

**Session 2: Finish Pop Quiz. Latin America as a Living Museum**

**On Blackboard**

Living museum	Tupac Amaru	Macondo
Caudillos	<i>Obedezco pero no cumplo</i>	"alchemists of the statutes"
Smallpox	<i>Para ingles ver</i>	Jus primae noctis
Latifundio	Juan Diego	Macondo
Hacienda	<i>La Matanza</i>	Caciquismo, coronelismo
Encomienda	Day of the Dead	Corporatism
Mercantilism	syncretism	Cacao
Chiapas	Virgen de Guadalupe	Iturbide
Nuevo León	Guaraní	Maximilian
	Nahuatl	

"contemporary Latin American politics is something of a "living museum", in which all the forms of political authority of the Western historic experience continue to exist and operate, interacting one with another in a pageant that seems to violate all the rules of sequence and change involved in our understanding of the growth of Western civilization. Politically pragmatic, democratic movements, devoted to the constitutional and welfare-state ideals of the mid-twentieth century, stand side by side with a traditional and virtually semi-feudal landed aristocracy. "Social technocrats" and economic planners of the most modern outlook confer and interact with an institutionalized Church which in some countries is favored with a political position not far removed from the "two swords" tradition of medieval political thought. Military *caudillos* cast in a role set in the early nineteenth century, and little changed with the passage of time, confront an organized trade union movement, a growing middle class, a new entrepreneurial elite." (Anderson, Charles. *Politics and Economic Change in Latin America: The Governing of Restless Nations*. Princeton, NJ: Van Nostrand, 1967, p. 104. ASIN: B000B9J54W.)

Latin America is a region of contrasts

- Extraordinary wealth and massive poverty: Rio de Janeiro shantytown next to skyscraper: could be a lot of cities
- Peasants using technology from pre-Colombian era next to a giant office building
- Unlike any region in the United States, except perhaps areas of the American South where the legacy of slavery, poverty, and racial inequality is reminiscent of Latin America

I will offer a history of the region in 30 minutes or less

- Many of the current contrasts in L.A. go back to Columbus and the Conquest
- Massive destruction of Indian population
  - Indians on Hispaniola eradicated by 1520 (little more than a generation after contact), in Cuba (which was one of next colonies) by 1540
  - Population of Mexico fell calamitously, from perhaps 10 million to 3 million. Didn't recover until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century
  - Causes included overwork, starvation, and especially disease (smallpox), to which locals had no immunity
  - Europeans died in droves too, of course. Mortality rates of 40% within first year throughout the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century (malaria being especially bad killer)
  - But Indians harder hit; Africans brought in to replace them

- Thus the demographic composition of the Caribbean basin was utterly transformed
- Some describe it as the only region of the world entirely created by North Atlantic capitalism
- But colonialism left other demographic legacies as well
  - Intermarriage between Europeans, indigenous population, Africans
  - Created the racial mix of region today
  - Some countries have a very large African population (Haiti, Belize, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Caribbean coast of Central America, Suriname and Guyana, Venezuela, Brazil); others have zones where most of the population has some African ancestry (Colombia's Chaco region, Mexico around Veracruz and in parts of Michoacan and Oaxaca states, Caribbean coast of Costa Rica)
  - African slavery in much of the region
  - In other countries, where the indigenous population was very large, mainly a mix of indigenous and European (Mexico, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Chile). Some countries still have very large indigenous populations (Bolivia, Guatemala, Ecuador, Peru), and others have sizeable enclaves (Mexico, Chile), though non-westernized Indians really only a majority in Bolivia
  - In other countries, mainly settled by Europeans (Argentina, Uruguay; to a lesser extent, Costa Rica, Chile)
- Color hierarchies all visible today
  - Social structure of the Conquest
  - Colonial and even early post-independence eras, dizzying array of terms used to describe skin color and classify people by race
  - Still a strong correlation of skin color and income
  - Skin color also a predictor of political views
  - Sometimes, racism much more virulent (e.g., Central America)
    - Guatemalan upper-class women wouldn't shave their legs, as hairless legs was an indicator of Indian heritage
    - In El Salvador's *Matanza* in 1932 led to the disappearance of all displays of indigenous identity
  - Also shows up in dress
    - Those cute costumes in the highland villages of southern Mexico and Central America – Where do they come from
    - Relics of colonial social control
    - Designed to mark people as identified with a certain village
- I have spoken of the legacy of the Conquest, but the Conquest was not a single event
  - Much "easier" in some areas than in others
  - Much more complete in some areas than in others
  - In Argentina and Uruguay, indigenous population exterminated or herded onto reservations (like U.S. and Canada)
  - In central Mexico, local indigenous elites intermarried with Spaniards, forming a new hierarchy. At least one local prince even received title in Spain
  - In Peru, intact indigenous royal lines remained, sometimes leading revolts against Spanish authority (Tupac Amaru I)
  - In Paraguay, the Castilians were co-opted by Guaraní-speaking tribes, provided with women, and made captains of the indigenous armies; to this day, Paraguayans speak Guaraní as well as Spanish and maintain certain Indian customs (Like drinking *mate* tea)
  - But lots of variation even within each of these areas (e.g., difference between Mexico's central valley and the Yucatan)

Another important legacy of the Conquest was cultural: Example of religion

- The region is predominantly Catholic
- But often quite nominal; religious practice is a blend of Roman and pagan rituals
- Day of the Dead in Mexico, celebrated on November 2 (All Souls Day)
- The further south you go and the more intact the indigenous community, the more the saints begin to look like Indian deities
- What is the irony here?
- In Mexico, Catholic faithful pray to the dark-skinned Virgin of Guadalupe (as opposed to the lighter skinned Virgin of los Remedios), who is also viewed as a symbol of nationhood
- But the Virgin of Guadalupe appeared to the Indian peasant Juan Diego in the 16<sup>th</sup> century on the same hill that had previously been the home to the Aztec goddess Tontzatzín; took a while to convince a skeptical local clergyman that she was a Christian symbol and to get the Church to build a shrine on that site
- “The Image they pray to is Christian, but only God knows what deity they pray to in their hearts”
- In other places, such as northeastern Brazil, blend of Christian and African spiritualism
- Recently, Protestantism has made inroads, especially among poorer and remote populations that had not been religiously served. Evangelicals take a very different attitude toward blending of religious practices – much less tolerant.
- We will talk about all these religious issues later in the class
- Also, we will talk about effect of religion on politics.
  - There has been a big change over last 40 years in Church, with crucial implications for its social role

What about the **economic** legacies of the Conquest?

- In Caribbean, Mexico, and elsewhere, Indians were given to Spaniards; essentially serfdom; in exchange, Spaniards were supposed to look out for them and Christianize them; this was known as *encomienda*
- Didn't work too well; Castilians tended to run through “their” Indians pretty fast
- Spanish and Portuguese instituted a new system known as *latifundia*
  - What was that?
  - Not very efficient; *latifundistas* disinclined to invest
- Gradually *latifundium* gave way to heritable plantation system, called *hacienda*
  - Grew cash crops (sugar, cacao, ultimately coffee); often combined with some processing
  - Lasted until the 20<sup>th</sup> century in many areas
  - Perpetuated highly unequal distribution of land and wealth
- One feature of almost all these systems was dependence on foreign interests
  - Not designed to serve needs of local population, even local landlords
  - Designed to milk the colonies, supply raw materials for mother country, as well as gold and silver
  - What was this system called?
- In practice, dependence on Iberia really meant dependence on England
- Dependent relationships persisted after Independence; in many places, ultimately became dependence on U.S.
- As a result, L.A. was often a step behind in development; development itself was often skewed and uneven
- We'll discuss the challenges of economic development next week

Finally, **political** legacies of the Conquest

- Spanish and Portuguese tried to institute highly centralized rule, but often not very thorough or effective
  - Very hard to administer across the ocean
  - Local realities vs. demands of the central authority
  - Substantial corruption; legacy which continues to this day
  - Law poorly enforced and heavily biased
- Most countries became independent during the first part of 19<sup>th</sup> century
- Republican norms and laws prevailed, at least in theory
  - Democratic constitutions, often modeled after U.S. or to a lesser extent France, but practice lags
  - Disjunctures between Theory vs. Practice (or Practice vs. Pretense)
  - Elections: The Portuguese had saying that was later applied to Brazil
    - Why hold elections where only a tiny percentage of the population can vote, and even then the outcome is rigged?
    - Answer: *para ingles ver* ("so the English can see")
- Tremendous political inequalities
- Political values (i.e., political culture) not particularly civic

So what is overall shape of the region?

- Tremendous social inequalities, often correlated with skin color
- Cultural Catholicism
- Weak political institutions and hybrid political systems
- High levels of urbanization, but also extensive poverty
- Often, the combination of weak institutions, unrepresentative government, massive inequality, and rural poverty produced insurgencies
  - For most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, most Latin American countries have had some sort of lingering rural insurgency that operates in certain areas
  - We will talk about revolutionary movements in a few weeks

Beyond this, very hard to generalize across a region that's incredibly diverse.

- Economic development varies from Cuba and Haiti to Argentina and Chile
  - Even within a single country, regional disparities between Northern and Southern Brazil defy generalization
- Politically, some places that have never really had democracy (e.g., Guatemala, Paraguay, Cuba); some places that have been stable and democratic longer than most of Western Europe (Costa Rica)
  - Some places have had real social revolution (Mexico, Bolivia, Cuba, Nicaragua)
  - others have experienced massive redistribution programs carried out from above (Argentina under Peron, Venezuela under AD, Peru under military)

In other words, we have approached the limits of bland generalities; indeed, I've already gone too far in generalizing.

- When I spoke of the end of colonial rule, I neglected to mention that Cuba was still a colony of Spain in 1898
- When I talked about how independence led to the adoption of republican institutions, I neglected to mention that Mexico was an Empire twice in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, first under Iturbide in 1821 and then Maximilian of Austria; meanwhile, Brazil became independent as a monarchy, and remained a monarchy until the 1880s
- When I talked about land tenure patterns, I neglected to mention that Costa Rica was largely settled by yeomen farmers

- When I talked about race, I didn't mention Lebanese and Palestinian merchants, Chinese brought in as coolies, Japanese indentured farmers, Mennonite communities scattered in Central America, Mexico, Paraguay, and Brazil; Irish who settled in Mexican territory before it was stolen by the United States
- Slavery was abolished in Mexico early in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and thought of as outlandish; but totally normal in Cuba and Brazil until eve of the 20<sup>th</sup> century

**Brief overview of the readings for next week**

- *Big Mama's Funeral*
  - A short story by Colombian author and Nobel Laureate Gabriel García Márquez (explain naming system: García is his patronymic)
  - Inventor of "magical realism" style
  - You should make sure to read it before class, as we will discuss it then; it is meant to be funny, but more likely to see the humor the first time if you know the region well
  - We will re-read this at the end of the semester
- Winn, Chapters 1-2
  - Describes three types of countries
  - Mulatto (Caribbean, Brazil, parts of other countries)
  - Mestizo (Mexico, Central America, Colombia, Venezuela, Peru, etc.)
  - European (Argentina, Uruguay, Costa Rica?)
  - Good overview of peoples and geography
  - A little turgid and heavy on exploitation
  - Chapter 2, on colonial period, reads better