

~~chiefs and their families, the Indians formed a distinct servile class, burdened with many tribute and labor obligations. They lived apart from the whites in their own communities of pre-Conquest origin, or in towns established by the Spaniards. In many regions they preserved their ancestral social organization, language, and other cultural traits. On numerous occasions they rose against their oppressors in revolts that were generally crushed with great severity.~~

The virtual disappearance of the native population of the Antilles and the rapid growth of sugar cane cultivation led colonists to demand black slave labor. A large black and mixed population came into being in the regions of plantation culture, notably in the West Indies and on the coasts of Mexico and Venezuela. Smaller populations were found in all the large colonial towns, where they were chiefly used as household servants.

Black slavery in the Spanish colonies has been described as patriarchal and humane by comparison with the system in the English and French colonies, but this judgment, based in considerable part on the Spanish eighteenth-century slave code, has recently been subjected to sharp criticism. Emancipation was legal and occurred with some frequency during the colonial period. Whether slaves or freemen, blacks occupied the lowest position in the social scale. Unless redeemed by wealth or singular talents, blacks, mulattos, and other racial mixtures shared this disfavor. Many found employment in the mines, in the mechanical trades, as confidential servants, and in the colonial militia, where they formed separate units under the command of white officers.

Race mixture played a decisive role in the formation of the Brazilian people. The scarcity of white women in the colony, the lack of puritanical attitudes among the Portuguese, and the despotic power of the great planters over their Indian and black slave women all gave impetus to miscegenation. Color lines were drawn less sharply than in the Spanish Indies, and in colonial Brazil the possession of wealth more easily expunged the "taint" of black skin.

Slavery played as important a role in the social organization of colonial Brazil as race mixture did in its ethnic makeup. The social consequences of the system were entirely negative. Slavery corrupted both master and slave, fostered harmful attitudes with respect to the dignity of labor, and retarded the economic development of Brazil. The virtual monopolization of labor by slaves sharply limited the number of socially acceptable occupations in which whites or free mixed bloods could engage. This gave rise to a large class of vagrants, beggars, "poor whites," and other degraded or disorderly elements who would not or could not compete with slaves in agriculture and industry.

The nucleus of Brazilian social as well as economic organization was the large estate; this centered about the Big House and constituted a patriarchal community that included the owner and his family, his chaplain and over-

seers, his slaves, and his *agregados*, or retainers—freemen of low social status who received the landowner's protection and assistance in return for a variety of services. In the sugar-growing northeast the great planters became a distinct aristocratic class that maintained family traditions and took pride in name and blood.

By contrast with the decisive importance of the *fazenda*, or large estate, most of the colonial towns were mere appendages of the countryside, dominated politically and socially by the rural magnates. But in a few large cities, such as Baía and Rio de Janeiro, other social groups that disputed or shared power with the great landowners existed: high officials of the colonial administration; dignitaries of the Church; wealthy professional men, especially lawyers, and the large merchants, almost exclusively peninsulars, who monopolized the export-import trade and financed the industry of the planters.

1. THE STRUCTURE OF CLASS AND CASTE

The population of the Spanish colonies formed a melting pot of races, white, red, and black. Their progressive amalgamation was slowed but not halted by a caste system that assigned different social values to the respective races and mixtures. Spanish officials Jorge Juan and Antonio de Ulloa describe the complicated structure of class and caste of a colonial town—the Caribbean port of Cartagena.

The inhabitants may be divided into different castes or tribes, who derive their origin from a coalition of Whites, Negroes, and Indians. Of each of these we shall treat particularly. The Whites may be divided into two classes, the Europeans, and Creoles, or Whites born in the country. The former are commonly called *Chapetones*, but are not numerous; most of them either return into Spain after acquiring a competent fortune, or remove up into inland provinces in order to increase it. Those who are settled at Cartagena, carry on the whole trade of that place, and live in opulence; whilst the other inhabitants are indigent, and reduced to have recourse to mean and hard labor for subsistence. The families of the White Creoles compose the landed interest; some of them have large estates, and are highly respected, because their ancestors came into the country invested with honorable posts, bringing their families with them when they settled here. Some of these families, in order to keep up their original dignity, have either married their children to their equals in the country, or sent them as officers on board the galleons; but others have greatly declined. Besides these, there are other Whites, in mean

Jorge Juan and Antonio de Ulloa, *Voyage to South America*, 2 vols. (London, 1772), 1:29–32.

circumstances, who either owe their origin to Indian families, or at least to an intermarriage with them, so that there is some mixture in their blood; but when this is not discoverable by their color, the conceit of being Whites alleviates the pressure of every other calamity.

Among the other tribes which are derived from an intermarriage of the Whites and the Negroes, the first are the Mulattoes. Next to these the *Tercerones*, produced from a White and a Mulatto, with some approximation to the former, but not so near as to obliterate their origin. After these follow the *Quarterones*, proceeding from a White and a *Terceron*. The last are the *Quinterones*, who owe their origin to a White and *Quarteron*. This is the last gradation, there being no visible difference between them and the Whites, either in color or features; nay they are often fairer than the Spaniards. The children of a White and *Quinteron* are also called Spaniards, and consider themselves as free from all taint of the Negro race. Every person is so jealous of the order of their tribe or cast, that if, through inadvertence, you call them by a degree lower than what they actually are, they are highly offended, never suffering themselves to be deprived of so valuable a gift of fortune.

Before they attain the class of the *Quinterones*, there are several intervening circumstances which throw them back; for between the Mulatto and the Negro, there is an intermediate race, which they call *Sambos*, owing their origin to a mixture between one of these with an Indian, or among themselves. They are also distinguished according to the class their fathers were of. Betwixt the *Tercerones* and the Mulattoes, the *Quarterones* and the *Tercerones*, etc. are those called *Tente en el Ayre*, suspended in the air, because they neither advance nor recede. Children, whose parents are a *Quarteron* or *Quinteron*, and a Mulatto or *Terceron*, are *Salto atras retrogrades*; because, instead of advancing towards being Whites, they have gone backwards towards the Negro race. The children between a Negro and *Quinteron* are called *Sambos de Negro, de Mulatto, de Terceron*, etc.

These are the most known and common tribes or *Castas*; there are indeed several others proceeding from their intermarriages; but, being so various, even they themselves cannot easily distinguish them; and these are the only people one sees in the city, the *estancias*, and the villages; for if any Whites, especially women, are met with, it is only accidental, these generally residing in their houses; at least, if they are of any rank or character.

These castas, from the Mulattoes, all affect the Spanish dress, but wear very slight stuffs on account of the heat of the climate. These are the mechanics of the city; the Whites, whether Creoles or *Chapetones*, disdain such a mean occupation follow nothing below merchandise. But it being impossible for all to succeed, great numbers not being able to procure sufficient credit, they become poor and miserable from their aversion to those trades they follow in Europe, and, instead of the riches which they flattered them-

selves with possessing in the Indies, they experience the most complicated wretchedness.

The class of Negroes is not the least numerous, and is divided into two parts; the free and the slaves. These [last] are again subdivided into Creoles and *Bozales*, part of which are employed in the cultivation of the haciendas or *estancias*. Those in the city are obliged to perform the most laborious services, and pay out of their wages a certain quota to their masters, subsisting themselves on the small remainder. The violence of the heat not permitting them to wear any cloths, their only covering is a small piece of cotton stuff about their waist; the female slaves go in the same manner. Some of these live at the *estancias*, being married to the slaves who work there; while those in the city sell in the markets all kind of eatables, and cry fruits, sweet-meats, cakes made of the maize, and cassava, and several other things about the streets. Those who have children sucking at their breast, which is the case of the generality, carry them on their shoulders, in order to have their arms at liberty; and when the infants are hungry, they give them the breast either under the arm or over the shoulder, without taking them from their backs. This will perhaps appear incredible; but their breasts, being left to grow without any pressure on them often hang down to their very waist, and are not therefore difficult to turn over their shoulders for the convenience of the infant.

2. THE COLONIAL CITY: MEXICO CITY

Mexico City and Lima were the two great centers of urban civilization in colonial Spanish America. In each an unbridgeable chasm separated the world of the white upper class, flaunting its wealth in gay apparel, richly ornamented dwellings, and colorful pageants, from that of the sullen Indian, black, and mixed-blood working class, living in wretched huts amid incredible squalor. The renegade English priest Thomas Gage paints a vivid picture of Mexico City in 1625.

At the rebuilding of this city there was a great difference betwixt an inhabitant of Mexico, and a Conqueror; for a Conqueror was a name of honor, and had lands and rents given him and to his posterity by the King of Spain, and the inhabitant or only dweller paid rent for his house. And this hath filled all those parts of America with proud Dons and gentlemen to this day; for every one will call himself a descendant from a Conqueror, though he be as poor as Job; and ask him what is become of his estate and fortune; he will answer that

Thomas Gage, *The English-American: A New Survey of the West Indies*, ed. A. P. Newton (London, 1946), pp. 89-92.

fortune hath taken it away, which shall never take away a Don from him. Nay, a poor cobbler, or carrier that runs about the country far and near getting his living with half-a-dozen mules, if he be called Mendoza, or Guzman, will swear that he descended from those dukes' houses in Spain, and that his grandfather came from thence to conquer, and subdued whole countries to the Crown of Spain, though now fortune have frowned upon him, and covered his rags with a threadbare cloak.

When Mexico was rebuilt, and judges, aldermen, attorneys, town clerks, notaries, scavengers, and sergeants with all other officers necessary for the commonwealth of a city were appointed, the fame of Cortez and majesty of the city was blown abroad into far provinces, by means whereof it was soon replenished with Indians again, and with Spaniards from Spain, who soon conquered above four hundred leagues of land, being all governed by the princely seat of Mexico. But since that first rebuilding, I may say it is now rebuilt the second time by Spaniards, who have consumed most of the Indians; so that now I will not dare to say there are a hundred thousand houses which soon after the Conquest were built up, for most of them were of Indians.

Now the Indians that live there, live in the suburbs of the city, and their situation is called Guadalupe. In the year 1625, when I went to those parts, this suburb was judged to contain five thousand inhabitants; but since most of them have been consumed by the Spaniards' hard usage and the work of the lake. So that now there may not be above two thousand inhabitants of mere Indians, and a thousand of such as they call there *mestizos*, who are of a mixed nature of Spaniards and Indians, for many poor Spaniards marry with Indian women, and others that marry them not but hate their husbands, find many tricks to convey away an innocent Uriah to enjoy his Bathsheba. The Spaniards daily cozen them of the small plot of ground where their houses stand, and of three or four houses of Indians built up one good and fair house after the Spanish fashion with gardens and orchards. And so is almost all Mexico new built with very fair and spacious houses with gardens of recreation.

Their buildings are with stone, and brick very strong, but not high, by reason of the many earthquakes, which would endanger their houses if they were above three stories high. The streets are very broad, in the narrowest of them three coaches may go, and in the broader may go six in the breadth of them, which makes the city seem a great deal bigger than it is. In my time it was thought to be of between thirty and forty thousand inhabitants—Spaniards, who are so proud and rich that half the city was judged to keep coaches, for it was a most credible report that in Mexico in my time there were above fifteen thousand coaches. It is a byword that at Mexico there are four things fair, that is to say, the women, the apparel, the horses, and the streets. But to this I may add the beauty of some of the coaches of the gentry, which do exceed in cost the best of the Court of Madrid and other parts of Christendom; for there they spare no silver, nor gold, nor precious stones,

nor cloth of gold, nor the best silks from China to enrich them. And to the gallantry of their horses the pride of some doth add the cost of bridles and shoes of silver.

The streets of Christendom must not compare with those in breadth and cleanness, but especially in the riches of the shops which do adorn them. Above all, the goldsmiths' shops and works are to be admired. The Indians, and the people of China that have been made Christians and every year come thither, have perfected the Spaniards in that trade. The Viceroy that went thither the year 1625 caused a popinjay to be made of silver, gold, and precious stones with the perfect colors of the popinjay's feathers (a bird bigger than a pheasant), with such exquisite art and perfection, to present unto the King of Spain, that it was prized to be worth in riches and workmanship half a million of ducats. There is in the cloister of the Dominicans a lamp hanging in the church with three hundred branches wrought in silver to hold so many candles, besides a hundred little lamps for oil set in it, every one being made with several workmanship so exquisitely that it is valued to be worth four hundred thousand ducats; and with such-like curious works are many streets made more rich and beautiful from the shops of goldsmiths.

To the by-word touching the beauty of the women I must add the liberty they enjoy for gaming, which is such that the day and night is too short for them to end a *primera* when once it is begun; nay gaming is so common to them that they invite gentlemen to their houses for no other end. To myself it happened that passing along the streets in company with a friar that came with me that year from Spain, a gentlewoman of great birth knowing us to be *chapetons* (so they call the first year those that come from Spain), from her window called unto us, and after two or three slight questions concerning Spain asked us if we would come in and play with her a game at *primera*.

Both men and women are excessive in their apparel, using more silks than stuffs and cloth. Precious stones and pearls further much their vain ostentation; a hat band and rose made of diamonds in a gentleman's hat is common, and a hat band of pearls is ordinary in a tradesman; nay a blackamoor or tawny young maid and slave will make hard shift but she will be in fashion with her neck chain and bracelets of pearls, and her ear-bobs of some considerable jewels. The attire of this baser sort of people of blackamoors and mulattoes (which are of a mixed nature, of Spaniards and blackamoors) is so light, and their carriage so enticing, that many Spaniards even of the better sort (who are too too prone to venery) disdain their wives for them.

Their clothing is a petticoat of silk or cloth, with many silver or golden laces, with a very broad double ribbon of some light color with long silver or golden tags hanging down before, the whole length of their petticoat to the ground, and the like behind; their waistcoats made like bodices, with skirts, laced likewise with gold or silver, without sleeves, and a girdle about their body of great price stuck with pearls and knots of gold (if they be any ways

well esteemed of), their sleeves are broad and open at the end, of Holland or fine China linen, wrought some with colored silks, some with silk and gold, some with silk and silver, hanging down almost unto the ground; the locks of their heads are covered with some wrought coif, and over it another of network of silk bound with a fair silk, or silver, or golden ribbon which crosseth the upper part of their forehead, and hath commonly worked out in letters some light and foolish love posy; their bare, black, and tawny breasts are covered with bobs hanging from their chains of pearls.

And when they go abroad, they use a white mantle of lawn or cambric rounded with a broad lace, which some put over their heads, the breadth reaching only to their middle behind, that their girdle and ribbons may be seen, and two ends before reaching to the ground almost; others cast their mantles only upon their shoulders, and swaggers-like, cast the one end over the left shoulder that they may the better jog the right arm, and show their broad sleeve as they walk along; others instead of this mantle use some rich silk petticoat to hang upon their left shoulder, while with their right arm they support the lower part of it, more like roaring boys than honest civil maids. Their shoes are high and of many soles, the outside whereof of the profaner sort are plated with a list of silver, which is fastened with small nails of broad silver heads.

Most of these are or have been slaves, though love have set them loose at liberty to enslave souls to sin and Satan. And there are so many of this kind both men and women grown to a height of pride and vanity, that many times the Spaniards have feared they would rise up and mutiny against them. And for the looseness of their lives, and public scandals committed by them and the better sort of the Spaniards, I have heard them say often who have professed more religion and fear of God, they verily thought God would destroy that city, and give up the country into the power of some other nation. . . .

Great alms and liberality towards religious houses in that city commonly are coupled with great and scandalous wickedness. They wallow in the bed of riches and wealth, and make their alms the coverlet to cover their loose and lascivious lives. From hence are the churches so fairly built and adorned. There are not above fifty churches and chapels, cloisters and nunneries, and parish churches in that city; but those that are there are the fairest that ever my eyes beheld, the roofs and beams being in many of them all daubed with gold, and many altars with sundry marble pillars, and others with brazil-wood stays standing one above another with tabernacles for several saints richly wrought with golden colors, so that twenty thousand ducats is a common price of many of them. These cause admiration in the common sort of people, and admiration brings on daily adoration in them to those glorious spectacles and images of saints.

It is ordinary for the friars to visit their devoted nuns, and to spend whole days with them, hearing their music, feeding on their sweetmeats, and for

this purpose they have many chambers which they call *locutorios*, to talk in, with wooden bars between the nuns and them, and in these chambers are tables for the friars to dine at; and while they dine the nuns re-create them with their voices. Gentlemen and citizens give their daughters to be brought up in these nunneries, where they are taught to make all sorts of conserves and preserves, all sorts of needlework, all sorts of music, which is so exquisite in that city that I dare be bold to say that the people are drawn to their churches more for the delight of the music than for any delight in the service of God. More, they teach these young children to act like players, and to entice the people to their churches make these children to act short dialogues in their choirs, richly attiring them with men's and women's apparel, especially upon Midsummer Day, and the eight days before their Christmas, which is so gallantly performed that many factious strifes and single combats have been, and some were in my time, for defending which of these nunneries most excelled in music and in the training up of children. No delights are wanting in that city abroad in the world, nor in their churches, which should be the house of God, and the soul's, not the sense's delight.

The chief place in the city is the market-place, which though it be not as spacious as in Montezuma his time, yet is at this day very fair and wide, built all with arches on the one side where people may walk dry in time of rain, and there are shops of merchants furnished with all sorts of stuffs and silks, and before them sit women selling all manner of fruits and herbs; over against these shops and arches is the Viceroy his palace, which taketh up almost the whole length of the market with the walls of the house and of the gardens belonging to it. At the end of the Viceroy his palace is the chief prison, which is strong of stone work. Next to this is the beautiful street called *La Plateria*, or Goldsmiths Street, where a man's eyes may behold in less than an hour many millions' worth of gold, silver, pearls, and jewels. The street of St. Austin is rich and comely, where live all that trade in silks; but one of the longest and broadest streets is the street called Tacuba, where almost all the shops are of ironmongers, and of such as deal in brass and steel, which is joining to those arches whereon the water is conveyed into the city, and is so called for that it is the way out of the city to a town called Tacuba; and this street is mentioned far and near, not so much for the length and breadth of it, as for a small commodity of needles which are made there, and for proof are the best of all those parts. For stately buildings the street called *del Aquila*, the Street of the Eagle, exceeds the rest, where live gentlemen, and courtiers, and judges belonging to the Chancery, and is the palace of the Marques del Valle from the line of Ferdinando Cortez; this street is so called from an old idol an eagle of stone which from the Conquest lieth in a corner of that street, and is twice as big as London stone.

The gallants of this city show themselves daily, some on horseback, and most in coaches, about four of the clock in the afternoon in a pleasant shady

field called *la Alameda*, full of trees and walks, somewhat like unto our Moorfields, where do meet as constantly as the merchants upon our exchange about two thousand coaches, full of gallants, ladies, and citizens, to see and to be seen, to court and to be courted, the gentlemen having their train of blackamoor slaves some a dozen, some half a dozen waiting on them, in brave and gallant liveries, heavy with gold and silver lace, with silk stockings on their black legs, and roses on their feet, and swords by their sides; the ladies also carry their train by their coach's side of such jetlike damsels as before have been mentioned for their light apparel, who with their bravery and white mantles over them seem to be, as the Spaniard saith, *mosca en leche*, a fly in milk. But the train of the Viceroy who often goeth to this place is wonderful stately, which some say is as great as the train of his master the King of Spain. At this meeting are carried about many sorts of sweetmeats and papers of comfits to be sold, for to relish a cup of cool water, which is cried about in curious glasses, to cool the blood of those love-hot gallants. But many times these their meetings sweetened with conserves and comfits have sour sauce at the end, for jealousy will not suffer a lady to be courted, no nor sometimes to be spoken to, but puts fury into the violent hand to draw a sword or dagger and to stab or murder whom he was jealous of, and when one sword is drawn thousands are presently drawn, some to right the party wounded or murdered; others to defend the party murdering, whose friends will not permit him to be apprehended, but will guard him with drawn swords until they have conveyed him to the sanctuary of some church, from whence the Viceroy his power is not able to take him for a legal trial.

3. THE MESTIZO: SEED OF TOMORROW

The mestizo arose from a process of racial fusion that began in the first days of the Spanish conquest and has continued to the present. The Spanish jurist Juan de Solórzano Pereira (1575–1655) discusses the status of the mestizo in colonial law and opinion.

Turning now to the persons called *mestizos* and *mulattos*, of whom there are great numbers in the Indies, first let me say that the name *mestizo* was assigned to the former because they represent a mixture of blood and nationality. . . .

As for the *mulattos*, although for the same reason they belong in the class of *mestizos*, yet as the offspring of Negro women and white men, or the re-

Juan de Solórzano Pereira, *Política indiana*, 5 vols. (Madrid, 1930), 1:445–448. Excerpt translated by Benjamin Keen.

verse, which is the most strange and repulsive mixture of all, they bear this specific name which compares them to the species of the mule. . . .

If these men were born of legitimate wedlock and had no other vices or defects, they could be regarded as citizens of those provinces and could be admitted to honor and office in them, as is argued by Victoria and Zapata. I am of the opinion that such an intention was the basis of certain royal decrees that permit *mestizos* to take holy orders and *mestizas* to become nuns, and admit *mestizos* to municipal offices and notaryships.

But because they are most often born out of adultery or other illicit unions, since few Spaniards of honorable position will marry Indian or Negro women . . . , they bear the taint of illegitimacy and other vices which they take in, as it were, with their milk. And these men, I find by many other decrees, are forbidden to hold any responsible public office, whether it is that of Protector of the Indians, councilman, or notary public, unless they acknowledge this defect at the time of application and receive special dispensation from it; and those who have gained office in any other way are not allowed to keep it.

There are other decrees that forbid them to take holy orders, unless by special dispensation.

I shall content myself for the present with saying that if these *mestizos* (especially those in the Indies) possess recognized and assured virtue, and sufficient ability and learning, they could be extremely useful in matters relating to the Indians, being, as it were, their countrymen, and knowing their languages and customs. . . .

But returning to the question of curacies, although for the reason given above it would be convenient to entrust them to *mestizos*, great care must be taken with this, for we see that the majority of them come from a vicious and depraved environment, and it is they who do the most harm to the Indians. . . . And for this reason many decrees forbid them to visit or live in the Indian towns, and compel them to live in the Spanish towns, or in such towns as may be formed and populated by *mestizos* and *mulattos*. These same decrees order that *mestizas* married to Spaniards, if charged with adultery, shall be tried and punished like Spanish women.

There are other decrees, of later date, issued in 1600 and 1608, directed to the viceroys of Peru Don Luis de Velasco and the marquis of Montes Claros, saying that the king had learned that the number of *mestizos*, *mulattos*, and *zambabigos* (the children of Negro men and Indian women, or the reverse) was increasing sharply, and ordering them to take appropriate measures that men of such mixtures, vicious in their majority, should not cause injury and disturbances in that kingdom—a thing always to be feared from such people, especially if to the sins that arise from their evil birth are added those that spring from idleness and poor upbringing.

For this reason, although by the ordinances of the viceroy of Peru, Don Francisco de Toledo, they are exempt from paying tribute, by later decrees of

the years 1600, 1612, 1619, by the celebrated decrees concerning personal service of 1601 and 1609, and by many others that have been successively promulgated, it is ordered that they pay tribute. And the same decrees command the viceroys to see that the *mestizos* and mulattos, like the Indians, are made to labor in the mines and fields. . . .

For it does not appear just that this labor [of the mines], which requires such physical strength . . . should be assigned entirely to the wretched Indians, while the *mestizos* and mulattos, who are of such evil caste, race, and character, are left to idleness; this contravenes the rule that lewdness should not be more favored than chastity, and that the offspring of legitimate marriage should be more privileged than the illegitimate, as is taught by Saint Thomas and other authorities. . . .

From this abuse results the fact that many Indian women desert their Indian husbands and neglect the children that they have by them, seeing them subject to tribute-payments and personal services, and desire, love, and spoil the children that they have out of wedlock by Spaniards or even by Negroes, because they are free and exempt from all burdens—a condition that plainly should not be permitted in any well-governed state.

4. THE INDIAN TOWN

Among the various races and mixtures that composed the population of the Spanish empire in the Americas, the Indians formed a nation apart. Most of them lived in their own self-governing communities in which Spaniards other than the village priest were forbidden to reside. In many regions they maintained their ancient clan or tribal organization, language, dress, and customs. Thomas Gage, who spent twelve years as a priest in Guatemala and amassed a tidy fortune from the piety and credulity of his native parishioners, describes the life of the Indian town.

Their ordinary clothing is a pair of linen or woolen drawers broad and open at the knees, without shoes (though in their journeys some will put on leather sandals to keep the soles of their feet) or stockings, without any doublet, a short coarse shirt, which reacheth a little below their waist, and serves more for a doublet than for a shirt, and for a cloak a woolen or linen mantle (called *aiate*) tied with a knot over one shoulder, hanging down on the other side almost to the ground, with a twelvepenny or two shilling hat, which after one good shower of rain like paper falls about their necks and eyes; their bed

Gage, *The English-American*, pp. 234–247.

they carry sometime about them, which is a woolen mantle wherewith they wrap themselves about at night, taking off their shirt and drawers, which they lay under their head for a pillow; some will carry with them a short, slight, and light mat to lie, but those that carry it not with them, if they cannot borrow one of a neighbor, lie as willingly in their mantle upon the bare ground as a gentleman in England upon a soft down-bed, and thus do they soundly sleep, and loudly snort after a day's work, or after a day's journey with a hundred-weight upon their backs.

Those that are of the better sort, and richer, and who are not employed as *tamemez* to carry burdens, or as laborers to work for Spaniards, but keep at home following their own farms, or following their own mules about the country, or following their trades and callings in their shops, or governing the towns, as *alcaldes*, or *alguaziles*, officers of justice, may go a little better appareled, but after the same manner. For some will have their drawers with a lace at the bottom, or wrought with some colored silk or crewel, so likewise the mantle about them shall have either a lace, or some work of birds on it; some will wear a cut linen doublet, others shoes, but very few stockings or bands about their necks; and for their beds, the best Indian Governor or the richest, who may be worth four or five thousand ducats, will have little more than the poor *tamemez*; for they lie upon boards, or canes bound together, and raised from the ground, whereon they lay a board and handsome mat, and at their heads for man and wife two little stumps of wood for bolsters, whereon they lay their shirts and mantles and other clothes for pillows, covering themselves with a broader blanket than is their mantle, and thus hardly would Don Bernabé de Guzman the Governor of Petapa lie, and so do all the best of them.

The women's attire is cheap and soon put on; for most of them also go barefoot, the richer and better sort wear shoes, with broad ribbons for shoe strings, and for a petticoat, they tie about their waist a woolen mantle, which in the better sort is wrought with divers colors, but not sewed at all, pleated, or gathered in, but as they tie it with a list about them; they wear no shift next their body, but cover their nakedness with a kind of surplice (which they call *guaipil*) which hangs loose from their shoulders down a little below their waist, with open short sleeves, which cover half their arms; this *guaipil* is curiously wrought, especially in the bosom, with cotton, or feathers. The richer sort of them wear bracelets and bobs about their waists and necks; their hair is gathered up with fillets, without any coif or covering, except it be the better sort. When they go to church or abroad, they put upon their heads a veil of linen, which hangeth almost to the ground, and this is that which costs them most of all their attire, for that commonly it is of Holland or some good linen brought from Spain, or fine linen brought from China, which the better sort wear with a lace about. When they are at home at work they commonly take off their *guaipil*, or surplice, discovering the nakedness of their

of Mexico. . . . At the time of the creation of the intendancies, the former was assigned that of Valladolid, where he remained only a short time, being transferred immediately to the more important one of Guanajuato; and Flon was placed over that of Puebla.

The strict and honorable Flon reformed great abuses, encouraged all the branches of industry in his province, and notably beautified its capital. Riaño, of equal integrity but of a mild and affable disposition, had served in the royal navy, and to a knowledge of mathematics and astronomy, natural in that profession, united a taste for literature and the fine arts. These interests, and in particular his delight in architecture, he introduced to Guanajuato; through his influence there were erected, not only in the capital but in all the province, magnificent structures, whose building he himself supervised, even instructing the stonecutters in the art of hewing stone. He promoted the study of the Latin classics of the best Spanish writers; it was owing to his influence that the young men of Guanajuato devoted themselves to the study of the Castilian tongue and to its correct pronunciation.

French, the native tongue of his wife, was spoken in their home, and he introduced among the youth of the provincial capital a taste for that language and its literature, together with an elegance of manners unknown in other cities of the province. He was also responsible for the development of interest in drawing and music and for the cultivation of mathematics, physics, and chemistry in the school that had formerly been maintained by the Jesuits. To that end he zealously patronized Don José Antonio Rojas, professor of mathematics in that school and a graduate of the School of Mines. He also established a theater, promoted the cultivation of olives and vines, and diligently fostered the mining industry, the chief wealth of that province, by encouraging the rich citizens of Guanajuato to form companies for the exploitation of old and abandoned mines as well as new ones.

6. THE MORE THINGS CHANGE . . .

“Plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose” could be fairly applied to Spain’s Indian policy. The Ordinance of Intendants promised to inaugurate a new and better day for the Indian by abolishing the offices of corregidor and alcalde mayor and forbidding their successors, the subdelegates, to engage in the infamous reparto de mercancías. Despite Alamán’s contention (see the previous selection) that the old order of things, “so unjust and oppressive, ceased with the promulgation of the Ordinance of Intendants,” other observers came to different conclusions. In Mexico an enlightened prelate, Bishop Manuel Abad Queipo of Michoacán, denounced the entire system of subjugation and segregation of the Indians and mixed castes and flatly stated that the natives were worse off than they had been before the intendant reform.

The population of New Spain is composed of some four and a half million inhabitants, who can be divided into three classes: Spaniards, Indians, and castes. The Spaniards number one tenth of the total population but possess almost the entire population or wealth of the kingdom. The other two classes, forming the other nine tenths, can be divided into two parts castes, the other part pure Indians. The Indians and castes are employed in domestic service, agricultural labors, and the ordinary tasks of commerce and industry—that is to say, they are servants and day-laborers for the Spaniards. Consequently there arises between them and the Spaniards that opposition of interests and views that is typical of those who have nothing and those who have everything—between superiors and inferiors. Envy, theft, and unwilling service are the traits of the latter; arrogance, exploitation, and harsh treatment, the qualities of the former. These evils are to a certain extent common to all the world. But in America they are immeasurably greater because there are no gradations or intermediate states: all are either rich or wretched, noble or infamous.

In effect, the two classes of Indians and castes are sunk in the greatest abasement and degradation. The color, ignorance, and misery of the Indians place them at an infinite distance from a Spaniard. The ostensible privileges which the laws accord them do them little good and in most respects injure them greatly. Shut up in a narrow space of six hundred *varas*, assigned by law to the Indian towns, they possess no individual property and are obliged to work the communal lands. This cultivation is made all the more hateful by the fact that in recent years it has become increasingly difficult for them to enjoy any of the fruits of their labor. Under the new intendant system they cannot draw on the communal funds [*caja de comunidad*] without special permission from the office of the royal exchequer [*Junta superior de la real hacienda*] in Mexico City.

Forbidden by law to commingle with the other castes, they are deprived of the instruction and assistance that they should receive from contact with these and other people. They are isolated by their language, and by a useless, tyrannical form of government. In each town there are found eight or ten old Indians who live in idleness at the expense of their fellows and artfully try to perpetuate their ancient customs, usages, and gross superstitions, ruling them like despots. Incapable, by law, of making a binding contract or of running into debt to the extent of more than five pesos—in a word, of any dealings at all—they cannot learn anything or better their fortune or in any way raise themselves above their wretched condition. Solorzano, Fraso, and other Spanish authors have wondered why the privileges granted them have

José María Luis Mora, *Obras sueltas*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1837), 1:55–57. Excerpt translated by Benjamin Keen.

redounded to their injury; but it is greater cause for wonder that such men as these should have failed to understand that the source of the evil lies in these very privileges. They are an offensive weapon employed by the white class against the Indians, and never serve to defend the latter. This combination of causes makes the Indians indifferent to their future and to all that does not excite the passions of the moment.

The castes are declared infamous by law, as descendants of Negro slaves. They are subject to the payment of tribute, which is punctiliously recorded; as a result, this obligation has become a brand of slavery which neither the passage of time nor the mixture of successive generations can ever obliterate. There are many of these who in their color, physiognomy, and conduct could pass for Spaniards if it were not for this impediment, which reduces them all to the same state. . . .

The Indians as well as the castes are governed directly by magistrates of districts [*justicias territoriales*] whose conduct has measurably contributed to the situation in which they find themselves. The *alcaldes mayores* considered themselves not so much justices as merchants, endowed with the exclusive privilege . . . of trading in their province and of extracting from it in a five-year term of office from thirty to two hundred thousand pesos. Their usurious and arbitrary *repartimientos* caused great injuries. But despite this state of affairs two favorable circumstances commonly resulted, one being that they administered justice with impartiality and rectitude in cases in which they were not parties, the other being that they fostered agriculture and industry, in their own interests.

The Spanish government undertook to put an end to these abuses by replacing the *alcaldes mayores* with the subdelegates. But since the latter were not assigned any fixed salary, the remedy proved much worse than the evil. If they adhere to the schedule of fees, among a wretched folk who litigate only against each other, they will inevitably perish of hunger. They must of necessity prostitute their posts, swindle the poor, and traffic in justice. For the same reason it is extremely difficult for the intendants to find suitable individuals to fill these posts. They are sought, therefore, only by bankrupts or by those whose conduct and talents unfit them for success in the other walks of life. Under these conditions, what benefits, what protection, can these ministers of law dispense to the abovementioned two classes? How can they attract their good-will and respect, when extortion and injustice are virtually their livelihood?

10



WINDS OF CHANGE

IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY, Spanish America roused from its medieval sleep. A lively contraband in unorthodox ideas accompanied the growing trade between the colonies and non-Spanish lands. Spain, now under the sway of the enlightened Bourbon kings, contributed to the intellectual renovation of the colonies. Spanish or foreign scientific expeditions to Spanish America, authorized and sometimes financed by the crown, stimulated the growth of scientific interests. The expulsion of the Jesuits (1767) removed the ablest exponents of scholasticism and cleared the way for modest projects of educational reform. But the most significant cultural activity took place outside academic halls—in economic societies organized for the promotion of useful knowledge; in private gatherings and coffeehouses, where young men ardently discussed the advantages of free trade and the rights of men; and in the colonial press, which gave articulate expression to the new secular and critical spirit.

In addition to this intellectual ferment among the literate classes, popular resistance to colonial authority accelerated under the Bourbons as imperial attempts to centralize political authority and modernize the colonial economy began to take their toll on social relations. While the Creole upper classes often enjoyed greater opportunities for material and cultural enrichment in the Bourbon era (if less political influence), the same was not true of Indians, *mestizos*, blacks, and other laboring groups. Intolerable conditions among the common people led to major revolutionary outbreaks in Peru, Bolivia, and Colombia (1780–1783) that were sternly suppressed by Spanish arms. In Brazil and the Caribbean, endemic revolts reflected ongoing tension produced by reliance on slave labor. The 1804 overthrow of the French colonial regime in Haiti—the most productive of the sugar-producing islands in the Caribbean—by armies of former slaves was the most dramatic and successful of these revolts.