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Government, Colonialism



Westmead International School Alangilan, Batangas City 2012-2013 Richard B. Dalawangbayan BSCS 421 Spanish (Mexico) Mexico: The “ NEW SPAIN”

The history of Mexico, a country located in the southern portion of North America, covers a period of more than two millennia. First populated more than 13, 000 years ago, the country produced complex indigenous civilizations before being conquered by the Spanish in the 16th century. Since the Spanish conquest, Mexico has fused its long-established native civilizations with European culture. Perhaps nothing better represents this hybrid background than Mexico's languages: the country is both the most populous Spanish-speaking country in the world and home to the largest number of Native American language speakers on the continent. From 1519, the Spaniards absorbed the native peoples into Spain's vast colonial empire. For three centuries Mexico was just another kingdom (the New Spain) of the Spanish Empire, during which time its indigenous population fell by more than half and was partially replaced by Spaniards and the now predominant Mestizos or mixture of Indigenous and Spanish populations. It was also then that the current Spanish-speaking, Catholic and Westernized Mexican culture was born. After a protracted struggle Mexico declared its independence from Spain in 1810. In 1846, the Mexican American War broke out, ending two years later with Mexico ceding almost half of its territory to the United States. Later in the 19th century, France invaded Mexico (1861) and set Maximilian I on the Mexican throne, which lasted until 1867. A half-century of economic stagnation and political chaos ended as Porfirio DÃaz held power and promoted order and the modernization of the society and economy. Mexico's infrastructure was modernized by a strong, stable central

government. Increased tax revenues and better administration brought dramatic improvements in public safety, public health, railways, mining, industry, foreign trade, and national finances. Little had been done for the nation's poor, and they revolted in the Mexican Revolution (1910—1929). Roaming armies killed a tenth of the nation's population, but the Revolution freed the peons from the system of large haciendas that had originated with the Spanish Conquest. The center-left Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) controlled national and state politics after 1929, and nationalized the oil industry in the 1930s. The population grew rapidly even as millions moved to the United States. Mexico's economy was further integrated with the U. S. after the NAFTA agreement began lowering trade barriers in 1994. Seven decades of PRI rule ended in the year 2000 with the election of Vicente Fox of the Partido Acción Nacional (PAN). In the face of extremely violent drug wars, the PRI returned to power in 2012, promising that it had reformed itself.

The Great Civilization During the pre-Columbian period, many city-states, kingdoms, and empires competed with one another for power and prestige. Ancient Mexico can be said to have produced five major civilizations: the Olmec, Maya, Teotihuacan, Toltec, and Aztec. The Spanish Conquest When the Spanish adventurer Hernan Cortez arrived in 1519, the rich city was a vision perfectly meshed to his thirst for conquest. The Conquest of New Spain, a great and tragic history, begins in April of 1519 when a Cortes lands in Veracruz, about 200 miles from the Aztec capital. Cortes had a singular mission: defeat the Aztecs and take their gold. To do so, he had less than 400 soldiers, 16 horses, 14 pieces of artillery, 11 ships, plenty of guns and ammunition, and cajones. His first act upon landing was

to burn all but one of his ships - he wanted no turning back. That he was able to defeat an empire with just a few hundred men seems nothing short of miraculous, but some of el conquistador's success, however, can be attributed to plain and simple luck. According to an Aztec myth, the white-faced Quetzacuatl - their most important god - had long ago fled to the east, but would one day return. When the Aztec ruler, Moctezuma II, beheld Cortes and his light-skinned men upon their arrival in Tenochtitlan, he believed them to be emissaries of the great Quetzacuatl himself. The opportunistic Cortes, coached by Malinche - a Spanish-speaking Indian who had become his lover back at the coast - did not attempt to correct him. Cortes returned the emperor's hospitality by taking him hostage. A compliant Moctezuma ordered his people to stand down, and by the time the Aztecs began to resist Cortes had already brought in reinforcements from the coast. The Aztecs disowned their cooperative, captive emperor, who died a prisoner in his own palace. When the Aztecs finally laid siege to the palace, Cortes and his men snuck away in the middle of the night and ran for the coast. On the way, over half his force was killed by the pursuing army, but the survivors returned with thousands of Indian allies to conquer the city a year later. Mexico, with its fertile plains and great mineral wealth, was the crown jewel of Spain's colonies. It was heavily taxed, ruled directly from Spain, and permitted no autonomy. The Spanish monarchs distributed land to settlers in the form of encomiendas (the predecessor to the hacienda), which were worked by Indian slaves that the settler's were charged to protect and convert to Christianity. A caste system developed: there were Espanoles (Spaniards born in Spain), criollos (Mexican-born, but with Spanish blood),

mestizos (Spanish and Indian), and finally the indigenes, the Indians. Because of their forced dependence on the hacienda owners, and no resistance to European ailments, the Indians were riddled with debt and disease long after Spain abolished slavery in 1548. Period of the Conquest (1521—1650) Contrary to a widespread misconception, Spain did not conquer all of the Aztec Empire when Cortes took Tenochtitlan. It required another two centuries to complete the conquest: rebellions broke out within the old Empire and wars continued with other native peoples. After the fall of Tenochtitlan, it took decades of sporadic warfare to subdue the rest of Mesoamerica. Particularly fierce was the Chichimeca War(1576—1606) in the north. Economics. The Council of Indies and the mendicant establishments, which arose in Mesoamerica as early as 1524, labored to generate capital for the crown of Spain and convert the Indian populations to Catholicism. During this period and the following Colonial periods the sponsorship of mendicant friars and a process of religious syncretism combined the Pre-Hispanic cultures with Spanish socio-religious tradition. The resulting hodgepodge of culture was a pluriethnic State that relied on the " repartimiento", a system of peasant " Republic of Indians" labor that carried out any necessary work. Thus, the existing feudal system of pre-Hispanic Mesoamerican culture was replaced by the encomienda feudal-style system of Spain, probably adapted to the pre-Hispanic tradition. This in turn was finally replaced by a debt-based inscription of labor that led to widespread revitalization movements and prompted the revolution that ended colonial New Spain. Evolution of the Race. During the three centuries of colonial rule, less than 700, 000 Spaniards, most of them men, settled in Mexico. The settlers intermarried

with indigenous women, fathering the mixed race (mestizo) descendants who today constitute the majority of Mexico's population. The Colonial Period (1650—1810) During this period, Mexico was part of the much larger Viceroyalty of New Spain, which included Cuba, Puerto Rico, Central America as far south as Costa Rica, the southwestern United States including Florida, and the Philippines. Spain during the 16th century focused its energies on areas with dense populations that had produced Pre-Columbian civilizations, since these areas could provide the settlers with a disciplined labor force and a population to catechize. Territories populated by nomadic peoples were harder to conquer, and though the Spanish did explore a good part of North America, seeking the fabled " El Dorado", they made no concerted effort to settle the northern desert regions in what is now the United States until the end of 16th century (Santa Fe, 1598). Colonial law with Spanish roots but native originalities was introduced, creating a balance between local jurisdiction (the Cabildos) and the Crown's, whereby upper administrative offices were closed to the natives, even those of pure Spanish blood. Administration was based on the racial separation of the population between the Republics of Spaniards, Indians and Mestizos, autonomous and directly dependent on the king himself. From an economic point of view, New Spain was administered principally for the benefit of the Empire and its military and defensive efforts (Mexico provided more than half of the Empire taxes and supported the administration of all North and Central America). Competition with the metropolis was discouraged, and for instance the cultivation of grapes and olives, introduced by Cortez himself, was banned out of fear that these crops would compete with Spain's. In order to protect

the country from the attacks of English, French and Dutch pirates, as well as the Crown's revenue, only two ports were open to foreign trade—Veracruz on the Atlantic and Acapulco on the Pacific. The pirates attacked, plundered and ravaged several cities like Campeche (1557), Veracruz (1568) and Alvarado (1667). Education was encouraged by the Crown from the very beginning, and Mexico boasts the first primary school (Texcoco, 1523), first university (1551) and the first printing house (1524) of the Americas. Indigenous languages were studied mainly by the religious orders during the first centuries, and became official languages in the so-called Republic of Indians, only to be outlawed and ignored after independence by the prevailing Spanish-speaking creoles. Mexico produced important cultural achievements during the colonial period, like the literature of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz and Ruiz de Alarcón, as well as cathedrals, civil monuments, forts and colonial cities such as Puebla, Mexico City, Querétaro, Zacatecas and others, today part of Unesco's World Heritage. The syncretism between indigenous and Spanish cultures gave way in New Spain to many of nowadays Mexican staple and world-famous cultural traits like tequila (first distilled in the 16th century), mariachi (18th), jarabe (17th), charros (17th) and the highly prized Mexican cuisine, fruit of the mixture of European and indigenous ingredients and techniques. Tourist Destination in Mexico Top 5 Palenque Top 4 Copper Canyon Top 3 Tulum Top 2 Chichen Itza Top 1 Teotihuacan