

LATIN AMERICA

Cultural Geography



INDIAN CIVILIZATIONS

Three important native civilizations that began in Latin America were:

- A. Maya
- B. Aztec
- C. Inca



- The Maya lived in southern Mexico, Belize, and Guatemala. Their civilization was at its peak around 250 - 900 AD.
- The Maya had city states ruled by kings and priests. They worshipped the gods by ritual sacrifice and blood-letting.
- The Maya lived in a tropical wet climate with rainforests. They practiced slash and burn farming and grew squash and corn.

MAYA





The Aztec lived in central Mexico. Their capital was called Tenochtitlan and it was located on islands in a lake. Mexico City now stands on the ruins of the Aztec capital.

The Aztec also practiced sacrifice and built large pyramids like the Maya.

The Aztec empire flourished from 1400 to about 1520, when it was overthrown by the Spanish.

AZTEC



Tenochtitlan (Mexico City)
Mexico (Aztec) Civilization
350,000 residents

Aztec Empire

c. 1519







The Inca lived in South America in Peru and Chile.

The Inca built a system of roads through the Andes Mountains to connect their empire.

The Inca did not have a writing system but they kept records with a complicated system of ropes with knots.



INCA



EUROPEAN COLONIZATION

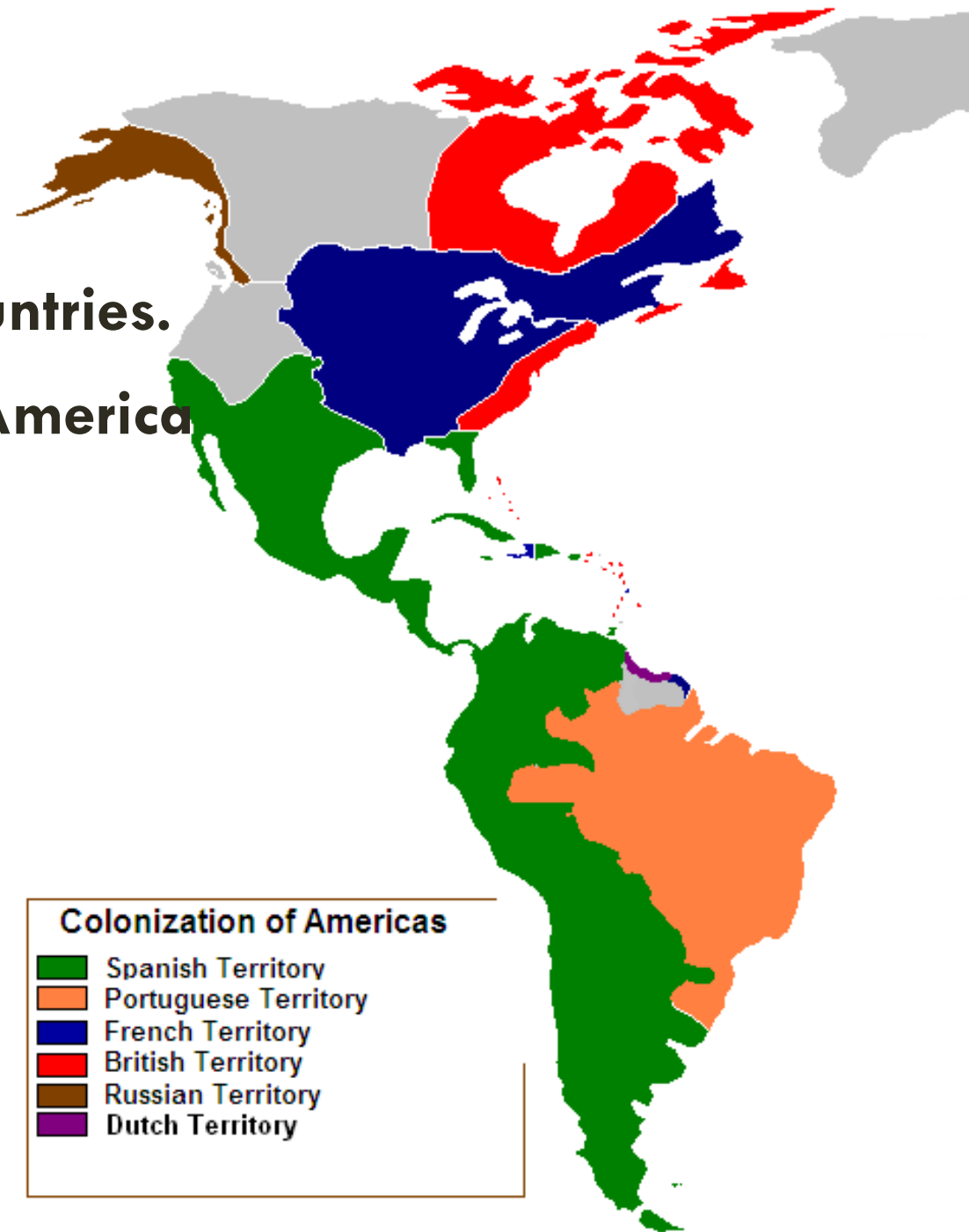
Latin America was colonized by European countries.

Spain colonized Mexico and most of Central America and South America.

Portugal colonized Brazil.

The English colonized Jamaica and Belize.

The French colonized Haiti.

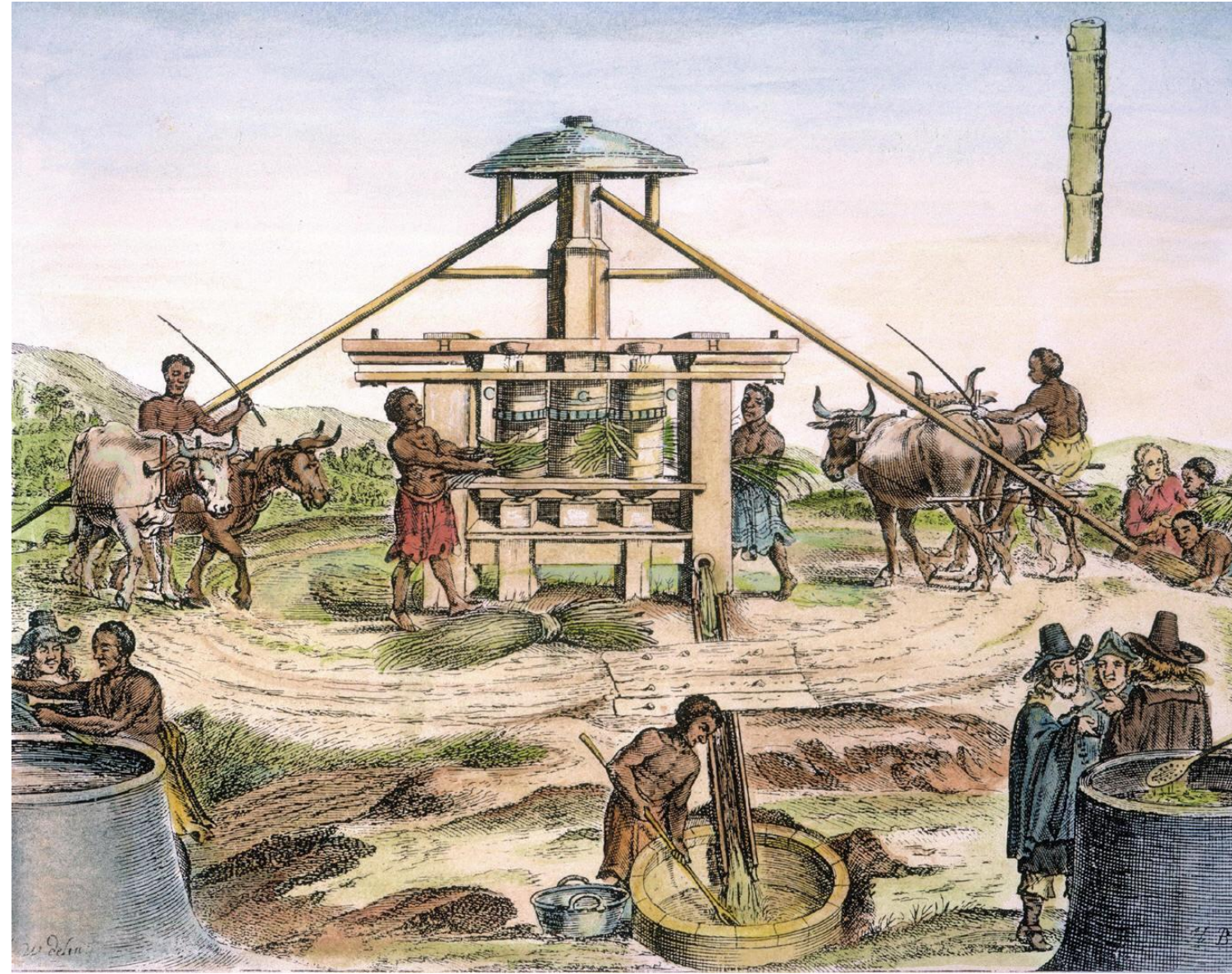


EUROPEAN COLONIZATION

The Europeans converted the natives to Roman Catholicism and made them learn their languages.

The most wide spoken languages are Spanish and Portuguese.

The Europeans brought Africans to work on sugar plantations as slaves.

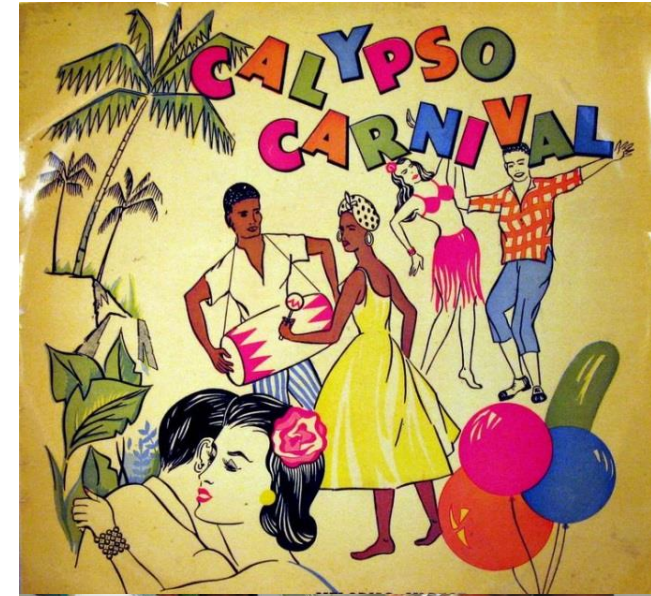


AFRICAN INFLUENCES

Latin America is heavily influenced by African culture.

Music - Calypso, steel drum bands, and reggae.

Religion - Voodoo in Haiti and Candomble in Brazil.



MESTIZOS

Most of Latin America has a mixed population called mestizo.

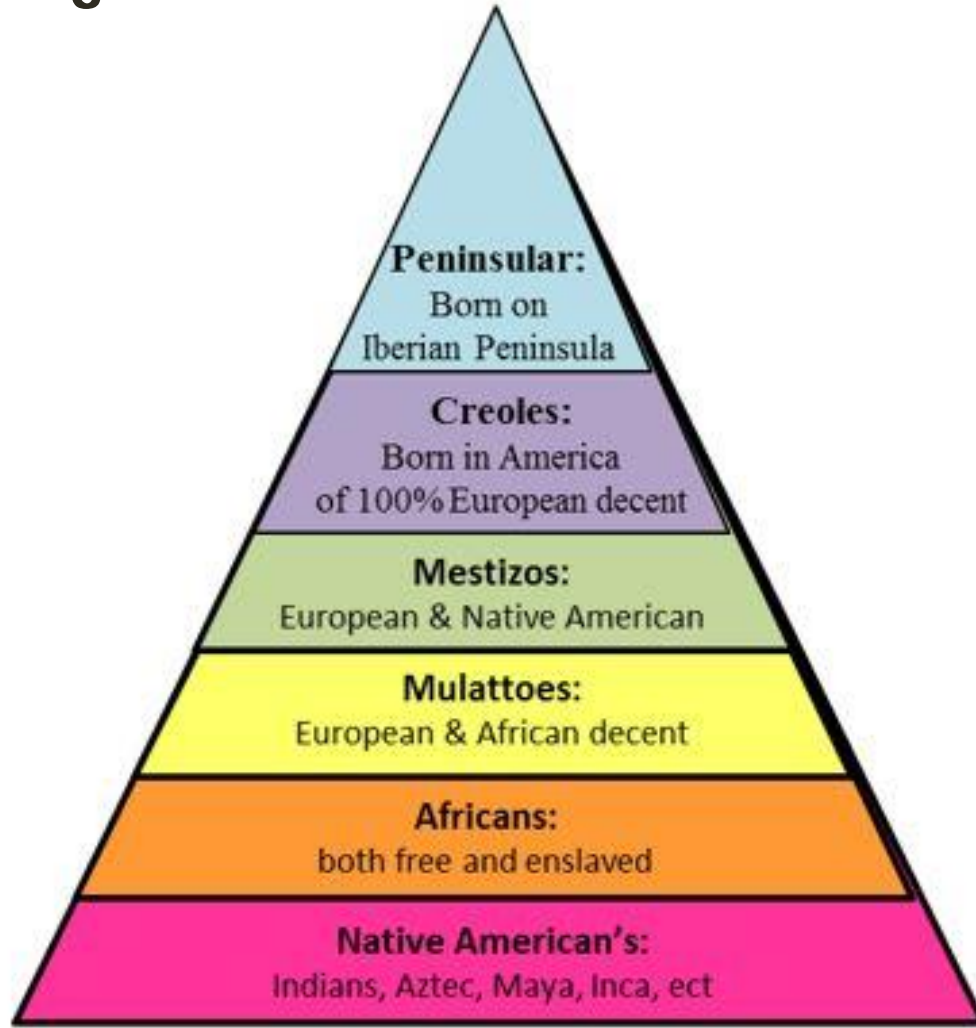
Mestizos are people of mixed Spanish and Native ancestry.

People in the Caribbean have mixed European, Native, and African ancestry.



RIGID SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Latin America has a very rigid social structure. There are many poor people and a few rich people. The middle class is very small. During most of its history Latin America was divided among rich landlords who owned most of the land.



POPULATION

The population of Latin America is clustered on the coast.

The interior of South America is difficult to settle because of the Andes Mountains and the Amazon rainforest.

Most of the major cities are on the coast except Mexico City and La Paz.



POPULATION

The population of Latin America is growing rapidly and people are moving into the cities in a process called urbanization.

People are moving into the cities to look for jobs (push and pull factors).

When poor people move to the city they create squatter settlements or shantytowns, areas of illegal housing in the city. These areas also have a high crime rate.

