Early Latin America
(1450 – 1750)
Africa's Slaves
Visual Source Documents 1 & 2

Document 1

Document 2

The Granger Collection, New York
Spanish & Portuguese Colonies in the Americas

In the 1500s, the Spanish set up a vast empire in the Americas from South America north to California while the Portuguese colonized Brazil.

The chronology of conquest breaks roughly into three periods:

- 1492 – 1570 Era of conquest
- 1570 – 1700 Colonial institutions & societies developed into a definite form
- 1700 – 1800 Period of reform and reorganization in Spanish America and Portuguese Brazil with strengthened the colonial relationship, laying the foundation for revolt

The Alamo Mission, Texas
Ruling the Spanish Empire

**Government**
- Spain was determined to maintain strict control over its empire.
- The empire was divided into five provinces, each of which was ruled by a **viceroy**.
- The Council of the Indies helped pass laws for the colonies.
- **Audiencias**, advisory councils of Spanish settlers, helped the viceroy to rule.

**The Catholic Church**
- The Church worked with the government to convert Native Americans to Christianity.
- Franciscan, Jesuit, and other missionaries baptized thousands of Native Americans.
- Church leaders often served as royal officials.
- Spanish **missionaries** introduced European culture including: European clothing, Spanish language, & new crafts, like locksmithing & carpentry.
The Economy

- Spain closely controlled trade.

- Colonists could export raw materials to Spain only and import only Spanish goods.

- Silver and gold were the most valuable exports, but silver more than gold formed the basis of Spain’s wealth in America.

- Sugar cane quickly became a profitable resource and was refined into sugar, molasses, and rum.

- Plantations were necessary for growing sugar cane.

- Encomiendas, or the right to demand labor and tribute from Native Americans, were granted to conquistadors.

- Spanish ranches and farms, called haciendas, emerged and provided the basis of wealth and power for the local aristocracy.
The Economy (cont.)

- Bartolomé de las Casas and other priests condemned the encomienda system.
- In 1542, Spain passed New Laws of the Indies forbidding the enslavement of Native Americans.
- Many natives became peons, workers forced to labor for a landlord to pay off a debt that could never be paid off.
The Economy (cont.)

- To fill the labor shortage, colonists began to import Africans by the 1530s.

- As demand for sugar cane increased, millions of African slaves were imported.

- In time, Africans and their American-born descendents greatly outnumbered European settlers in the West Indies and parts of South America.

- Many rebelled, ran away, or earned enough money to buy their freedom.
A Sugar Plantation Lithograph
Special Collections, Georgia State University
Africa's Slaves
Visual Source Documents 3 & 4

Document 3

Document 4

The Granger Collection, New York
Colonial Society and Culture

- In Spanish America, the mix of diverse people gave rise to a new social structure.
- At the top were *peninsulares*, people born in Spain, filling highest positions in colonial governments and Catholic Church.
- *Creoles*, were American-born descendants of Spanish settlers, and owned most of plantations, ranches, and mines.
- *Mestizos* were people of Native American and European descent.
- *Mulattoes* were people of African and European descent.
- Native Americans and people of African descent formed the lowest class.
Colonial Culture

- Catholic missionaries built mission churches and baptized thousands of Native Americans and set up schools profoundly influencing the cultural and intellectual life of the colonies.

- The blending of Native American, African, and European peoples and traditions resulted in a new American culture.

- Colonial cities were centers of government, commerce, and European culture.

- To meet the Church’s need for educated priests, the colonies built universities.

- Although Spanish culture was dominant in the cities, the blending of diverse traditions changed people’s lives throughout the Americas.
Nun Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz was an author, poet, musician, and social thinker.

She was welcomed into the court of the viceroy in Mexico City.

The tribunals of the Spanish Inquisition asserted its jurisdiction over Jews and Protestants, although usually the native Americans were exempted.
A Blended Culture

Indigenous Aztec dancers in Mexico City.

Bullfighter in Mexico City

An image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, patron saint of Mexico

A photograph of a 1954 stone carved mural at the ITESM in Monterrey, Mexico, portraying a battle between the gods Quetzalcoatl and Tezcatlipoca.
Give three examples of cultural blending in Spain’s American empire.

1. *Spanish settlers built their homes in the style of Native Americans, ate their food, used native-style canoes, and were influenced by native arts.*

2. *The majority of people adopted Christianity and European imported horses and cattle.*

3. *African farming methods, cooking styles, crops, and arts (drama, dance, music) enriched the cultures of Spanish America.*
Africa's Slaves
Written Source Document 3

Comment by Johannes de Grevenbroek

“From us they have learned strife, quarreling, drunkenness, trickery, theft, unbridled desire for what is not one’s own, misdeeds unknown to them before, and the accursed lust for gold.”

• Do you think Grevenbroek’s comment accurately criticizes all of European society or only those involved directly in the slave trade?

• How do you think it was that a slave trader might come to hold such views?
The Portuguese Colony in Brazil

- The first official Portuguese landfall in South America occurred when Pedro Alvares Cabral landed in Brazil briefly in 1500 on his way to India.
- Portugal claimed Brazil under the Treaty of Tordesillas in 1494.
- They issued grants of land, called capitaincies, to Portuguese nobles, who agreed to develop the land and share profits with the king.
- Landowners quickly turned to plantation agriculture and cattle raising.

Portuguese map (1574) by Luís Teixeira, showing the location of the hereditary captaincies of Brazil.
Portuguese map by Lopo Homem (c. 1519) showing the coast of Brazil and natives extracting brazilwood, as well as Portuguese ships.
Portuguese Economy in Brazil

- Natives and Africans cleared land and worked the plantations.
- During the 18th century 150,000 slaves were imported to work the sugar plantations.
- A new blended culture developed.

View of a sugar-producing farm (*engenho*) in colonial Pernambuco by Dutch painter Frans Post (17th century).
Brazil’s Age of Gold

- From 1630 to 1654, the Dutch seized a portion of northwestern Brazil and controlled its sugar cane production.

- They were expelled in 1654, but by the 1680s the Dutch, French, and English had established their own plantation colonies in the Caribbean and were producing sugar with slave laborers.

- Although Brazil’s domination of sugar production was lost, hardy backwoodsmen called, Paulistas, were exploring the interior and laying claim to it for Portugal.

- In 1695, gold strikes were made in the mountainous interior in a region that came to be called Minas Gerais (General Mines) leading to an economic revival in the Brazilian colony.
Challenging Spanish Power

To get around Spain’s strict control over colonial trade, smugglers traded illegally with Spanish colonists.

Dutch, English, and French pirates preyed on Spanish treasure ships. Some of these pirates, called privateers, even operated with the approval of European governments.

The Dutch, English, and French hunted for other gold empires and for a northwest passage to Asia.
18th Century Reforms

- In the 18th century Spain’s power began to decline as the mercantile systems of England, France, and Holland began to increase.
- Spain lost exclusive control of the Indies as the French, English, and Dutch ship captains raided Spanish colonies and ships.
- In 1654, the English took Jamaica and in 1697, the French took control of western Hispaniola (Haiti). Other islands fell to the English, French, and Dutch.
- In Spanish colonies graft and corruption were rampant as Spain’s central government became weaker and local aristocrats gained power.
- Then in 1701, when the Spanish king Charles II died without an heir, Philip of Anjou, a Bourbon and thus relative to the king of France, was named successor to the Spanish throne.
- The War of the Spanish Succession (1702-1713) ensued resulting in the Treaty of Utrecht (1713) which recognized the Bourbon family as rulers in Spain.
- Spain’s commercial monopoly in Spanish America was broken.
The Bourbon Reforms in Latin America

- The government and military was reformed in Spanish America.
- French bureaucratic models were introduced and taxation systems were tightened.
- Monopoly companies were granted exclusive rights to develop certain colonial areas in return for developing the economies in those regions leading to greater supplies and cheaper products.
- As the economies in Europe expanded, English and Spanish goods became more accessible and cheaper, undercutting locally made goods, which resulted in declining economies in Latin America leading to conflicts between those who wanted free-trade and those who wanted to limit imports.

Charles III of Spain of the House of Bourbon
Reforms in Brazil

- **Marquis of Pombal**, Prime Minister in Portugal, paralleled the reforms of the Bourbons in Brazil.
- This led to an increase in production and the development of cotton plantations and cacao production in Brazil.
- He abolished slavery in Portugal to encourage more slaves to be sent to Brazil.
- He reduced the imbalance of trade with England, but the demand for Brazilian products remained low on the world market.
- While not immediately successful, his reforms laid the framework for an economic boom starting in the 1880s that set the stage for Brazilian independence.

King Joseph I of Portugal was devoted to the Church and the opera. He succeeded to the Portuguese throne in 1750 and almost immediately placed effective power in the hands of Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo, better known today as the Marquis of Pombal.