**Peninsular**

* The highest social group in the Latin America social hierarchy was of Peninsulares. These were people who were born in Spain not in Latin America. They were considered of true blood. This social class was also termed as Spaniards. These people enjoyed top most power, rights, authority and economic favors in the society. Entire political powers were also under their administration. They controlled the entire government along with economic affairs of the society.
* Persons of Spanish descent born in Spain (i.e., from the Iberian Peninsula, hence their name). Generally, there were two groups of Peninsulares. The first group includes those that were appointed to important jobs in the government, the army and the Catholic Church by the Crown. This system was intended to perpetuate the ties of the governing elite to the Spanish crown. The theory was that an outsider should be appointed to rule over a certain society, therefore a New Spaniard would not be appointed Viceroy of New Spain. These officials usually had a long history of service to the Crown and moved around the Empire frequently. They usually did not live permanently in any one place in Latin America. The second group of Peninsulares did settle permanently in a specific region and came to associate with it. The first wave were the original settlers themselves, the Conquistadors, who essentially transformed themselves into lords of an area through their act of conquest. In the centuries after the Conquest, more Peninsulares continued to emigrate under different circumstances, usually for commercial reasons. Some even came as indentured servants to established Criollo families. Therefore, there were Peninsulares of all socioeconomic classes in America. Once they settled, they tended to form families, so Peninsulares and Criollos were united and divided by family ties and tensions.
* At the top of the social tree are Spaniards born in the Iberian peninsula who have come out to America to take up an official position in government or church, or else to make their fortunes; they are known as peninsulares or gachupines (a local word for Spaniards). It has always been Spanish policy to favour the peninsulares, in terms of appointments to high and profitable office