargo of sumptuous silks, jewels, and items made of lacquer and ivory. These goods were transported overland to Veracruz and then shipped to Spain. A substantial portion of the Manila Galleon cargo, however, remained in the New World. A strong contraband trade existed between the port of Acapulco and Callao, the principal port of Lima in the viceroyalty of Peru. [see Slide 16: *Crucifix of Ivory from the Philippines*]

An added danger to shipping was the threat of attack by pirates. The Caribbean islands functioned as excellent hiding places for French corsairs and buccaneers, as well as English and Dutch pirates. By disrupting and hindering the Spanish presence, the Dutch opened the way for French and British settlements on the islands of Jamaica and modern-day Hispaniola. The Spanish retaliated by creating the famous convoy system and fortifying major Caribbean harbors. They also stationed a special fleet in an area called the *barlovento* (the Windward Passage area between Cuba and Haiti). By the 1750s non-Spanish European enclaves engaged in heavy contraband trade with the colonists. The Spanish monopoly had been seriously challenged and failed.

Other than wine, olive oil, and luxury items, colonial producers provided all goods for local consumption. This was because Spanish manufacturers and agriculturists were unable to produce a sufficient quantity

of items to supply the growing needs of the New World. A significant number of items shipped by Spain to the Americas were manufactured in other European nations. In the colonies the domestic economy revolved around the marketplace, and a network of roads facilitated the transportation of goods to market every Sunday. [see Slide 17: *Flower Market in Coyoacán*]

In addition to leather hides, other specialty items were manufactured in the colonies and shipped to Spain. Settlers brought *talavera* tile to the Americas, specifically to Puebla in New Spain, and the *mudejar* tradition (derived from the Moors) was elaborated and redefined. The use of *talavera* and stucco in the decoration of buildings, ecclesiastical and civil, created one of the most unique manifestations of baroque architecture in the New World. The tile was exported back to the mother country during the colonial period and is still manufactured today using the same methods. [see Slide 18: *El Pozito at the Shrine at the Virgin of Guadalupe*]

Colonial ironwork also was exported and reached new levels in ornamental style in the colonies. Lattice-work ornamentation was essential for the decoration of the residences of distinguished families. Iron rod was also necessary to the silver industry, in transportation (carts), and for manufacturing other equipment. [see Slide 19: *Door to Hacienda Patio in Jalisco*]

LAND AND AGRICULTURE (Slides 20-25)

In the 16th century the Spanish not only brought their weapons and their religion to the Americas, but also their beasts of burden, domesticated animals and taste for lamb, pork, chicken, and beef. Livestock animals, particularly cattle, flourished in the colonies. The introduction of these animals into hitherto untouched lands had serious

ramifications in terms of soil depletion. In addition, cattle constantly invaded indigenous lands and ruined the crops. The crop destruction caused serious food shortages and contributed to the demise of the indigenous population during the first century of conquest and colonization. [see Slide 20: *Cattle and Cattle-Raising Industry*]

The Spanish at the time of the conquest were perhaps the most accomplished horsemen in Europe. They inherited an excellent equestrian tradition from the Moors. The round-up, the corral, and branding were all Arab-derived innovations incorporated into Spanish rural society and transferred to the New World. The *charro* (cowboy) in New Spain was usually found in frontier areas (modern-day northern Mexico, and New Mexico, Arizona and Texas in the United States) as well as on larger landed estates in the Mexican heartland. The large landed estates specialized in cattle grazing and slaughtering to provide for urban beef consumption or for hides for export to Spain or other regions of the empire. [see Slide 21: *El Charro*]

The procurement of land was initially of little interest to the Spanish conquistador. He mainly searched for riches, especially gold or silver and the right to Indian tribute. Suspicious of *encomenderos* and determined not to permit a series of feudal kingdoms in the colonies, the Crown limited and discouraged the *encomienda*. The decrease in the native population compelled colonists to become agriculturists in order to survive. By the mid-16th century Spaniards began to petition the Crown for *mercedes* (titles to land). The colonists acquired land abandoned by the rapidly declining indigenous population. Most indigenous communal land, if inhabited, remained intact. [see Slide 22: *The Hacienda or Large Landed Estate*]

In some remote areas the *hacienda* main house constituted the only “village” for miles. Though it usually produced for a New Spain urban market, a silver boomtown, or for Spain, the *hacienda* also functioned as a self-sufficient entity. Included within the walls of the *hacienda* were corrals, granaries, store-rooms, and the house of the overseer (*mayordomo*) as well as the living quarters for the extended family of the *hacendado* (hacienda owner). [see Slide 23: *The Hacienda, A City Unto Itself*]

Many *hacendados* also maintained a chapel or church on the grounds of the *hacienda* for family members and the workers. Religious festivals were coordinated here, as were masses for successful harvests and round-ups. [see Slide 24: *The Hacienda Church*]

Most *hacendados* did not live on their haciendas during the colonial period. They generally maintained a residence in the nearest large city and occasionally visited their landed estate. The administration of the *hacienda* was entrusted to a *mayordomo*, usually a poor Spaniard or a *mestizo*. The *hacienda* labor system during the colonial period did not exclude *encomienda*; however, with time some sort of wage became more customary. Debt peonage did exist during the late colonial period, though it was not the norm in all areas of the viceroyalty.

Although the *hacendado* rarely lived on his estate, some colonists did maintain permanent residence on their *haciendas*. In this case large sums of money were dedicated to building an elaborate and sumptuous main house. [see Slide 25: *Patio of the Main House of the Hacienda*]

FESTIVALS AND THE ARTS (Slides 26-27)

Colonial life also consisted of an endless stream of religious festivals, both joyous and

solemn. Life revolved around Catholic traditions, and in some cases the Catholic traditions fused with pre-Hispanic rituals. Traveling minstrels and open-air theatrical performances were prominent in the cities and larger towns. Parades were essential parts of many festivities, including religious ones. Particularly sumptuous ceremonies celebrated the arrival of a new viceroy or the birth of an heir to the Spanish king. Large numbers of music schools were also prevalent during the colonial period. Women in particular specialized in musical studies in order to perform at family festivals. [see Slide 26: *Musician*]

One important ceremony of colonial society was the funeral procession. The presence of death in colonial life was pervasive, especially given the number of epidemics and natural disasters. The death of distinguished members of society was a thoroughly public ritual and included the participation of different segments of society. The death of a viceroy while in office was treated solemnly, but no less sumptuously, than Saint feast days, and the commemoration could last up to five days. Special banners and carts were constructed, and specific music and poetry pieces memorialized the deceased Spanish official. [see Slide 27: *The Cemetery at Guanajuato*]

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Slide Descriptions



SLIDE 1: Huastec Indian Girl (Photograph courtesy of Fritz Henle, The Fritz Henle Collection, Latin American Library, Tulane University)

SLIDE 2: Maya Village of Ek Balam, Yucatan (Photograph courtesy of Christopher van Nagy)

SLIDE 3: Palacio de Cortés in Cuernavaca

SLIDE 4: Street Scene in Guanajuato (Photograph courtesy of Elizabeth Mozzillo)

SLIDE 5: Street Scene in Morelia

SLIDE 6: Morelia Town Square

SLIDE 7: Palacio Nacional in Mexico City

SLIDE 8: The Acolman Monastery

SLIDE 9: The Acolman Monastery, 16th Century Murals (Photograph courtesy of Eric Zimmer, S.J.)

SLIDE 10: Cupula at the Jesuit College at Tepotzotlan (Photograph courtesy of Eric Zimmer, S.J.)

SLIDE 11: Baroque *Retablo* from the Jesuit College of Tepotzotlan

SLIDE 12: Atrium Cross at the Jesuit College at Tepotzotlan

SLIDE 13: Silversmith at Taxco (Photograph courtesy of Fritz Henle, Fritz Henle Collection, Latin American Library, Tulane University)

SLIDE 14: Dam with Statue Ornamentation in Zacatecas

SLIDE 15: Bridge in Zacatecas

SLIDE 16: Crucifix of Ivory from the Philippines (Photograph courtesy of Eric Zimmer, S.J.)

SLIDE 17: Flower Market in Coyoacán

SLIDE 18: El Pozito at the Shrine of the Virgin of Guadalupe

SLIDE 19: Door to Hacienda Patio in Jalisco

SLIDE 20: Cattle and Cattle-Raising Industry

SLIDE 21: El Charro (Photograph courtesy of Fritz Henle, Fritz Henle Collection, Latin American Library, Tulane University)

SLIDE 22: The Hacienda or Large Landed Estate

SLIDE 23: The Hacienda, A City unto Itself

SLIDE 24: The Hacienda Church

SLIDE 25: Patio of the Main House of the Hacienda

SLIDE 26: Musician (Photograph courtesy of Fritz Henle, The Fritz Henle Collection, Latin American Library, Tulane University)

SLIDE 27: The Cemetery at Guanajuato (Photograph courtesy of Elizabeth Mozzillo)

Questions and Activities



1. Compare the Aztec and Spanish versions of the Conquest using the works of Hernán Cortés and Miguel León-Portilla (see *Suggested Readings*).
2. Recreate the Great Debate between Bartolomé de las Casas and Juan de Sepúlveda. Use Louis Hanke's "The Spanish Search for Justice." (See *Bibliography* and *Suggested Readings* for more information.)
3. View the film *The Mission*. Discuss the role of the clergy. How did they impact Indian society? What were the effects of European politics on Indian/Spanish relations?
4. Using the colonial town map displayed in "Early Latin America," ask students to decide who would live where and why. (See *Bibliography* for information.)
5. Using excerpts from the poetry of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz and slides of baroque architecture, try to paint a picture of baroque life in New Spain. Use Irving Leonard's book as a reference. What was the relationship between the individual, society and God as manifested in the arts? What was the role of women? (See *Bibliography*.)
6. Compare the architectural decoration of the Mexico City Metropolitan Cathedral to the Iglesia de Santa María de Tonatzintla.
7. How did indigenous Catholicism differ from the traditional Catholicism of the *peninsular* or *criollo* as seen in the architectural decoration of these two churches?

Audio-visual material mentioned can be acquired on loan from the Latin American Curriculum Resource Center, Roger Thayer Stone Center for Latin American Studies, Tulane University (more information at the end of this packet).

Additional Readings



Cortés, Hernán. *Letters from Mexico*. Trans. and ed. A.R. Pagden. NY: Grossman Publishers, 1971.

Florescano, Enrique. *Memory, Myth, and Time in Mexico*. Trans. Albert G. and Kathryn R. Bork. Austin: UT Press, 1994.

Gibson, Charles. *Spain in America*, 1st ed. New York: Harper & Row, 1966.

Leon-Portilla, Miguel. *Broken Spears*, updated and expanded edition. Trans. Lysander Kemp. Boston: Beacon Press, 1992.

Leonard, Irving Albert. *Baroque Times in Old Mexico*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1959.

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