

America before it was America

**Spanish
Conquistadors in
Central and
South America**



Olmecs and Mayans



Olmecs

- Earliest known ceremonial centers of ancient Americas appeared around 1200 B.C.
- “Olmec” - not what people called themselves
 - It means “rubber people” - comes from rubber trees in region



Characteristics of Olmec Civilization and those Meso-American Civilizations that Followed

- **Intensive agricultural techniques**
 - elaborate drainage systems to divert flood waters
- **Specialization of labor**
- **Cities and complex economic exchange**
- **Social hierarchy:** probably authoritarian
- **Organized religion and education**
 - Priests, temples, altars, and human sacrifice
- **Technologies**
 - Excellent astronomers and mathematicians

Decline of the Olmec

- No one knows why...
By about 400 B.C., Olmec society had fallen



Olmec Influence on the Mayans

- **Maize**
- Temple pyramids
- Calendar
- Ball games
- Rituals of human sacrifice



Mayan City: Tikal

- From about 300 - 900 built over 8 ceremonial centers
 - All had pyramids, palaces, and temples
- Larger ones - dense populations
 - >40,000



Mayan Warrior

Religion: Bloodletting & Sacrifice



- Cacao used as money

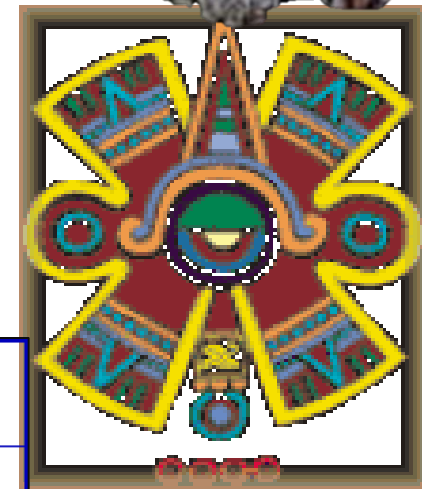


Mayan
Calendar



Observatory at El Caracol

0	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19



Mayan
numerical
system

Mayan Decline

- By about 800, most Mayan had begun to leave cities
 - Full scale decline followed almost everywhere
 - Cause... unknown



Inca

- By 13th Century, Inca dominated Andean South America
- By late 15th Century, Incan empire covered more than 2,500 miles

–Chief crop: potato

–Herded llamas & alpacas for meat, wool, hides, and dung (fuel)



Terraced farm land



INCA

- Inca capital at Cuzco
- Supported 300,000 by late 15th Century
 - Tremendous system of roads emanated from Cuzco



Inca textile fragment



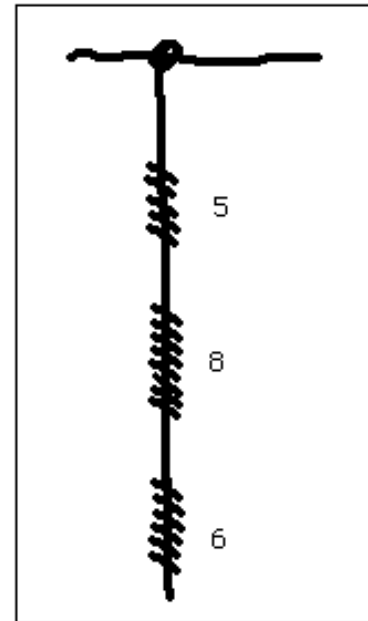
Inti Raymi,
feast of the sun



- Inca had no writing
- Records using a quipu
 - Colorful cords in many lengths, suspended from a thick cord
 - Tying knots = Info



586 on
a quipu



**End of
INCA...**

Arrival of Francisco Pizarro

AZTEC



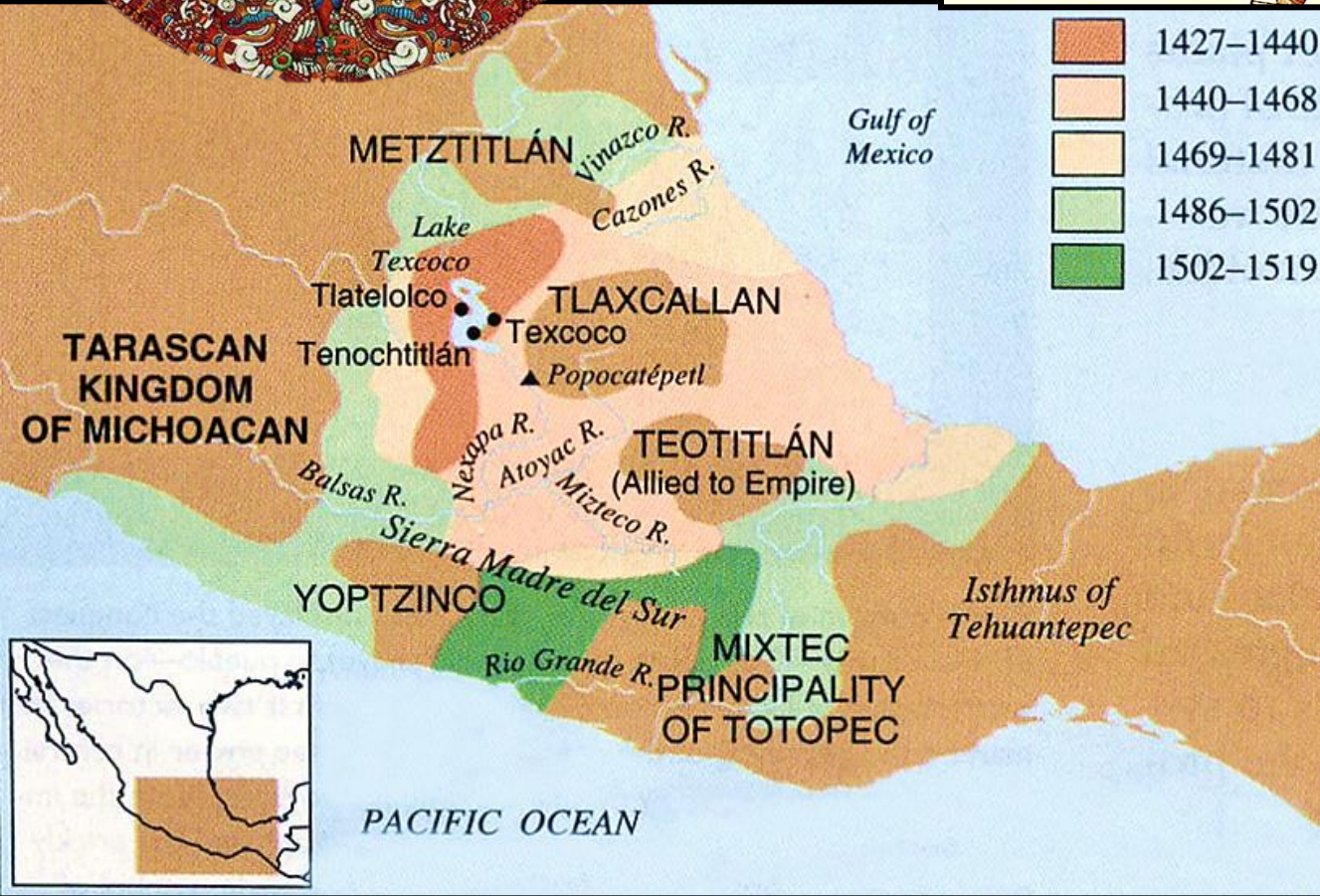
Initially
Aztecs
were
nomadic



- Their god Huitzilopochtli commanded them to find an eagle devouring a snake, perched atop a cactus.
- They founded their new capital, Tenochtitlan.



Aztec
calendar

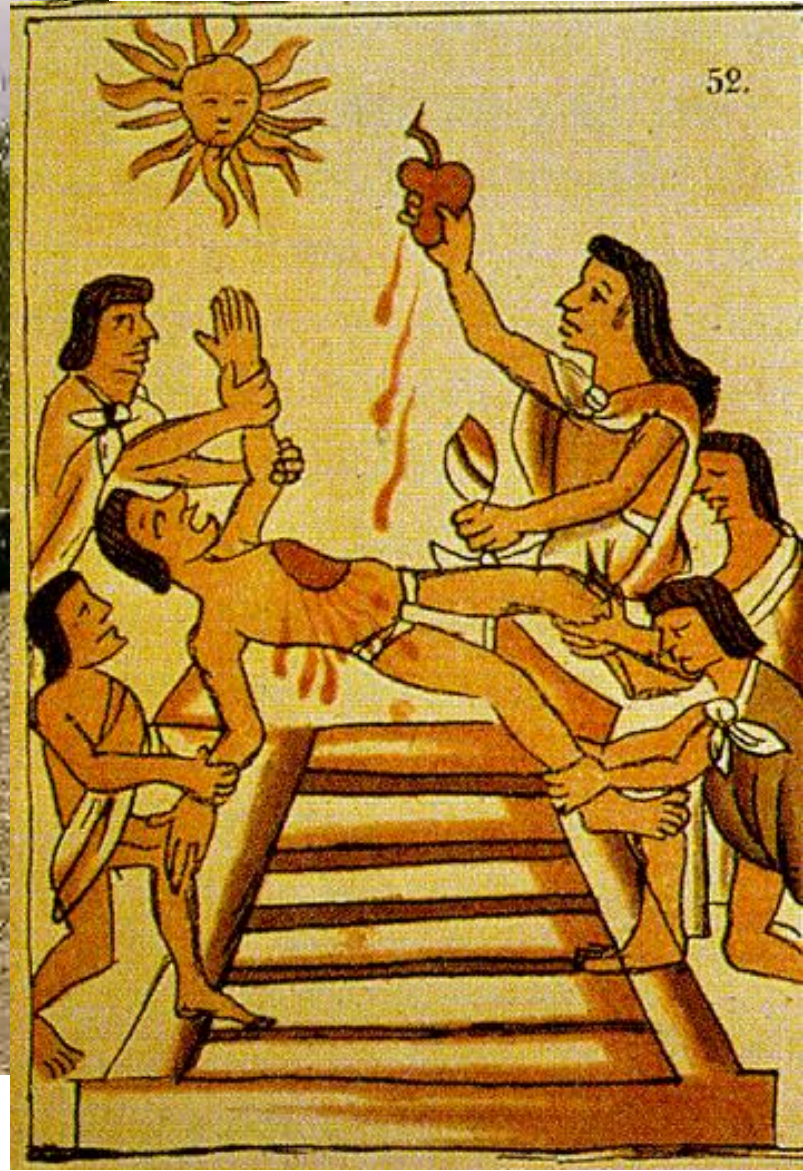




By early 1500's, Tenochtitlan has a population of 200,000 and over 1 million in the Basin of Mexico

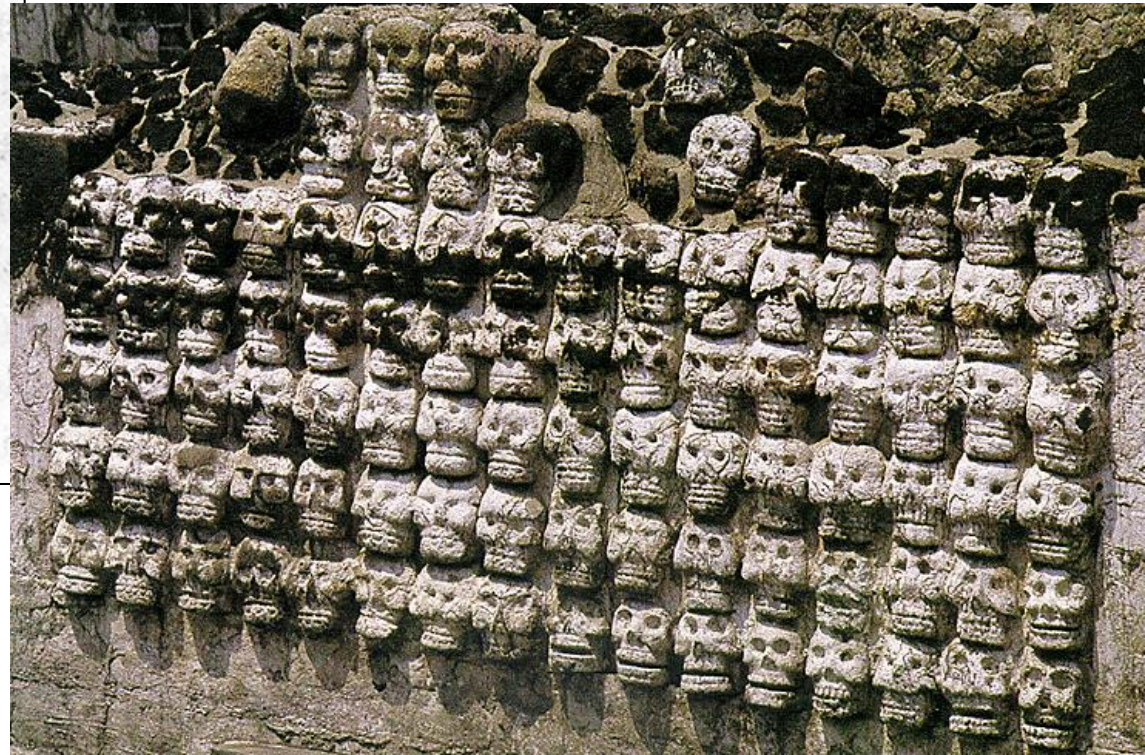
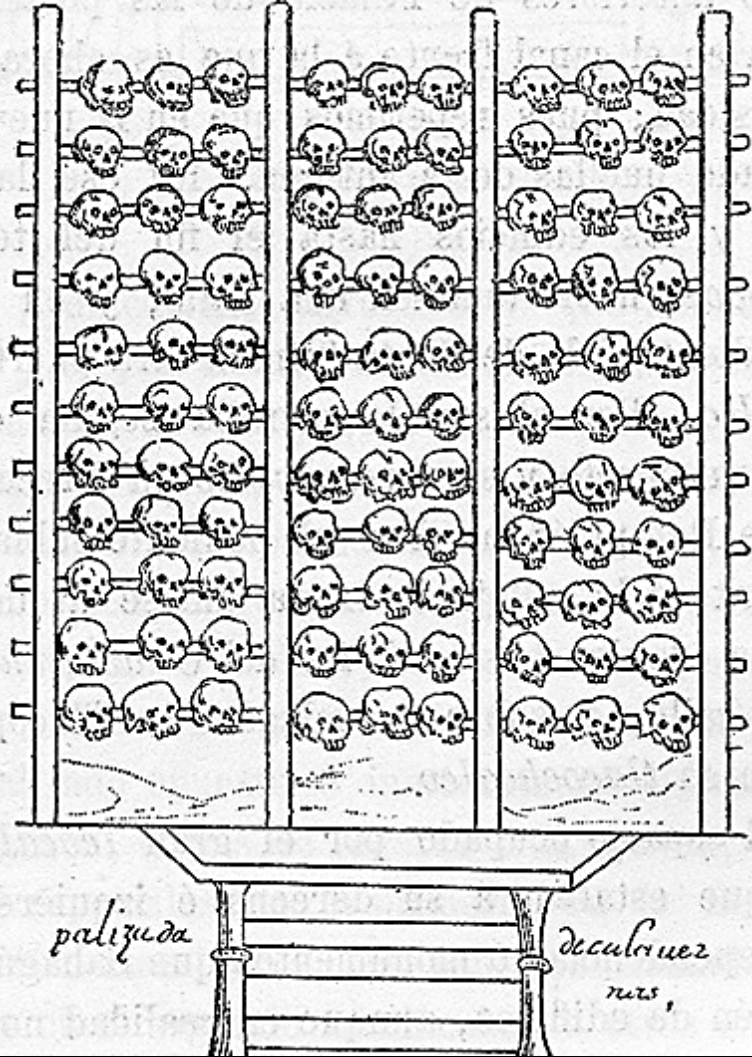
5 times larger than London at the time

Sun god was especially important.



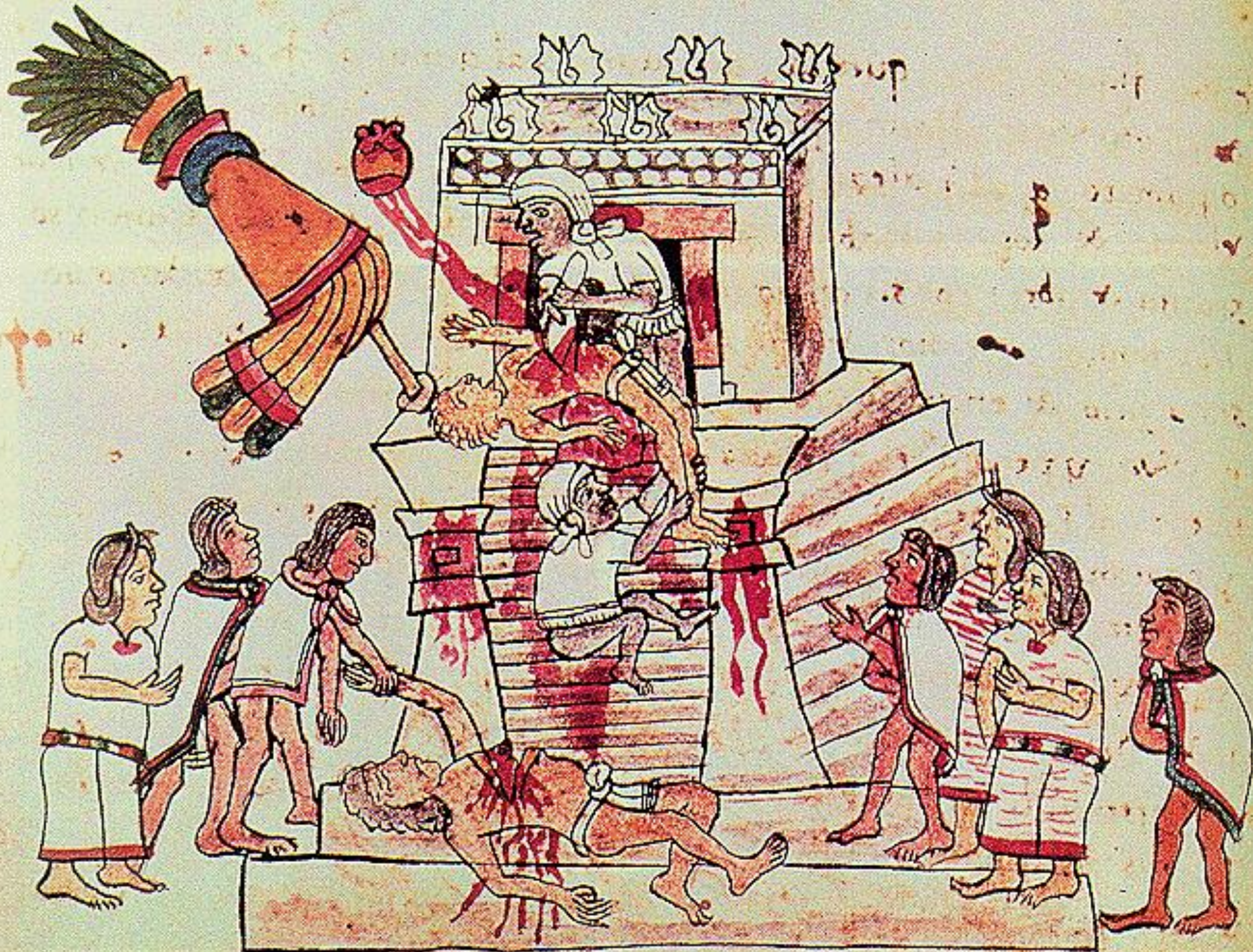
Aztec Religion

Thousands of prisoners were sacrificed to the Aztec gods.



An Aztec tzompantli: illustrated 1596.

A tzompantli is a wooden rack used to display human skulls, typically war captives or sacrificial victims.



Mexican Invasion by Cortés





CONQUIS ADORS

- **Spanish soldiers who came to New World to conquer, claim land, and settle in the name of Spain.**
- **Their methods were harsh and brutal to the Native Americans**
- **With every Spanish explorer were conquistadors and members of the Catholic Church to convert Natives**

Cortez Brings Down the Aztecs

- 1520, Hernan Cortez found the Aztec Empire
- With the use of guns.... and more importantly help of diseases (smallpox)

The
“isolated”
Aztecs
had no
immunity



3 G's

Political:
(GLORY)

Economic:
(GOLD)

Religious:
(GOD)

Reinforce
each other



Spanish Conquest: The Incas



**Francisco
Pizarro**



Atahualpa

- Soon after Cortez, **Francisco Pizarro** went to South America to Peru.

- He destroyed the Inca culture for their gold.
- Spain became the richest nation in the world.
- Built their naval prowess that came to be known as the Spanish Armada.

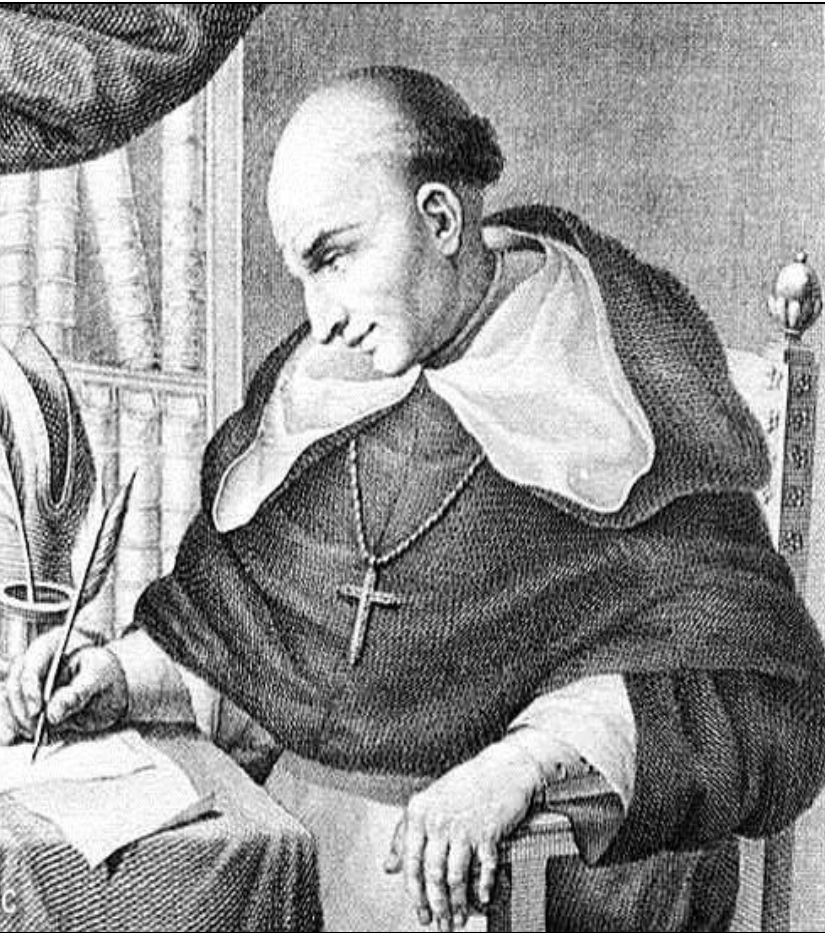


Encomienda

- Spanish securing cheap labor supply akin to slavery for those who were considered genetically “inferior”

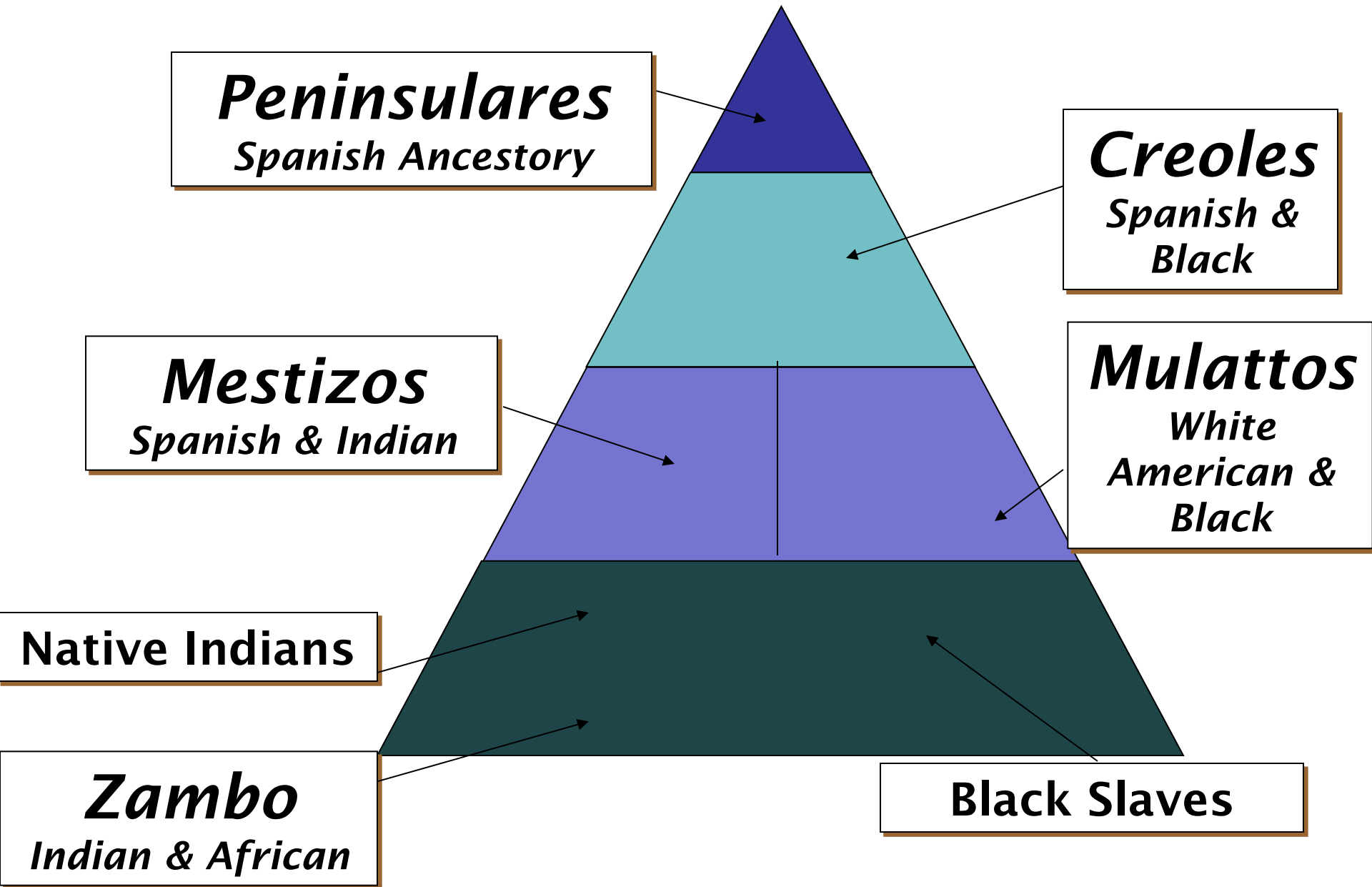
- **Conquistadors controlled Indian populations**
 - Required some Indians to pay tribute from their lands
 - Indians often rendered personal services
- **Encomienda eventually destroyed Indian populations**
- **King ended encomienda with the new Laws (1542) supported and prompted by Bartolomé de Las Casas, the system gradually died out**

Father Bartolomé de Las Casas



- Believed Indians could be educated and converted to Christianized
- Believed Indian culture was advanced as European but in different ways.

The Social Hierachry Race System





SPANISH INSTITUTIONS IN NORTH AMERICA

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graph TD; A[SPANISH INSTITUTIONS IN NORTH AMERICA] --> B[Missions]; A --> C[Haciendas and Ranchos]; B --> D([Description<br/>Church/Fort<br/>complexes]); C --> E([Description<br/>large farming<br/>estates<br/>& ranches]); D --> F([Effect on Spanish Rule<br/>• helped convert Indians<br/>• provided important cultural<br/>& social centers]); E --> G([Effect on Spanish Rule<br/>• provided food<br/>• helped control Indians<br/>in the isolated countryside]);
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Missions

Description
**Church/Fort
complexes**

Effect on Spanish Rule

- helped convert Indians
- provided important cultural & social centers

Haciendas and Ranchos

Description
**large farming
estates
& ranches**

Effect on Spanish Rule

- provided food
- helped control Indians in the isolated countryside