

Labor, Slavery and Caste in the Spanish Colonial System

The Native Americans move from being enslaved to becoming a part of the growing hybrid culture of Latin America— even in the present-day United States.

The Encomienda System

- * Native Americans worked in mines and on plantations throughout Spain's colonial empire in North and South America. Though slavery was forbidden by the Catholic Church, the brutality of the system and the diseases it introduced, led to an untold number of Native American deaths.
- * It was replaced by the repartimiento system which paid Native Americans a meager sum for their labor and had them work on the basis of tribute. As brutal as the system it replaced, over time, it too, would come to be replaced by the mission system. Epidemic disease brought it to an end.

An early artist's rendering of the brutality of the encomienda system.



The Mission System

* The Mission System eventually was the final Spanish model of dealing with the Native Americans. After the great Pueblo Revolt of 1680, the mission system was born— and mission communities were created throughout what is present-day Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California in what is now the United States.

* The mission system was designed to assimilate the Native American population into working Spanish communities, bring them to Christianity and to teach them a trade. Though the populations of these communities were never large compared to the English settlements in the New World, for example, a caste system of diverse people—based on their place of birth and background emerged.

The Mission System

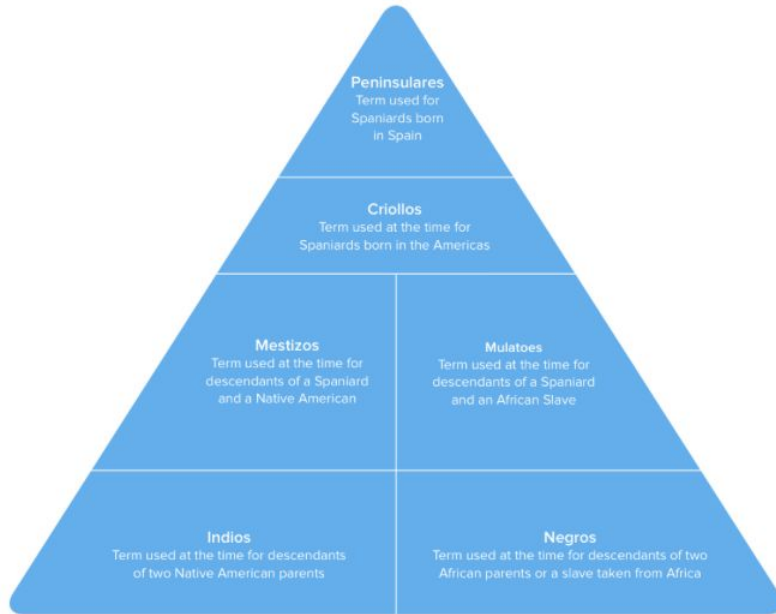


The Mission System



The Caste System in Colonial Spain

The Spanish colonial caste system



Europeans Encounter the Native Americans

