Social Structure of Colonial Latin America

Chapter 25
Colonial Latin American Caste System

• When Spanish and Portuguese colonies were established in central and south America a caste system formed.

• One’s social class was directly tied to how “pure” his blood was and his place of birth.

• The kings wanted to keep the colonies under their control and only have “loyal” people in office.
Peninsulares

• “pure blood” ???
• From the Iberian Peninsula
• Highest social class and the only class which could hold high office (church, military, administrative)
• Spain wanted to keep loyalty of colonial leaders.
Creoles

- Born in Americas
- Land-owning
- Elite
- Could not hold highest positions
- In 1800s will rebel against peninsulares in wars of independence
Mestizos

• Of Spanish and Amerindian descent
• Spanish and Portuguese men married native women and had families.
Mulattoes = Spanish and African descent
Zambos = Amerindian and African descent
Africans

• Many Africans were brought over from Africa to the colonies as slaves.
• Some of these Africans would escape from a plantation and find their way to native villages.
• Natives were usually sympathetic to the African people.
Factions by Fractions

- There were various levels in society, in between the main groups, based on blood quantum.

Example:
Castizos = \( \frac{3}{4} \) European, no more than \( \frac{1}{4} \) Amerindian

- Derogatory Slurs