

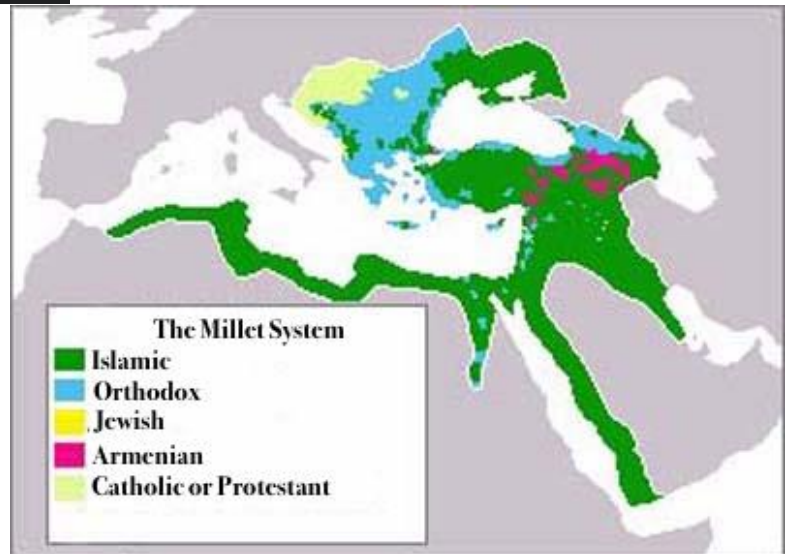
Topic 4.7 Changing Social Hierarchies 1450 to 1750

The world experienced such dramatic upheavals of conquest, the movement of wealth, and new connections in the period 1450-1750 that societies experienced significant restructuring. As we have seen since the earliest empires, the territorial growth of states invites the problems of ruling a large multi-ethnic empire. Many states, such as the Mughal and Ottoman empires, adopted practices to accommodate the ethnic and religious diversity of their subjects or to utilize the economic, political, and military contributions of different ethnic or religious groups. In other cases, states suppressed diversity or limited certain groups' roles in society, politics, or the economy. In some cases, new ethnic groups rose to the top of society thus replacing traditional elites.

Societies that sometimes supported diversity

Ottomans and their non-Muslim subjects

After the fall of Constantinople in 1453 the Ottoman empire absorbed the former Byzantine lands and the number of Christians under Ottoman rule greatly increased. By the middle of the 1500s the non-Muslim population of the empire reached about 40%. The Ottoman Empire had a large number of non-Muslim and non-Turkish minority groups within the empire. The treatment of these groups varied across time. While many instances of harsh treatment and the killing of minority groups exist in Ottoman history, the Ottoman Empire had many inclusive policies incorporating religious and ethnic diversity into Ottoman society.



Devshirme: To limit the power of the Turkish nobility, the Ottoman Sultan used the devshirme system. The Ottomans required Christian areas in the Balkans (southeastern Europe) to provide a quota of Christian boys that the Ottomans raised in this system. The boys were forcibly converted to Islam and trained for military or government service. Only Christians were allowed in the devshirme. Most of the highest-ranking members of the Sultan's government and military were former Christians trained through the devshirme system. The highest-ranking minister in the Ottoman government was the grand vizier. All grand viziers came from the devshirme system.

Janissaries: The Ottoman Janissary was one of the first modern standing armies in Europe and the Middle East. Sultan Murad I (1326-1378) formed the first Janissary military unit. Ottoman leaders pulled Janissary soldiers from the devshirme system. Under the devshirme and Janissary systems, young Christian boys were taken from their families, converted to Islam, and raised with complete loyalty to the sultan.

Millet System: Under the Ottoman millet system, religious communities each had independent courts of law that governed their communities. The millet system allowed non-Muslim religious minority (Jewish and Christian) communities to judge members of their religious communities on their own spiritual teachings' rules and requirements. The Ottoman created this system to protect the rights of non-Muslim religious minorities and maintain social harmony between the majority Muslim community and religious minorities.

Acceptance of Jewish People in the Ottoman Empire: In the 15th and 16th centuries, there was a rise in antisemitism in parts of Europe. In Portugal and Spain, Jewish persecution was extreme. Queen Isabella started a process in 1492 that led to the expulsion of all Jews from Spain. One place that allowed Jewish community migration was the Ottoman Empire. Once in the Ottoman Empire, Jewish communities became influential in trading and business within the empire. Jewish communities were incorporated into the millet system and generally allowed to maintain Jewish schooling and court systems.

Mughal accommodation of diverse populations

Like in the Ottoman Empire, the treatment of non-Muslim religious minorities in the Mughal Empire varied across place and time. However, under many Mughal emperors, there were religious tolerance policies from the Muslim ruling classes toward their non-Muslim subjects.

- Under some Mughal Emperors, Hindus and other groups could reach senior government or military positions.
- Emperor Akbar was tolerant of varied religious beliefs. Under his rule, non-Muslims did not need to obey Islamic law.
- Akbar created the new religion of the Divine Faith, which contained various Islamic, Hindu, Christian, and Buddhist teachings with himself as a deity. The religion did not spread and died when Akbar died.
- Many Hindus held high positions in Akbar's government.
- When the Islamic fanatic Aurangzeb became emperor, he ended religious tolerance for India's majority non-Muslim communities.

Mughal Zamindars

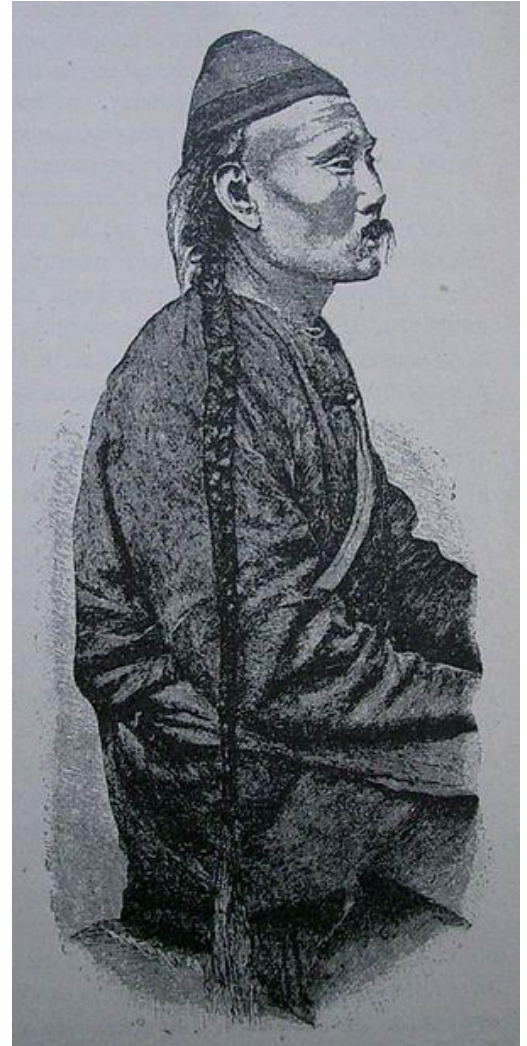
Another group whose power fluctuated in this time was the **zamindars** of the Mughal Empire. Like the boyars in Russia, zamindars were intermediaries between rulers and the ruled. They performed the function of aristocrats. The Mughal state had the zamindars collect tribute from peasants and allowed them to keep 10 percent of it themselves before sending it to the government. Tribute was paid in kind, in the form of crops, rice, pepper, or some other agricultural product. As with all aristocrats with local authority, zamindars constituted a potentially decentralizing force. Revenues to the state began to drop because the zamindars were keeping much of this tribute for themselves; peasants resented them for growing rich at their expense.



Some states created systems of oppression to limit the power of certain populations

Manchus and their Chinese subjects

In East Asia the **Manchus**, descendants of the Jurchen, overthrew the corrupt Ming and established the Qing Dynasty placing China once again under the yoke of a foreign ethnic group. The Qing dynasty expanded Chinese territory larger than it ever had been before and ruled a population of 450 million people. Unlike previous Chinese dynasties, the Qing did not impose Chinese language or culture over their subjects and thought of China as just one part of a larger Manchu empire. They adopted a policy of "ruling different people differently," allowing local languages, customs, and in some cases, permitting local leaders to maintain leadership positions. The Manchus strove to keep themselves racially separate from the ethnic Chinese (the Han). Chinese were forbidden to learn the Manchu language and prohibited from traveling to the Manchu homeland where they might learn it. Marriage between Manchu and Han was illegal. With ethnic lines clearly drawn, Manchus got preferential treatment. There was a separate court system for Manchus and prosecuting them was very difficult. If convicted, Manchus got reduced punishments and had prison cells separate from those used for all other prisoners. Although Manchus were the most favored group in the imperial bureaucracy, Chinese were allowed to take governing posts along with Manchus. Allowing Chinese to earn positions in the bureaucracy through civil service examinations rendered Manchu rule more acceptable for Chinese. However, the highest point to which a Chinese civil servant could rise, was an executive position known as a "grand secretary." These administrators had no policy making power; they served as channels of communication "by ratifying, and forwarding 'memorials,' reports sent to the emperor from other central and field offices." The highest central administrative positions in Beijing, of course, were reserved for Manchus who were paid salaries in silver, not copper coins like other ethnic groups were paid. And to prevent Chinese from dominating the bureaucracy, it was much easier for Manchus to gain appointments and rise through the ranks.



The Manchus forced the conquered Han to adopt their hair style called the queue. It became a symbol of Manchu domination over the Han and an easy way to identify those Chinese who refused to submit to the Manchu.

Expulsion of Jews from Spain

In late 15th century Spain, **the Spanish Inquisition** sought to "purify Catholicism" from corrupt influences. Jewish communities got caught up in the inquisition. In 1492, Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand accepted the Catholic priest Tomas de Torquemada's argument to remove Jewish communities from Spain forcibly. Torquemada believed that Jewish people who refused to convert to Christianity would continue to influence Jews who had earlier converted to Christianity if allowed to stay in Spain. Many former Spanish Jews moved to the Ottoman Empire, where they found some acceptance and economic opportunity.

Race in Portuguese and Spanish Latin America

Spanish Castas= New Social/Racial Categorization

In Latin America, a much more complex racial dynamic developed. Because it was less common for white women to immigrate to the Portuguese and Spanish American colonies, European men commonly married and had children with women of color or had children outside of traditional marriage. These relationships resulted in a significant mixed-race population. Unlike in North America, mixed-race ancestry did not strip an individual of all social status or opportunity. By the 19th century, mixed-race peoples had obtained positions of significant influence within the Latin and South American social structure. Unlike in North America, those of mixed race could find their way into government employment and decision making—at least at the lower levels. However, like other American colonies, natives and African slaves lacked all social and political rights.

Creoles in Spanish America

Having just driven the Moors and Jews out of Iberia, the Spanish Conquistadors who came to the Americas were very conscious of race. The class system they established there combined the racial prejudices of Europeans with the unique circumstances of the New World. The Spanish exercised power in their American empire primarily through large landed estates (see *encomienda* above) through which they controlled indigenous labor and collected tribute. The owners of these estates were **creoles**, people of pure Spanish descent for whom the New World was their permanent home. Although peninsulares, viceroys and other bureaucrats on assignment from Spain, continued to be the colonial connection to the crown back in Europe, creoles better understood the day-to-day management of the colonies and developed their own colonial culture. The new creole elites worked in close relationship with the Roman Catholic Church which served to reinforce the hierarchical and patriarchal social order of the colonies. Needless to say, the creoles grew to resent the peninsulares. They would be the driving force for independence in the revolutionary period.

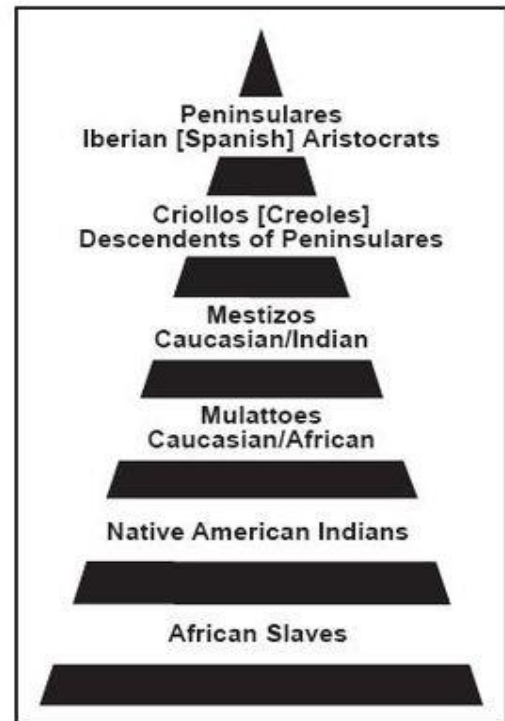
Encomienda System

Spanish coerced labor system that rewarded conquistadors with the labor of conquered non-Christian peoples (Natives Americans). The laborers, in theory, were provided with benefits by the conquerors for whom they labored, including military protection and conversion to Catholicism.

Catholic Missionary Efforts= New Syncretic Religions

- Santería in Cuba
 - Yoruba religion of West Africa and Roman Catholicism
- Haitian Vodou
 - West/Central Africa and Roman Catholicism
 - Vodou revolves around spirits known as lwa (like Catholic saints)
- The Lady of Guadalupe
 - Connection made between Virgin Mary and Aztec goddess of love and fertility, Tonantzin

Social Classes in Spanish Colonies



Source: John Osborne et al., *Global Studies*, N & N Publishing (adapted)

The Transatlantic Slave Trade and Chattel Slavery

In addition to the rise of new elites and the fluctuating power of intermediaries, this era saw demographic, gender, and family changes as well. In Africa, the **slave trade** caused a significant demographic change. Between 1500 and 1900 approximately 10 million slaves were taken from Africa's west coast to labor in the Americas (this journey was known as the **Middle Passage**). During that same time, 6 million left the east coast as slaves in Asia and 8 million were enslaved within the African continent. The result was that just as European and Asian populations were increasing due to the transferring of new crops (The Columbian Exchange), Africa saw a significant decline in population. Moreover, since there was an emphasis placed on having male slaves for sugar plantations in the Americas, the drain of slaves on the west African coast had a strong gender dimension. Places hit hardest by the slave trade, such as Angola, experienced a catastrophic gender imbalance with females comprising up to 65 percent of the population.

Why African Slaves in Americas?

- Smallpox devastated Native populations (no immunity)
- Already established slave trade in Trans Saharan trading network
- African elites desire for European goods (guns/rum/etc.)
- Planation system (cash crops like sugar) require large labor force
- Most African slaves taken to Caribbean (West Indies) and Brazil to work on sugar plantations
- Many times, there was a larger population of African slaves than Europeans in colonies

