

# Essay on culture and daily life in new spain

Religion



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During the Viceroyal period (1521-1700), the colony of New Spain had an incredibly strong and religious culture, based heavily in the Catholic conversion of the natives. In these first steps into Latin America, the Spanish Crown chose to impose its imperialist, colonialist values onto the native people of New Spain, turning the region itself into a Catholic mission, for better or worse. Despite this (or perhaps because of it), life in New Spain became strongly focused on traditional Spanish values, as well as an emphasis on art. While conversion was a central facet of life during the viceroyal period, the colonists' faith was expressed through the wonderful art and culture of New Spain as well. The often unstable nature of the status of viceroy also contributed to a feeling of intrigue in New Spain's culture.

The culture of New Spain was based around the conquistador's adoption of the Roman Catholic Church as a central facet of colonization. During this time, the Catholic religion had become an inextricable part of Spanish culture – to that end, part of the viceroyal mandate was to convert as many people to Catholicism as possible. Conquistadors would bring missionaries to convert the American Indians to Catholicism, as well as teach them Spanish. Originally, there was a plan to create Native American priests to further the Catholic cause, but those ideas were dropped. Despite the colonialist nature of these efforts, there were steps taken to try and preserve the natives' way of life: priests took the time to learn native languages, and not interfere or upset any cultural traditions that did not directly contradict Catholicism.

Much of the viceroyal period was spent attempting to transition natives into Roman Catholic life, as Catholicism was a central component of New Spain's culture.

There were four levels of society in New Spain: the Peninsulares, the Creoles,

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and the Mestizos, and native Africans and Amerindians. Peninsulares are those who are 100% Spanish – often, the peninsulares in Spain were military men with long years of experience, who were tasked to move to New Spain to colonize the new empire. Creoles were of Spanish descent, but born in New Spain; their roles often fluctuated the most within the caste system that was established in New Spain because of these increasingly fluid racial lines. (Carerra 19-21). Mestizos were people of both Spanish and native descent, and finally the native Indians and Africans who were imported on slave ships. This hierarchical structure favored Spanish ancestry and citizenship above all else, though these lines started to become increasingly blurred as time went on, and racial lines started to meld.

Apart from the religious element of New Spain, its culture involved a strong focus on the arts. New Spain's viceroyalty became one of the most important places for American art and culture to grow, as many new innovations and opportunities for artists were introduced here. In 1539, New Spain received a printing press – the first the New World had ever seen. This led to the introduction of printed books and movable type, resulting in many new books and magazines being published and disseminated to the people of New Spain. The architectural style of Mexican Churrigueresque was introduced by Pedro Martinez Vazquez and Lorenzo Rodriguez in Ocotlan. Furthermore, Baroque music was explored in New Spain, as composers like Manuel de Zumaya would create new works in New Spain.

In conclusion, the culture of New Spain was mostly focused on exploration and colonization. The Spanish invaded and colonized Latin America, spreading from California to the Philippines with a Roman Catholic mission statement and the power of a civilized government and military. Interactions

between missionaries and natives were possibly tense, but largely led to a smooth transition and conversion of Native Americans to Catholicism. In the meantime, the art scene in New Spain started to flourish, with civilized culture (including literature, art and music) beginning to assert itself in many interesting ways. All in all, the culture and daily life of New Spain was that of hierarchical religious hegemony, with the Catholic Church largely informing one's actions. Cities and towns were formed under the promise of converting natives and exploring the region for Spain. By the time the 18th century came, New Spain was already a thriving colony based on these principles, with a strong focus on art and religion.

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