

one who rules a country or province as the representative of his sovereign or king and who is empowered to act in the sovereign's name. Viceroy (*virrey*) was the title given to the principal governors of Spain's American colonies, as well as to the governors of the "kingdoms" (*reinos*) of peninsular Spain proper (*e.g.*, Aragon, Valencia).

In the early 16th century the great vicerealties of New Spain (Mexico) and Peru were instituted; two more—New Granada and Río de la Plata—were created in South America in the 18th century. The viceroys were appointed by the king of Spain and the Council of the Indies from among noble Spanish families. Their official powers and duties were extensive: the collection and augmentation of royal revenues, the nomination of lesser colonial officials (both civil and ecclesiastical), the enforcement of the laws, the protection of the Indians and their conversion to Christianity, and, until the 18th century, the grant of *encomiendas* (grants of Indians for labour and tribute to certain colonists).

The powers of the viceroys were subject to various limitations: other important colonial officials were also crown-appointed and could thwart them by dealing directly with Madrid. Moreover, the home government's minute regulations on every aspect of colonial administration (though they were often ignored) tended to allow little discretionary power. The *audiencia*, a court that shared the viceroy's administrative responsibilities, often used its power to obstruct him. The viceroy's princely salary was supposed to prevent corruption, and commercial dealings were forbidden to him. Before laying down his office he was required to report to the king the principal deeds and events of his administration, which was also subjected to a judicial review (*residencia*).

In Brazil, the captain general, who occupied a position similar to the Spanish viceroys, was styled viceroy from the mid-17th century. From the 14th century the governors appointed by the English crown to rule in Ireland were called viceroys; and between 1858 and 1935 the title was applied to the British governor-general of India.

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