

Aimorés are so savage that the other barbarians consider them worse than barbarians. Some of these were taken alive in Porto Seguro and in Ilheos, and they would not eat, preferring to die like savages.

This people first came to the sea at the River Caravellas, hard by Porto Seguro, and roamed this countryside and the beaches as far as the River Camamú; from there they began to launch attacks near Tinharé, descending to the shore only when they came to make an attack. This people is of the same color as the others, but they are larger and of more robust build. They have no beards or any other hair except on their heads, because they pluck out the hairs on the other parts of their bodies. They fight with very large bows and arrows, and are such excellent bowmen that they never miss a shot; they are marvelously light on their feet, and great runners.

These barbarians do not live in villages or houses like other people, and so far no one has come across their dwellings in the woods; they go from one place to another through the woods and fields; they sleep on the ground on leaves; and if it rains they go up to the foot of a tree and squat there, covering themselves with leaves; no other furnishings have ever been found among them. These savages do not have gardens or raise any food; they live on wild fruit and the game they kill, which they eat raw or poorly roasted, when they have a fire. Both men and women cut their hair short, shearing it with certain canes of which they gather a great number; their speech is rough, projected from their throats with much force, like Basque, it is impossible to write down.

These barbarians live by robbing everyone they encounter, and one never sees more than twenty or thirty bowmen at one time. They never fight anyone face to face, but always employ treachery, for they attack in the fields and roads which they travel, waiting in ambush for other Indians and all other sorts of persons, each hidden behind a tree and never missing a shot. They use up all their arrows, and if the people turn on them they all flee in different directions, but if they see that their pursuers have dropped their guard they stop and find a place to hide until their pursuers have passed, when they shoot them in the back with their arrows at will. They do not know how to swim, and any river that cannot be forded presents an adequate defense against them; but in order to find a crossing they will go many miles along the river in search of one.

These savages eat human flesh for sustenance—unlike the other Indians, who only eat it for the sake of revenge and in memory of their ancient hatreds. The captaincies of Porto Seguro and Ilheos have been destroyed and almost depopulated by fear of these barbarians, and the sugar mills have stopped working because all the slaves and the other people have been killed by them. The people on most of the plantations and those who have escaped from them have become so afraid of them that if they merely hear the word “Aimorés” they leave their plantations in search of refuge, the white men

among them. In the twenty-five years that this plague has afflicted these two captaincies, they have killed more than 300 Portuguese and 3,000 slaves.

The inhabitants of Baía used to send letters to the people of Ilheos, and men traveled this road along the shore without danger. But when the Aimorés realized this they decided to come to these beaches to wait for the people who passed there, and there they killed many Portuguese and many more slaves. These bandits are such fleet runners that no one could escape them on foot, except those who take refuge in the sea; they dare not enter the ocean, but wait for them to come on shore until nightfall, when they retire. For this reason the road is forbidden, and no one travels it except at great risk of his life. If some means is not found to destroy these savages they will destroy the plantations of Baía, through which they roam at will. Since they are such intractable enemies of all mankind, it was not possible to learn more about their mode of life and customs.

## 8. INDIAN FORCED LABOR IN GUATEMALA

*Las Casas died in 1566, at the age of eighty-two, in a convent outside Madrid. Three Spanish kings had listened respectfully to his advice on Indian affairs, had sometimes acted on that advice, and in their Indian legislation gave pious lip service to the principles he advocated. But the realities of colonial existence overruled the voice of morality and religion. Legal slavery and personal service under the encomienda system had largely disappeared by 1600 in New Spain and Peru, effectively replaced by a system of labor conscription requiring all adult male Indians to give a certain amount of their time to work in mines, factories, and on farms, ranches, and public works, receiving a small wage for their labor. In New Spain this institution was known as the repartimiento. Its operation in this area is described by Thomas Gage (1600?–1656), an observant though highly biased Englishman who spent twelve years as a priest in Guatemala before turning apostate and coming home to write an anti-Spanish book about his experiences.*

The miserable condition of the Indians of that country is such that though the Kings of Spain have never yielded to what some would have, that they should be slaves, yet their lives are as full of bitterness as is the life of a slave. For which I have known myself some of them that have come home from toiling and moiling with Spaniards, after many blows, some wounds, and little or no wages, who have sullenly and stubbornly lain down upon their

---

Thomas Gage, *The English-American: A New Survey of the West Indies*, ed. A. P. Newton (London, 1946), pp. 230–233.

beds, resolving to die rather than to live any longer a life so slavish, and have refused to take either meat or drink or anything else comfortable and nourishing, which their wives have offered unto them, that so by pining and starving they might consume themselves. Some I have by good persuasions encouraged to life rather than to a voluntary and willful death; others there have been that would not be persuaded, but in that willful way have died.

The Spaniards that live about that country (especially the farmers of the Valley of Mixco, Pinola, Petapa, Amatitlan, and those of the Sacatepequez) allege that all their trading and farming is for the good of the commonwealth, and therefore whereas there are not Spaniards enough for so ample and large a country to do all their work, and all are not able to buy slaves and blackmoors, they stand in need of the Indians' help to serve them for their pay and hire; whereupon it hath been considered that a partition of Indian laborers be made every Monday, or Sunday in the afternoon to the Spaniards, according to the farms they occupy, or according to their several employments, calling, and trading with mules, or any other way. So that for such and such a district there is named an officer, who is called *juez repartidor*, who according to a list made of every farm, house, and person, is to give so many Indians by the week. And here is a door opened to the President of Guatemala, and to the judges, to provide well for their menial servants, whom they commonly appoint for this office, which is thus performed by them. They name the town and place of their meeting upon Sunday or Monday, to which themselves and the Spaniards of that district do resort. The Indians of the several towns are to have in a readiness so many laborers as the Court of Guatemala hath appointed to be weekly taken out of such a town, who are conducted by an Indian officer to the town of general meeting; and when they come thither with their tools, their spades, shovels, bills, or axes, with their provision of victuals for a week (which are commonly some dry cakes of maize, puddings of *frijoles*, or French beans, and a little chili or biting long pepper, or a bit of cold meat for the first day or two) and with beds on their backs (which is only a coarse woolen mantle to wrap about them when they lie on the bare ground) then are they shut up in the townhouse, some with blows, some with spurnings, some with boxes on the ear, if presently they go not in.

Now all being gathered together, and the house filled with them, the *juez repartidor*, or officer, calls by the order of the list such and such a Spaniard, and also calls out of the house so many Indians as by the Court are commanded to be given him (some are allowed three, some four, some ten, some fifteen, some twenty, according to their employments) and delivereth unto the Spaniard his Indians, and so to all the rest, till they be all served; who when they receive their Indians, take from them a tool, or their mantles, to secure them that they run not away; and for every Indian delivered unto them, they give unto the *juez repartidor*, or officer, half a real, which is threepence an Indian for his fees, which mounteth yearly to him to a great deal of

money; for some officers make a partition or distribution of four hundred, some of two hundred, some of three hundred Indians every week, and carrieth home with him so many half hundred reals for one, or half a day's work. If complaint be made by any Spaniard that such and such an Indian did run away from him, and served him not the week part, the Indian must be brought, and surely tied to a post by his hands in the marketplace, and there be whipped upon his bare back. But if the poor Indian complain that the Spaniards cozened and cheated him of his shovel, axe, bill, mantle, or wages no justice shall be executed against the cheating Spaniard, neither shall the Indian be righted, though it is true the order runs equally in favor of both Indian and Spaniard. Thus are the poor Indians sold for threepence apiece for a whole week's slavery, not permitted to go home at nights unto their wives, though their work lie not above a mile from the town where they live; nay some are carried ten or twelve miles from their home, who must not return till Saturday night late, and must that week do whatsoever their master pleaseth to command them. The wages appointed them will scarce find them meat and drink, for they are not allowed a real a day, which is but sixpence, and with that they are to find themselves, but for six days' work and diet they are to have five reals, which is half a crown. This same order is observed in the city of Guatemala, and towns of Spaniards, where to every family that wants the service of an Indian or Indians, though it be but to fetch water and wood on their backs, or to go of errands, is allowed the like from the nearest Indian towns.

## 9. DEBT PEONAGE IN PERU

*The repartimiento, known in Peru as the mita, could not provide Spanish employers with a dependable and continuing supply of labor. As a result, they turned increasingly to the use of free or contractual wage labor. From the first, however, this so-called free labor was associated with debt servitude. An advance of money or goods required an Indian to work for his employer until his debt was paid, often reducing him and his descendants to the condition of virtual slaves or serfs. Debt peonage became widespread in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The Spanish royal officials Jorge Juan and Antonio de Ulloa offer a precise description of how debt peonage, superimposed on mita obligations, operated in the Peruvian province of Quito in the first half of the eighteenth century.*

---

Jorge Juan and Antonio de Ulloa, *Noticias secretas de América*, 2 vols. (Madrid, 1918), 1:290–292. Excerpt translated by Benjamin Keen.

On farming haciendas, an Indian subject to the *mita* earns from fourteen to eighteen pesos a year, the wage varying with the locality or *corregimiento*. In addition, the *hacendado* assigns him a piece of land, about twenty to thirty rods square in size, to grow his food. In return the Indian must work three hundred days in the year, leaving him sixty-five days of rest for Sundays, other church holidays, illness, or some accident that may prevent him from working. The *mayordomo* of the hacienda keeps careful record of the days worked by the Indian in order to settle accounts with him at the end of the year.

From his wage the master deducts the eight pesos of royal tribute that the Indian must pay; assuming that the Indian earns eighteen pesos, the most he can earn, he is left with ten pesos. From this amount the master deducts two pesos, two *reales* to pay for three rods of coarse cloth, costing six *reales* a rod, from which the Indian makes a cloak to cover his nakedness. He now has seven pesos, six *reales* with which to feed and dress his wife and children, if he has a family, and to pay the church fees demanded by the parish priest. But this is not all; since he cannot raise on his little plot all the food he needs for his family, he must get from the *hacendado* each month a half *fanega* of maize, costing six *reales*, more than double the price if he could buy elsewhere. Six *reales*, times twelve, come to nine pesos, which is one peso, six *reales* more than the Indian has left. Thus the unhappy Indian, after working three hundred days of the year for his master and cultivating his little plot in his free time, and receiving only a coarse cloak and six *fanegas* of maize, is in debt one peso and six *reales*, and must continue to work for his master the following year. . . .

If, to crown his misfortunes, his wife or a child should die, he must somehow find the burial fee demanded by the priest, and so turns to the *hacendado* for another advance. If he is spared the pain of losing a member of his family, the priest demands that he show his gratitude by paying for another church ceremony in honor of the Virgin or some saint, which requires another loan. Thus, at year's end, without money or anything else of value having passed through his hands, the Indian owes his master more than he has earned. The *hacendado* then claims legal control over the Indian and compels him to work for him until the debt is paid. Since it is impossible for the poor Indian to do so, he remains a slave all his life and, contrary to natural law and the law of nations, after his death his sons must continue to work to pay the debt of their father.

## 10. DIALOGUE IN YUCATÁN

*Some of the early friars in the Indies were saintly and courageous men who preached not only the gospel of Christ but the message of justice to the Indians. Their point of*

*view is well expressed in a dialogue overheard in a Yucatán village by Fr. Tomás de la Torre, one of the Dominican friars who accompanied Las Casas when the great fighter for Indian rights came to southern Mexico as bishop of Chiapas in 1544.*

The sun had already set when we came to a clean looking little church, decorated with branches. We were much pleased and greatly heartened, believing that where the signs appeared we were certain to find charity. After saying a prayer we continued on our way as if spellbound, for we knew nothing of these people and did not know how to talk to them. This was our first encounter with the Indians, who certainly could do as they pleased with us without fear of resistance; it was we who were afraid of them.

So we came to a village where many Indians were sitting about. When they saw us they rose and gave us seats, which were small stools, no larger than the distance between the extended thumb and forefinger of one hand. . . . The father vicar said, "Let us stay here this night, for God has prepared this lodging for us." The Indians, seeing how miserable we were, owing to the cold of the lagoon, made a great bonfire, the first that we had needed since leaving Spain. Then the chief came with half a pumpkin shell filled with water; he washed our feet, and they gave us each two tortillas and a piece of fresh fish and another of sweet potato. We ate and felt much better, and were filled with devotion and wonder to see the charity of these Indians, who the Spaniards claimed were so bestial.

At night came Ximénes, who knew their language, and through him we asked them why they had treated us so kindly. They replied that on the road an Indian had seen us and realized that we were thirsty and had told them so, and for that reason they had sent that pumpkin shell of water and accorded us that hospitality, because they knew that we came from Castile for their good. We took great pleasure in the reply of these barbarians.

That night there arrived a peasant who came with the bishop [Las Casas], Zamora by name, and after we had all lain down to sleep, some on boards and others on small mats that the Indians make of rushes. . . . Zamora, the recently-arrived peasant from Castile, and Ximénes, an oldtimer in the country and a conqueror of Yucatan, began to talk, and because their conversation was very diverting I shall set down here what I remember of it.

Said Ximénes to Zamora: "You chose a poor place to stable that beast of yours for the night; the Indians will surely take it and eat it."

Said Zamora: "Let them eat it, by God; we Christians owe them a good deal more than that."

Fray Tomás de la Torre, *Desde Salamanca, España hasta Ciudad Real, Chiapas, Diario del viaje, 1544-1545*, ed. Frans Blom (México, 1945), pp. 150-152. Excerpt translated by Benjamin Keen.

the fleets) sells for ten and twelve. . . . The wine trade is no small affair, but does not exceed the limits of the province.

The silk which is made in New Spain goes to other provinces—to Peru, for example. There was no silk industry before the Spaniards came; the mulberry trees were brought from Spain, and they grow well, especially in the province called Misteca, where they raise silkworms and make good taffetas; they do not yet make damasks, satins, or velvets, however.

The sugar industry is even wider in scope, for the sugar not only is consumed in the Indies but is shipped in quantity to Spain. Sugar cane grows remarkably well in various parts of the Indies. In the islands, in Mexico, in Peru, and elsewhere they have built sugar mills that do a large business. I was told that the Nasca [Peru] sugar mill earned more than thirty thousand pesos a year. The mill at Chicama, near Trujillo [Peru], was also a big enterprise, and those of New Spain are no smaller, for the consumption of sugar and preserves in the Indies is simply fantastic. From the island of Santo Domingo, in the fleet in which I came, they brought eight hundred and ninety-eight chests and boxes of sugar. I happened to see the sugar loaded at the port of Puerto Rico, and it seemed to me that each box must contain eight arrobas. The sugar industry is the principal business of those islands—such a taste have men developed for sweets!

Olives and olive trees are also found in the Indies, in Mexico, and in Peru, but up to now they have not set up any mills to make olive oil. Actually, it is not made at all, for they prefer to eat the olives, seasoning them well. They find it unprofitable to make olive oil, and so all their oil comes from Spain.

### 3. THE POTOSÍ MINE

*Spain's proudest possession in the New World was the great silver mine of Potosí in Upper Peru (present-day Bolivia), whose flow of treasure attained gigantic proportions between 1579 and 1635. More than any other colonial resource, the fantastic wealth of Potosí captivated the Spanish imagination. The following selection gives some account of this wealth and of mining practices in the late sixteenth century.*

It appears from the royal accounts of the House of Trade of Potosí, and it is affirmed by venerable and trustworthy men, that during the time of the government of the licentiate Polo, which was many years after the discovery of the hill, silver was registered every Saturday to the value of 150 to 200,000 pesos, of which the King's fifth (*quinto*) came to 30 to 40,000 pesos, making a

Acosta, *Historia natural y moral de las Indias*, pp. 238–243. Excerpt translated by Benjamin Keen.

yearly total of about 1,500,000 pesos. According to this calculation, the value of the daily output of the mine was 30,000 pesos, of which the King's share amounted to 6,000 pesos. One more thing should be noted in estimating the wealth of Potosí; namely, that accounts have been kept of only the silver that was marked and taxed. But it is well known in Peru that for a long time the people of that country used the silver called "current," which was neither marked nor taxed. And those who know the mines well conclude that at that time the bulk of the silver mined at Potosí paid no tax, and that this included all the silver in circulation among the Indians, and much of that in use among the Spaniards, as I could observe during my stay in that country. This leads me to believe that a third—if not one half—of the silver production of Potosí was neither registered nor taxed. . . . [It should also be noted that] although the mines of Potosí have been dug to a depth of two hundred *estados*, the miners have never encountered water, which is the greatest possible obstacle to profitable operations, whereas the mines of Porco, so rich in silver ore, have been abandoned because of the great quantity of water. For there are two intolerable burdens connected with the search for silver: the labor of digging and breaking the rock, and that of getting out the water—and the first of these is more than enough. In fine, at the present time His Catholic Majesty receives on the average a million pesos a year from his fifth of the silver of Potosí, not counting the considerable revenue he derives from quicksilver and other royal perquisites. . . .

The hill of Potosí contains four principal veins: the Rich vein, that of Centeno, the vein called "of Tin," and that of Mendieta. All these veins are in the eastern part of the hill, as if facing the sunrise; there is no vein to the west. These veins run from north to south, or from pole to pole. They measure six feet at their greatest width, and a *palmo* at the narrowest point. From these veins issue others, as smaller branches grow out of the arms of trees. Each vein has different mines that have been claimed and divided among different owners, whose names they usually bear. The largest mine is eighty yards in size, the legal maximum; the smallest is four yards. By now all these mines are very deep. In the Rich vein there are seventy-eight mines; they are as deep as one hundred and eighty and even two hundred *estados* in some places. In the Centeno vein there are twenty-four mines. Such are as much as sixty and even eighty *estados* deep, and the same is true of the other veins and mines of that hill. In order to work the mines at such great depths, tunnels (*socavones*) were devised; these are caves, made at the foot of the mountain, that cross it until they meet the veins. Although the veins run north to south, they descend from the top to the foot of the mountain—a distance calculated at more than 1200 *estados*. And by this calculation, although the mines run so deep it is six times as far again to their root and bottom, which some believe must be extremely rich, being the trunk and source of all the veins. But so far experience has proven the contrary, for the higher the vein the richer it is, and the deeper it runs the poorer the yield. Be that as it may, in order to work

the mines with less cost, labor, and risk, they invented the tunnels, by means of which they can easily enter and leave the mines. They are eight feet wide and one *estado* high, and are closed off with doors. With the aid of these tunnels they get out the silver ore without difficulty, paying the owner of the tunnel a fifth of all the metal that is obtained. Nine tunnels have already been made, and others are being dug. A tunnel called “of the Poison” (*del Veneno*), which enters the Rich vein, was twenty-nine years in the making, for it was begun in 1556 (eleven years after the discovery of those mines) and was completed on April 11, 1585. This tunnel crossed the vein at a point thirty-five *estados* from its root or source, and from there to the mouth of the mine was 135 *estados*; such was the depth of that they had to descend to work those mines. This tunnel (called the *Crucero*) is 250 yards in length, and its construction took twenty-nine years; this shows how much effort men will make to get silver from the bowels of the earth. They labor there in perpetual darkness, not knowing day from night; and since the sun never penetrates these places, they are not only always dark but very cold, and the air is very thick and alien to the nature of men. And that is why those who enter there for the first time get seasick, as it were, being seized with nausea and stomach cramps, as I was. The miners always carry candles, and they divide their labor so that some work by day and rest by night and others work at night and rest during the day. The silver ore is generally of a flinty hardness, and they break it up with bars. Then they carry the ore on their backs up ladders made of three cords of twisted cowhide, joined by pieces of wood that serve as rungs, so that one man can climb up and another come down at the same time. These ladders are ten *estados* long, and at the top and bottom of each there is a wooden platform where the men may rest, because there are so many ladders to climb. Each man usually carries on his back a load of two arrobas of silver ore tied in a cloth, knapsack fashion; thus they ascend, three at a time. The one who goes first carries a candle tied to his thumb, because, as I mentioned, they receive no light from above; thus, holding with both hands, they climb that great distance, often more than 150 *estados*—a fearful thing, the mere thought of which inspires dread. So great is the love of silver, which men suffer such great pains to obtain.

#### 4. THE COLONIAL FACTORY

*The Mexican city of Puebla was a leading industrial center in the colonial period, with numerous workshops (obrajes) producing cotton, woolen, and silk cloth, bats, chinaware, and glass. The Englishman Thomas Gage, who visited Puebla not many*

Antonio Vázquez de Espinosa, *Compendio y descripción de las Indias Occidentales*, 2 vols. (1636), 1:218–220. Excerpt translated by the editors.

*years after the visit described below, observed that “the cloth which is made in it . . . is sent far and near, and [is] judged now to be as good as the cloth of Segovia, which is the best that is made in Spain.”*

This city [Puebla] has great workshops in which they weave a quantity of fine cotton cloth, wool frieze, and ribbed silk from which they make a handsome profit because this business is common in these parts. And although the workshop owners are compassionate Christians, in order to supply their workshops with people to make the cloth and ribbed silk, they have persons hired and paid to deceive poor innocents. When they see some Indian from out of town, they lure him to the workshop with tricks or on some pretext like hiring him as a porter and paying him to carry something. When he enters inside the workshop they spring the trap, and the poor soul never again leaves that jail until he dies and is taken away to be buried. In this way they have seized and deceived many an Indian, married with children, forgotten for twenty years or more and for all his life, without his wife or his children knowing where he is, because even though he might want to leave, he cannot, since the city gates are well guarded by watchmen. These Indians are kept busy with carding, spinning, weaving and the other tasks associated with the making of cloth and ribbed silk. And the owners make their profits by these unjust and illicit means.

The Royal Council of the Indies, with holy zeal in the service of Our Lord God, His Majesty, and for the good of the Indians, has tried to remedy the situation through the warrants and ordinances that were sent and continue to be sent for the proper administration of the Indians and for their relief from this great burden and enslavement. And the Viceroy of New Spain [Mexico] has appointed inspectors to visit the workshops and remedy such things. But since most of those charged with these duties are concerned more with their own betterment than with helping the Indians—although it might weigh on their consciences—and since the workshop owners pay them well, the miserable Indians are left in the same slavery. And if some inspectors are carried away by a holy zeal to remedy these abuses when they go to inspect the workshops, the owners hold the workers in some previously designated area, where they hide the Indians against their will so that they are not seen, or found, or able to voice their complaints. This is so common in all the workshops of this city and jurisdiction, and that of Mexico City, and those that build and run the workshops do so without scruples—as if it were not a grave mortal sin.

#### 5. ON THE SEA-ROAD TO THE INDIES

*Throughout the sixteenth century, men and goods were carried to the colonies in tiny vessels similar to those in which Columbus made his memorable discovery. Danger and*

mixed blood, wish to lean towards the whites, if they can possibly lay any claim to relationship. Even the *mestizo* tries to pass for a mulatto, and to persuade himself and others, that his veins contain some portion of white blood, although that with which they are filled proceeds from Indian and negro sources. Those only who have no pretensions to a mixture of blood, call themselves negroes, which renders the individuals who do pass under this denomination, much attached to each other, from the impossibility of being mistaken for members of any other cast. They are of handsome persons, brave and hardy, obedient to the whites, and willing to please. But they are easily affronted: and the least allusion to their color being made by a person of lighter tint, enrages them to a great degree; though they will sometimes say, "a negro I am, but always upright." They are again distinct from their brethren in slavery, owing to their superior situation as free men.

## 7. THE SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES OF SLAVERY

*A forerunner of the Brazilian abolitionists of a later day, Luiz dos Santos Vilhena, Regius Professor of Greek in Baía from 1787 to 1798, boldly assailed the system of slave labor on which the sugar culture of his province was based. Slavery, not an enervating tropical climate, he affirmed, was responsible for the dissolute manners and idleness of the Portuguese living in Brazil. The following excerpt from his book on Brazil, written in the form of letters to a Portuguese friend, illustrates the vigor and forthrightness of his attack.*

The Negro women and a majority of the mulatto women as well, for whom honor is a delusion, a word signifying nothing, are commonly the first to corrupt their master's sons, giving them their first lessons in sexual license, in which from childhood on they are engulfed; and from this presently arises a veritable troop of little mulattos whose influence on family life is most pernicious. But it often happens that those who are called the old masters, to distinguish them from their sons, are the very ones who set a bad example for their families through their conduct with their female slaves, giving pain to their wives and perhaps causing their death. Frequently their black favorites contrive to put the legitimate children out of the way, to avoid any difficulties in the event of the master's death.

There are other men who never marry, simply because they cannot get out of the clutches of the harpies in whose power they have been since childhood. There are ecclesiastics, and not a few, who from old and evil habit, for-

Luiz dos Santos Vilhena, *Recopilação de noticias soteropolitanas e brasílicas*, ed. Braz do Amaral, 2 vols. (Baía, 1921-1922), 1:138-142. Excerpt translated by Benjamin Keen.

getting their character and station, live a disorderly life with mulatto and Negro women, by whom they have sons who inherit their property; in this and other ways many of the most valuable properties of Brazil pass into the hands of haughty, arrogant vagabond mulattos, to the great detriment of the State. This is a matter well deserving of His Majesty's attention, for if these sugar mills and great plantations are not prevented from falling into the hands of these mulattos, who ordinarily are profligate and set little store by these splendid properties, having come by them so easily, in due time they will all fall into their hands and be ruined, as has happened to the greater part of those that came into the possession of such owners.

You must also know that the passion for having Negroes and mulattos in the house is so strong here that only death removes them from the household in which they were born; there are many families that have sixty, seventy, and more superfluous persons within their doors. I speak of the city, for in the country this would not be remarkable. All this black brood, whether mulattos or Negroes, are treated with the greatest indulgence, and that is why they are all vagabonds, insolent, bold, and ungrateful. . . .

The Negroes are harmful in still another way to the State of Brazil. For since all the servile labors and mechanical arts are in their charge, few are the mulattos, and fewer still the white men, who will deign to perform such tasks. . . .

It has been observed that he who comes here as servant to some public official continues to be a good servant until he realizes that the work he does for his master is performed in other households by Negroes and mulattos, whereupon he begins to plead with his master to find him some public employment not open to Negroes. Some masters yield to their entreaties, finding themselves so badgered and badly served that they are driven to distraction. But if they delay in finding them jobs, their servants leave them, preferring to be vagabonds and go about dying from hunger, or to become soldiers and sometimes bandits, to working for an honored master who pays them well and supports and cherishes them—and this only to avoid having to do what Negroes do in other households.

The same occurs with the serving women who accompany the ladies that come to Brazil. The same prejudice induces them to take to the streets; they prefer suffering all the resulting miseries to living in a home where they are honored and sheltered.

The girls of this country are of such disposition that the daughter of the poorest, most abject individual, the most neglected little mulatto wench, would rather go to the scaffold than serve a Duchess, if one were to be found in this country; that is the reason for the great number of ruined and disgraced women in this city.

The whites born in this land must either be soldiers, merchants, notaries, clerks, court officials, judges, or Treasury officials or else hold some other public occupation that is barred to Negroes, such as surgeon, apothecary, pilot,

shipmaster or sea-captain, warehouse clerk (*caxeiro do trapiche*), and so forth. A few others are employed as sculptors, goldsmiths, and the like.

Many used to attend the school established by His Majesty in this city, a school that once boasted of excellent students who prepared for the Church and other learned professions. But when their fathers saw that the school was the fixed target at which the recruiting officers and soldiers aimed their shots, and that their sons were being snatched away for garrison duty, against which their immunities, privileges, and exemptions availed them nothing, they became convinced that the State had no further need of ecclesiastics or members of other learned professions . . . and decided that they would not sacrifice their sons by exposing them to the enmity of autocratic and thoughtless soldiers. . . .

Is it not obvious that the inactivity of the whites is the reason for the laziness of the blacks? Why should a man not dig the ground in Brazil who in Portugal lived solely by his hoe? Why should one not labor here who in Portugal knew nothing more than to put one hand to the plough handle and another to the goad?

Why should a man go about here with his body upright who came here bent with labor?

Why should he who knows only obedience want only to command? Why should he who was always a plebeian strut about with the air of a noble?

How plentifully would these blessed lands produce, dear friend, if they were cultivated by other hands than those of savage Negroes, who do no more than scratch their surface!

What great profits they would yield if cultivated by sensible and intelligent men, and if sound views of political economy changed the prevailing system!

No land could boast of greater opulence and plenty than Baía if it were ruled wisely, and if henceforth admittance were denied to slaves, the causes of its backwardness and poverty.

## 8



## COLONIAL CULTURE

**C**OLONIAL CULTURE in most of its aspects was a projection of contemporaneous Spanish culture and only faintly reflected Native American influences. Colonial culture thus suffered from all the infirmities of its parent but lacked the breadth and vitality of Spanish literature and art, the product of a much older and more mature civilization.

The Church enjoyed a virtual monopoly of colonial education on all levels. Poverty condemned the great majority of the natives and mixed castes to illiteracy. The universities of Lima and Mexico City, both chartered in 1551, were the first permanent institutions of higher learning. Because they were modeled on Spain's University of Salamanca, their organization, curriculum, and method of instruction were medieval.

Within the limits imposed by official censorship and their own backgrounds, colonial scholars, especially those of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, made impressive contributions in the fields of history, anthropology, linguistics, geography, and natural history. The second half of the seventeenth century saw a decline in the quantity and quality of scholarly production. Nevertheless, in this period two remarkable men, Carlos Sigüenza y Góngora in Mexico and Pedro de Peralta Barnuevo in Peru, foreshadowed the eighteenth-century Enlightenment by the universality of their interests and by their concern with the practical uses of science.

Colonial literature, with some notable exceptions, was a pallid reflection of prevailing literary trends in Spain. Among a multitude of poetasters towered a strange and rare genius, one of the greatest poets of the New World, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. Sor Juana could not escape the pressures of her environment. Rebuked by the bishop of Puebla for her worldly interests, she ultimately gave up her books and scientific instruments and devoted the remainder of her brief life to religious devotion and charitable works.