

Africans in Colonial Mexico

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Africans in Colonial Mexico

The history of Africans in Mexico is an oft-neglected facet of the cultural complexities of that country. In 1519, Hernando Cortes brought 6 African slaves with him to Mexico; these individuals served the conquest as personal servants, carriers, and laborers.[1] In the years to come, slavery would become a critical component of the colonial economy with approximately 2,000 slaves arriving each year 1580-1650; it is estimated that a total of 200,000 Africans were brought to Mexico during the colonial period.[2] Given this large number of slaves, the lengthy period of their importation, and the inevitable mixing of races, which took place throughout the colony, the historical and cultural significance of bozales, criollos, mulattoes, and zambos is far-reaching. The colonial period provides an excellent starting place for an examination of the significance of these groups not only because the institution of African slavery was introduced to New Spain at that time, but also because the regular influx of native Africans combined with the close attention paid to color-based castas in official records allows historians to trace the influence of African culture more readily during that period. The early years of colonial Mexico were a time of great change, as the native Indian populations were decimated by disease and increasingly dominated by the Spanish social and economic structure. Under the encomienda system, the initial flood of Spanish immigrants were provided with a support structure in New Spain, as the Indians' land and labor were put at their disposal in

exchange for moral guidance.[3] As Spain sought to reap the benefits of its new colony, the need for dependable labor in Mexico's agr..... middle of paperAndrew L. "Yellow Fever and the Late Colonial Public Health Response in the Port of Veracruz." *Hispanic American Historical Review* 77, no. 4 (1997): 619-644.6. Love, Edgar F. "Negro Resistance to Spanish Rule in Colonial Mexico." *The Journal of Negro History* 52, no. 2 (1967): 89-103.7. MacLachlan, Colin M. and Jamie E. Rodriguez O. *The Forging of the Cosmic Race: A Reinterpretation of Colonial Mexico*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980.8. Meyer, Michael C., et al. *The Course of Mexican History*, 7th ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.9. Palmer, Colin A. *Slaves of the White God: Blacks in Mexico, 1570-1650*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976.10. Richmond, Douglas. "The Legacy of African Slavery in Colonial Mexico, 1519-1810." *Journal of Popular Culture* 35, no. 2 (2001): 1-17.

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