



# *The Colonial Spanish-American City*

URBAN LIFE IN THE AGE OF ATLANTIC CAPITALISM

*Jay Kinsbruner*

# THE COLONIAL SPANISH-AMERICAN CITY





THE  
COLONIAL  
SPANISH-AMERICAN  
CITY

Urban Life  
in the Age of Atlantic Capitalism



*by Jay Kinsbruner*



UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS PRESS  
AUSTIN

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First edition, 2005

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LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOGING-IN-PUBLICATION DATA

Kinsbruner, Jay.

The colonial Spanish-American city : urban life in the age of  
Atlantic capitalism / by Jay Kinsbruner. — 1st ed.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-292-70621-9 (cl. : alk. paper) — ISBN 0-292-70668-5 (pbk. : alk. paper)

I. Cities and towns—Latin America—History. 2. City and town life—  
Latin America—History. I. Title.

HT127.5.K56 2005

307.76'098—dc22 2004022134



*Dedicated to the memory of my uncle,  
Dr. Albert A. Reitman,  
who made so many lives better*

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## Acknowledgments



This book had its origin in an unpublished essay that I wrote titled “The False Plebeian in Colonial Spanish American History/Historiography,” in which I traced the use of the term “plebeian” from Roman times to the present. I want to thank Ralph della Cava, Lyman Johnson, and Robert Patch for reading that essay and giving me their thoughts. As I worked on the book, many people offered their help in more ways than I would ever have imagined possible. I want to thank Susan Deans-Smith and Elizabeth Kuznesof for reading parts of the manuscript. During my semester at Syracuse David Robinson answered many questions. He also gave me permission to take material from my book on the *pulperos*, which he published. Many colleagues responded to two queries that I put out on H-Latam. To all who responded, I want to extend one grand thank-you. Such collaboration was not possible when I started in the profession. Others who came to my aid and whom I want to thank here are John F. Schwaller, Dauril Alden, Herbert S. Klein, Ralph Lee Woodward, Jr., Jane Mangan, Robinson Herrera, Jerry W. Cooney, Thomas Whigham, Pamela Voekel (who sent me a copy of her dissertation while en route to Mexico), Jordana Dym, Linda Arnold, Stephen Webre, Robert Ferry, Richard Warren, Jane Landers, Marie Francois, Alejandra Osorio, Ben Vinson, Euan Hague, Luis Fernando Restrepo, Martina E. Will de Chaparro, and Carlos Vázquez. If I asked too many questions, I am sorry, but this book covers a lot of ground. Richard W. Slatta sent me slides. David Garten (cubaphoto.com), a remarkable photographer of Cuba, converted some material to electronic files. Linda Arnold again sent me (this time on CD) the Mexico City map of 1793. David Robinson sent maps, and Joe Stoll drew maps. Books by John Charles Chasteen, Robinson Antonio Herrera, and Linda A. Curcio-Nagy appeared too late to be included here. How-

ever, in each instance preliminary studies by these scholars were available and were consulted.

My wife, Karen, an editor prior to the Law, had time to read and reread the manuscript, now with the deep scrutiny of editor and lawyer. Our conversations about the book reminded me warmly of life at the beginning of our married trajectory, before the children and law school. We started our married life living at a ski center, and the last reading was done at our new home at Sugarbush. Things have worked out nicely.

Finally, again I have written a synthesis and deeply feel my debt to the many scholars upon whose work I have depended. Without a body of excellent scholarship and interpretation, a synthesis such as the present one would be impossible. In a synthesis it is not possible to cite as many scholars as one would have liked, but I hope those not cited find their work represented productively and fairly.

# *Introduction*



This book is both a history and an interpretation of the colonial Spanish-American city. So far as I can tell, it is the first book of its kind in English, and there are precious few in Spanish. This is probably because the problems attached to writing such a book are many. A definitive rendering would require volumes, and a relatively short synthesis based upon secondary sources raises myriad decisions about style, vocabulary, and what to exclude at every turn. Like V. S. Naipaul, I too wish my prose to be transparent, so the reader will see what I have to say. Many times during the writing of this book I imagined what other scholars, often friends, would think when they noticed that my emphasis was not the one they might have assigned.

This book has a central theme, which is that the colonial Spanish-American city evolved during the age of Atlantic capitalism and was itself a circumstance of that capitalism. This means many things and implies challenges to those who believe that the colonial economy was not essentially capitalist but one in which very few people owned the means of production and distribution (to borrow a phrase) in such form that only a small percentage of the urban population possessed tangible and discretionary wealth, and the rest of the people were the immiserated plebeians (to borrow someone else's phrase). This dichotomous construct does not allow for much of a middle class, or, perhaps more importantly, a lower-middle class, or for the breadth and depth of generalized economic endeavor that could efficaciously underwrite a colonial society's entry into the world capitalist marketplace as an independent nation. I have tried to suggest the range and content of my discussion in the book's title. Colonial and national economies matured according to different rhythms and did so differently. In any event, life in all capitalist societies, regardless of degree of maturity, was hard and gener-

ally unforgiving, perhaps especially so on the periphery, and this was true of Spanish America.

There is an unstated subtext in this book. It is that there really were no plebeians in urban colonial Spanish America. The use of the term by contemporaries was disdainful and dismissive (and historically incorrect), and its current usage beclouds rather than edifies our understanding of the social and economic reality. The term and its implications close off inquiry just where we need it to be opened. It is essential that we apply the same degree of historical judgment to terminology that we apply to ideas, actions, and just about everything else in the historical record. As the title of this book might suggest, I argue for a class interpretation, as some others have done even if not overtly.<sup>1</sup>

Today many scholars attribute an importance to the Latin American city that still surprises me to see in print. Witness the following recent observation by two distinguished historians:

Thus, the Latin American city was virtually coterminous with the Columbian encounter. With its precocious establishment came the privileged attributes: the locus of political authority, the hub of ecclesiastical activity, the nerve center of commerce and finance, and the essential venue for conspicuous consumption.<sup>2</sup>

Hence the current urban piety, assuredly put, and I could not agree more. However, there was a dark side to urban life. The concentrations of people that made the urban habitats possible exacerbated problems of sanitation and indeed morbidity. Prostitution, single female-headed families, children born illegitimate, and children abandoned were all social phenomena intensified in the urban milieu to the point that we can consider them largely urban phenomena. Furthermore, social deviance, while present in rural areas, also was magnified in the villages, towns, and cities of colonial Spanish America. Of course, we shall explore the greatness of the urban habitats, as opportunity and shaper of society and economy, but we shall also confront the other reality, the *noir* side of urban life.

A final point: because this book is a synthesis written for a broad audience, endnotes have been kept to a minimum.

## *A Note about the Terms “Town Council,” “Stores,” and “Shops”*



The town council plays a very important role in the following book, but the term “town” has multiple meanings. We will be discussing villages, towns, and cities, which all had governing councils. I have tried to use the term “town council” as it applied to towns but also sometimes to the governing councils of villages, towns, and cities. In English we sometimes say “we stayed in town over the weekend” when we might be talking about Manhattan or that we have a “townhouse” in a large city. To avoid confusion I have sometimes adopted the term “municipal council” when speaking about the councils of towns and cities or those of villages, towns, and cities taken together. In every instance, my intention was clarity.

I have also adopted the term “store” rather than “shop” when discussing the workplaces of entrepreneurs and artisans alike. In English we often speak of “artisan shops” rather than “artisan stores.” However, “shop” sometimes conveys a less than full participation by artisans in the market economy, and indeed some guilds did manage to restrict the free functioning of the marketplace; but on the whole the artisans of colonial Spanish America were entrepreneurial enough for their workplaces to be referred to as “stores.” This usage avoids possible confusion about my meaning.

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# THE COLONIAL SPANISH-AMERICAN CITY



Houses make a town, but citizens make a city.

—JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU



Perhaps the best definition of the city in its higher aspects is to say that it is a place designed to offer the widest facilities for significant conversation. The dialogue is one of the ultimate expressions of life in the city: the delicate flower of its long vegetative growth.

—LEWIS MUMFORD

## CHAPTER I

# *The Colonial City by Definition and Origin*



### THE URBAN PARADIGM

An appreciation of the city, the apotheosis of modern civilization to many—and there is no argument to the contrary in this book—demands an understanding of the term “urban.” What constitutes an urban aggregation, and what distinguishes the urban from the rural, should be the point of departure for an inquiry into the character and course of the colonial Spanish-American city. As is so often the case, the geographer offers us succinct and meaningful guidance: “Size and administrative status are not essential criteria of true urban character. Function and form are the essentials of the matter.”<sup>1</sup> When the U.S. Bureau of the Census declared the country more than 50 percent urban for the first time, it employed the aggregate figure of 2,500 people as the threshold between urban and rural settlement. Later it raised and then raised again the minimum number of dwellers requisite for urban classification. This bureaucratic quantification is mere convenience, but otherwise uninformed and historically meaningless. Function and form are the essentials of what is truly urban and not the number of people living coherently in a settlement. Let us explore this.

Urban centers share a number of similar characteristics, although not necessarily all of them. They are places where people reside all or most of the year. They are places where very few residents produce all or even most of their own food. This means that urbanites are dependent upon other people to produce food for them. In return the urban dwellers produce manufactured goods or acquire cash for exchange. Sometimes the rural inhabitants produce and sell or exchange semifinished or even manufactured goods in the urban nexus. In the urban centers differentiated labor and classes de-

velop. A wide range of crafts and stores (large, small, and medium in capitalization and size of inventory) evolve. People specialize in their economic activities, and this division of labor means that urban dwellers produce goods and services for each other and, when broader markets develop, for export. The urban center is a marketplace in its most defining characteristic. Urban centers commonly contain schools, religious institutions, professionals of various types, and bureaucrats. Urban agglomerations provide social, economic, and geographical opportunities that rarely exist in rural environments.

To put it another way, urban is modern and rural is traditional. Rural societies are commonly referred to as traditional because they are almost always ascriptive, meaning that the son of a peasant will likely become a peasant, the son of the rich agrarian will likely become a rich agrarian, and the son of the local blacksmith will likely become a blacksmith or perhaps a small farmer. Urban centers tend not to be ascriptive, because society is differentiated, with many more occupational opportunities. Here the son of a shoemaker might be apprenticed to a master silversmith, as happened, or might become a clerk in a small retail or wholesale store, with the possibility of upward mobility. Moreover, historically girls were also apprenticed in the urban ecology, even becoming members of guilds. In fact, it was in the urban centers that the middle class arose, ascended, and descended according to its constituents' abilities, familial connections or other patronage (not excluding the benefit of marriage), and the ambiguous rhythms of the marketplace. This was not the case in the rural regions. Urban life was not centered upon and circumscribed by the seasons and the agricultural cycles. Urban dwellers in substantial numbers came to believe that they could manipulate their environment, their destiny, which was essential for the transition from traditional to modern and became one of modernism's abiding characteristics.

This raises the question: how many people does it take to constitute an urban habitat? The question admits of no sure answer. The critical mass of, say, 2,500 residents might be sufficient to initiate and sustain the urban calculus, but this is merely a convenient marker rather than a realistic evaluation. In fact, individual members and sectors of the economy might reach the threshold of activity and *mentalité* associated with what defines urban at different times. Therefore, dwellers possessed of unequivocal "urban" qualities of thought and activity might easily reside in population centers of, say, 1,000 people or perhaps 500 or fewer people that otherwise were essentially "rural" settlements.

To further our understanding of the urban habitat, it is instructive to know more about what is rural. Essential to the rural settlement, or village,

as it is almost always denoted, is that the residents are engaged primarily in agricultural pursuits. Even in high feudal Europe serfs manufactured (in its formal meaning, by hand, which includes use of rudimentary machines such as spinning wheels and looms) household necessities, and some produced a surplus that could be exchanged for goods produced in other households. By the early modern era in Europe such production and exchange, as well as expanded markets, became more intense, layered, and widespread. Nevertheless, the "village" was essentially an agricultural habitat. One would imagine such a village to consist of ten or twenty primitive peasant dwellings or fifty or perhaps a hundred or more. In Mediterranean Europe towns, in contradistinction to smaller villages, frequently devoted part of their energies to agriculture but also to trade, artisanal activities, and other broadly commercial endeavors. An excellent example is the Castilian city of Ciudad Real, where "well over half of the city's householders worked the land on a full-time basis."<sup>2</sup> Thus, although the functional distinction between the agricultural village and the urban town or city is occupation in agriculture, in Iberia the urban process remained vestigial, still heavily rooted in agriculture. Urbanism (meaning the nature of what is urban) did not mature in Spain as early as in northern Europe because trade and industry were less well developed. This is precisely what occurred in Spanish America, where countless villages of a thousand, two thousand, or more inhabitants—which in aggregate would suggest the possibility of palpable urban development—remained overwhelmingly rural in functional character (and in form also, because of the demands of agriculture).

That having been said, what fundamentally distinguishes the urban settlement is that the economy is centered in nonagricultural activities. While some residents of the rural village or town of mixed economy might develop an urban or modern worldview, this is not the case in the majority. The vexing problem, again, is that we do not know at what point in the growth of a population settlement this transition begins to take hold. When the activities associated with urban life "occur in some kind of combination, in a permanent and compact settlement with some measure of community organization, the place assumes the character of a town. A city is simply a king among towns, enjoying leadership over its neighbors. A fundamental trait of both town and city, in all ages, has been that they serve as institutional centers (commercial, cultural and administrative) for a surrounding territory."<sup>3</sup>

Thus, the functional definition of the urban habitat. Form is a less complicated matter. By the middle of the twelfth century in western Europe, the long-used term *civitas* came to mean "a compact settlement that enjoyed a special law, that was walled, and that was usually a market and a seat of in-

dustry and commerce."<sup>4</sup> The Spanish *ciudad* (city) evolved from this term. Sometimes, as we shall see shortly, form followed function, and other times function followed form. One way or another, the form of an urban habitat had to serve the needs of an urban society. Requisite were residential structures capable of housing large numbers of people in reasonably close proximity to markets, stores, churches, and public administrative buildings. When the topography permitted, the physical form could be radial (flowing out from a central market and administrative center); geometric grid (the pattern so prevalent in Spanish America); or linear (when buildings were constructed alongside a single route axis, such as the royal highway). When the topography was uncooperative, as in the instance of mountainous regions, the urban form could be more eclectic. Whatever the structural form, for the urban settlement to be large enough in population to deserve the title of city, ordinarily it had to be proximate to good water or land transportation routes; and if it were to grow to the size of what came to be called a "primate" city, it needed a productive hinterland to supply food and materials for manufacture and a market to accommodate surplus production. The exceptions were the mountainous mining cities, whose production was so valuable that it could be sent through otherwise uneconomical trade routes and whose exchange value was so great that goods would be imported through those same onerous trade routes.

When function and form coincide, an urban habitat comes into existence. Fundamentally, "town and city are merely aspects of the same thing, and the small country town with some 1,000 inhabitants has all the same elementary functions, with their corresponding structures, that the large town or city possesses . . ."<sup>5</sup> This is the working generalization for this book, but it is important to bear in mind that there were many variations along the trajectory toward mature urbanization. The larger the town or city, the greater the possibility for expanded trade and manufacturing—and therefore economic specialization distant from agriculture. In this case, the habitat could nucleate around a business (and administrative) core, with areal artisanal, commercial, and manufacturing concentration. Nevertheless, "there was, and still is, no real difference in essential functions between the urban settlement in the country with 1,000 inhabitants and the urban agglomeration with several millions."<sup>6</sup> This view underpins the logic of my central argument in this book.

Spain, however, embraced urban development from an almost entirely different perspective. Urban settlements during the long Reconquest against the Moors were conceived politically rather than economically. They were mandated or succored as corporate entities to the degree that they served the

political and defensive purposes of the Spanish kings. Their privileges generally depended upon the size of their populations, their capacity to secure reconquered lands, and their potential for wealth that could be expropriated by the Crown. To differentiate among settlements, according to this rationale, specific names were applied to habitats of varying size. These terms were later transferred to the empire in the New World, but they were not always deployed systematically. As a general rule of thumb, the following typology is employed in this book to convey municipal organization:<sup>7</sup>

Town (*pueblo*): 500 to 2,000 inhabitants

*Villa* (does not translate well as village): 2,000 to 4,000 inhabitants

City (*ciudad*): 4,000 or more inhabitants

Municipality (*municipalidad*): generally the largest city of the realm

Municipal: a term that describes all urban settlements

This urban typology has exceptions. For instance, Juan de Oñate's contract to colonize the province of New Mexico allowed him to categorize settlements as *ciudad*, *villa*, or *pueblo*, in descending order of privilege and status.<sup>8</sup> In some colonies *villas* were larger and more important than *pueblos*, and in others the reverse obtained. In New Mexico the term *pueblo* was not normally used since the village Indians in the province were called Pueblos, and a dual usage could have occasioned much confusion.<sup>9</sup> Elsewhere, however, Indian towns were generally referred to as *pueblos*, regardless of size. In southern Chile, where defense against both pirates and the defiantly successful Araucanian Indians was essential, *villas* were established that were essentially *presidios* (frontier military posts), and, in clear recognition of their military etiology, they were uniquely referred to as *tercios*. Among them were Arauco, which would be known throughout the colonial period as a *tercio*, and Nacimiento, which we shall visit in Chapter 3. Furthermore, the term *villa* could be conferred to acknowledge prodigious wealth, size, and population, as in the case of the great mining city, the Villa Imperial de Potosí.

Spanish-American urban habitats were founded by the conquistadors, later by natural occurrence near water or land routes for the exchange of goods and services, or by official decree. In the latter instance, these urban habitats could be quite artificial and fragile, and many failed, perhaps most egregiously in the colony of Hispaniola. During the sixteenth century several northern and western towns on the island had become centers of cattle ranching and smuggling. Furthermore, the colony's capital, Santo Domingo, was not being sufficiently supplied with beef. The governor proposed the

depopulation of those towns and the relocation of the residents along with their cattle to new towns created for the purpose in the south near Santo Domingo. In 1603 the Council of the Indies approved the plan, and in 1605 a new governor physically depopulated the selected towns, burning buildings, including churches, as a means of insuring the plan's success. These *devastaciones* were an abject failure. Few of the cattle arrived in the south, the new towns erected to support the northern and western emigrants had a difficult time sustaining themselves, and the island's economy was shattered.<sup>10</sup>

Towns that did thrive and perhaps grow in size and regional influence throughout the colonies, however, all shared a similar origin in the commercial revolution that began in Europe several hundred years before Spain's imperium in the New World got under way. This requires some elaboration. Prior to the slow and sporadic revival of trade in Europe during the tenth century, small urban centers began to evolve around the walled episcopal and administrative (initially fortress) cities, none of which were urban in nature. As European international trade expanded to the East, but also throughout the continent, these urban centers and capital cities expanded in response and in turn furthered urbanization.<sup>11</sup> Cities such as Paris, Amsterdam, Venice, and Barcelona, to name only a scant few, were symbolic of the new economy and growth in urbanization. In Spain, however, the situation was quite different, because in political and economic reality there existed several Spains until 1469 and the marriage of Isabel of Castile and Ferdinand of Aragón and because what became known as Spain had carried out a war of Reconquest against the Moors since their invasion of the Iberian Peninsula in A.D. 711. Isabel of Castile famously created a "national" army that reduced her dependence on the feudal nobility, which she proceeded to dispossess of privileges and power. For centuries kings, and later Isabel, mandated the founding of towns of various size to hold and defend newly reconquered lands. But the war effort could lead to an unexpected urban need, and a perfect example of this again is Ciudad Real, in La Mancha, kingdom of Castile.

Ciudad Real was founded by King Alfonso X of Castile not as a stronghold against the Moors in a frontier region where scores of others had been founded as fortified towns in service to Crown and God but as a stronghold against one of the powerful crusading orders that arose during the Reconquest and had been granted large tracts of land to defend and in recompense for its glorious successes. In his attempt to strengthen royal prerogative, Alfonso created Ciudad Real (Royal City), and the name was not a casual elaboration, directly in the middle of lands held by the military order of Calatrava as a counterpoise to its power. Ciudad Real did not arise as the result of economic forces, which might have underwritten future growth, and in fact

it did not grow and fare well except to the extent that the Crown granted it special privileges.<sup>12</sup>

Nevertheless, royal political and defense requirements as well as an expanding agro-pastoral and commercial economy animated widespread urbanization. By the end of the fifteenth century, in the south Seville and Valencia each held populations of about 75,000 people; Córdoba, 35,000; and Jerez, also 35,000. Several smaller cities reached population levels of 25,000, 20,000, or 15,000, to say nothing about the smaller cities and towns. At the same time, four cities in the north, including Toledo and Valladolid, had reached populations of between 20,000 and 25,000. Several smaller Castilian cities were important economically, even with populations of only about 10,000, such as Burgos, Segovia, and Madrid. These were urban habitats with differentiated social and economic hierarchies. They were nurtured largely by the natural forces of commerce and industry rather than by royal bestowments of special privilege, although each city had its charter, its *foro*, which did indeed elucidate its privileges and responsibilities.

In fact, although Spain's economy was not as urbanized or commercially and industrially advanced as many countries in northern Europe, it was more so than the overburdened metaphor of Don Quixote of La Mancha manages to suggest to new generations of readers. It is true and well known that by the fourteenth century Castile was the premier producer of merino sheep and Europe's leading exporter of wool, but such pastoral and commercial activity can never be a one-way street. Castile's main market was Flanders, which in turn sent back luxury goods. But Castile also exported items to France, the Hanseatic League, and Catalonia, including iron, alum, salt, wine, olive oil, lemons, almonds, fruit, rice, and cloth.<sup>13</sup> And this is to leave aside the great Catalan-Aragonese trading empire, which had become a powerful trading presence in the Mediterranean.

Knowing who carried out the domestic and international trade is important to an understanding of the future colonization of Spanish America. It is often said, and it is undeniable, that by about 1500 the commercial development of Spain had not produced a bourgeoisie as large or as mature as the bourgeoisies to the north, but this beclouds rather than clarifies the Spanish urban reality. In fact, the widespread trade in wool, wheat and other grains, manufactured cloth, and the export items noted above, as well as the imports to pay for them, did call into being an expanding bourgeoisie to which Spanish kings resorted for taxation and political support as they attempted to compromise the powers of the traditional nobility in their quest for monarchical status, and this was especially so, perhaps, with Isabel. To understand the term "bourgeoisie" in its broadest and most instructive meaning,



one should include import/export merchants, bankers, smaller wholesalers, a whole range of retailers, and sometimes even artisans. By 1500 there were tens of thousands of these people of the [urban] bourgeoisie in Spain, even if most Spaniards lived on the land or in agricultural villages.

The urbanization that had occurred in Spain during the last decades prior to the discovery of the New World was not subject to what is generally referred to as "urban" or "town" planning. Throughout much of western Europe, town planning had become widespread during the later fifteenth century, but not in Spain. Spaniards were aware of these developments, but their interests lay elsewhere—in the Reconquest. Military encampments were established for both offensive and defensive purposes, and some of these were formed on a geometric grid pattern. Sometimes these grid encampments evolved into towns, but the impetus for the design was military need. The most famous of the military grid encampments was Santa Fe, which Ferdinand and Isabel established in two and a half months in 1491 just outside the gates of Granada as a military base for the final thrust against the last Moorish stronghold, at which they were successful the following year. The origin of this military grid pattern is not clear, but it had its own logic and required little historical instruction. Thus, whatever its conceptual provenance, Santa Fe was a hastily constructed geometrically designed rectangular encampment, crisscrossed by two central axes leading to four cardinal gates.

Be that as it may, the Spanish kings had no formal policy toward the physical side of town planning. Several of Spain's most important cities (such as Seville) had a deeply rooted Moorish character, and the Moors were heterodox regarding town planning, allowing urban habitats to evolve more or less spontaneously. The ancient Roman cities served as no model; nor did the demands of the military encampment. However, there is another dimension to town and city planning, the institutional one. In this realm the Spanish kings had evolved a rational and precise scheme for the administrative apparatus of urban habitats. From the municipal council to the organization of the local economy, those who would establish a town or city had very clear and, one might say, restricting guidelines to follow.

In 1492 Spain was in many ways uniquely well suited to carry out a large-scale conquest and colonization. It was highly experienced in doing exactly this. Many of the institutions of Reconquest, such as the *adelantado* (a private contractor empowered by the kings to carry out the reconquest of a specific region largely at his own expense in return for land and other perquisites) and even Isabel's revived Inquisition, were amenable to transfer to the

empire. But, as it turned out, the most fundamental institution of the colonization was the urban habitat. It was the town and city upon which Spanish Crown and colonizers alike depended for establishing juridical legitimation, organization of the economy, and perhaps most importantly defense of trading routes, commercial exchange, and protection of frontier regions. For this urban colonization Ferdinand and Isabel possessed a clear and precise administrative program, but not a physical one. In a fundamental way, the early conquest and colonization of the New World was undertaken without a plan for physically setting out the towns and cities that were central to the effort.

#### SANTO DOMINGO AND NEW WORLD URBANIZATION

Spain's first attempts at town building in the New World occurred on the island of Hispaniola. Christopher Columbus founded Isabella on his second voyage, but this town quickly failed. Other attempts to establish towns on the island during the first decade of colonization also were unsuccessful. The first true Spanish city in the New World was Santo Domingo, whose construction began in 1496. Like so many later towns and cities in the Spanish Empire, this one had to be moved. Sometimes it was a hurricane which caused the relocation of a city (as in the case of the first Santo Domingo), or an earthquake (as in the case of Guatemala City), or poor site location with regard to transportation networks (like Buenos Aires), or a pestilential climate (as with Vera Cruz). And there are many other examples. Construction of the second Santo Domingo began in 1502, and it was the first Spanish-American city to have a rectilinear grid pattern. How this came about is of importance.

The new Santo Domingo was constructed on the bank of the Ozama River under the direct supervision of Governor Nicolás de Ovando. Ferdinand and Isabel were obviously familiar with the geometric grid pattern, sometimes called the checkerboard pattern (*sistema de demero*), which they had imposed on Santa Fe and other towns and cities of the Reconquest, but the royal instructions to Governor Ovando in 1501 do not suggest this:

As it is necessary in the island of Española to make settlements and from here it is not possible to give precise instructions, investigate the possible sites, and in conformity with the quality of the land and sites as well as with the present population outside present settlements establish settlements in the numbers and in the places that seem proper to you.<sup>14</sup>

Clearly, nearly ten years after the discovery of the New World and the establishment of the Spanish Empire in America, the Catholic kings maintained no formal plan for the physical organization of urban settlements, which they must have understood would be the political, social, and economic matrix of colonial life as well as the locus of defense. Nevertheless, Ovando proceeded to elaborate a grid pattern for Santo Domingo, whose provenance is unclear. Certainly he had as a guide similarly patterned Reconquest cities, but it would be only a small speculation to presume that someone with his court experience would have been aware of the French *bastides* (fortified towns) and perhaps the English planned towns. In any event, Santo Domingo earned a formidable reputation as a planned grid city. In 1526 the Spaniard Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo wrote admiringly of it, comparing it favorably to Spanish cities, including Barcelona, which he had seen many times:

The streets are much more level and much broader and incomparably straighter . . . it was laid out by rule and compass with the streets all of the same size, in which respect it is far ahead of all the towns I have seen.<sup>15</sup>

Toward the end of the sixteenth century Juan de Castellanos wrote of his visit to Santo Domingo in 1535:<sup>16</sup>

Está su población tan compasada  
Que ninguna sé yo mejor trazada  
(The layout of the town is such  
That I know of none so well devised)

Ninguna cosa por menor que sea  
Hay en cualquier parte de la vía  
Que desde un cabo a otro no se vea  
Según la rectitud con que se guía  
(No thing regardless of its size  
Wherever it may lie along the course  
From end to end can it be seen  
Owing to the way the streets have been designed)

#### THE URBAN PROTOCOL

The vagueness imparted in Ovando's instructions as to site selection and physical form became essentially a passive guideline for town creation over

the course of the following decade. For instance, Columbus' son, Diego Colón, was instructed in 1509 to "establish settlements where it seems best to you."<sup>17</sup> But there was soon to be a dramatic change in the Crown's policy toward urban planning in its American empire. It began with the royal instructions given to Pedrarias Dávila in 1513:

One of the most important things to observe is that . . . the places chosen for settlement . . . be healthy and not swampy, good for unloading goods [if ports]; if inland to be on a river if possible, . . . good water and air, close to arable land . . .

In view of these things necessary for settlements, and seeking the best site in these terms for the town, then divide the plots for houses, these to be according to the status of the persons and from the beginning it should be according to a definite arrangement; for the manner of setting up the solares will determine the pattern of the town, both in the position of the plaza and the church and in the pattern of the streets, for towns being newly founded may be established according to plan without difficulty. If not started with form, they will never attain it.<sup>18</sup>

The Spanish Empire in America now had a protocol for town and city planning, although it would be refined and clarified during the following decades. Implicit was the Crown's desire that urban habitats be laid out according to a grid pattern with parallel or right-angled streets. Explicit was its command that towns and cities be established in ecologies suitable for the health of their residents and the carrying out of trade. Dávila was also instructed to subdivide towns into lots (*solares*) for house building, given to the residents according to their status. Thus, the Crown both recognized and instituted a socio/economic hierarchy, a fundamental urban characteristic in any event. The more important residents would receive the best building lots and, implicitly, those closest to the central plaza, where the governmental buildings and the church would be located.

Dávila first employed these instructions in the founding of Panama City in 1519, and they were conveyed to other early conquistadors. With Dávila was Alonso García Bravo, who later would be with Hernán Cortés at the founding of the first but short-lived Spanish village in Mexico, the Villa Rica de Vera Cruz in 1519, and who would later elaborate the famous *traza* (grid pattern) around the main plaza of Mexico City in 1523–1524.<sup>19</sup> Cortés described him as "a good geometer."<sup>20</sup> Many of the towns established during the colonial period were founded by clergy, explicitly for the purpose of converting Indians and supervising their new religious lives. Thus, the basic ideas

of the Dávila instructions were repeated by the king to the Jeronymite friars for the establishment of towns. Similar instructions were given to Francisco de Garay in 1521 for the founding of towns in the province of Amichel in Mexico, and the same instructions were prepared as a guide for all those who might establish towns (always including cities and even villages, of course) on the mainland and also for Cortés.<sup>21</sup>

Before proceeding to the founding of towns and cities on the mainland, *tierra firme*, a brief consideration of pre-Columbian urbanization is in order.

## CHAPTER 2

# *The Pre-Columbian City*



There were cities in the Western Hemisphere centuries before the Europeans arrived. However, this was not the case in the Caribbean. The Taino Arawaks, the largest Indian culture in the Caribbean, resident on virtually all the islands of the Greater and Lesser Antilles, frequently lived in towns with a few to several hundred or even a thousand houses and as many as several thousand inhabitants. The houses, generally straw-roofed huts called *bohíos* (a term still used in parts of the Caribbean), were grouped around a ceremonial ball court. But there were no streets as understood in an urban habitat, nor central marketplace for the exchange of goods produced both within and outside the town. Furthermore, almost all residents were involved mainly in agricultural pursuits. These were truly rural rather than urban towns.

The situation was different on the mainland. All of the great cities of pre-Columbian America grew spontaneously from origins as agricultural communities or ceremonial centers. In this sense they were unlike the great contemporaneous European cities where castles and/or transportation possibilities such as roads, rivers, or large bodies of water provided the impetus for urban growth. Whether agricultural or ceremonial in origin, the great American cities were located near permanent sources of potable water. The only planned cities were in Peru, and none grew to political or commercial eminence.

### TEOTIHUACÁN

The first great urban center in the Americas was Teotihuacán, located about thirty miles northeast of Mexico City in the Valley of Mexico. A ceremonial center situated in a densely populated agricultural valley capable of pro-

viding products and visitors, it grew to become the paramount political and commercial center of a large geographical area, with a trading network that reached the Gulf coast and Central America. Thus the resident urban population was composed of clergy, political leaders and bureaucracy, artisans, servants, and traders. At the height of its glory, between A.D. 450 and 650, Teotihuacán supported a very large resident population, reaching perhaps 200,000 in an area of about 20 square kilometers.

Teotihuacán is well known for its two great pyramids, the Sun and the Moon, and the Avenue of the Dead. Let us follow Jorge Hardoy's description and analysis of the city's urban form:

. . . the builders of Teotihuacán established two enormous axes in the shape of a cross, serving as the basis for a grid that not only defined residential areas but also permitted easy displacement and drainage of water. The civic-ceremonial center was distinguished by the complex of buildings and plazas bordering the Avenue of the Dead, undoubtedly one of the most brilliant monumental conceptions in urban history. Although conceived for a population of pedestrians, spatially it was a true urban street.<sup>1</sup>

This was a great urban habitat in form but also in social structure, which was "hierarchical, heterogeneous, and specialized in a way none of its predecessors had been."

A hierarchical street network is an essential characteristic of an urban habitat, and in this regard too Teotihuacán was an urban center. The Avenue of the Dead was a "main street" of sufficient width to permit the movement of large numbers of people and great quantities of goods in what was then one of the largest cities in the world. And as a mature urban center, it supported a network of secondary streets. The size of the population and the network of streets permitted the existence of secondary residential areas, where artisans and perhaps the lesser bureaucrats resided in more modest housing than the extravagant and complex dwellings, often referred to as palaces, along the Avenue of the Dead.

#### TENOCHTITLÁN

The other great city of Mesoamerica was the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlán, founded in 1325 on a small islet in the southwestern part of Lake Texcoco also in the Valley of Mexico and long after Teotihuacán had been largely abandoned. Two years later Tlatelolco, a second Aztec city, was founded

nearby on another small islet. The two cities were rivals until Tlatelolco was defeated in 1473 and annexed to Tenochtitlán. The Aztec capital was the center of a vast Mesoamerican empire that was founded and maintained by harsh military prowess and a system of tribute and long-distance trade.

Tenochtitlán was not initially formed according to any rational plan. It was not until the second century of its existence that emperors began to bring order to the city's growth and to improve public works. The growth of the city, now orderly planned, as well as its power and importance reached their apogee during the reign of Moctezuma II, between 1502 and 1520. By that time the city was approximately half land area and half *chinampas* (artificially constructed gardens moored to a lake's floor),<sup>2</sup> with a population of somewhere between 155,000 and 165,000. Under the stewardship of the later emperors of the fifteenth century, Tenochtitlán had grown to be not only one of the largest cities in the world but one of the most decidedly urban cities. The capital was extraordinarily complex and sophisticated in form and capacity to provide food and manufactured goods, potable water, and indeed public order to the large constituent resident population and the tens of thousands of Indians who visited each day for personal or trading reasons. In *form* and *function* Tenochtitlán was exquisite.

"This great city of Temixtitan [Tenochtitlán] is built on the salt lake," Hernán Cortés wrote in his second letter to King Charles V of Spain at the end of October 1520, "and from the mainland to the city is a distance of two leagues, from any side from which to enter."<sup>3</sup> The city was connected to the mainland by four "artificial causeways, two cavalry lances in width . . . The city is as large as Seville or Cordoba." Cortés was immensely impressed by this great city that he was soon to level. As with any mature urban habitat, Tenochtitlán had a hierarchical network of primary and secondary streets. "The principal streets are very broad and straight; some of these are one half land and the other half water on which they go about in canoes. All the streets have openings at regular intervals, to let the water flow from one to the other. At all of these openings, some of which are very broad, there are bridges, very large, strong, and well constructed." (Cortés immediately understood that the Aztecs could confine the Spaniards within the city merely by raising the bridges, so he "made great haste to build four brigantines, which, whenever we might wish, could take three hundred men and the horses to land.")

Tenochtitlán was also a city of imposing public works. The city was built almost at the level of the lake and therefore was subject to flooding during the rainy season. To assuage the problem, a sixteen-kilometer dike was constructed, which divided the lake into two parts, Lake Texcoco to the east



and Lake Mexico to the west. Lake Mexico was the smaller of what now amounted to two lakes, and its waters surrounded Tenochtitlán. In addition to controlling the disruptive flooding, the dike, which had sluiceways to permit water control and canoe passage, allowed Lake Mexico to fill with fresh water from southern fresh-water lakes. Thus, the city was no longer isolated on a great salt lake but was surrounded by fresh waters alive with fish and fowl. "Along one of the causeways which lead to the city," Cortés reported to the king, "there are two conduits of masonry, each two paces broad and five feet deep. Through one of these there flows into the heart of the city a volume of very good fresh water. The other, which is empty, brings the water they use to clean the first conduit. Conduits as large around as an ox's body bring the fresh water across the bridges, thereby avoiding the channels through which the salt water flows. The whole city is supplied in this way, and everybody has water to drink."

The plaza was central to pre-Columbian urban life; and the larger and more densely populated the settlement, the greater the likelihood that there would be more than one plaza, each differentiated by use. The larger or largest plaza would likely be the administrative and perhaps also the religious center of the city. Others would be devoted to different kinds of markets. The conquistador Bernal Díaz del Castillo, who accompanied Cortés, describes the great market of Tlatelolco:

We were astounded at the number of people and the quantity of merchandise that it contained, and at the good order and control that was maintained, for we had never seen such a thing before . . . Each kind of merchandise was kept by itself and had its fixed place marked out. Let us begin with the dealers in gold, silver, and precious stones, feathers, mantles, and embroidered goods. Then there were other wares consisting of Indian slaves both men and women; and I say that they bring as many of them to the great market for sale as the Portuguese bring Negroes from Guinea . . . Next there were other traders who sold great pieces of cloth and cotton, and articles of twisted thread, and there were *cacahuateros* who sold cacao. In this way one could see every sort of merchandise that is to be found in the whole of New Spain [Mexico]. There were those who sold cloths of henequen and ropes and the sandals with which they are shod, which are made from the same plant, and sweet cooked roots, and other tubers which they get from this plant, all were kept in one part of the market in the place assigned to them. In another part there were skins of tigers and lions, of otters and jackals,

deer and other animals and badgers and mountain cats, some tanned and others untanned, and other classes of merchandise.

Let us go on and speak of those who sold beans and sage and other vegetables and herbs in another part, and to those who sold fowls, cocks and wattles, rabbits, hares, deer, mallards, young dogs and other things of that sort in their part of the market, and let us also mention the fruiterers, and the women who sold cooked food, dough and tripe in their own part of the market; then those who sold honey and honey paste and other dainties like nut paste, and those who sold lumber, boards, cradles, beams, blocks and benches, each article by itself, and the vendors of *ocote* [pitch-pine] firewood, and other things of a similar nature.<sup>4</sup>

The conquistador could hardly go on, he was so overwhelmed by the enormity and diversity of the great market, but he added that it also sold paper, reeds filled with tobacco, ointments, and "much cochineal" (a red dye), and herbs. He almost forgot to include the vendors who sold salt, stone knives, fish, "axes of brass and copper and tin, and gourds and gaily painted jars made of wood." The great marketplace with "its surrounding arcades was so crowded with people, that one would not have been able to see and inquire about it all in two days." His list of items sold was perforce incomplete. There would also have been chili peppers, feathers, blankets, and more. The market of Tlatelolco must have been the one Cortés described as being "twice as large as that of Salamanca, all surrounded by arcades where there are daily more than sixty thousand souls buying and selling."

After visiting the marketplace of Tlatelolco, Bernal Díaz del Castillo proceeded to the Aztecs' Great Temple, what later would be called the Templo Mayor, and its plaza, today's *zócalo*. He saw "a great enclosure of courts, it seems to me larger than the plaza of Salamanca, with two walls of masonry surrounding it, and the court itself all paved with very smooth great white flagstones." He ascended the Great Temple's "one hundred and fourteen" steps, and there on its top was "a small plaza . . . where there was a space like a platform with some large stones placed on it, on which they put the poor Indians for sacrifice . . ." Apart from human sacrifice, the plaza atop the enormous pyramid offered an excellent vantage from which to see the capital. He "could see over everything very well, and we saw the three causeways which led into Mexico, that is the causeway of Iztapala, by which we had entered four days before, and that of Tacuba, and that of Tepeaquilla, and we saw the fresh water that comes from Chapultepec, which supplies the city,

and we saw the bridges on the three causeways . . . and we beheld on that great lake a great multitude of canoes, some coming with supplies of food and others returning loaded with cargoes of merchandise."<sup>5</sup> He turned his eye to the great marketplace "and the crowds of people that were in it, some buying and others selling, so that the murmur and hum of their voices and words that they used could be heard more than a league off. Some of the soldiers among us who had been in many parts of the world, in Constantinople, and all over Italy, and in Rome, said that so large a market place and so full of people, and so well regulated and arranged, they had never beheld before."

Indeed, Aztec society itself was well regulated and arranged, just like the marketplace, and both were sustained by a jurisprudence that was clear, precise, and efficiently, if sometimes harshly, administered, but it was a system of law and adjudication that so far as we know was unburdened by graft and corruption. More to the point, Aztec jurisprudence underpinned and nourished the society's diverse and complex market system. In the great marketplace of Tlatelolco, Díaz del Castillo observed "buildings where three magistrates sit in judgment, and there are executive officers like *Alguacils* who inspect the merchandise." The Aztec market system, not monetized, was one of barter, with differences in value adjusted by the exchange of cacao beans. Cortés was impressed by "a very large building" in one of the plazas, that was "like a Court of Justice, where there are always ten or twelve persons sitting as judges, and delivering their decisions upon all cases which arise in the markets. There are other persons who go about continually among the people, observing what is bought and sold, and the measures used in selling, and they break those which are dishonest." This was a metropolitan economy, and it could not be contained within generalized plazas.

As befitted one of the world's largest cities (a commercial as well as administrative metropolis), the size of the capital's markets, the number of people who participated, and the volume of trade permitted commercial specialization. Individuals were able to differentiate in production and/or sale, and many streets leading away from the plazas came to be occupied according to the specialized product being sold (and manufactured in the case of artisans). Cortés wrote to the king: "Each kind of merchandise is sold in its respective street, and they do not mix the different kinds of merchandise so that they preserve perfect order. There is a street for game where they sell every sort of bird such as chickens, partridges, quail, wild ducks, fly-catchers, widgeons, turtle-doves, pigeons, reed-birds, parrots, owls, eaglets, owlets, falcons, sparrow-hawks and kestrels . . . One street is set apart for the sale of herbs, including every sort of root and medicinal herb which grows in that country." So there were not only principal market plazas but also articulated

streets that constituted secondary areas of commercial specialization. Much the same had occurred in Europe and would be replicated once again in the cities of Spanish America.

One of Cortés' observations deserves additional comment. In reporting areal specialization, Cortés implied that the grouping of similar sellers by street to "preserve perfect order" was an act of government policy. This made good sense to the Spaniard, who appreciated the need for order and who knew intuitively or otherwise the advantage such spatial arrangements would have for supervision and tax collecting. However, although Aztec society was effectively authoritarian and orderly in a way that no coterminous European society was, it is not at all clear that such specialization by street was instituted by governmental policy. It may have been that the economy itself had matured to the point that it would freely induce such spatial arrangements, as indeed often occurred in later cities of Spanish America.

Tenochtitlán's housing clearly and impressively distinguished it as a great urban habitat. Cortés informed the king:

There are many very large and fine houses in this City, and the reason of there being so many important houses is that all the Lords of the land who are vassals of the said Montezuma have houses in this City and reside therein for a certain time of the year, and in addition to this there are many rich Citizens who also possess very fine houses. All these houses in addition to having very fine and large dwelling rooms, have very exquisite flower gardens both on the upper apartments as well as down below.

The principal houses were of two stories, but the greater number of houses were of one story only. The materials, according to the importance of the buildings, were *tezontli* [a volcanic stone of dull-red color] and lime, adobes formed the walls plastered with lime, and in the suburbs and shores of the island of reeds and straw, appropriate for the fishermen and the lower classes.

The housing hierarchy observed by Cortés was appropriate to a great urban city. The city possessed temples and other public buildings, palaces with multiple rooms, even apartments, as Cortés noted. The larger, more complex dwellings had one or more plazas within their walls. The majority of the population, however, resided in simple one-room adobe houses, while others had several separate rooms, including a kitchen.

We do not know how building lots were allocated in Tenochtitlán. However it was done, the result was that the palaces of the nobility were in the

central zone of the city. The "fine houses" of the "many rich Citizens" would have been located as close to the seat of power and status as possible. Those of less affluence and status resided farther away from the city's center. It was a city with a large and varied housing stock.

This would end abruptly at the hands of the Spaniards. We can only guess how many houses, including palaces, Tenochtitlán held when the Spaniards arrived in 1519. Later chroniclers sometimes had it at 60,000 houses for a population of some 300,000. Both of these figures are exaggerated by about half. Conservatively, it is probable that the city held somewhere between 30,000 and 40,000 houses. Virtually all of those in the central zones of the city would be destroyed by Cortés and his soldiers.

Cortés' assault on Tenochtitlán in 1521 met with fierce resistance. The Aztecs, women included, fought on the lake, in the streets, from their houses, and from their rooftops. "Seeing that the enemy was determined to resist to the death," Cortés reported to the king that the Indians "would force us to destroy them all." He "reflected on the means I might use to frighten them so that they would realize their mistake and the injury they would sustain from us; and I kept on burning and destroying their houses and the towers of their idols." He already "had burned many houses in the outskirts of the city." Now, "to make them feel it even more, on this day I ordered fire to be set to the great houses on the square." Cortés and his men had "fought hard that day, and my seven brigantines had entered the city by the water streets and burned a great part of it." The Spaniards had with them more than a hundred thousand Indian allies, tributary vassals of the Aztecs, who took the opportunity to break the Aztecs' power over them and did so with unrelenting revenge. Cortés ordered his men and his Indian allies to enter the city and "overrun the greater part of [it] and burn and do all the damage they could." The carnage continued day after day. "Now that our allies had observed the systematic order we followed in the destruction of the city, the multitude which accompanied our daily entrance was now beyond all reckoning." Soon "[t]here were already so few houses left where the enemy might take shelter that the lord of the city and some of the chiefs had placed themselves in canoes, not knowing what to do with themselves."

The great Aztec capital had been systematically destroyed. For all practical purposes it had been leveled. It would never be rebuilt to resemble its former self. In fact those Indians who survived or were born to the few who remained or who emigrated to the rebuilt Spanish city would be required to reside in outer Indian barrios. The exemplar of grand indigenous urbanism had been assaulted by European Civilization and had lost.

## THE INCAS

The other great urbanized civilization in pre-Columbian America was that of the Incas in South America. Inca society was highly organized and vertically integrated. Little about Incan life was left to chance, yet the Inca Empire's many cities were not fully planned. Some of the cities shared similarities, however, such as walled housing complexes called citadels, which were rectilinear in form, and central plazas. The most famous of Inca cities was the empire's capital, Cuzco.

The Inca Empire greatly expanded during the last half of the fifteenth century. Conquered capitals were incorporated into the growing empire as regional capitals, and new urban centers were established in service of imperial requisites. Generally, the Incas drew upon their experience in Cuzco and introduced the central plaza surrounded by the city's most important houses, which in turn were formed around interior patios. Roads linked these cities to the imperial capital. One of the newly established cities, Ollantaytambo, followed an almost perfect grid, although the main plaza was trapezoidal in shape in the manner of Cuzco's, perhaps similarly a concession to an intractable mountainous topography.

In the words of Pedro de Cieza de León, a Spaniard who arrived in the New World in the early 1530s as a thirteen-year-old and departed some seventeen years later, "nowhere in this kingdom of Peru was there a city with the air of nobility that Cuzco possessed, which . . . was the capital of the empire of the Incas and their royal seat." The city's streets were "large . . . except that they were narrow, and the houses [were] made all of stone so skillfully joined that it was evident how old the edifices were, for the huge stones were very well set." Cieza de León was impressed by the "splendid buildings of the Lord-Incas" as well as "the imposing temple to the sun . . . which was among the richest in gold and silver to be found anywhere in the world." The general population, however, lived in houses made "all of wood, thatch, or adobe."<sup>6</sup>

The Incas were great central planners, but Cuzco itself was permitted to grow through the fifteenth century with limited planning. However, here too administrative, religious, and economic life focused on a central main plaza, occupying about twenty-five acres. The main Cuzco plaza was surrounded by the palaces of the Incas as well as religious edifices. The plaza was divided by a canal cut in the bed of the Huatany River into two spaces, one for ceremonial purposes and the other for quotidian secular activity. Radiating from the central plaza were "four highways" which led to the four corners of the empire. These four cardinal roads gave a seeming symmetry to Cuzco's street system, but the city's topography presented too many obstacles for

regularized street planning to have occurred. This was truly a mountainous city as well as an urban one.

Cuzco's population in the early sixteenth century is difficult to estimate. Early chroniclers judged that the city contained anywhere from 4,000 to 20,000 houses. We can guess that the population at the time of the arrival of the Spaniards was somewhere between, say, 20,000 and 100,000 people. To estimate some 50,000 residents does not seem unreasonable. In any case, Cuzco was a large urban city confronted by a difficult topography that did not easily admit of the kind of rational centralized planning that so clearly defined Inca society in general.

#### THE NON-URBAN MAYA CITY

This discussion of pre-Columbian urban cities has moved from the Valley of Mexico to Andean Peru without a single word about the city-building society that arguably produced the most advanced and accomplished culture in the Western Hemisphere and in fact in the contemporaneous world, the Mayas. This is because the Mayas, so remarkable in their mathematics, astronomy, calendars, and unique written language, built cities that were not truly urban in form. The Mayas constructed splendid ceremonial centers, often with causeways leading to temples. The causeways (really roads rather than streets), however, were not fronted by dwellings or religious buildings except when they appeared randomly. There simply was no regularized plan of spatial organization in the Maya cities.

To put it another way, Maya cities, even when they held large, permanent nonagricultural, socially and economically differentiated populations and many temples, priestly dwellings, palaces, and modest one-room dwellings—all manifest characteristics of urban habitats—were not truly urban cities.<sup>7</sup> No matter the scale, the population density was very low, much more so than normally associated with urban development. Perhaps most importantly, Mayan cities contained no urbanized streets. Houses were usually constructed in small groups of three or four dwellings built on platforms to avoid flooding. They were not built in the urbanized manner parallel to streets in linear fashion. In any event, the Classic Maya period and the apogee of the society's cultural development had long passed when the Spaniards arrived on their doorstep in 1519.

These Spaniards were about to conquer and colonize the mainland through the institution of town and city, and wherever they came upon great Indian urban settlements their task was all the easier.

## CHAPTER 3

# *The Colonial City Ordained and Structured*



The title of this chapter conveys multiple meanings. First, it refers to the royal decrees during the first decades of the sixteenth century that delineated the physical structure of towns and cities to be founded in the Spanish Empire in America. Second, it refers to the ordination of a hierarchical socioeconomic structure acknowledged and sustained by the differential distribution of the initial physical assets of those towns and cities. The various decrees for urban organization were issued in concert with the Crown's desire to institute systematic royal authority in the empire; and the grid plan, with its central core plaza anointing the locus of secular and religious authority, with the social elite standing nearby, suited this purpose perfectly. In fact Madrid itself, far removed from the ambiguities of imperial authority within the empire, did not have a governmental plaza similar to those across the Atlantic until the seventeenth century.

By the time Philip II codified the existing urban decrees in 1573, the Italian Renaissance had taken hold in Spain, and Spanish humanists had become familiar with Roman urban organization. In the fifteenth century the Italian architect Leon Battista Alberti found and in 1485 published *De Architectura*, the seminal work of the Roman military architect Vitruvius. Almost immediately the ideas of both urban architects were known in Spain. The most important source for the Spaniards, however, was the guide to urban layout written by Vitruvius. *De Architectura* was translated into Spanish in 1526 as *Medidas del romano*. The influence of Vitruvius was palpable in the royal instructions to the early town builders in the empire but was even more so in the codification.



## THE URBAN TEMPLATE

The *Ordenanzas for the Discovery, New Settlement, and Pacification of the Indies* of 1573 was a summary of previous royal instructions for urban planning in the empire and would be the prescriptive guide, notwithstanding royal emendation, until subsequent decrees were incorporated in the *Recopilación de las leyes de las Indias* of 1680 (Libro IV, 7.1). An early article of the *Ordenanzas* conveys a central tension within the logic of the Spanish imperium: how to guarantee a sufficient labor force for the colonial economy and yet protect as well as Christianize the native population. Article 5: "Look carefully at the places and ports where it might be possible to build Spanish settlements without damage to the Indian population."<sup>1</sup> Beyond that we see a direct derivation from the Roman Vitruvius (for a comparison of clauses from the *Ordenanzas* and from Vitruvius, see the Appendix).

The *Ordenanzas* directed the colonists to select sites for towns very carefully, preferably in an elevated but not too elevated place. "If it be on the coast, care should be taken that it be a good harbor and that the sea should be neither to the south nor to the west; if this is not possible, do not place it near lagoons or swamps in which are poisonous animals and polluted air and water" (Article 111).<sup>2</sup>

Meticulous attention was paid also to the town's main plaza, and again the provenance was the Roman Empire through Vitruvius. The *Ordenanzas* ordered that "[t]he four corners of the plaza face to the four principal winds, because in this way the streets leaving the plaza are not exposed to the principal winds, which would be of great inconvenience" (Article 114). Emanating from the plaza should be four principal streets, one from the middle of each side as well as two from each corner (for a total of twelve). This injunction was not routinely followed, since it would have limited the size of government and religious buildings at the main plaza. "The plaza should be a rectangle, prolonged so that the length is at least half again as long as the width, because this form is best for celebrations with horses, and for any others that are to take place" (Article 112). The plaza should not be less than two hundred feet in width and three hundred feet in length. A good proportion would be six hundred feet in length and four hundred in width. If the town were situated on the coast the plaza should be located near the port and if inland at the center of the town.

Thus, the general shape, proportion, and place of the much remarked upon Spanish-American plaza . . . and in its Roman origin (see Appendix).

The administrative hierarchy was also set out, with the Catholic Church accorded eminence. The cathedral, parish church, and monastery were to be

assigned the first *solares* (town lots) after the streets and plazas were laid out (Article 119). Then lots for the government palace, the town hall, the custom-house, and finally the arsenal were to be assigned in that order. The church and government buildings at the main plaza were each to be placed on a whole block unless practical or ornamental reasons dictated otherwise. The Spanish-American main plaza with its religious and secular administrative edifices clearly was conceived on the basis of a preexisting plan—the urban habitat of the Roman Empire. The locus of power and exploitation in both empires was urban and evident for all to see.

Let us leave aside the matter of imposing origins and follow the *Ordenanzas* further for what they tell us about early colonial Spanish America.

The Crown was intensely concerned about the general well-being of the urban populations. Slaughterhouses, fisheries, tanneries, and other businesses which produce filth were to be located so that the filth could be easily disposed of (Article 122). Inland towns should, if possible, be located near navigable rivers; and, poignantly, filth-producing buildings should be placed down wind (Article 123). Additionally, each town was required to set aside a commons, so that regardless of population growth there would always be sufficient space for recreation and pasturage (Article 129).

The urban plan was a potential challenge to the traditional Spanish concept of social hierarchy. In the main plaza no building lots were to be assigned to private individuals; but after allocating whole-block lots for the public buildings mentioned above, stores and houses for the merchants should be built (Article 127). After providing lots for the merchants, the remaining building lots in the town were to be distributed by lottery, starting with those closest to the main plaza, with unclaimed lots reserved for future residents (Article 127). This is extremely interesting, since prior to 1573 the founders of towns had routinely assigned building lots to the first settlers according to their socioeconomic status, with the more important settlers receiving lots closest to the main plaza and those less important receiving lots ever farther away. For instance, when Francisco Pizarro, the conqueror of Peru, founded Lima he divided the city into *solares* and assigned each conquistador and *encomendero* (holder of a grant of Indian labor) a *solar* closest to the main plaza on which they were to construct their houses. To several of his most worthy followers he assigned two *solares*. Now the Crown was ordering a more equitable system based on equal opportunity (albeit in the form of chance) rather than socioeconomic rank, with the exception of the merchants. Of course, recipients of lotteried allotments could and sometimes did sell, barter, or gamble away their rights to a *solar*.

The Crown's desire for an equitable distribution of building lots was

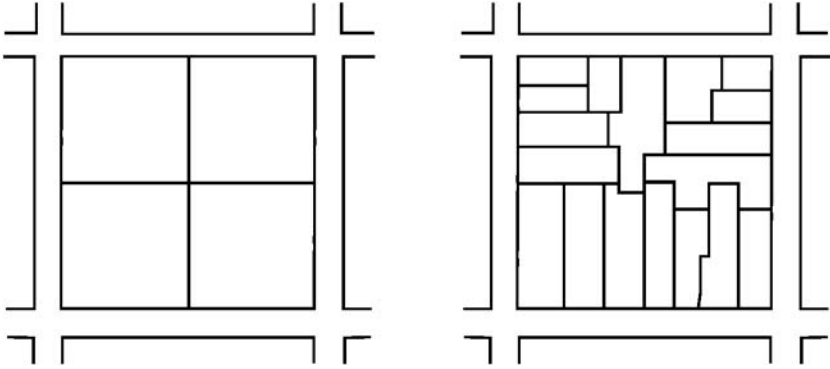


Fig. 3.1. A Caracas Block Subdivision over Time  
(Drawn by Joseph Stoll after Graziano Gasparini, *La arquitectura colonial en Venezuela*, 119)

abetted by the workings of time and the vagaries of an urban economy. Over the course of time many of the original large building lots meant for a private single dwelling were subdivided, and not infrequently on more than one occasion. Caracas provides an excellent example. The original plan for the city provided that blocks designed for private dwellings be divided into four equal lots (see Fig. 3.1). Yet over time, and for whatever reason, many of those large building lots were subdivided, permitting more people to reside in the central city, including those of less affluence than some of the original settlers (Fig. 3.1).

#### A CORDEL Y REGLA

The towns of the Spanish Empire in America were to be laid out by “cord and rule.” However, most of the principal towns had been laid out “geometrically,” with intersecting streets emanating from the main plaza, forming a grid pattern, during the half century before the very regulations which prescribed this regularity and symmetry were codified in 1573. The first urban area that accurately anticipated the later *Ordenanzas* was Mexico City. Cortés was strongly urged by some of his officers to establish the locus of Spanish rule away from the center of the Aztec capital, even at the village of Coyoacán. But the conqueror of Tenochtitlán (or, one might say, the destroyer of that great city) made the providential decision to convert the center of Aztec imperial power into the center of Spanish rule. The Aztec plaza therefore was coopted into the main plaza of the new Mexico City. Cortés superimposed Spanish religion and rule on Aztec religion and rule. At one end of the Plaza

Mayor, now called the *zócalo*, the cathedral was constructed over a period of decades directly where the main Aztec pyramid had stood. On another side of the Plaza, to the east, Cortés' palace was set, replacing Moctezuma's. On the remaining two sides of the Plaza buildings fronted by colonnades were erected. The colonnades, in accordance with royal instructions soon to be codified, were provided to protect merchants from sun, wind, and rain. Such colonnades, which today we would call portals (*portales*) or porticoes, still exist in many Spanish-American plazas.

Laying out the grid plan for Mexico City was entrusted in 1524 to Cortés' "good geometer," the Spanish surveyor Alonso García Bravo. His task was not very complicated, because the Spaniards had destroyed virtually all of the city around the main plaza that was to form the original Spanish section of the city—the *traza*. At each corner of the Plaza Mayor two broad streets were laid out, thus constituting the eight specified in the royal instructions. *Solares* were carefully plotted and apportioned to the conquerors.

This systematic pattern of urban organization was repetitiously repeated in the decades leading to the codification of 1573. The main plazas of inland towns were to be placed at the center of the town and were supposed to be at least 300 by 200 feet. It appears that the early urban planners attempted to fulfill this requirement, notably in Lima (1535), Bogotá (1538), and La Paz (1548). The pattern also prevailed in the founding of such towns as Popayán in New Granada, Puebla in Mexico, and Santiago de Guatemala. Towns that were situated at the seaside needed to be walled as a means of protection against pirates and foreign enemies. This was the case, famously, with Havana and San Juan, but also with Cartagena and Buenos Aires at the time of its second founding in 1580. Lima, too, although not exactly at the seaside, was fortified with walls. Following instructions, seaside towns placed their main plazas proximate to portside, as in the case of Buenos Aires, Havana, San Juan, and others. When the topography presented an insurmountable barrier, however, the architects of the towns could situate the main plaza wherever feasible. Thus, the main plaza of Quito could not be the physical center of a town that would grow in response to its mountainous habitat.<sup>3</sup>

Whereas towns situated on hillsides (such as Quito) needed to evolve spontaneously and organically, some towns began as fortified defensive positions, which we may generally call *presidios*. This was the case with many of southern Chile's fortress towns and *villas* called *tercios*, as we have seen, and none is more structurally interesting than Nacimiento (see Fig. 3.2). This fortified and walled *villa* was designed in the late colonial period as a defensive bulwark. The main plaza was placed near the water, as prescribed, but the

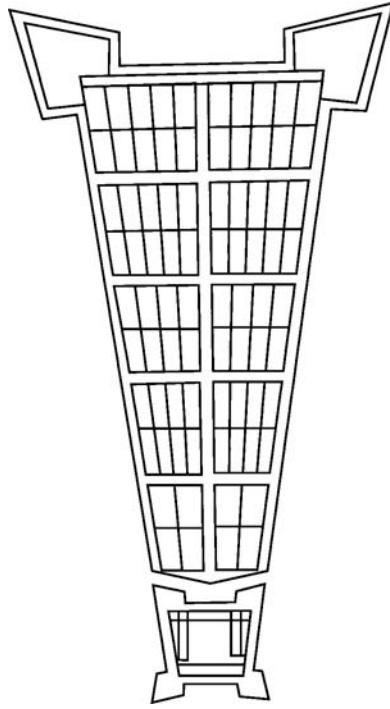


Fig. 3.2. Nacimiento, Chile, at Mid-Eighteenth Century  
(Map by Joseph Stoll)

streets flared away from the water, with the *villa* expanding from narrow to wide. At the narrowest end the first blockface (*cuadra*) contained eight *solares*. The next blockface contained sixteen *solares*, each narrower than those of the first blockface. Next were sixteen building lots slightly wider than the second blockface. The fourth and fifth levels each had twenty building lots. Thus, apart from the main plaza, there were eighty building lots, each to contain a single house. Altogether, this was late colonial urbanism *cum* war machine, albeit a defensive one.

We have been discussing the secular town, when in fact there probably were as many or more “religious towns,” that is, towns (and *villas*) established by the regular or secular clergy for the essential purpose of Christianizing Indians in the broadest meaning of that term. Early in the colonization the Crown ordered that Indians be brought together in towns the better to appropriate their labor and collect taxes more efficiently. The Church was quick to support the effort. These Indian towns were known as *congregaciones* or *reducciones*. The Franciscans and Dominicans are well known to

have founded many such towns in Mesoamerica, especially in the area of Maya presence. The Jesuits too were great town builders, especially in Paraguay. The clerical towns were designed in accordance with the civil regulations that we have examined. While the church building was always of paramount importance and given a place of high honor in the plazas of the civil towns, in the religious towns the visual center of the religious main plaza was the church; and the customary rectangular shape of the church edifice drew the parishioner's eye through the doors to the nave.

Indeed, the regular orders were enterprising town builders, but what is not widely known is that the secular clergy also laid out and raised towns, again for the purpose of long-term Christianization of Indians. These too were designed according to the regular gridiron plan prescribed in the *Ordenanzas* of 1573. During the course of the colonial period in Mexico the secular clergy established as many Indian parishes (that is, small towns or villages) as all of the regular orders combined or even more. In the region of Oaxaca during the sixteenth century the majority of some 110 of these small habitats were established by secular priests.<sup>4</sup> These were in the main small villages, and it is not clear what percentage of their dwellers resided "in town" much or even most of the year.

#### POPULATION GROWTH OF SEVERAL COLONIAL CITIES

Now that we have the general urban morphology laid out, we can profitably add population growth to the picture. There are population data (which are not as reliable during the early colonial period as they would be during the later eighteenth century) for 191 urban centers in Spanish America for 1580 and 165 urban centers for 1630. The index of relative growth for that period for all of Spanish America excluding Spanish Florida is 2.97.<sup>5</sup> For the Viceroyalty of New Spain (Mexico) the index of relative growth during this period is 3.33; and for the Viceroyalty of Peru, 2.37. Although the secular population trend was generally upward, many habitats witnessed population losses, perhaps most egregiously the great Andean mining city of Cerro de Potosí, which by mid-sixteenth century enjoyed commanding affluence and a population of about 140,000 people. By roughly 1630 that fabulous city's population had dwindled to approximately 30,000 people.

#### THE URBAN/RURAL NEXUS

In theory the relationship between urban habitat and rural region should have been one of symbiosis—two different organisms mutually benefiting

TABLE 3.I. *Population Change in Several Colonial Cities over Time*

<i>Date</i>	<i>Population</i>
<i>Lima</i>	
1599	14,262
1614	25,434
1755	54,000 (est.)
1812	63,900 (est.)
<i>Mexico City</i>	
1591	50,000
1790	112,926
<i>Santiago de Chile</i>	
1657	1,657
1790	40,000
<i>Buenos Aires</i>	
1609	1,060
1738	4,738
1778	24,205
1810	42,252

from their interconnection. Often this indeed was the case. The urban center drew agricultural products, ranging from perishables to grains, corn, flour, leather, for instance, and semifinished commodities, usually from an agricultural base. In this rough schema the urban center sent back both money and manufactured goods. These manufactured goods were produced within the urban confine or imported from other provincial regions or colonies or from Spain itself (meaning largely northern Europe) and then re-exported to the rural hinterland. Ideally, benefits would accrue to both sides, and it is difficult to discern whether one gained more in economic, social, and political terms than the other. It is easy but facile to say that wealth tended to flow into the cities from their rural regions, but wealth also flowed outward, and in any event, the iconic landed "aristocracy" was not without its resources and influence.<sup>6</sup>

This model, however, was distorted in actual practice. For one thing, the landed rich commonly maintained homes in the regional or colonial capital cities, where they could escape the monotony of rural life, educate their children, find appropriate spouses for them, and, very importantly, secure both short- and long-term financing. Often they or members of their families purchased positions on the municipal councils. Not infrequently their daughters married sons or nephews of prominent urban merchants. Further-

more, some merchants purchased landed properties to secure their estates, to diversify their holdings, and sometimes to acquire putative social standing. In terms of political and social influence the lines between urban and rural early became indistinct.

The symbiosis was distorted also in two other fundamental ways. The first was the result of the phenomenon of silver and Europe's mercantilist dependence on bullion as the centerpiece of its economic logic. Spanish America was blessed with the largest and most prolific silver mines in the world, and the Crown encouraged silver production and taxed it heavily. These mines were situated in mountainous regions—and therein lay the distortion. The great mining centers of Potosí in what later became Bolivia and Zacatecas in Mexico, for instance, imported food, leather, animals, meat, grain, flour, luxury items, and a long list of other commodities from fairly close by, from provincial areas 50 or 100 miles away, but also from hundreds of miles distant: in the case of Potosí from Europe through Lima and later Buenos Aires and in the case of Zacatecas from Europe through Mexico City. In exchange the mining centers overwhelmingly sent silver, an arrangement which placed mine owners and the merchants who supplied them (and often loaned them capital) at the apex of the colonial society in every way. In the long run the great mining cities could not sustain themselves; but they did enrich other cities, especially Lima, Buenos Aires, and Mexico City.

The other fundamental distortion was created by the Crown. Early in the sixteenth century the Crown established a trading monopoly for Spain vis-à-vis its colonies and, more particularly, for the exclusive benefit of the members of the Seville merchant tribunal, the *consulado*. All goods, including other European exports, shipped to the colonies had to depart from Seville until the early eighteenth century, when the port of departure was moved to Cádiz. Similarly all exports from the colonies were required to return to Seville and later to Cádiz. In concert with this closed trading system, the goods from Spain could enter the colonies only through three ports: Veracruz for Mexico; Cartagena for New Granada; and Nombre de Dios (and later Portobelo) for Peru. In the early eighteenth century ships enjoying special license could proceed from Spain to additional ports. Furthermore, the customhouses capable of receiving international trade were located in colonial capital cities, which further restricted trans-Atlantic trade and confined it to the hands of very few Spanish merchants and their colonial agents. Until 1778, when additional Spanish and colonial ports were opened to direct trade with each other, the colonial capital cities (buttressed by the Seville-Cádiz trading monopoly and the practice of placing the main customhouse in the colonial capital) distorted what would have been and did become a more



natural trading system with dispersed economic benefit. The restricted system rendered cities such as Lima, Buenos Aires, and Mexico City inordinately powerful, distorting the urban/rural nexus. This systemic distortion often placed provincial cities at economic odds with capital cities and—while this was only one of several causes—inspired a federalism that would play a dedicated and frequently devastating role during the independence and early national periods.

We have laid out the towns and cities and populated them. We may now inquire into the administrative component of the urban habitat.

## CHAPTER 4

# *The Administration of the Colonial City*



### THE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

Colonial Spanish-American towns and cities were often much larger geographically than their North American counterparts. With regard to area under their jurisdiction, Spanish-American cities were rather more like North American counties than cities. The city of Quito held jurisdiction over an area that ran approximately 200 miles in length and 75 to 90 miles in width. In frontier regions the jurisdiction was commonly imprecise and subject to local interpretation and the capability of a municipality to exert an effective claim. Accordingly, with no nearby city to contest its reach, Buenos Aires exerted jurisdiction over an area 300 miles northwest to the boundary claimed by Córdoba, 170 miles northeast toward Santa Fe, and the vast Indian territory to the south.<sup>1</sup>

At the center of this jurisdiction (whether village, town, or city) was the municipal council: the *cabildo* or *ayuntamiento*, as it was referred to alternatively. The composition of each council depended on the official status of the town or city which it served. As we have seen, in the Spanish Empire urban and near-urban habitats were categorized legally into three broad groups. First were the cities, then the towns and villages. Villages and towns could become elevated officially to the status of city through special service to the Crown, an honor that conveyed the right to possess a coat of arms. Similarly, a city could be elevated by the Crown to the status of first city of the realm. Here we refer to the first among several as municipalities—*municipalidades*. Each urban habitat received a *foro*, a charter of privileges and responsibilities. The most important city among cities of the realm was entitled to two *alcaldes*, a minimum of twelve *regidores* (aldermen), and several

other officials. Lesser cities were entitled to two *alcaldes* and eight *regidores* as well as the standard array of lesser officials. Towns and villages were permitted only one *alcalde* and up to four *regidores*. Following are the main urban officials that formed the town councils:

*Alcalde ordinario* (magistrate with executive/administrative responsibilities)

*Regidor* (alderman)

*Alférez real* (royal standard bearer)

*Alguacil mayor* (chief constable)

*Fiel ejecutor* (inspector of weights and measures)

*Procurador general* or *síndico* (procurator or syndic—the council's chief legal counsel)

In addition, there were lesser officials, such as the *escribano mayor* (the council's chief notary), *depositario general* (keeper of accounts), *alcalde provincial* (*alcalde* of the provincial region), *escribano* (notary/scribe), *portero* (courier), and, in the larger cities, *alcaldes de barrios*.

Another urban official enjoyed little prestige but was of great importance in preliterate Spanish America—the town crier (*pregonero*). When town council decisions were considered important enough for the general population to be aware of, the town crier would walk through the streets shouting out those decisions. For instance, in April 1589 the town council of Potosí determined to limit the number of small general stores and confine them to a restricted area of the mining capital. At 10 o'clock one morning the town crier, Benito de Camudio, walked through the streets announcing the decision and, in the main plaza, the names of the favored storekeepers.<sup>2</sup>

Of all the urban officers in Spanish America, it is the *alcalde* who most defies North American comprehension. The *alcalde* was not a mayor, as North Americans understand that term, although it is often incorrectly translated as "mayor." Essentially, the *alcalde* was a magistrate, somewhat akin to the North American local town justice. *Alcaldes* also held administrative responsibilities and privileges of an executive nature, however, although not to the degree associated with mayors. Furthermore (and here there was frequent deviation), the provincial governor, or his agent, was authorized to preside over village, town, and city council meetings and indeed enjoyed the right of first vote, a privilege that could amount to a weighty influence among the councilmen.

The early conquistadors who established towns appointed the first *alcaldes*, *regidores*, and other officials. Following the initial appointment, *al-*

*caldes* were elected by the *regidores*, supposedly from among the town's *vecinos* (citizens). Initially, the *vecinos* were the leading landowning citizens, with all other residents being classified as *moradores*. The *vecinos* were permitted to vote in special town council meetings that were opened for public deliberation, called *cabildos abiertos*. As the towns increased in size, residents of socioeconomic status who might not have been landowners were accorded the right of *vecinidad* (citizenship); and, in fact, the very idea of what constituted a citizen and citizenship changed from time to time and place to place.<sup>3</sup> When there were two *alcaldes*, one was designated the *alcalde de primer voto* and the other the *alcalde de segundo voto*. Although they shared judicial responsibilities in civil and criminal cases, it is fair to refer to the *alcalde de primer voto* as the senior magistrate. Thus, when the town and then city council met in session in the absence of a royal agent, the *alcalde de primer voto* presided.

The office of *alcalde* was elective; but during the early colonization the conquistadors were unwilling to relinquish control over local affairs, especially in their capital cities. Thus, Francisco Pizarro, conqueror of Peru and founder of Lima, appointed several *regidores perpetuos*—lifetime aldermen. Furthermore, he required that the *regidores* present a list of four names from which he selected the two *alcaldes*. Similar cooptation of municipal power and privilege occurred elsewhere, and in the initial colonization there was nothing the Crown could do about it. At the other extreme, until 1557 the *vecinos* of Havana enjoyed the privilege of electing the town's *alcaldes* and *regidores*. But as a rule the municipal councils in colonial Spanish America became self-perpetuating corporate bodies, with the retiring aldermen electing the succeeding aldermen and magistrates.

The election of municipal council members normally occurred on the first day of each year, in some places by voice vote and in others by secret ballot, which later became generalized. Almost all rules governing the municipal councils were bent or subverted both at the local level and all the way up to the Crown. In theory, and in the law, the *alcaldes* were supposed to be selected from outside the council's membership and were to serve a term of only one year, after which they could be reelected in three years. Through a considerable gift of money to the Crown, the *cabildo* of Lima acquired the right to elect one *alcalde* from among the *regidores*. We have no certain knowledge of how widespread the practice of electing *alcaldes* from among the *regidores* became, but indications are that it occurred often. *Regidores* themselves commonly served two-year terms and often were reelected without an interim period out of office. In many places the *regidores* were elected simultaneously to other positions on the municipal council. Thus,

a *regidor* might be the *alguacil mayor* or *fiel ejecutor* while serving as an alderman. The *cabildo*'s legal counsel, the procurator, was elected by the *cabildo* but served *ex officio*; that is, he could participate in deliberations but possessed no vote. All *cabildo* elections required approval by the provincial governor or his deputy, another royal intrusion into local government.

The criteria for selection to *cabildo* membership were designed to insure equitable representation of the citizenry in local government. However, this excluded the noncitizens, among whom were Indians, blacks (even when free), and all people of mixed race—the *castas*. In more than one town or city, therefore, the majority of local residents were ineligible for a place on the municipal council. For the white, nontransient society of some obvious or demonstrable affluence, eligibility was in theory quite broad, although clergymen, those indebted to the Royal Treasury, and those of illegitimate birth were not permitted to serve. *Alcaldes* were required to be at least twenty-six years of age and *regidores* eighteen. The *alcaldes* were supposed to possess at least minimal literacy, but this was not always the case. Nor, it seems, was the inability to read or write a severe handicap to local justices in Spanish America, or English America for that matter. In keeping with this spirit of broad representation, close relatives were not supposed to serve in important council positions; but this admirable goal was quickly undone by the colonists.

In fact, in many urban centers the *cabildos* quickly succumbed to the influence of particular socioeconomic groups. In Cuzco, for instance, holders of grants of Indian labor (*encomenderos*)—the social elite—monopolized the position of *alcalde*. In Lima, during the first decades after its founding, one of the *alcalde* positions was routinely held by an *encomendero*. Merchants were not yet of sufficient wealth to warrant place in the Lima *cabildo*. In Santiago de Chile *vecinos* who had been excluded from council positions because of modest wealth petitioned the *audiencia* (the regional supreme court) to be guaranteed half of those positions. The *audiencia* approved the petition, in keeping with the Crown's intentions; but little changed, and the socioeconomic elite continued to control the *cabildo*. Selection of the *alcaldes* from outside the *cabildo* coupled with a three-year interregnum before reelection obviously would have insured a much wider local representation in the *cabildos* than occurred when *alcaldes* were elected from among the *regidores* and the period out of office was shortened.

Within decades after the founding of the first generation of towns and the setting into place of the rules of local government, the Crown itself subverted its original intentions concerning broad representation and simultaneously affronted a long Castilian tradition. By the middle of the fifteenth

century the Crown had authorized the placement of Royal Treasury officials on municipal councils, with the right of "voice and vote." Officials of the Royal Treasury, charged with the compelling responsibility of collecting taxes, functioned with the power of the Crown behind them. Whatever the status of the municipal council, Treasury officials (the accountant, treasurer, and factor) placed the Crown directly and forcefully at the center of urban affairs. When urban centers were small and were permitted only one *alcalde* and a few *regidores*, three Royal Treasury officials could wield inordinate influence. Moreover, although the Crown did not intend that Treasury officials should become *alcaldes* or occupy other *cabildo* positions, during the seventeenth century some did so illegally. Charles V announced royal disinterest in municipal autonomy by appointing two *regidores* in 1518-1519 to each of Cuba's important towns.<sup>4</sup> This royal policy was in consonance with the practice by early conquistadors of appointing friends as *regidores* with lifetime tenure. Later in the sixteenth century this practice was continued by colonial officials as well as by the king himself.

The possibility of widespread socioeconomic participation in the municipal councils of colonial Spanish America soon came into decisive conflict with the financial exigencies of Philip II, who needed to restore his ruined treasury and refit a second Armada for a fight against England. He began selling lesser governmental posts, first in Iberia (as he was also the king of Portugal) and then in the colonies. In approximately 1591 the king initiated the policy of selling the position of *regidor* in Peru. This undermining of a fundamental principle of Spanish municipal government was soon extended to the other colonies, and in 1606 all municipal offices that were sold at public auction conveyed the privilege of perpetuity. That is, colonists could purchase positions on the *cabildos* (including that of *regidor*) in perpetuity, which means that they could sell or bequeath their office, and indeed many did. Thus, key positions in Spanish-American municipal councils often passed from father to son to grandson and so on. The position of *alcalde* was kept apart from this venal system; but, as we know, sometimes *regidores* became *alcaldes*, so the venality could creep through insular election into the local magistracy and, of course, back again.

Official venality at the municipal level led to unexpected results. First, all municipal officials appointed during the aftermath of the conquest were men born in Spain (called peninsulars). By the second generation many of the *cabildo* officials had been born in the empire, meaning that they were creoles. Before long, the Crown's policy of sending over peninsulars to serve in important bureaucratic as well as military posts aggravated a conflict between peninsulars and creoles in matters of power, position, and, not least,

pride that would flare, simmer, and flare again for centuries. As positions in the urban governments became vendible, creoles of affluence gained access to an opportunity for local power and took advantage of this throughout the colonies. Notwithstanding the presence of Royal Treasury officials on the municipal councils and the impingement by governors, the *cabildos* commonly became the essential seat of creole political power in the colonies. Second, in this way the policy of venality somewhat insulated urban councils from royal authority. To varying degree, depending on the assertiveness (and affluence) of council members and the reciprocal assertiveness of colonial officials, town and city councils regained and perpetuated their autonomy. This autonomy—which, when joined with the elite's propensity to marry endogamously, contributed to local oligarchic rule—would not be challenged directly and forcefully by the Crown for two centuries.

The term “venal” is generally considered pejorative, and it is difficult to disassociate it from corruption. In fact, the practice of selling bureaucratic positions generally and *cabildo* positions particularly was a corruption of the tradition of the municipal council as representative voice of the *común* (the community), even, as often conceptualized in documents of the period, the *república*. Nonetheless, the practice permits insight into the inner nature of this fundamental institution of Spanish colonization. Interestingly, from sale prices we see that the most politically powerful positions, and the ones conveying the greatest social status, were not always economically desirable in the cold calculation of the marketplace.

For example, in the capital of the Viceroyalty of Peru, Lima, during the eighteenth century the council positions that sold for the highest prices were in descending order *escribano mayor*, *alguacil mayor*, *depositario general*, *alcalde provincial*, *alférez real*, *regidor*, and *escribano*. (For a map of Lima in the 1770s, see Fig. 4.1.) This is somewhat of a surprise, since one would have thought the office of *regidor* would have been at the top of the list (recall that the office of *alcalde* was not vendible). But what really was at play here was income on investment, not power and prestige. The minor offices were fee-producing positions; and the income generated for the holder of the office affected its market price, insofar as the public was concerned if not also the Crown. The Crown desired to keep prices at the highest level possible, since one-third of the price accrued to the Royal Treasury.

During the course of the eighteenth century, however, prices for the most prestigious of the elected officials on the municipal councils, the *regidores*, fell generally throughout the colonies. In Lima the position of *regidor* sold for 11,000 pesos in 1700. This was a very large amount of money, which could have been used to establish a large retail store or a moderately large whole-



Fig. 4.1. Lima in the 1770s  
(Map by Joseph Stoll)

sale establishment. But by 1760 the position sold for 6,000 pesos and in 1777 for only 4,000. This secular downtrend confirms that the prestige of membership in one of the most important city councils in the Spanish-American Empire had declined to the point that it was difficult to find people interested in paying for the aldermanic positions. In fact, the Lima example was generalized throughout the colonies.<sup>5</sup>

#### MUNICIPAL COUNCILS AND THE ECONOMY

Nevertheless, during the first two centuries of empire the municipal councils were corporate bodies of local prestige and power. Initially, the *cabildos* sold or leased lands from their *propios*—often large areas of unoccupied lands under the council's jurisdiction. They created both major and minor public markets and leased stalls and open spaces to merchants large and small,



wholesalers and retailers. Through the *fiel ejecutor* or his appointed delegate (*veedor*) they supervised these markets to be sure that perishables were fresh and that no one was over-charged or over-weighted. The *cabildos* licensed a multitude of diverse stores, from the smallest retail "store" of only a few square feet situated in a nook in a building (sometimes called an *accesoria*) and the largest group of licensed fixed storekeepers, the small retail grocery stores (*pulperías*), to all manner of artisan stores. The *cabildos* were also the primary supervisory agency of the guilds, controlling the election of master guildsmen, the regulations governing the guilds, what they could sell, the quality of their products, and even the prices they could charge the public. In fact, the councils established prices in lists called *aranceles* for a wide range of items sold by many categories of stores.

Since the two most fundamental responsibilities of municipal councils everywhere in the Atlantic world were to secure the public order and ensure a sufficient stock of the basic necessities, the *cabildos* took pains to assure a plentiful supply of fresh meat, grain, corn, and, not least, water at reasonable cost to the general public.<sup>6</sup> Consequently, they issued exclusive contracts, usually to the lowest bidder, for the supply of fresh meat (the *abasto de carne*) and sometimes constructed their own slaughterhouses. They built aqueducts and public fountains and also granaries. To insure a favorable supply of grain they often constructed and supervised (through the *depositorio*) a public granary, the *alhóndiga*. Some *cabildos* also maintained their own granary, the *pósito*, which could be drawn upon in times of dearth or to lower market prices. Of all food items, bread was the most essential, and in accord with their primary responsibilities, the *cabildos* also established the price of bread and even the profit that the bakers of bread (*panaderos*) could earn.

Obviously, in many instances officers of the municipal councils of Spanish America could decisively affect the lives and livelihoods of town and city dwellers. The granting or denying of a license to operate a store or a supply contract, the selling or leasing of land, and the permission to establish oneself in the public markets and in many other aspects of urban life imbued the *cabildo* with an influence that rewarded the effort required to gain a position on it. That vendible positions should eventually become unattractive and remain unfilled for long periods suggests that local economies had become less dynamic than they had been earlier. However, there may have been something else involved here. When the early towns were founded, the most widespread source of wealth and prestige was land and mining. This was the genesis of the legendary and somewhat mythologized landed and mineral aristocracies. Being a storekeeper or even import/export merchant

was not yet a promising career path to elite status, although for the more affluent merchants this would eventually change. Further, in order to insulate the aldermen who licensed, regulated, and set prices (and profits in some instances, as with bread) from a conflict of interest, Philip II ruled that anyone engaged in trade or commerce was prohibited from serving as a *regidor*. On the one hand, this bespeaks the importance of the town councils; but on the other, it kept the pool of potential aldermen artificially small for a long time, until the restriction was eventually relaxed.

Another responsibility of the municipal council placed its members directly at the center of urban life—the need to tax, which realized as the power to tax. The *cabildos* incurred both ordinary and extraordinary expenses and had to raise money to satisfy them. Municipal income derived from fees paid for licenses, from fines levied by the justices, from the rental or sale of the *propios*, from the rental of market stalls and places, and from a variety of excise taxes on items imported or exported from the town or city, known collectively as *sisas*. There were other taxes specific to particular localities. The total municipal income commonly was insufficient to meet expenditures, so the councils levied an extraordinary tax known as the *repartimiento*, supposedly based upon ability to pay. The *cabildos* also solicited donations when necessary, and they took out loans on occasion.

*Cabildo* expenses were diverse and burdensome. The councils had to pay for council salaries and for the general upkeep of their jurisdictions, including the paving and maintaining of streets, lighting, public buildings, and the like. Municipal councils often were involved in costly litigation. If they wanted to send an agent to the provincial or viceregal capital or to Spain to represent their interests, they incurred an extraordinary expense. Finally, urban Spanish America was a place of public celebration. Fiestas, almost countless in number, often including fireworks and sometimes bullfights, imposed a burden upon urban treasuries. Many of the celebrations lasted several days. It was also of no small cost to celebrate the presence of visiting royal officials. An untold number of times *cabildos* resorted to borrowing to finance these public displays.

Some of the complexities and nuances of urban administration are explored in the following chapters, but first we must consider two somewhat different kinds of towns—Indian and free colored.

#### THE INDIAN TOWNS

It suited both Crown and Church to concentrate Indians into towns, and these were grouped into districts.<sup>7</sup> In each district one of the towns was des-

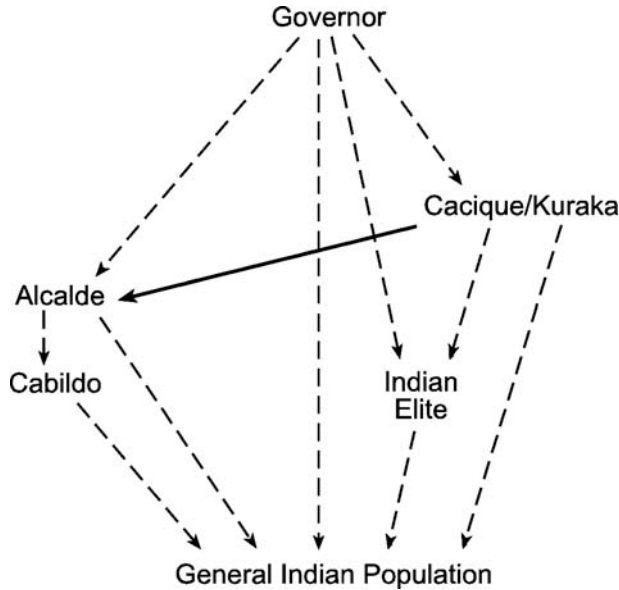


Fig. 4.2. Direction of Early Political Power in Indian Communities

(Adapted by Joseph Stoll from Francisco de Solano, *Ciudades hispanoamericanas y pueblos de indios*, 376)

ignated *cabecera* (literally, “head” town) and the others *sujetos*. The *cabecera* held special administrative responsibilities, including collection of the tribute owed to the Crown. The Indian towns were founded according to the same paradigmatic regulations that applied to the Spanish towns, following the same rectangular grid pattern, with a central plaza and (to the degree possible) symmetrical *solares*. Initially, an Indian governor, one or two *alcaldes*, and two to four *regidores* were appointed from among the Indians, and other officials were added (see Fig. 4.2). In the larger towns additional *regidores* were permitted. In the beginning, elite Indians of the *cacique/kuraka* hereditary nobility commonly were appointed as governors and to the important council positions. Once established, the town council was a corporate body and therefore self-perpetuating. The governor was the most important Indian official at the regional level. In Mexico the Indian governor’s title was the hybrid *gobernadorytl*, taken from the Spanish *gobernador* and from Nahuatl; but in general governors throughout the colonies eventually came to be referred to as *caciques* or *kurakas*. The governor resided in the *cabecera* town and was invested with broad authority, especially the collection of the tribute owed to the Crown. After the initial organization of the Indian communities, governors tended to be appointed, and the position

passed from father to son. And as in the Spanish universe the elected positions soon gave way to venality and perpetual possession.

To protect the Indians from "unofficial" exploitation, that is, nongovernmental exploitation, no Spaniard or person of African descent was permitted to reside in the towns. This protective regulation was soon variously disregarded, however, particularly when large numbers of mestizos (of Indian-white descent) and people of mixed African-white or African-Indian descent sought residence in the towns, perhaps especially when they formed consensual or marital relations with residents. Spanish towns with Indian populations were required to set aside segregated barrios for the Indians, which were administered by Indian governments composed of an Indian governor, municipal council, and police. These barrios also quickly lost their exclusively Indian character and for the same reasons.

Mexico City provides an excellent example of the logic and practicality of segregating Indian barrios within or around a Spanish urban center. In this instance and in many others, the Spaniards physically insinuated themselves within an Indian city, displacing the indigenous population outside the *traza*. The Indians were congregated into two overarching administrative districts called *parcialidades*. To the northwest of the *traza* was the *parcialidad* of Santiago Tlatelolco and to the south and east was San Juan Tenochtitlán. Each *parcialidad* was governed by the standard municipal apparatus, including a *cabildo* with *alcaldes*, *regidores*, and other council officers. The *parcialidades* eventually contained numerous villages and barrios, more than seventy in each instance.

So what came to be enshrined as the *Dos Repúblicas* (the Two Republics) was played out in Mexico City across the centuries of the colonial period. Throughout the colonies it was impossible to segregate Indians from whites while attempting to protect the Indians as well as to administer their daily lives. Crown logic quickly would be frustrated by two inexorable forces. One was biologic—the process of miscegenation. From the instant of conquest the process of *mestizaje* commenced, producing the conflicted and perennially growing mestizo population. Through the decades in Mexico City and elsewhere mestizos resided in Indian communities, often becoming government officials and even *caciques* or *kurakas*. Not infrequently mestizos exploited Indians, rendering the theory of the two *repúblicas* impure. The other was the Spaniards' insatiable need for Indian labor. Indians from the *parcialidades* worked for Spaniards within the *traza* in a variety of capacities. Those who were employed as domestics, apprentices, store workers (they were not permitted to own stores in the *traza*), artisans, and in many other occupations were required by their employers to reside in the houses or stores where

they worked. The distance to the outer barrios, especially during the long rainy season, made for an insecure labor force. It was better to have one that was captive. Here again, Indians could not be segregated from the Spaniards and protected from abuse.

In theory Indians were not permitted to reside in their preconquest communities, and in fact great numbers were established in new towns. It is difficult to determine the precise number of these new Indian habitats, but it is clear that they greatly outnumbered their Spanish counterparts. Some were extremely small, amounting to just a few rustic dwellings; but others were much larger and during the course of the centuries came to possess thousands of inhabitants. These Indian towns were so numerous that there were many small variations in how their administration was composed and effectuated. Commonly, the local hereditary chief (the *cacique* in Mesoamerica and the *kuraka* in the Andean region) was accorded special official administrative recognition by the royal authorities and, even when not an *alcalde*, nevertheless wielded commanding influence.

Thomas Gage, an Englishman and Dominican friar, visited Mexico and Guatemala between 1625 and 1637 and left this account of an Indian town, Chiapa de los Indios (later Chiapa de Corzo):

This consisteth most of Indians, and is held to be one of the biggest Indian towns in all America, containing at least four thousand families. This town hath many privileges from the King of Spain, and is governed chiefly by Indians (yet with subordination unto the Spanish government of the city of Chiapa), who do choose an Indian governor with other inferior officers to rule with him. This Governor may wear a rapier and dagger, and enjoyeth many other liberties denied to the rest of the Indians. No town hath so many dons in it of Indian blood as this. Don Felipe de Guzmán was governor of it in my time, a very rich Indian, who kept commonly in his stable a dozen of as good horses for shows and ostentation as the best Spaniard in the country. His courage was not inferior to any Spaniard, and for defense of some privileges of his town he sued in the Chancery of Guatemala the proud and high-minded Governor of the city of Chiapa, spending therein great sums of money till he had overcome him. Thereupon he caused a feast to be made in the town, both by water and land, so stately, that truly in the Court of Madrid it might have been acted.<sup>8</sup>

A final point is of paramount interest. Although the administrative organization of the Indian towns throughout the colonies was in several ways

different from that of the Spanish towns, what the Crown set in place was in fact Indian municipal government. We should recognize that for centuries the *corregidor* in South America and the *alcalde mayor* in Mesoamerica had greater influence by far in the Indian communities than they did in non-Indian towns and cities, but, notwithstanding this official impingement, Indians governed themselves at the local level. This means that they themselves provided for local law, order, and jurisprudence. They supervised the public markets and stores and the effective supply of water and food. They organized the many public festivals. Naturally, a community of just a few people and shacks had little to do in this regard; but the larger towns were administered fairly much like the larger Spanish towns and cities. And just as in the case of their Spanish counterparts, the daily and long-term exigencies of administering the Indian communities similarly required appeals to higher authorities and judicial litigation. In fact, Indian communities often were intensely involved in litigation, represented by non-Indian lawyers to protect their lands from encroachers, their labor from demand beyond official requirement, their rights to water, and other matters. Lawsuits set Indian communities against whites but also sometimes against other Indians and people of mixed race.

Not only did the Indian communities negotiate their place within the Spanish imperial exploitative system, but they did so essentially through the institution of municipal government established by that imperial system for its own self-serving purposes. In fact, Indian communities became adroit at taking full advantage of Crown-created courts and governmental officials charged with hearing Indian complaints as well as of the lawyers appointed by the Crown to represent them before governmental agencies. The lawsuits tended to be costly and had to be paid by the community's public treasury, rarely filled to excess. This was especially burdensome when representatives had to leave the community and travel to provincial or capital cities to pursue litigation. The trips took weeks and sometimes months, and the costs were proportionally high for the Indian communities to bear. But what is important is that the Indian communities, constituted and organized by the Crown, became active participants in the administration of the Spanish-American Empire, albeit not always successfully, in addition to being an exploited and fundamental source of agricultural and mining labor.

#### FREE COLORED TOWNS

In many ways the most fascinating and extraordinary towns were the few free colored towns, established in various parts of the empire mainly to pro-

tect frontier and coastal regions. We do not know very much about them or indeed how many were established during the course of the centuries. Some were essentially free colored militia towns under militia administration. But several others were constituted with their own civilian administrations. That is, they were governed by a *cabildo* with free colored *alcaldes* and *regidores*. To appreciate how remarkable these towns were, one must consider the general status of free people of color (that is, of African descent) within the colonies. A fuller discussion of Spanish-American racism and discrimination is presented in Chapter 7. Suffice it to say here that free people of color were considered racially inferior by the Spanish Crown and by the white establishment generally and consequently were legally discriminated against on grounds of race. Free people of color were deprived of many rights commonly enjoyed by whites and in some instances even by Indians. For instance, they were not permitted a university education; nor, more importantly to this discussion, were they allowed to be members of the civil, religious, or military bureaucracies. In theory and in practice they were excluded from positions on the town councils.

Free colored towns were created early in the colonial period. We know of only a few, but future research will probably demonstrate that there were more, especially in coastal and frontier regions. In the seventeenth century the free colored town of San Diego de la Gomera was established in the colony of Guatemala. A foreign traveler observed that the town was governed by a *cabildo* of free colored *alcaldes* and *regidores*.<sup>9</sup> Other free colored towns were established in Costa Rica, Mexico, and Florida and in other colonies, often with ambiguous governmental status.<sup>10</sup>

One of the most interesting towns in the Spanish Empire was San Agustín de la Emboscada, a free colored militia town established in Paraguay in approximately 1740. It was constituted essentially as a military garrison to protect against Indian uprisings and Portuguese infiltration by sea or land. The townspeople appear to have fulfilled their role well; while recognizing this contribution, the governor of Paraguay in 1783 determined to improve upon future prospects by reforming the town's administrative protocol. A free colored *corregidor* would continue to serve as the town's chief administrator, along with two free colored *alcaldes*, four free colored aldermen, and a free colored general procurator. Other positions of the council, however, were eliminated. The governor regulated many of the town's activities, such as agricultural pursuits (including labor drafts), education, apprenticeships, and religious indoctrination.<sup>11</sup> In some significant ways, therefore, this free colored town was not quite as free as a mainstream "white" town.

What this means is that the debilitating racial policies of the Spanish Crown were pointedly abrogated, even if only to serve larger imperial interests. The free colored of the militia towns were legally empowered, even required, to participate at all levels of local government and economy at the very same time that free colored people in cities and towns throughout the empire could not aspire to positions on municipal councils and in some places could not even own and operate a store. We need to know much more about such empowerment, both political and economic. It is clear that, when viewed from the periphery, the racial inferiority ascribed to people of color by the Crown and the white establishment alike had proven itself a spurious and expedient rationale to preserve white hierarchical superiority in a multiracial society (to say nothing of slavery). We shall see more of this racial discrimination in Chapter 7, but for the moment let us pursue the matter with another remarkable example.

*The Slave Village of El Cobre, Cuba*

The village of El Cobre was, just as the town of El Cobre is today, situated about ten miles west of Santiago de Cuba in the island's eastern mountains. The village formed to supply labor to the local copper mines. In 1670 the king of Spain confiscated the mines and slaves belonging to the owners. At the moment of confiscation the village contained 271 slaves of African descent, now juridically converted to the status of royal slaves. Royal slaves customarily were afforded protections and privileges not normally associated with slavery in the Spanish Empire, but it is safe to presume that nowhere in the empire did they achieve such a degree of freedom as they did in El Cobre. By the 1770s the village contained 1,320 inhabitants. The majority were royal slaves, but a large minority were free people of color.<sup>12</sup>

Once the mines and slaves were confiscated, the Crown established a duly constituted village with a *cabildo*, *alcaldes*, and *regidores*. During the early eighteenth century, a period for which documentation is plentiful, most members of the village government were royal slaves, notwithstanding the presence of free men of color in the village.<sup>13</sup> This means that royal slaves and free men of color governed a small village, essentially a rural village, for more than a century.

In 1780 the king privatized the copper mines of El Cobre and in doing so returned the royal slaves to private ownership. Twenty years later the king decreed these slaves to be free and constituted the village of El Cobre as a *villa*, now to be governed by free people of color.<sup>14</sup> Sadly, during the two



decades separating privatization from freedom, many of the formerly royal slaves were sold off or fled into the mountains. We do not know how many returned to El Cobre and freedom.<sup>15</sup>

El Cobre was a rural village, with residents in the main devoted to agro-pastoral and copper-mining pursuits. The town council did not even have its own building. What it did have, however, was slave and free colored residents and a slave and free colored government, albeit with powers somewhat circumscribed by the white authorities. When it came to defending the empire (in this instance, coastal Cuba) and creating a corporate mechanism that would organize and supply labor drafts for public works, notably the construction of Santiago's fort, the Spaniards could radically abridge their racial prejudices.

## CHAPTER 5

### *The City Visualized*



In multiple ways the towns and cities of colonial Spanish America were dissimilar, a consequence of such factors as geographic location, including terrain, altitude, climate, and annual rainfall. They also varied according to their demographic character: whether they contained large numbers of slaves, Indians, and *castas*, as well as according to the male/female ratio, the incidence of young and the incidence of old. Other factors also differentiated urban habitats and induced varying urban cultures within the empire. Nevertheless, fundamental similarities predicated upon the ordained morphology and the commercial enterprise were conspicuous and have captured the attention of contemporaries as well as later residents and visitors. Anyone who visits a Spanish-American “colonial” city or the old part of a more “cosmopolitan” city (whether it be Havana, San Juan, Mexico City, Caracas, Lima, Santiago, Buenos Aires, or wherever) gains a distinct sense of what the colonial city was like physically and has had a shared experience with countless other visitors. In this chapter we shall explore some of these similarities.

The main plaza was the center of administrative, religious, and commercial activity in the colonial urban habitat, whether it was a city, town, or small village. The chief governmental buildings, the cathedral or town or village church, the main public market, and stores of leading merchants all shared this privileged space. Radiating from the plaza were streets that housed important commercial and artisan stores. At the plaza or nearby were the houses of the elite—landed aristocrats, merchants, miners, and government officials. In some cities, however, the elite began to migrate away from the main plazas.

## COLONIAL ARCHITECTURE AND THE CHURCH

As in Europe, architecture was intended to convey a message. The grandeur of the church buildings was a statement of the primacy of the Catholic Church in all matters religious and, to the extent possible, in matters secular also. In places of unsettled security, and not infrequently elsewhere, church walls were sometimes so thick as to suggest a fortress, which is understandable when we consider that all of the early Spanish architects working in the colonies were military engineers. Government buildings, whether the residence of the viceroy or governor, the *audiencia* or *cabildo*, were constructed and designed to manifest the power and status of government at all levels. This was also true of the houses, frequently mansions, of the leading merchants and other elite.

The architecture of the colonial period suited this purpose well. During the early colonization architecture reflected the rounded graceful classical arches of the Italian Renaissance, joined by Gothic adornment. This is best exemplified in the Cathedral Santa María la Menor in Santo Domingo, the oldest cathedral in the oldest city of the empire. But the most prominent architectural style during the colonial period was the Baroque, and a famous example is the Cathedral of Mexico, in Mexico City (see Fig. 5.1).<sup>1</sup> This great edifice was constructed virtually throughout the entire colonial period. Construction began in the 1560s and did not end until 1813. Initially, the building's architecture was derivative of the Spanish Herreran style and was rather austere. As construction continued over the decades, the architecture reflected the growing Spanish fascination with the Baroque. In the seventeenth century colonial architecture became more complex, heavier in a way, and still ornate, so that the viewers' eyes were drawn into the architecture and into the building itself. The Baroque did not satisfy eye and emotion so much as it demanded attention. As it evolved, the Baroque could overwhelm. And this was not lost upon European lay and religious leaders alike. Thus, we have Versailles, Bernini's great plaza at St. Peter's in Rome, and St. Paul's Cathedral in London. We also have the grand Baroque cathedrals of the Spanish-American colonies.

Later, with the European monarchies established and the Catholic and Protestant statements of authenticity made, architectural expression became more self-satisfied, more elaborate, more dignified perhaps; this was the architecture of the Rococo. In Spain the Rococo was elaborated by José Churriguera, and when imported by the colonies it became known as the Churrigueresque style.

In fact, many buildings, church and lay, were subject to more than one



Fig. 5.1. The Cathedral of Mexico City and Plaza Mayor

architectural intervention when they evolved slowly or were ruined or partially destroyed by the earthquakes that troubled so many of the colonies or other catastrophes, including fire. Furthermore, as in many areas of Spanish life, there was a strong Moorish legacy in colonial architecture. Some churches, as well as public and private buildings, displayed wooden ceilings, colored tiles, and other *mudéjar* influences.

The Church was omnipresent throughout the colonial urban habitat. It dominated the urban landscape with both religious buildings, hospitals, monasteries, and convents and with people dressed in varied religious habits and vestments. In villages and small towns there might be only one church edifice and a few religious; but as the towns grew in size, there would be additional churches and religious, finally a dozen or more buildings and thousands of religious of both sexes. Furthermore, the Church, through bequests mainly, became a large and frequently the largest owner of secular property, as was the case in Mexico City by the end of the colonial period.

It is arguable whether church or government buildings were the more imposing, since this was a matter of personal impression, but certainly church buildings were a commanding presence in all urban habitats in colonial

Spanish America. With their spires, they were everywhere the tallest buildings. Their towers held the first public clocks in the larger cities, which focused added attention upon them. Urban dwellers were constantly reminded of the Church's presence through the almost incessant ringing of bells. Entering a large and solidly built, not to say ornate, government building as a supplicant often inspires a sense of awe, but religious buildings inspire in their own way and were more ubiquitous. Cities were divided into parishes, and each had its own church. In many cities there were monasteries and convents, and they tended to be large and imposing. In more than one instance the regular orders attempted to demonstrate their preeminence by outdoing the others in the size and grandeur of their monasteries. In the richest cities church buildings could be astonishingly opulent.

Lima is a case in point. Let us follow the description of Lima's religious tapestry made at mid-eighteenth century by Jorge Juan and Antonio de Ulloa, official agents of the Spanish Crown. The city, they noted, was divided into five parishes. "The convents here are very numerous: four Dominicans . . . Three Franciscans . . . Three of the order of Agustin . . . Three also belong to the order of Mercy." The Jesuits had "six colleges or houses." There were other church buildings, including a dozen hospitals. The city also held "14 nunneries, the number of persons in which would be sufficient to people a small town." Additionally, there were six monasteries in Lima. Thus, wherever one turned one could find the Church. "All the churches, both conventual and parochial, and also the chapels, are large, constructed partly of stone, and adorned with paintings and other decorations of great value." Especially opulent in the "City of Kings" were "the cathedral, the churches of St. Dominic, St. Francis, St. Agustin, the fathers of Mercy, and that of the Jesuits," which were "so splendidly decorated as to surpass description." It should be noted that these observers were seasoned Spanish travelers—that is, they had seen much prior to their arrival in Lima. "The riches and pomp of this city, especially on solemn festivals, are astonishing. The altars, from their bases to the borders of the paintings, are covered with massive silver, wrought into various kinds of ornaments. The walls also of the churches are hung with velvet, or tapestry of equal value, adorned with gold or silver fringes . . ." There were "candlesticks of massive silver, six or seven feet high, placed in two rows along the nave of the church; embossed tables of the same metal, supporting smaller candlesticks; and in the intervals betwixt them pedestals on which stand the statues of angels." It was not only the physical structure that captivated but also the accoutrements of divine worship. "In these the gold is covered with diamonds, pearls, and precious stones, so as to dazzle the eye of the spectator."<sup>2</sup>

The conspicuous splendor of Lima's religious edifices befitted the capital of a viceroyalty made enormously wealthy by silver and trade at the time most of them were erected and outfitted. But to the extent that Lima's religious grandiosity might seem unique, it was so in proportion to its urban ecology. In countless other urban habitats, religious buildings also tended to be splendid and even dazzling in proportion to local affluence.

Let us visit another cathedral, through the eyes of the Englishman William Bullock, who visited Mexico during 1823. Puebla de los Angeles, Mexico's second most populous city, contained

sixty churches, nine monasteries, thirteen nunneries, and twenty-three colleges . . . They are the most sumptuous I have ever seen. Those of Milan, Genoa, and Rome, are built in better taste, but, in expensive interior decorations, the quantity and value of the ornaments of the altar, and the richness of the vestments, are far surpassed by the churches of Puebla and Mexico . . . The Cathedral, which forms one side of the great square, is a large pile of building, with little architectural ornament in its exterior, but its interior furniture . . . is rich beyond description. So much is it covered with ornaments, that the whole of its fine effect is considerably diminished . . . Towards the south is placed the high altar, a most superb temple, of exquisite taste, lately finished by an Italian artist, from Roman designs, but executed in Mexico, and of native materials.

Bullock thought the altar too modern "to harmonize with the surrounding objects." But the overall effect of the interior design and appointments captivated him: "The materials are the most beautiful marble and precious stones that can be found in New Spain: its numerous and lofty columns, with plinths and capitals of burnished gold, the magnificent altar of silver, crowded with statues . . . have an unequalled effect. I have traveled over most of Europe, but I know nothing like it: and only regret it does not belong to a building more worthy of it."<sup>3</sup>

#### URBAN HOUSING

Church buildings normally are a fair indicator of a community's affluence and religiosity, although they sometimes remain in a good state somewhat longer than their urban surroundings when these might be in decline. Private houses, on the other hand, more accurately reflect the economic, and indeed social, realities of their communities. Urban centers everywhere give

rise to a housing stock reflective of the entire socioeconomic hierarchy, and so it is no surprise that in colonial Spanish America cities and towns alike displayed houses suitable to the wealthy, those middling, and the poor also. They ranged from the great and much remarked upon palaces and mansions of the wealthy, to more modest dwellings, and then to those of the poor, including what were more or less shacks. What is surprising is that away from the main plazas, but often not far away at all, there manifested a commingling of housing of varied quality in which people from more than one socioeconomic level resided. Sometimes shacks held place on the same block as a mansion.

Furthermore, many wealthy urbanites owned dwellings with apartments in them, some of which were rented to people of a lesser social and economic status than the building's owner. Wherever segregation has been studied, as in San Juan, Puerto Rico, and parts of Mexico City, free people of African descent resided alongside whites, not infrequently in the same buildings.<sup>4</sup> In many cities there were dwellings so large that they were capable of functioning as apartment houses or boarding houses. In many urban centers thirty, forty, fifty, and even more people resided in the same building. Sometimes the differing socioeconomic status and race of the residents was striking. These large buildings could be well kept and in a generally affluent part of town, but they also could be of the meanest sort no matter where situated, frequently housing people of limited affluence in crowded conditions. Often bachelors, not infrequently from Spain, or men who left their spouses in Spain until they had the wherewithal to send for them—who worked in stores or in the bureaucracy and earned meager livings—shared quarters. And sometimes single, married, and widowed women also shared quarters.

Both topography and climate greatly influenced the structural design of colonial Spanish-American homes. In some places where earthquakes were prevalent, as in the region in which Caracas, Venezuela, was constructed, even the rich (including the inordinately affluent family of Simón Bolívar) usually chose to reside in one-storied houses rather than in taller and perhaps more imposing buildings. Urban building permits had to be approved by the municipal councils, which sometimes limited the height of buildings in response to the reality of earthquakes. Nonetheless, there were many three-storied houses in Mexico City, where the possibility of earthquakes might have suggested otherwise. Another topographical characteristic affected building design. The walled cities often ran out of building space, perhaps most demonstrably in the case of Havana, so that construction within

the walled area (*intramuros*) limited the size of new buildings while simultaneously encouraging a migration of rich and poor alike to outer barrios and suburbs (*extramuros*).

Climate was another factor that the Spanish Americans notably took into consideration when designing their dwellings. Unlike the English (who even in the sweltering Caribbean stubbornly clung to their familiar building design, which allowed for little or no cross-ventilation), wealthy Spanish Americans commonly adopted the architectural design of southern Spain, which incorporated inner patios that allowed for cross-ventilation in all rooms.

Two further points about the colonial city are highly significant. First, not everyone who could afford to do so could own a home. In many cities the Church owned a great deal of residential property, and some individuals also owned multiple residences. This means that many urban dwellers, including the affluent, had little choice but to be renters. In Mexico City in 1623, for example, one merchant owned at least ten houses, including stores, which in that year were auctioned for a total of 155,000 pesos, a prodigious sum. Another merchant owned a combination of twenty houses and stores, which in 1621 were also highly valued. Another owned more than twenty-five houses, spread throughout the city.<sup>5</sup> This pattern of multiple dwelling ownership by the Church and private citizens continued into the nineteenth century. In 1813 the Marquesado del Valle owned all six houses on the prestigious Calle Primera de Plateros (First Street of the Silversmiths) facing south. Together these houses were officially valued at approximately 60,000 pesos. The Marquesado also owned all six houses on Calle del Empedradillo (east), which were valued at about 80,000 pesos, and all six houses on the second street of Plateros, facing south, which were valued at about 60,000 pesos. Don Esteban Escalante owned all fifteen houses on Calle de Celaya (south), with a value of some 4,000 pesos. On many streets in Mexico City there were houses of varied value, but this tended to occur away from streets where real estate was highly valued. Coupled with the fact that the Church also owned many residential buildings and rented them out, it is clear that many people could not possibly have been owners of homes.

However, this is not to suggest that people from all levels of urban society could not own private dwellings; throughout the colonies the urban housing stock manifestly varied in value, which means that even quite poor people could sometimes afford to be property owners. To take the example of Mexico City in 1813 again, on Calle de la Pila de Havana (south) María Gertrudis "the fruit seller" owned an *accesoria*. So too did José "the sweets



seller." Manuel "the carpenter" owned a house on that street. The values of these real properties were officially 270 pesos, 150 pesos, and 180 pesos, respectively.<sup>6</sup> The problem was not that poor people could not find dwellings to purchase, since urban habitats commonly held buildings in fringe areas that were not worth a great deal (at least to the affluent) and buildings in core areas that were in disreputable shape. The problem was that at every level of the socioeconomic scale there often was not enough suitable housing for purchase. Consequently, at all levels of society many people (including the great majority in cities of any size) were frozen out of dwelling ownership. This is a consequential point, which is sometimes overlooked by scholars who consider real property ownership essential to socioeconomic status.

Before visualizing some of the colonial houses through the eyes of contemporaries, let us follow dwelling opulence in Mexico City in the late eighteenth century through the excellent words of a modern historian. "The opulent homes of the wealthy were concentrated primarily west and southwest of the Plaza Mayor, especially along the Calle de San Francisco which was the most fashionable street in the city . . . José de la Borda, one of the great mining entrepreneurs of the eighteenth century, constructed a great mansion on the Calle de San Francisco, which cost 300,000 to build. Nearby, the Marqueses del Prado Alegre had a house that cost 37,000 just to furnish." The "most fabulous mansion in Mexico City was that of the Marqueses de Jaral. The first Marqués purchased a convent on the Calle de San Francisco and, for 100,000 pesos, converted the structure into a replica of the Royal Palace of Palermo. The façade of this magnificent structure was decorated with wrought-iron balconies and sculptural décor in the Churrigueresque style . . ."<sup>7</sup>

Bullock recorded his observations of houses in Puebla de los Angeles, Mexico, during his visit in 1823:

The houses are spacious, mostly three stories, with flat roofs, and many are covered with glazed tiles, of delft of various colours, some forming pictures, (principally scriptural subjects,) and having the appearance of rich Mosaic. These produce a fine effect, and differ from any thing I ever saw in Europe. Some of the houses are painted in fresco, similar to those of Genoa, and most of them have iron balconies in front, very elegantly constructed, with projecting roofs, and lined with porcelain tiles. Each house usually forms a square court in its center, with open galleries passing round, the balustrades of which are covered with porcelain pots of growing flowers and plants, producing a pleasing effect and refreshing coolness.

Thus Bullock has given us the prototypical Spanish-American colonial homes of affluent families. "The houses are in general large and lofty, with plastered walls, painted in distemper . . . the furniture not elegant . . . The floors are tiled much like those of France, and uncovered, carpets not being in use, nor indeed necessary in such a climate." Bullock observed the residential hierarchy prevalent in many contemporary cities: "The family of the proprietor usually resides in the upper story, the ground-floor being occupied by shops, warehouses, offices, etc., and the middle by the tradesmen or servants."<sup>8</sup>

Havana was not as opulent and did not have as many convents and monasteries as Mexico City, but it nonetheless captivated a long line of foreign travelers, as indeed it continues to do. John Miller visited the port city of more than a hundred thousand residents in 1820. "The narrow streets are formed of large solid houses, usually one story high, the ground floors of which are commonly occupied as shops and warehouses. If it be a merchant's, the counting houses are up stairs, and the *patio*, or court yard, in the center of the building (round which all the rooms are ranged, opening into balconies) is filled with produce and effects." (In Spanish America as in many other parts of the world the first floor of a building is not counted as a "story." Thus a one-storied dwelling would likely be two stories in height in U.S. nomenclature, although there indeed were many colonial dwellings with only one floor, as in the case of the Bolívar family house in Caracas.) Havana in the early nineteenth century, still a colonial city, was perhaps the most costly city in the New World.

A house of this description, you will be astonished to hear, lets from 8000 to 14,000 dollars per annum [about the same in pesos] . . . But you will recollect that the *Havana* is a regular fortification, and that no more houses than those *already in it can be built within its walls*; that the influx of commerce has been sudden and its profits enormous; and that both fashion and trade have localities. Beyond the walls, houses are not so exorbitant, though even there, as that situation is considered as possessing some immunity from the fever, they are very high in rent.

Miller provides an excellent description of the affluent homes:

To the street they present a plain stone front with a broad passage opening at the side, in which the *volante*, or carriage, stands. If there are apartments on the ground floor, the windows are large and high, barred with iron, without any glazing, and usually have curtains hung within,

to prevent curiosity and dust from being too intrusive. Above are similar windows opening into a balcony that runs the breadth of the house. The house is tiled, and of course, in this tropical region, has no plume of chimnies crowning its top.

As elsewhere in Spanish America, there existed in Havana no prejudice against commercial activity, and the houses of the affluent reflected this: "Most commonly, even in the houses of the nobility, the ground floor is let out for shops, or at least nooks are opened at the corners of the house for that purpose."<sup>9</sup>

The carriages of colonial Spanish-American cities were in most instances very much like those of Europe. The rich were transported in elegant liveried carriages both large and small. Those less affluent conveyed themselves in less splendid vehicles. And there was one uniquely American carriage, the *volante* mentioned by Miller. This two-seater originated in Havana. It was a narrow carriage conveyed by two oversized wheels and one horse, often ridden by a liveried slave. The *volante* was designed to navigate Havana's narrow streets, and it was very effective and much remarked upon by foreign visitors.

#### THE URBAN STREET

From the founding of Santo Domingo through the colonial period the streets of the colonial cities have captured the attention of visitors, government officials, the clergy, and in one way or other probably everyone else. First it was the geometrical symmetry that caused comment, then the abject filth, and finally the late colonial program of constructing long, wide avenues as well as parks. We have already examined the gridiron streets. Now let us confront one of the most vexatious aspects of Spanish-American urban life: the streets and cities in general were fetid. This affective quality of urban life was fairly common to towns and cities everywhere, and it is worthwhile to note that Spanish America was not unique in this distressing aspect of the urban habitat. Nevertheless, a few comments are in order. Colonial Spanish Americans threw *everything*, we might say without fear of hyperbole, into their streets, plazas, lakes, rivers, and (in the instance of Mexico City) canals. Butchers discarded the offal of their occupation into plazas and streets; tanners, their acids; residents, their garbage and commonly their excrement. Cadavers, animal and human, often littered streets and plazas. This overwhelming detritus of urban life often lingered for days and sometimes longer, putrefying all the while.

Of Lima, a splendid viceregal city just prior to mid-eighteenth century, Juan and Ulloa were struck by "one of the inconveniences of Lima, during the summer . . . that of being tormented with fleas and bugs, from which the utmost care is not sufficient to free the inhabitants. Their prodigious increase is partly owing to the dust of that dung, with which the streets are continually covered; and partly to the flatness of the roofs, where the same dust, wafted thither by the winds, produce these troublesome insects, which are continually dropping through the crevices of the boards into the apartments."<sup>10</sup> In *El Lazarillo: A Guide for Inexperienced Travelers between Buenos Aires and Lima, 1773*, one of the most remarkable works of prose written during the colonial period, Don Alonso Carrió (as Concolorcorvo) wrote of Lima: "The tile roofs here are useless, due to the lack of rain, which may be considered a serious lack for . . . cleaning their streets, for although a number of ditches cross the streets, pure water does not flow in them; since they are of little depth and the water is scarce, they hold only excrement and urine, which are prejudicial to health and ruinous to the buildings and is publicly known to all."<sup>11</sup>

Even during the age of the Enlightenment (La Ilustración), with its strong resonance in Spanish America, urban dwellers continued to throw basins of human sewage into the streets, not infrequently from upper stories. In more genteel circumstances, earthen pipes conveyed human excrement directly out of homes into streets. No one seemed to know what to do about this deleterious situation. Municipal councils throughout the colonies repetitiously passed ordinances requiring timely cleanup of streets and plazas, the removal of cadavers, and quick burial, but these were largely to no avail. To worsen matters, in some places heavy rainfall rendered streets impassable and when unpaved a morass of mud, sewage, and detritus in general.

No city was worse than Mexico City, where normally horrendous conditions were exacerbated by the canals and Lake Texcoco. The Italian Capuchin friar Ilarione da Bergamo was in Mexico between 1761 and 1768, and the sanitation situation was not lost upon him. Of Mexico City he wrote: "Nothing is swept, and rubbish of every kind is cast into the streets, though it is true that a little water runs in a channel, concave in shape, through the middle of everything." This "refuse" supposedly was removed every week and permitted to dry out before being carted out of the city. In the meantime there was "such a stench" that passersby "have to plug their nostrils."<sup>12</sup>

The many canals in Mexico City made disposal of refuse seem quite simple: merely dump it into the water and have it carried away. As one modern historian has put it, "by 1637 there were seven major canals plus innumerable smaller ones, all of which ultimately carried their burdens to the

city cesspool—Lake Texcoco—where more things floated than just the gardens.”<sup>13</sup> No matter how the city government tried, a solution proved evasive, as occurred elsewhere in the colonies.

Let us follow Mexico City’s attempts to improve sanitation further as an example of the administrative problem. An ordinance of 1728 forbade residents to “throw rubbish or human waste in the streets, plazas, canals, nor fountain[s] of this city.” No one was permitted to “throw clean or dirty water through the windows or doors into the streets by day, or until curfew has sounded . . .” Further, it was “ordered that no person shall throw into the streets, plazas, or canals, dogs nor horses, nor other dead animals . . .”<sup>14</sup> Appropriate fines were stipulated for all infractions. In 1776 a government officer, concerned that all of the official regulations promulgated in the past to insure proper sanitation had failed, appealed to the city council to improve the situation by establishing “outbuildings on each street of the city where the citizens would be asked to deposit trash and body waste.” Contractors would be engaged to cart the refuse away. The city council turned him down, stating that present ordinances were sufficient; they needed only to be obeyed. But as one might expect they were not obeyed. In 1787 Hipólito Villarroel, a vigorous social critic, wrote: “Many have been the edicts and measures which have been published regarding the cleaning and paving of the streets, but none has been observed.” The result was “pestilential stench, harmful to health.”<sup>15</sup>

Some efforts at late colonial urban renewal, however, were manifestly successful. The Enlightened reformers serving King Charles III especially were dedicated to modernizing colonial cities.<sup>16</sup> First they modernized Spanish cities, happily Madrid among them, and then they sponsored similar improvements in the colonies. Long, wide tree-lined avenues, locally called *paseos* or *alamedas* (an *alameda* could also be a park, as was the case in Mexico City), were constructed in cities such as Havana, Mexico City, Lima, Santiago de Chile, and others. Plazas and parks were built or upgraded and fountains were improved or installed. Notwithstanding stench and unsanitary conditions, the cities and towns of colonial Spanish America became more beautiful and more amenable to physical passage, whether by conveyance or by foot. And as everywhere else where freedom of movement prevailed, public space became contested space—but more of this later.

#### MORBIDITY AND THE CITY

The urban habitat was beneficent in diverse ways and improved the lives of many who sought refuge or opportunity there, but agglomerations of people

in congested areas could also be death traps. Spanish Americans generally and urban dwellers particularly were subject to a daunting array of illnesses, which were aggravated by insalubrious sanitation and inadequate medical knowledge. The Aztec capital of Tenochtitlán fell to the Spaniards in part due to a smallpox epidemic. In an Aztec account the epidemic “lasted for seventy days, striking everywhere in the city and killing a vast number of our people. Sores erupted on our faces, our breasts, our bellies; we were covered with agonizing sores from head to foot.” Collateral deaths occurred from hunger, and many “starved to death in their beds.”<sup>17</sup> This virulent disease continued to appear over the centuries, along with measles, influenza, typhus, pneumonic plague, mumps, various fevers, yellow fever (the *vómito negro*), and malaria in some areas. There were trained and licensed physicians in the colonies who practiced generally at the level of their European counterparts, but this means that their knowledge was extremely rudimentary and insufficient to the challenge of contemporary disease. There were also “surgeons,” who were essentially bleeders. When they were also barbers, which was quite common, they might at least perform a worthwhile service.

With so many diseases and such unwholesome sanitary conditions, it is a wonder that anyone survived to maturity. Epidemics of typhus erupted so often during the course of the colonial centuries that it is safe to conclude even with only marginally accurate records that more than hundreds of thousands lost their lives. Vectors that carried the disease-bearing lice and fleas were virtually omnipresent. Rats were particularly efficacious as carriers, which is why typhus epidemics so often accompanied natural disasters. And one need only mention the common household blanket, so often transferred from the dying and dead to the healthy. The typhus epidemic of 1737–1739 appears to have taken about 200,000 lives in Mexico. An epidemic of typhus and smallpox in 1761–1762 took perhaps as many as 25,000 lives in Mexico City alone.<sup>18</sup>

Epidemic catastrophes sometimes approached cities with pitiless certainty. A smallpox epidemic of 1797 worked its way insistently toward Mexico City over a period of years, arriving at nearby cities and then the capital itself. The smallpox vaccination developed by Edward Jenner was not introduced into Mexico until 1803, so the only normal recourse authorities had was the age-old practice of quarantine, and this protocol did not stop the disease. Once the smallpox reached the city, quarantine could little assuage the scourge for a multiplicity of reasons, including improper handling of clothing, blankets, and cadavers, but most significantly because the smallpox vector was the human being, who spread the virus particularly on droplets sneezed and coughed across rooms and even outdoor spaces. A

single person could infect scores of others in a matter of moments. Smallpox (*Variola major*) was an opportunistic virus, and the urban habitat was its most promising venue. One recourse was inoculation, but this was a highly controversial option: since live smallpox virus was used, the afflicted person was provided an opportunity to contract the disease, which conveyed immunity to those fortunate enough to survive. Some physicians, members of the elite and scientific community, did have themselves and their families inoculated even when this was against the law. As it happened, those who were inoculated survived at a higher rate than those who were not. The smallpox epidemic of 1797–1798 took more than 7,000 lives in Mexico City alone, while disfiguring countless others with severely pitted faces or even blindness.

Between 1761 and 1813 five epidemics of varied kind struck Mexico City, and probably as many as 50,000 people lost their lives.<sup>19</sup> Other cities and towns lost fewer people, but they held fewer to begin with. Throughout the colonial period urban centers were hit time and again by epidemics. Buenos Aires, as just one other example, suffered a typhoid epidemic in 1717–1718, which was followed by smallpox epidemics in 1720 and 1728. Typhus struck again in 1739, and smallpox in 1775, 1780, and 1784.<sup>20</sup>

To worsen matters, many parts of Spanish America were and are subject to devastating earthquakes, which not infrequently precipitated epidemics. They also in a few seconds or minutes caused immediate loss of life and property. Sometimes it was mainly property that was lost, as was the case with the earthquake that shocked Lima and its port of Callao in November 1655. Sergeant Josephe de Mugaburu witnessed it:

I saw a large section of the island in the bay break loose and fall into the ocean . . . I saw the chapel and dome of the Jesuit church of that port caved in. Many houses also collapsed, whereupon all the inhabitants moved into the plazas and the streets to sleep . . . It caused great damage to all the houses in Lima. Only a married woman . . . and a Negress were killed. But the houses were uninhabitable for many days, so that the people went out into the plazas and streets . . . In the space of three days there were more than a hundred tremors, and everyone trembled [with fear] at what had never been perceived in this city.<sup>21</sup>

Lima was struck frequently by ruinous earthquakes during the colonial period. One particularly malevolent one occurred in late October 1746, at 10:30 in the evening: "the concussions began with such violence, that in little more than three minutes, the great part, if not all the buildings, great

and small, in the whole city, were destroyed, burying under their ruins those inhabitants who had not made sufficient haste into the streets and squares; the only places of safety in these terrible convulsions of nature." Two hundred "concussions" (what we would call tremors) were felt. "The fort of Callao, at the very same hour, sunk into the like ruins . . . the sea . . . receding to a considerable distance, returned in mountainous waves foaming with the violence of the agitation, and suddenly turned Callao, and the neighbouring country, into a sea." And this the sea repeated.<sup>22</sup> Sometimes the loss of life was incomprehensible. The quake that struck Caracas in March 1812 caused an estimated 10,000 deaths. Simón Bolívar raced from his house immediately to aid in the rescue effort. In an attempt to reduce the likelihood of epidemic, he soon suggested burning collapsed buildings with human bodies within them.

The city visualized was sometimes the city acquiescent, quickly and easily destroyed by a ferocious and often unsparing nature. But not always. Juan and Ulloa recounted that Peruvian Indians mocked the Spanish method of erecting buildings on foundations laid below the surface of the ground. The larger the building, the greater the foundation—and, as it turned out, the greater the susceptibility to damage by earthquake. Indian dwellings "built on the surface of the earth, without any foundation . . . have withstood those violent earthquakes which overthrew the more solid buildings of Lima and other large towns erected in the Spanish manner."<sup>23</sup> Colonial Spanish-American architecture—often so grand and eloquent, so appealing to the eye—in many regions was ill-informed and prideful, a combination that caused countless deaths and a need to rebuild and rebuild again.



## CHAPTER 6

# *The Urban Economy*



### THE CITY AND COMMERCIAL CAPITALISM

It bears repeating. It was about the economy, and the economy was one of commercial capitalism. This is central to an understanding of the colonial city and this book generally. The city and capitalism were tied inextricably together, and at any given point along the historical continuum it is sometimes difficult to assign greater value to one or the other. The question of which phenomenon caused the other, or which abetted the growth and development of the other, is susceptible to close analysis only when the run of history is interrupted and we ponder an isolated moment. Where urban life thrived in colonial Spanish America it did so because the economy sustained it—to greater or lesser degree of success in each instance.

Since the term “commercial capitalism” is so germane to this discussion, a few words about it are in order. In the preindustrial era capitalists were those who participated in the market economy for profit.<sup>1</sup> They might be agricultural, mining, or merchant capitalists, or, as often was the case, some combination of these. Exemplars of this capitalism were owners of large landed estates that produced grain, wool, meat, and other products for nearby and distant markets, who may also have been large import-export merchants in Mexico City, for instance, who ran wholesale and sometimes retail store operations from the ground floor of their stately homes, perhaps even mansions. Typically they borrowed large amounts of money to finance the purchase of cacao from Venezuela or copper or iron or a host of other items from Spain (much of it transshipped from northern Europe) or to outfit a ship or purchase a ship. They often loaned money at interest to other merchants or miners. They kept careful books, although they did not practice double-entry bookkeeping. They purchased maritime insurance or participated in a con-

sortium providing such insurance. Whether they were purely merchants, or miners, or agrarians, they rationally pursued profit, some of which they invested in other areas of the economy or in their own businesses or estates. This is not to say that all participants in the capitalist marketplace were so rational and dynamic, since some were not, but the generalization stands.

Let us look at a Mexico City retailer whose holdings were much more modest than those of the great entrepreneurs and who would hardly have been noticed by them. This minor player in the contingency of commercial capitalism was Joaquín de Aldana, a retailer and small wholesaler. John Kicza, that excellent historian of Mexico City, has told us about him. Aldana "began his business career by marrying into a family active in the pulque trade."<sup>2</sup> Pulque was the inexpensive alcoholic beverage quickly and easily fermented from the maguey plant. Many landed aristocrats, even nobles, of Mexico City owned estates that grew maguey plants and distilled pulque. Furthermore, some of them owned *pulquerías*, generally fairly rustic taverns that specialized in the sale of pulque, the poor person's drink of choice, and often they leased these drinking establishments to others, routinely on the condition that the pulque be purchased from the owner's estate. Such a "restrictive covenant," we might label it, was a degradation of the free-market economy, but such encumbrances were common in the economy of the Atlantic world and in variation would be so through the centuries. So Aldana received an encouragement in life in a very tried and proven way—through marriage. "He soon assumed management of the family's operations and eventually came into ownership of a good part of them."

Aldana was no laggard, content to rest on the laurels of a good marriage. Rather, "he diversified into ownership of large bread-bakeries and retail stores. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, he owned several dry-goods stores in the capital and surrounding region, including one in his home town [of San Juan Teotihuacán]." Aldana was demonstrably a very active entrepreneur, a commercial capitalist who combined energy, expertise, and a willingness to invest and diversify. It should be noted that the bread-bakeries (*panaderías*) were largely wholesale operations, producers of bread and other items that were sold to retailers such as grocers, although they may also have maintained a retail outlet. Thus, Aldana was a diversified retailer and also a wholesaler. In 1781 someone of the same name owned three grocery stores in Mexico City, and it is reasonable to assume that they were one and the same person. In that case, Aldana was not only a retailer and a wholesaler but one who produced bread to be sold perhaps at his own grocery stores.<sup>3</sup> Based on this somewhat limited information, it would be fair to think of him as a model capitalist.

Capitalists, as they did even during the commercial era, seize opportunity, of course, but they also create opportunity for others. José Basurto worked in Aldana's store in Teotihuacán. In 1798 he was a clerk (*cajero*). The following year the store's manager left, and Basurto was elevated to that position. As manager he received a salary and a percentage of profits and "was so successful that by the beginning of 1800 Aldana owed him 1,150 pesos in salary and profits and thereupon installed him as a partner, though at a share of the profits left to the owner's discretion." Basurto continued to be a successful businessman, "and at the end of that year Aldana rewarded him with a one-third share of the profits . . . and assured him a full half share in the future." The company was dissolved in 1805, by which time the former store clerk had earned 13,362 pesos after his personal expenses were deducted. So Aldana, who commenced the trajectory of his business success by marriage, created economic opportunity whereby a store clerk would become an uninvested partner and store manager. Basurto had earned enough money by 1805 to have opened a mid-range wholesale operation in Mexico City had he so desired.

Such economic and social mobility was salient and intrinsic to commercial capitalism and is central to its definition. Wherever merchants and stores of colonial Spanish America have been studied, similar opportunity and accession have proven commonplace. Let us pursue this matter with one further example from Aldana's business career. During the 1780s Aldana "took an orphan boy, Juan Reyes, into his charge and set about training him in the ways of commerce. He placed him under the supervision of the *cajero mayor* [store manager] of his general store, the Alcantarilla, in one of the many small plazas in the capital." Reyes did very well; and when the manager of another of Aldana's general stores left his position, "the owner installed Reyes as its manager, making him a partner." In 1800 Reyes became the managing partner of the store Alcantarilla, which was valued at 28,255 pesos, a substantial sum. Here again we observe the kind of economic opportunity that could come about only with the rise of commercial capitalism.

These two examples were selected to elucidate this immanent quality of commercial capitalism, because they substantiate the depth and maturity that the economy had reached by the end of the colonial period. Examples such as those of Aldana, Basurto, and Reyes are not the kind usually written about. More famously depicted are the many examples of economic opportunity provided by large import-export merchants to nephews, cousins, sons-in-law, or merely young men from their home region in Iberia. Many of the young men worked their way up the business hierarchy to the position of manager or manager partner or even owner. The most efficient way

(as in the case of Aldana) was marriage, a tried and true career path much remarked upon in the historical literature. But it is Aldana's career (and its beneficent ramifications) that more deeply informs our understanding of the colonial Spanish-American economy.

#### URBAN BUSINESS

All urban habitats during the commercial era sustained *de facto* a distinct hierarchy of businesses. At the apex in colonial Spanish America were the large import-export merchants. Their position in the socioeconomic hierarchy was confirmed by their control of the merchant tribunals (*consulados*) when these were established in the larger cities. They also enjoyed positions on the municipal councils, sometimes even controlling them. Beneath them in the hierarchy were the mid-level wholesale distributors and large retail operators. Then there came a wide range of smaller retailers, whether they specialized in a single item such as silk or cloth or a broader range of goods, as in the case of the grocery stores. Artisan stores held a somewhat ambiguous position in the hierarchy: some artisans (like tailors) generally earned relatively little and enjoyed a corresponding level of local prestige, while silversmiths tended to earn substantial incomes and enjoyed a correspondingly high prestige. Beneath these storekeepers were very small stores in nooks of houses, many the size of a closet. Farther down the scale were the operators of marketplace stalls, although in some cities like Caracas and Mexico City these could be operated by wholesalers with substantial earning capacity. Wherever there were Indians resident or nearby, many sold the goods they produced directly from the floors of the urban public markets, sometimes from places that were theirs by custom or official permission. There were multitudes of street sellers or hawkers, most of whom survived at the subsistence level if at all. Finally, there were also innkeepers, professionals, teachers, musicians, and the like. It was a multifaceted commercial economy.

Let us begin at the top. The great merchants were called variously in different parts of the empire, such as *almanceiros* in Mexico and *comerciantes* in many other places like Argentina and Chile. Merchants were essential to the early colonization of Spanish America. For example, Antonio Núñez de Fonseca reached Chile in 1543 or 1544. Employing his own ships he conducted trade between Chile and Peru, and he constructed the first warehouses in the port of Valparaíso. He was also involved in shipbuilding and the fishing industry. Before he died he owned several landed estates. Juan Jufré was a soldier who arrived in Chile with the conqueror Pedro de Val-

divia. For his military efforts he was awarded three *encomiendas*—grants of Indian labor. In 1553 he built a flourmill, and later he added a cloth factory. He too was involved in shipbuilding. Like leading merchants in other colonies, those of Chile had agents in other colonial capitals, as well as Cádiz, London, or other European commercial centers.

Manuel Riesco was one of these merchants. Born in Spain, he settled early in Chile and earned a fortune. Toward the end of the colonial period he sent his son Miguel to Buenos Aires and to Cádiz to act as his agent. Riesco exported Chilean copper to Spain and received in return manufactures, including English goods, especially textiles. In 1805 he instructed his son to lease or purchase a ship for a trip from Spain to Chile. Since his own goods would not fill it, he told his son to solicit goods from other merchants. To help finance the construction of a ship of 600 to 700 tons, which would cost about 30,000 pesos, Miguel should take copper to Santander or Barcelona, but prices should be checked at Marseilles, France, where another Chilean had enjoyed success selling Chilean copper. Unfortunately, warfare soon disrupted the plan, so the father pursued other options. By 1809 he was instructing his son to look into the possibility of buying a smaller ship in England, where he would purchase textile goods, iron, and tar. If the total package could be arranged more favorably in Sweden, he should proceed there. Again unsettled international problems scuttled his plan.<sup>4</sup> What we notice, however, is his entrepreneurship and determination.

Similar entrepreneurship and determined presence in local, provincial, intercolonial, and trans-Atlantic trade can be seen throughout the Spanish-American colonies, but let us focus on Mexico City for an additional example. One of the most successful merchants in Mexico was Antonio de Bassoco, who like many others surrounded himself with relatives from Spain, in this case five nephews who were brothers. In 1800 Bassoco formed a company with one of the nephews for the purpose of sending a ship to Spain. They were to share equally in profits. The nephew, Bernardino de Arangoiti, was to travel to Havana and there purchase a ship of about 300 tons, then proceed to La Guaira, the port of Caracas, where he was to purchase 2,000 *fanegas* (a *fanega* equaled one and a half bushels) of cacao. From La Guaira he was to proceed to any port in Spain that offered the most advantageous price for the cargo. Again with an eye toward profits, Arangoiti was to purchase iron, steel, paper, or whatever else "promised the best return when transported back to Mexico in the ship."<sup>5</sup>

The most famous and rewarding export product of colonial Spanish America was, of course, silver, and it is good to have an example of commercial entrepreneurship related to it. During the final decades of the colo-

nial period only a few companies shipped silver from Mexican mines to the ports of Acapulco and Veracruz, meaning that they all were highly capitalized enterprises. One of these was "[t]he merchant house of Pedro de Vértiz, [which] engaged in this aspect of commerce for at least three generations, achieving continuity through the familiar pattern of marrying daughters to peninsular nephews." In 1802 the firm failed, however, "taking down with it a number of smaller traders who had entrusted funds to it." In a capitalist economy, business does not like a vacuum; and soon the merchant Martín Angel de Micháus y Aspiros, a trader "of commodities such as sugar and leather formed a company . . . to ship bullion" to Acapulco and Veracruz. This was a risky business on many accounts; to win the confidence of silver miners, the company formed a bond of 200,000 pesos through "commitments of 25,000 pesos from each of eight prominent merchants of the capital." The company was a success and continued shipping bullion at least until 1823.<sup>6</sup>

This rather sophisticated and successful business operation bespeaks the level of maturity that this sector of the colonial economy could reach. Indeed the success of Micháus y Aspiros' company did not long go unchallenged. Toward the end of the eighteenth century Juan Antonio Vázquez and Juan Domingo Fernández were equal partners in a Mexico City merchant house. Like the other leading merchant houses of the capital, this one had family roots. Juan Domingo had married the daughter of his partner. Over the years other partners were "family members, usually nephews and cousins." This family firm, like countless others in the colonies, was restructured frequently over the decades. This was done again in 1804 when Diego Fernández de Peredo, the current director of the firm, took a two-page notice in the *Gazeta del México*, announcing "a new reorganization, the establishment of a partnership with yet another cousin." Responding to the successful bonding tactic of the Micháus y Aspiros firm, Fernández de Peredo announced that his firm would offer a bond of 300,000 pesos, composed of twelve bonds each of 25,000 pesos subscribed by leading Mexico City merchants to insure safe delivery of silver and gold to the ports. This high finance was constituted on a fundamental business practice of the commercial capitalist era: secured and prompt delivery. The firm advertised that it would "transport any amount of money to Veracruz and Acapulco for private individuals at the standard charge . . . that the shipments would go forth with the notorious promptness of never a month's interval between them, and that every person, within or outside the capital, might submit any amount and be assured of on-time delivery and payment of any bills of credit against the security of the 300,000 peso guarantee."<sup>7</sup>

It was high finance and attention to detail. Let us pursue such urban business activity still further, but at a somewhat less exalted yet still high level. Import-export merchants, large-scale domestic merchants, wholesalers generally throughout the colonies were not embarrassed to own and operate retail operations. It is still arguable whether this was so at the very beginning of the colonial period; but by roughly the end of the sixteenth century landed wealth—while always prestigious—no longer was sufficient to guarantee one's place at the upper echelon of society. Wealth became status and power, and its provenance could not tarnish. This was especially true in the ambiguous circumstance of merchants and miners who purchased large landed estates, and sometimes titles of nobility, notably after the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1767 and the Crown's auctioning their estates, with merchants among the prominent purchasers.

We shall shortly examine petty urban business, but first the example of José Gómez Campos, a capitalist of Mexico City. In 1780 Gómez owned four contiguous stores located on the ground floor of the capital's city council building, that is, in the most prestigious part of the city. In that year the owner determined to turn "over their management to Pedro Marín." A three-year contract was arranged, providing for an equal partnership between the two, with Gómez Campos putting up the stores valued at 150,000 pesos and Marín putting up 45,000 pesos, 20,000 of which he borrowed. Marín was given complete operational control over the business, including the right to sell on credit "to whatever extent he thought necessary." At the end of the three-year contract, Gómez Campos "chose not to renew this partnership . . . but rather formulated a new company . . . elevating two of his *cajeros* to managing partners for the next four years . . . The four stores were now valued at 180,000 pesos, and only one of the two managers put in any money, a mere 1,195 pesos." Contrary to the previous arrangement, Gómez Campos now reserved the "right to approve all business deals." So two store clerks, perhaps managers or near managers, were elevated to the status of uninvested partner in one instance and very modestly invested partner in the other. The owner of the stores and inventory received one-half the profits, and the two partners shared one-quarter of the profits each. Things went well; and the contract was renewed with the same terms for an additional two years.<sup>8</sup>

Because of research, particularly over the past two decades, scholars know a great deal about the business activities of the large-scale merchants and the small-scale merchants of colonial Spanish America but not nearly as much about those in between. We do know some things, however. In Caracas, for example, the most important merchants were the *comerciantes*, the import-

export merchants. Beneath them in economic importance were the *mercaderes*. Not to be confused with import-export merchants elsewhere, in Caracas these were the wholesalers, whom we might refer to as distributors. To place these two categories of merchants in socioeconomic perspective, it is instructive to note that the merchant tribunal in Caracas, a very powerful corporate body that sat as a commercial court and influenced commercial policy, was composed of *comerciantes*, *mercaderes*, and *hacendados* (large landowners). It is difficult to rank store categories and storekeepers beneath this upper level of this capital's commercial life. Generally, in declining order of capitalization, these were the *tiendas de mercería*, followed by *canastillas*, *bodegas*, *pulperías* (grocery stores), and finally *ranchos* (small wooden shacks in plazas that sold food items). The *tiendas de mercería* were dry-goods stores, basically selling imported goods at retail. They could be capitalized modestly, in the range of a *bodega* or *pulpería*, or more extensively, beyond 10,000 pesos. The *canastillas* were extremely interesting stores. They could be fixed shopstalls in the main plaza or nooks in the corner of another store. They generally specialized in a single item, such as dry goods, hardware, or clothing. Their capitalizations could be as great as that of a *tienda de mercería* or as modest as that of a *bodega* or *pulpería*.<sup>9</sup>

At the bottom of the hierarchy were the *bodegas* and *pulperías*, followed by the *ranchos*, and, finally, itinerant traders. In Caracas a *bodega* was a grocery store that sold imported items (not only food) at retail. In many places a *bodega* was simply a storeroom. In Caracas a *bodega* might be capitalized very modestly, in the range of a *pulpería* or more robustly, between 5,000 and 10,000 pesos or even more. Sometimes *bodegueros* crossed store categories, as in the case of Don Francisco González and Don José Ignacio Ezguiaga, who formed a company to operate two stores: a dry-goods store and a *bodega*. The company was capitalized at 9,000 pesos, and both stores were located on the same corner. A *bodega* could be capitalized well into the range of a more prestigious wholesale operation, as was the case with one located in the main plaza in 1800 capitalized at 18,592 pesos. This *bodeguero* chose to be in the retail trade when he could easily have been a wholesaler. That is, he chose to identify himself with the lowly *bodegas*, which could be capitalized at less than 1,000 pesos.

In an attempt to understand the urban economy perhaps the most interesting and informative category of fixed store was that of the small retail grocery—the *pulpería*. The owners were called *pulperos*. In urban colonial Spanish America the *pulperías* composed the largest group of fixed stores that were officially categorized and licensed, in this case by the municipal councils. There might be a greater number of artisan stores, but these were



of different artisanal crafts, whereas the small retail grocery stores (notwithstanding categorical differences from colony to colony) were all fundamentally alike. No other category of fixed store presented so great an opportunity for so many to enter the entrepreneurial sector of the commercial economy, men and women alike. They were frequently located at the corners of streets, in fact sometimes on all four corners. In Buenos Aires the grocery stores were commonly referred to as *esquinas* (corners, although other kinds of stores could be located at corners). In Caracas, as elsewhere, they could be capitalized at a few hundred pesos but sometimes much more. In 1803, for example, a company was established to operate a *pulpería* in Caracas with a capitalization of 800 pesos.

Let us learn more about the urban economy and commercial capitalism generally through further inquiry into the small retail grocery stores and the grocers—the *pulperías* and *pulperos*. With certain notable exceptions, it was comparatively easy to enter the ranks of the small retail grocers. This access prevailed for three fundamental reasons. First, in many towns and cities the capitalization of grocery stores was relatively low, that is, under a thousand pesos. In 1787 the advocate for the grocers of Puebla, Mexico, stated to the city council that most of the grocery stores, “perhaps like ours, do not have a capital of thirty pesos . . .” It is wise to presume some exaggeration here, but the point is made nevertheless. In Buenos Aires there were indeed grocery stores capitalized at under 500 pesos, and many of them under 200 or even 100 pesos.

Second, sellers of grocery stores often made the terms of sale particularly attractive. For example, in 1799 a Puebla grocery store was purchased for 853 pesos, payable at a rate of 15 pesos per month. In 1807 two Puebla grocery stores were purchased for 1,509 pesos, with payments of 40 pesos per month. In Mexico City in 1788 a grocery store was purchased for 1,216 pesos, to be paid off at 40 pesos per month. In that same year the administrator of a Mexico City grocery store purchased it for 111 pesos, with payments of 10 pesos per month. This means that people of very limited means could enter the lower reaches of the economic continuum.

Third, grocery stores (as was the case with all other stores and merchant operations, from the most modest to the most splendid) functioned largely on the basis of credit. The import-export merchants received their goods from Spain largely on the basis of credit offered by the European exporters. They in turn extended credit to the large wholesalers, who also supplied the smaller wholesalers largely on credit. These wholesalers supplied the smaller wholesale/retail or just retail operations on credit; and these supplied items to the small stores such as the grocery stores largely on

credit. These stores whose inventories were built and restocked largely on the basis of credit sold their inventories to their customers, again sometimes on credit.

### *Credit*

Credit was one of the marvels of commercial capitalism and one of its defining qualities. Daniel Defoe, cherished for his fiction, was a widely traveled man of business and an astute observer of the economy. Early in the eighteenth century he wrote: "Credit, next to real stock, is the foundation, the life and soul of business in a private tradesman; it is his prosperity; it is his support in the substance of his whole trade . . ." Defoe captured the very essence of the commercial system. Furthermore, he apprehended the beneficent role that credit played in permitting trade to expand beyond any individual's capital base—or, for that matter, society's. "Hence it is that we frequently find tradesmen carrying on a prodigious trade with but a middling stock of their own, the rest being all managed by the force of their credit."<sup>10</sup> Credit so readily suffused and sustained the urban economy of colonial Spanish America that even street vendors in some places offered credit on items they sold.<sup>11</sup> Altogether the *mentalité* of commercial capitalism was firmly rooted in the urban landscape.

This is an extremely important point. There were no generalized banks open to the public in colonial Spanish America. The most important institution of lending, the Church, almost always eschewed loans to merchants, since they normally did not have collateral comparable to a landed estate. The lay confraternities (brotherhoods), the *cofradías*, sometimes did loan modest amounts to their members, among whom might be merchants. But further down the commercial continuum Church loans were virtually nonexistent. Investment capital had to be supplied for the majority of people in urban business by sellers, family, and friends. Small amounts of capital were supplied by pawnbrokers. In Mexico City grocers were required by municipal law to take in certain items as pawns (*prendas*) in exchange for items of food, but some exchanged pawns for cash, as did many grocers as well as other storekeepers in other cities.

### *The Small Retail Grocers in the Crucible*

Inventories in colonial Spanish-American grocery stores tended to be varied. During the 1770s the Caracas city council set an *arancel* for the *pulperías* of a small nearby town over which it held jurisdiction. Among the items were:

# THE COLONIAL SPANISH-AMERICAN CITY

Wine	Bacon
<i>Aguardiente</i> (cane brandy)	Lard
Syrup from cane juice	Sausage
Sugar	Pork loins
Corn	Soap
Different kinds of bread	Firewood
Wheat biscuits	Candles
Rice	Bananas
Various kinds of beans	Salt
Cacao	Flour

Not every grocery store in the town may have stocked all these items, but in 1792 Don José Reymundo de Moya did stock all of the following items in his Mexico City *pulpería* (although it was officially declared a grocery store, the inventory makes clear that Moya was also operating a wine store):

Firewood	Empty barrels
Charcoal	<i>Chilito</i> (an alcoholic drink)
Cloth of different kinds	Shrimp
Vinegar	Starch
Quicksilver	Anchovies
Hides	Ham
Beans (many different kinds)	Eggs
Rice (different kinds)	Canes
Salt	Grain
Palm mats	Lard
Bottles and flasks	Honey
Drinking glasses	Olives
Anisette	Bread
<i>Aguardiente</i>	Candles
<i>Mistela</i> (brandy-fortified wine)	Cheese
Malaga wine	Sugar
Chocolate	Sacks

Altogether there were 154 separate entries in Moya's inventory, which then had a wholesale value of 558 pesos. In 1802 Don Juan Monasterio sold a grocery store in Mexico City which had an inventory valued at 4,268 pesos. This much more valuable inventory listed 331 separate entries, including many items similar to those in Moya's inventory. This one, however, also

contained cacao from Venezuela and Guayaquil, oregano, chickpeas, corn, nuts, wooden shovels, peppers, and small brushes.<sup>12</sup>

What these inventories illustrate is that the small retail grocers were business people. Most often they were men, but there were also women owners, partners, and store managers. Some towns and cities reserved all or most of the *pulpería* licenses for women, commonly widows and others in need. But in any case, these people were entrepreneurs; that is, they invested capital at risk, in this instance in fixed stores. Their inventories, often large and varied, inform us that these entrepreneurs at the bottom of the business hierarchy required the skill to build an inventory, be aware of what was on the shelves and in a storeroom, order and reorder, be cognizant of myriad credit arrangements, pay bills, and stand up to the many problems facing small storekeeping anywhere. They had to be literate and numerate or had to have someone who was thus accomplished working in their stores, which in this case offered opportunity to others at the lower rungs of the socioeconomic ladder. The larger operations employed non-nuclear family or nonfamily members. Again, these stores represented opportunity.

In this regard, the possibility that children “helped out” in the stores is intriguing. In 1787 in a petition to the city council of Puebla, the grocers’ advocate stated that because it was necessary for the grocers to leave their stores daily in order to go to the plazas to purchase certain inventory items (such as eggs and chickens, which were brought to town by Indian producers), they had to have someone in the stores during their absences. Sometimes “we have our women and children whom we can place in charge of the store . . .”<sup>13</sup> What skills did they learn? At a time when it was unlikely that they would have received any formal education, did they learn basic arithmetic, writing, and even reading in the stores, because such skills were helpful and perhaps requisite? Did the sense or spirit of entrepreneurialism inhere in them? One can hope that future generations of scholars will be able to enlighten us about these young people. Although there was a wide range of success and affluence among the *pulperos*, mainly they formed what in the United States would be referred to as a lower-middle class. This class has been a crucial energizer of capitalism across the centuries—thus the reification in the United States of the Horatio Alger story/myth in its profuse manifestations.<sup>14</sup>

The other side of the capitalist coin, however, was a gnawingly precarious existence for most, failure for many, and long-term success for only a few. The fundamental problems the grocers faced were those intrinsic to any market economy, such as competition or poor business judgment, including perhaps inventory mismanagement. It was not uncommon for grocers to be

behind in their credit payments, and for many this was a slippery road to failure.

To make matters worse, throughout the colonies, as in many and perhaps most other places in the contemporaneous Atlantic world, the small retail grocers were frustrated by regraters, known as *regatones* in Spanish America. These highly resourceful entrepreneurs routinely intercepted Indians and others on their way to sell their goods in the public markets of urban centers, gave them cash for their goods at prices commensurate with a quick and easy sale, then proceeded to town to sell those same goods at inflated prices to the grocers and the general public. Grocers periodically appealed to government authorities to interdict the *regatones*, and the authorities supported the grocers and took steps to stop this illegal stranglehold. This is how advocate Don José de Arriaga put it for the Puebla grocers in 1787: the regraters “give us what their whim classifies as good or bad; necessary or not necessary; desirable or worthless . . . After throwing into the street the bad and rotten, not only can we not make profits, but not even costs, rather only losses.”<sup>15</sup> But everywhere, it seems, these efforts failed in the face of determined ingenuity and the willingness of producers to unload their products and save a great deal of time into the bargain. While one can appreciate that the regraters diminished the grocers’ profits, it is difficult not to wonder about, not to say admire, these resourceful marketers. It would be fascinating to know more about their business activities, especially whether they went on to more “respectable” businesses.

One problem that was particularly troublesome to small storekeepers everywhere in the Spanish colonies was the endemic shortage of specie—a consequence of the extraction of gold and silver by the mother country—which translated into a general shortage of small currency. Many storekeepers, grocers and others alike, navigated around this problem by issuing their own currencies. It appears that only the grocers of certain cities were required to do so, however, and this increased their liabilities. The Spanish peso, a hard currency in the Atlantic world, was divided into eight *reales*. In Mexico the *real* was itself divisible by individual storekeepers into eighths, called *tlacos*. This highly individualized micro-currency was legal tender. In recognition of the central role played by the grocers in satisfying the daily sustenance of the general public (the majority of whom were of limited affluence and not in daily possession of *reales*), the small retail grocers of Mexico City in 1757 were prohibited from using the half *tlaco* in their trade; rather, they were required to use coin that divided the half *tlaco* into four parts. The regulation was fraught with peril for the grocers, since new owners of *pulpe-*

*rias* were required to accept the *tlacos* issued by the previous owner even if these would not be accepted by their own creditors.

A somewhat similar problem besieged the grocers of Caracas. To overcome the shortage of small currency, many issued their own currencies, there called *señas*, which were the equivalent of one-half *real*. Unlike the situation in Mexico City, however, these issues were not legal tender, meaning that no other storekeeper was required to accept them in payment for goods or in satisfaction of debts.<sup>16</sup>

Additionally, the grocers faced other government interference in their business operations. Everywhere in the Atlantic world municipal councils routinely determined the maximum retail price of bread (a basic grocery store item) and, in colonial Spanish America at least, the profit the grocer could earn on bread. Maximum prices were often set on other items as well. Furthermore, *cabildos* commonly prohibited the grocers from entering the public plazas to purchase items for resale in their stores until after the general public had the opportunity to purchase them directly from the providers, often Indians who brought perishables such as eggs, chickens, fruit, cheese, and firewood to sell. Sometimes it was 10 or even 11 A.M. before the grocers had a chance to make these essential purchases. As if these interferences were not enough, the Mexico City *cabildo* at mid-eighteenth century set a 500-peso minimum on the value of a grocery store's fixtures (*aperos*), which on the face of it eliminated many people from entry into the ranks of fixed storekeeping at the beginning of the economic continuum.

A particularly egregious example of government interference occurred in Caracas. In the late eighteenth century no *pulperías* were located in or near the city's main commercial center, the main plaza. This spatial distortion was the consequence of government interference rather than market forces. In 1788 there were 67 *ranchos* and 45 *canastillas* at the main plaza, selling food and dry goods. There were no *pulperías*, because the city owned and leased out the *ranchos* and *canastillas* at the main plaza. By the 1780s the city council had elevated the main plaza into the city's most important market for fish, dairy products, meat, vegetables, and fruit—products that were also sold at the *pulperías*. In effect the government had contrived to make itself a powerful competitor of the small retail grocers. The justification was compelling: during the final decades of the eighteenth century, about 40 percent of the municipal government's total income derived from rents at the main plaza.<sup>17</sup> The lowly *pulperos* were expendable.

The urban ecology certainly offered greater opportunity for a larger number of people than did the rural, but it was not normally an easy life. With

factors like market forces, variations in personal aptitude, and government interference, success was elusive. In his petition to the city council of Puebla in 1787, the grocers' advocate placed a fine point on this: "many manage to sustain a store of this kind only a year." In 1794 the merchant tribunal of Mexico City stated to the viceroy that among the owners of grocery and wine stores were few who stayed in business for many months.<sup>18</sup> Both the advocate and the merchant tribunal had indulged for self-serving purposes in some hyperbole, but the point was well taken. Indeed many grocers managed to remain in business only a few months or at most a year or two. Furthermore, the culmination of the colonial period, the Wars of Independence, wrecked many lives and much property.

Nevertheless, there were those who succeeded and in so doing contributed to the well-being of the whole continuum. In their success we may presume that they expanded the sense of entrepreneurialism among others, including family members, but we need to know much more about this. In the meantime, let us share in their success. In 1781 ten people each owned more than one retail grocery store in Mexico City. Seven owned two stores each; two men owned three groceries, and one man owned four of them. In that year 11 percent of the city's 219 grocery stores were owned by 5 percent of the grocers. To stretch the colonial period a bit, in 1825 twenty grocers in Buenos Aires each owned at least two grocery stores. The brothers Don Tomás and Don Nicolás Giraldes each owned five stores. Such commercial activity and entrepreneurialism scarcely appears visible when one searches downward from the vantage of the great elite merchants and landowners.

#### *María Salazar, Plaza Vendor*

As a means of further elucidating the character of the colonial Spanish-American economy at the beginning of the continuum, an example from a public market is highly informative. In 1793 María Salazar (note the absence of the honorific Doña) had a shopstall in Puebla's main plaza for the purpose of "buying and selling shoes." She requested of Doña Micaela López, who also had a shopstall in the main plaza, 200 pesos with which to purchase items for her inventory. López advanced the money under the condition that Salazar would operate her own business but pay López one-half the profits. According to the official papers, this was "not what is understood to be a legal loan, but an administrative arrangement." Actually, López had become a silent partner. The borrower was not permitted to secure further loans without the express consent of López. Later that year López advanced another 200 pesos under even more stringent conditions. Salazar was re-

quired to place in her shopstall a person approved by López to look after her interests. Profits were still to be divided in half, but an accounting had to be prepared each night. From the profits, López was to be paid a part of her now 400-peso investment. López, a plaza shopstall operator, was obviously a sharp businesswoman. But what may be most interesting is that the two women with shopstalls in Puebla's main plaza both sold shoes. Whether or not their shoes were similar in quality and cost, López was clearly displaying a sophisticated sense of business acumen.<sup>19</sup>

### *The Artisans*

There existed a parallel economy among the fixed storekeepers of colonial Spanish America, some of whom achieved enviable economic success and social status, many of whom subsisted at the margins of success. They were the artisans, and although they are more widely known than the small retail grocers, market sellers, or street vendors, scholars have not paid them as much attention as they deserve. We know a great deal about their social lives but much less about the intimacies of their economic lives. One thing certain is that many guildsmen and guildswomen in the Spanish colonies were not given exclusively to "bespoken" work, work crafted on demand, but rather produced items in anticipation of a customer's interest. To put it another way, many artisans speculated about sales, which means that they were dependent on market forces for their success. When they breached the protective barriers of guild-limited production, they were entrepreneurs in the sense that other storekeepers were. Some artisans, including silver-smiths, shoemakers, and tailors, among many others, sold items produced by other artisans, invested in other artisan stores, and invested in nonrelated businesses.

This entrepreneurial bent among artisans may have been abetted by the absence of guilds in many towns and cities, most prominently the transparently commercial port of Buenos Aires. On the other hand, municipal councils customarily but not always exerted organizational and supervisory control over their artisans, whether or not guilds existed within their jurisdictions, and sometimes it benefited them to keep quality high and output under restraint.

There were many different kinds of artisans in the towns and cities of colonial Spanish America. The variety and their number depended on many variables, especially the nature of local and regional economies and the general level of local prosperity. Following is a representative list of some artisans and other workers not meant to be inclusive:



Some Artisan Categories

Silversmith	Shoemaker
Goldsmith	Blacksmith
Cigar maker	Brazier
Cabinetmaker	Armourer
Watchmaker	Tailor
Cooper	Tanner
Lathemaker	Hatmaker
Silk-spinner	Comb maker
Belt maker	Carpenter
Baker	Buttonhole maker
Dressmaker	Mason
Confectioner	Weaver
Coach maker	

Other Common Urban Workers

Day laborer	Domestic servant
Cook	

Additionally, there were small groups of scribes, musicians, and teachers (including music and art teachers) as well as barbers, pharmacists, surgeons, physicians, notaries, bookkeepers, and lawyers. There could be architects, land surveyors, various kinds of store employees, civil, religious, and military bureaucrats, as well as soldiers, sometimes sailors, and militia. Furthermore, in each village, town, and city there were an indeterminate number of those who negotiated life within the informal, often illegal, economy, notably beggars, prostitutes, thieves, hucksters, and operators of unlicensed small stores.

Normally, the master craftsmen, whose election was supervised by the municipal council, owned and operated relatively small stores. Working for them were anywhere from one to several journeymen (or women), and perhaps one or several apprentices. Many master craftsmen were too impecunious to be able to afford a journeyman or even the upkeep of an apprentice. In such cases, it was not uncommon for one's spouse and children to work at the craft, which may have been therapeutic with regard to their future economic well-being. Spanish regulations permitted widows of master craftsmen to succeed their deceased husbands in the economy so long as they did not remarry. Consequently, women sometimes operated their deceased husbands' master-craft stores, supervising journeymen and apprentices, and even investing in other kinds of businesses. The widow of a master crafts-

man, however, was a likely marital prospect for a journeyman. More than a few journeymen ascended to a better life in this time-honored fashion even when they might not have earned the title of master.

It is extremely difficult to determine which craft commanded the greatest prestige over time. Normally the silversmiths and goldsmiths achieved the greatest prosperity and prestige among the artisans, belonging to affluent confraternities and enjoying an honored place in the frequent urban parades and privileged seating at public reviews and spectacles. When the economy was expansive, however, the masons often earned more money and constructed personal housing commensurate with their wealth. In any event, there was a wide range of economic success within each craft. The wholesale bakers (*panaderos*) often were prosperous. Many of them owned several or more slaves, who provided the heavy labor required in the *panaderías*. Shoemakers (*zapateros*), tailors (*sastres*), and dressmakers (*costureras*) frequently just managed to get by, although any of these fortunate enough to cater to the wealthy did much better than the others.

Women were very active in the artisanal economy. Certain of the crafts (such as dressmaker, hatmaker, sweet maker, confectioner, and silk, cotton, and wool weaver) could be predominantly female in composition. In 1788 women in Mexico City formed a silk-spinners guild with 23 masters, 200 journeymen, and 21 apprentices.<sup>20</sup> And as previously noted, women sometimes inherited their deceased husbands' place as head of an artisanal (or business, for that matter) operation.

#### JOURNEYMEN AND APPRENTICES

Journeymen and apprentices were essential to the urban economy. The apprenticeship system throughout the Atlantic world was the gateway to gainful employment and perhaps even prosperity for a large number of young boys and girls who in some cases might otherwise not have been tracked for gainful employment. We know too little about the apprenticeship system, but we do know that the master would normally contract to provide an education in the craft or trade, room, board, and sometimes even clothing for a stipulated period (normally three to five years, but this term could be extended). The master was usually required to prepare the youth to pass the journeyman's exam and sometimes had to continue the apprenticeship arrangement until the youth passed the exam and was able to move on to higher employment. At the end of the apprenticeship there was commonly some predetermined cash payment and sometimes a set of new clothing. The system was fraught with the possibility of exception, on both the posi-

tive and negative side, and we may permit ourselves to speculate that abuse was not out of the question. Nonetheless, the apprenticeship system provided opportunity at the level of the economy where it was most needed and perpetuated the artisanal sector of the economy.<sup>21</sup>

Furthermore, we may indulge in a further speculation and wonder whether the apprenticeship system widely provided the rudimentary skills in reading, writing, and arithmetic that were generally unavailable to many young people at the lower reaches of the socioeconomic scale but were extremely helpful as one sought to move up in the economy. In 1788 there were several thousand apprentices in Mexico City. The guild of primary school teachers, the *Arte de Leer*, enrolled 1,327 apprentices, meaning students the teachers were educating on behalf of other guilds.<sup>22</sup> The essential skills taught were valuable to the apprentices and the urban society in general. However, the later eighteenth-century Spanish reformers had other ideas. In their attempt to modernize Spain and the colonies they viewed guilds as an impediment to economic development and widespread education. The reformers considered it essential for the youth of all socioeconomic classes to be educated. Throughout the colonies municipal councils established free (but separate) primary schools for boys and girls. The Church also increased its efforts to educate youth of all classes and races. By the end of the eighteenth century approximately one-half of all children of primary school age in Mexico City were being educated through the efforts of the city council, Church, or private teachers and tutors.<sup>23</sup> This is very impressive, but we do not know how long students remained in school or whether apprentices could be away from their tasks each day long enough to have had a meaningful educational experience. Moreover, the royal authorities in Mexico City, benefiting from great colonial wealth, were particularly successful reformers. Their counterparts in other colonies may have been less successful when it came to the education of youth. In any event, some 50 percent of Mexico City's youth were still without primary schooling, and the apprenticeship system therefore may have been essential to their educational development.

The urban journeymen of colonial Spanish America warrant much greater attention than they have received. Under normal conditions they would constitute the largest contingent within each craft. They received their advanced training from the masters and then went on to open their own stores until they might ascend to the rank of master. Which is to say that most craft output was accomplished by journeymen. If the journeymen were not able to open their own stores, however, they were consigned to continued work for a master, which was not the desired outcome of the apprentice/journeyman/master process. The process—the system—was further en-

cumbered and strained when the number of masters was kept low and the number of journeymen grew too large. We need to learn more about the role of journeymen in the many revolts and ultimately the civil wars and revolutions of the late colonial period. A vital journeymen sector was essential to the general well-being of the urban economy.

This was precisely the case in Buenos Aires in 1780, when nine artisan groups embodied a total of 413 masters, 508 journeymen, and 124 apprentices. The number of apprentices seems curiously small, but the minor difference in number between masters and journeymen suggests no significant roadblock limiting the progress of the journeymen. A further signifier of the general health of these artisan groups is that 51.6 percent of all masters were married and 36.0 percent of all journeymen were also married. That more masters would be married is understandable; but the number of journeymen married is also impressive, considering that many journeymen were just or shortly out of apprenticeship. Additionally, only 25.7 percent of masters owned their own homes, but an almost equal 23.8 percent of journeymen also owned their own homes. Of course, the homes of the journeymen may have been of lesser value, but overall the nine artisan groups appear to have had a healthy equilibrium between masters and journeymen, perhaps reflective of the strong commercial economy in Buenos Aires, especially after the freedom of trade decree of 1778.<sup>24</sup>

#### TOWARD A MIDDLE CLASS/ANALYSIS

By way of concluding this chapter, we might ask ourselves: just who were these small wholesalers, retail storekeepers, artisans and tradesmen (such as masons), market sellers, and others of little regard, in relation to the great merchants and traders and lesser wholesalers of the urban habitats of colonial Spanish America? Did the retail storekeepers, small wholesalers, artisans, operators of micro-stores, and the like form a lower-middle class? In their informed and thoughtful book *The Forging of the Cosmic Race: A Reinterpretation of Colonial Mexico*, Colin M. MacLachlan and Jaime E. Rodríguez O. forcefully assert the capitalist nature of the Mexican colonial economy and posit the following seven social categories:<sup>25</sup>

1. the royal officials
2. the great magnates
3. the secondary elite
4. the *pequeña burguesía*
5. the artisan class

6. the workers

7. the *léperos*

MacLachlan and Rodríguez might have gone further, a point to which we shall return in the following chapter, but we can be gratified and surprised at their recognition of a *pequeña burguesía* in their social taxonomy. Indeed, notwithstanding a broad range of affluence or absence of it among store-keepers, artisans, and others, both within their immediate categorized group and in relation to others below the palpably rich, these people formed a class which profitably can be labeled a petty bourgeoisie. This term, however, suggests the possibility of a bourgeoisie, a possibility (actually probability) that deserves a separate discussion.<sup>26</sup> Rather, it is informative to consider these people part of a lower-middle class. Constituting this class would be most of the retailers, small wholesalers, artisans, and others above those urban dwellers not gainfully employed. In fact, as suggested more pointedly in the following chapter, the lower-middle class formed a very large percentage of the urban population. MacLachlan and Rodríguez have broken through the intellectual haze and given us a petty bourgeoisie (read lower-middle class); but for all the reasons inherent in the discussion of the artisans in this chapter they too should be included, as indeed many "workers" should be also. Let us consider the desirability of formulating Spanish-American colonial urban society along the lines of an upper class, an upper-middle class, a middle class, a lower-middle class, and (with all due respect for human possibility) a lower class or, as it is commonly known, an underclass. These terms are edifying and informative of the nature of a society and economy and encourage inquiry rather than close it off. More of this in the following chapters.

## CHAPTER 7

# *Urban Society*



### RACISM AND THE MARKETPLACE

What society was wrought by the economy we have just seen? The answer is in two parts. The first has to do with racial prejudice and its consequences, the second with perception and its consequences.

Spanish-American society was formed around a legally defined cognitive caste system—the society of castes (*sistema* or *régimen de castas*), which placed whites at the top and African or American-born slaves at the bottom. Following is the general schema of this racial hierarchy:

- Whites (including others who passed for white)
- Indians
- Mestizos (of white-Indian mixture)
- Free people of color (of African descent)
- Slaves (of African descent)

The distant model for Spain's caste system was the pan-Hindu caste system as mediated by the Muslims and the Portuguese, but what Spain instituted was racially based rather than religiously and occupationally based. At bottom the Spanish American caste system was racist—people who were not white were considered racially inferior and therefore subject to various legal debilities. Indians, as wards of the state, had to pay tribute to the Crown but were granted bureaucratic and educational opportunities not permitted to mestizos and free people of color. Generally speaking, the free people of color (*gente de color*) suffered the greatest discrimination within the free community. They were not permitted a university education, which meant that they could not become physicians or lawyers, although a very few managed to do

this; they were not permitted to become notaries; and they were prohibited from entering the civil, Church, or military bureaucracies. Except under unusual circumstances free colored men could not carry arms or even a dagger, emblematic of a gentleman, and neither men nor women were permitted the important honorific of "Don" or "Doña." They also were required to pay a tribute to the Crown. When they served in the colonial militia, they were almost always relegated to segregated units, normally with white superior officers.<sup>1</sup>

Hence, colonial Spanish-American society was steeped in racial prejudice and discrimination; but it is important to note that this was not as harsh a prejudice and discrimination as evolved in the United States. Gradations of color (or whiteness, depending upon how one looked at it) were deployed, meaning that through intermarriage with whites blacks could "whiten" the family group, eventually producing socially accepted white progeny. This was the opposite of the one-drop-of-blood racism that has underwritten racial prejudice in the United States. In colonial Spanish America different colonies had their own nomenclature to categorize and certify the process of whitening. A white parent and a black parent always produced a "mulatto," but in some places the term included all mixtures of white and black. From there local custom and law influenced the typology of race. Ordinarily, in order of greater degree of whiteness, were *pardos*, *morenos*, and *negros*. The *pardos* were usually the free colored of lightest skin color and socially and economically tended to enjoy the greatest privilege and success within white society, but there were exceptions. Nevertheless, although an indeterminate number of free colored managed to "pass" into white society, even to the point of having no familial recollection or genealogical proof of not being white, anyone might be required on any number of occasions to demonstrate *limpieza de sangre* (pureness of blood). In fact, although it was usually possible to become legally white through generational intermixture, by the end of the colonial period the Spanish imperial administration took the position that a person of proven African descent, no matter how distant, was tainted and consequently subject to certain disabilities.<sup>2</sup>

A great equalizer, although not a perfect one, was the urban habitat and its commercial economy. Within it grew large communities of free colored and mestizos—the much disparaged *castas*, a term that came to mean people of mixed blood (technically, free blacks were not *castas* since they were not of mixed blood, but this was a nicety that was of no particular benefit). The colonial Spanish-American caste system, unlike the pan-Hindu caste system, did not guarantee the free colored or mestizos any occupation; rather there were only restrictions. On occasion, however, free people of color so

exclusively dominated a particular occupation that they came to consider it theirs by right. Thus, in many places the public executioner (the *verdugo*) was always a free colored man. In others the street or market sellers of certain items habitually were free colored men or women, who even came to believe they held proprietary rights. A fascinating example occurred in Santiago de Guatemala, later called Antigua (for a view of Santiago de Guatemala in the late eighteenth century, see Fig. 7.1).

From early in the colonial experience of Guatemala, free men and women of color and mestizos found their way into the interstices of the legal marketing system, often operating in the gray and sometimes illegal areas of the market economy. *Castas* as well as some Hispanized Indians and poor Spaniards became *regatones*, intercepting Indian traders and reselling their products in the capital of Santiago de Guatemala at higher prices. Government officials took steps to end the practice, but as in other towns and cities the efforts failed. In 1681 the *audiencia* (supreme court) of Guatemala granted Indian women the privilege of selling beef in the city's central plaza. The *audiencia's* ruling opened the way for a group of *mulatas revendedoras* to sell legally purchased meat in the public market so long as they "used a balance and weights to ensure that no customer was cheated."<sup>3</sup> The Santiago city council opposed this blatant interference in local matters, but it took nearly two decades for the *audiencia* to reverse itself. The *mulata* resellers of meat considered themselves to be what amounted to a hereditary guild. In 1715 twelve of them petitioned the Santiago city council for licenses to sell fresh and pickled meat loins in the public plaza. "Tradition, they contended—the fact that they, their mothers, grandmothers, and *their* mothers and grandmothers had practiced this trade—dictated that they receive official sanction . . ." The *mulatas* couched their argument in humanistic terms: the minimum legal purchase of meat in the city's butcher stores (*carnicerías*) was six and a half pounds, costing one-half *real*, which, they observed, was very expensive. Only they could purchase meat from the butchers in large quantities and then resell it to the poor in "small, affordable quantities."<sup>4</sup>

The caste system gave these enterprising free women of color no special succor. The city council quickly refused their petition. Soon four of them were caught selling meat in the main plaza. Three of them found refuge in the cathedral, but the fourth was "apprehended and given a public whipping as a warning to her compatriots." There was an obvious need for the service supplied by these free colored women, and within a week they were back in business, albeit illegally. What was at work here was a clash between caste and commercial capitalism. Commercial capitalism permitted the participation of many enterprising free people of color who in the course of events



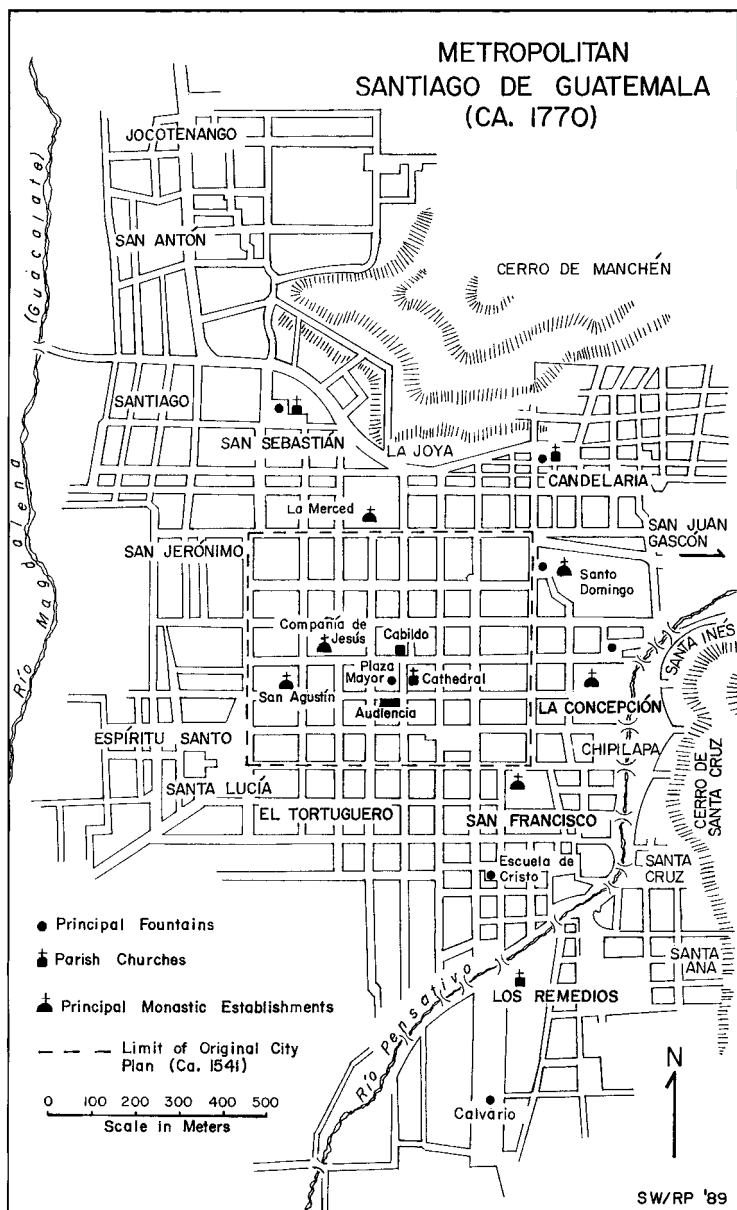


Fig. 7.1. Santiago de Guatemala in the Late Eighteenth Century  
(Courtesy of Stephen Webre)

suffered many legal disabilities. The caste system guaranteed them nothing good.

The bifurcated society of whites and all others was breached in the economy everywhere, to one extent or another. This is especially clear in the artisanal and storekeeping sectors of the economy that we looked at in the preceding chapter. In the entire historical inquiry into colonial Spanish America, nothing is more elusive than the matter of race and the anomaly and contradiction enshrouding it. In December 1667 the viceroy of Peru made public a series of bans pertaining to Lima that have become infamous in colonial Spanish-American history in and of themselves and because they were issued by the Crown and therefore taken to apply to the empire at large. No mulatto woman, black, or *zamba* (offspring of a mulatto parent and black parent) was henceforth permitted to wear a dress of silk, trimming of gold or silver, or black trim of silk or linen. No Indian, mulatto, or *zambo* was permitted to carry a sword, dagger, knife, or machete. Further, a local proclamation in December prohibited mulattoes from selling meat in a plaza or street, under penalty of one hundred lashes. Fines were also proclaimed against *regatones*. In 1669 the viceroy of Peru issued a proclamation that no mulatto, black, or mestizo was permitted to be a storekeeper, under penalty of five hundred pesos.<sup>5</sup> In 1757 no black, mulatto, or other person of color was permitted to administer or own a *pulpería* in Mexico City (and presumably elsewhere in Mexico).<sup>6</sup> These were discriminatory limitations on the activities of free people of color, and they also encumbered the unimpeded functioning of the marketplace.

Nevertheless, in many colonies there were no bans against the participation of free people of color as owners of stores. This was the case in Havana, San Juan, Puerto Rico, and Caracas, among others. Sometimes such liberal attitude was prompted by a need for a town or city to increase revenues through the issue of store licenses. For example, in Santiago de Guatemala a few mulattoes and mestizos were issued licenses to open *pulperías* and taverns in the Indian barrios during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. When drunkenness and brawling in these establishments became a public issue, however, the city council closed them down.<sup>7</sup>

Free people of color in Caracas were afforded wide access to the market economy. Toward the end of the eighteenth century *pardos* (the locally categorized subcaste of lightest skin color among the free people of color) constituted 38 percent of the city's population. Although they were subject to the now standard limiting and degrading legal debilities, the free colored of Caracas were permitted wide latitude in participating in the crafts, trades, and storekeeping. And as everywhere else in the Spanish colonies free people

of color could enter into contracts, sue in the courts, own property (including slaves), borrow and loan money, and petition all royal officials, even the Crown, to redress a grievance. In Caracas some *pardos* "fared quite well and soon owned their own houses, operated their own businesses, bought slaves, trained apprentices, organized trade unions [guilds] and established *cofradías* . . ." Near the end of the eighteenth century it was the *pardos* "who appeared in notary records as the buyers and sellers of slaves, houses, stores, and city land; who petitioned the municipal government for water rights and building permits. Among individual homeowners it was the *pardo* group which showed the greatest increase between 1750 and 1790."<sup>8</sup> Things did not go so well for the *morenos* (the Caracas subcaste of darker skin color), but the urban habitat and commercial capitalism conjoined with a local white establishment's willingness to moderate its discrimination clearly provided palpable opportunity at least for the *pardos*.

This liberal racial attitude on the part of the white establishment of Caracas should not be taken out of context, since it had its stark limitations. For one thing, in Caracas as in Santo Domingo, demography played a significant influencing role. When free men and women of color crowded whites out of the economy, local white attitudes tended to harden and become more limiting. This also occurred at times when a city or colony's slave proportion was perceived as threateningly high. In Puerto Rico the slave proportion was very low, and free people of color were permitted wide participation in the economy, almost without restriction. In the colony of Santo Domingo, in contrast, in 1794 the slave proportion of the general population was 29 percent while the white proportion was only 34 percent. Thus, it is not surprising that in 1785 the famous *Código Negro Carolino* placed many restrictions on the free colored population of Santo Domingo that were nonexistent in Puerto Rico.<sup>9</sup>

The place of free people of color in the economy and in society generally was always in jeopardy. Caracas is again instructive. Diego Mejías Bejarano was a *pardo* doctor practicing in Caracas during the latter part of the eighteenth century. When the Crown permitted free people of color to purchase decrees of legal whiteness—the *Gracias al Sacar Cédulas*—the good doctor applied for one and was granted the coveted dispensation in 1795. A few years later he attempted to enroll his son Lorenzo in the University of Caracas. The university, with the support of the Caracas city council, governor, bishop, and leading citizens, turned the young man down, stating that Bejarano was not a *pardo* but rather a mulatto and therefore not entitled to the Crown's dispensation. The white establishment wrote:

What an immense distance separates whites from pardos, the advantage and superiority of the former and the baseness and subordination of the latter . . . How could the citizens and white natives of this province possibly admit to their side . . . a mulatto descended from their own or their fathers' slaves . . . whose relatives find themselves in actual servitude . . . whose origin is stained by a long series of bastardies and turpitude.<sup>10</sup>

The stigma of slavery, in Magnus Mörner's riveting phrase, ran deep in Caracas and veiled a profound racism.<sup>11</sup> The Crown supported the doctor's legal whiteness, but the educational fate of his son is unknown. What is clear is that when the marketplace of commercial capitalism was free and open, free people of color, as well as Indians and mestizos, had the opportunity to thrive. This was also the case in the realm of the crafts.

#### RACISM AND THE CRAFTS

In some urban centers people of color (free and slave) or people of color and Indians and mestizos dominated the crafts, from apprentices to journeymen to masters. This was not the consequence of a white disdain for manual labor, although there certainly were whites who abhorred particular kinds of manual work (especially when associated with slave labor), but rather the result of demography. When whites enjoyed ample employment opportunities and the slave proportion was small or moderate, people of color were permitted wide participation in the crafts. Indians and mestizos commonly were allowed to enter the crafts, especially when their labor was essential. In this event, the Indians could work outside their segregated barrios.

In the face of racial prejudice and sharp discrimination, the accomplishment of people of color, Indians, and mestizos in the crafts is indeed impressive. Individual guilds sometimes successfully deprived people of color, Indians, and mestizos of membership, but other guilds' members were largely or exclusively people of color, Indians, or Indians and mestizos by default. The global picture was one of opportunity, and it was urban opportunity. The charter of the Potters' Guild of Mexico City in 1681 excluded blacks and mulattoes from membership but did include mestizos. In Lima there were mestizo and mulatto master craftsmen among the carpenters and masons.<sup>12</sup> In Havana and San Juan free people of color often achieved great success in the economy, becoming master craftsmen, owning homes and other real property, and sometimes slaves.

One of the reasons that participation in the crafts was so significant is that opportunity could be passed on to the following generation. In only one out of countless examples, in San Juan, Puerto Rico, the prominent free colored silversmith Pedro Elías had acquired three houses in that city by the time he wrote a will in 1820. These were two-story contiguous houses in the virtually unsegregated barrio of San Francisco, and they were then worth 3,500, 3,000, and 1,500 pesos, respectively. These were substantial properties: the mean value of a privately owned house in the barrio that year was 2,514.6 pesos. By 1833 Elías' son Manuel, also a free colored silversmith, had inherited from his father the same three houses, living in one of them with his wife, five children, and three slaves, while renting out the other two. By 1845 the son not only owned the inherited three houses but had added a fourth.<sup>13</sup>

### *Buenos Aires*

The insinuation of racial prejudice and discrimination into the artisanal economy could lead to remarkable events, as occurred in Buenos Aires late in the colonial period (for a view of Buenos Aires in the late colonial period, see Fig. 7.2). There were no formal guilds in Buenos Aires; but artisans were supervised by the municipal council as elsewhere, and there existed the traditional hierarchy of apprentice, journeyman, and master. After the creation of the Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata, however, and the joining of the rich silver mining region of Upper Peru (later Bolivia) to the new jurisdiction in 1776 and the widening of trading opportunities two years later, it became extremely difficult to supervise artisans regarding procedures, quality, and quantity of production. For instance, some journeymen simply left their employ and without being examined set up business as master craftsmen. With the expanded commercial opportunities attendant upon the freedom of trade decree of 1778 and the economic requirements of Upper Peru, many European artisans migrated to Buenos Aires and brought with them a desire for guild organization. Immigrant local shoemakers joined in an effort to form a guild that would in effect limit the free play of the marketplace, which after all is what guilds attempted to do everywhere.

The shoemakers of Buenos Aires who led the effort to establish a guild shared the widespread racial attitudes by then systemic in the Spanish-American colonial system. A draft constitution excluded slaves from the rank of master shoemaker. The city council objected and required that the prohibition be expunged, but not for especially liberal reasons. The council stated that slaves should be permitted to be master shoemakers because many families, including widows, in Buenos Aires sustained themselves

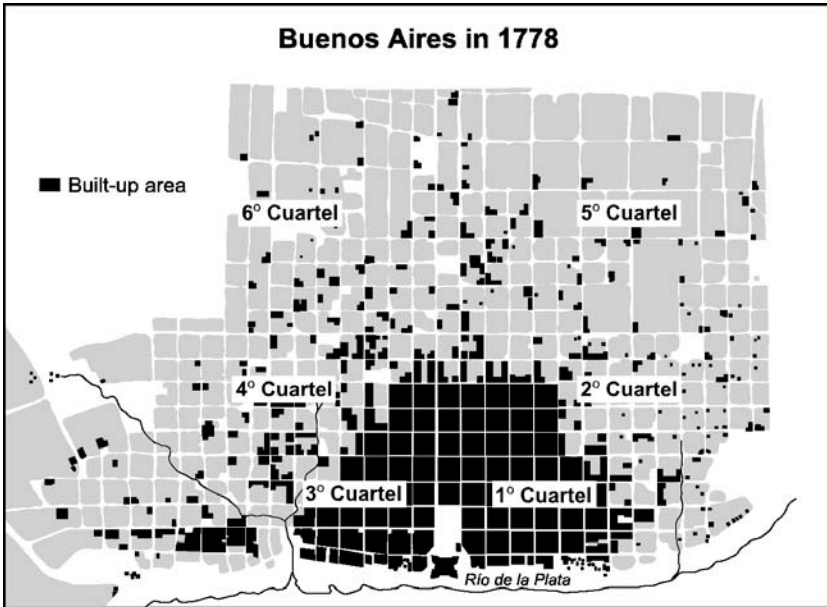


Fig. 7.2. Buenos Aires in 1778

(Adapted by Joseph Stoll from a map drawn by David J. Robinson from archival sources. Courtesy of David J. Robinson)

through the daily wages of their slaves. For their part, the organizers of the proposed guild responded by removing the offensive exclusion, but they added a clause that prohibited any black or mulatto, free or slave, from becoming a guild official. Further, the organizers wrote in “a decorous distinction between masters who are white and freeborn on the one side and on the other those who are Negro and either slave or free. Included in the first class are all who are Spaniards, European or American, pure blooded Indians, and also foreigners who have met the requirements . . . and in the second, all those who are Negroes, both slave and free and those known generally to be mulattoes, free or slave, although their color be much lighter.”<sup>14</sup> The white organizers had institutionalized a profound racial discrimination.

This amounted to segregation and inferior guild status. Master shoemakers of the “second” class were “to have in [guild] meetings and in church functions a place and order of seats inferior and separated from those of the masters of the first class.” In both the guild and its lay brotherhood, only whites and Indians—those of the first class—“would have the active and passive vote in elections and in matters of guild government, that is, only they could vote, elect, and be elected for the offices.” The whites, deep in

their prejudice, had completely written people of color out of the administration of the shoemakers' guild. This agitated discrimination soon induced a response that might seem remarkable but was not anomalous.<sup>15</sup> In early 1793 forty-eight nonwhite members of the new guild took steps to form their own guild of black and mulatto shoemakers. The dissidents selected the master shoemaker Francisco Baquero to represent them before the authorities. In his first petition Baquero emphasized the racial discrimination that the shoemakers' guild had institutionalized against all nonwhite members with the exception of Indians. In a quotation from the guild's constitution, Baquero repeated the white shoemakers' reasoning: active participation in guild office-holding and elections would "cause the drunken confusion that is felt by free whites when they are mixed with Negroes, either slave or free. And, if subordinated to the latter in some cases, it would be a strange and indecent matter for the whites." A segregated separate guild would permit both the nonwhite and white masters to achieve their fullest potential, Baquero concluded.

The Spanish Crown's long established policy of institutionalized racial discrimination would now be turned on its head. Baquero argued that that very policy of segregation, as in the instance of the many racially segregated lay brotherhoods and some guilds themselves, demonstrated the precedent and desirability of a racially segregated shoemakers' guild in Buenos Aires. The guild, through its procurator general, quickly countered the nonwhites' initiative with the unambiguous racist argument that in nature there was a hierarchy of orders, and some were of a higher and some of a lower order. The shoemakers' guild merely reflected the natural order of things. The procurator was not satisfied with racist theory alone; he added that the nonwhites wanted to withdraw from the guild to escape its high standards of quality, and permitting them their own guild even if supervised by the white guild would lead to a lessening of the quality of shoes produced in the city. A month after Baquero presented his petition the viceroy rejected it. Baquero continued the campaign, now adding that the king had permitted blacks and mulattoes to form separate militia units with their own officers, which had functioned successfully and without scandal. The procurator general for the guild replied that ultimate authority in the militia units resided in the hands of white officers. Baquero responded that the nonwhite masters would appeal directly to the Crown, "as is the right of all Spanish vassals."

The right of every Spanish vassal to appeal all the way up to the Crown was fundamental to the longevity of the empire, and urban dwellers were more likely to take advantage of it because of the greater presence of lawyers, notaries, corporate organizations, and funding. Thus, Francisco Baquero trav-

eled to Spain to pursue the black and mulatto shoemakers' quest for a segregated guild. There he reprised their position to the king and Council of the Indies, announcing himself as "Francisco Baquero, Indian, and captain of militia." Baquero's appeal was approved, and soon steps were taken in Buenos Aires to form the segregated shoemakers' guild. Interestingly, in the preparatory census of nonwhite shoemakers, Baquero was listed as a mulatto. This Indian or mulatto master shoemaker now attempted to include Indian shoemakers in the segregated guild in order for the guild to have a sufficient number of master craftsmen. This effort failed. Finally, in 1799 the Buenos Aires city council refused to approve the segregated guilds, and the *audiencia* and viceroy refused to pursue the matter, meaning that there would be no shoemakers' guild of any kind in Buenos Aires.

#### PERCEPTION

Who were these people of the guilds, of the small and middling retail stores, of the plaza stalls, even peddlers, and the small and middling wholesalers? And what of musicians, artists, teachers, and most bureaucrats? Tailors, carpenters, masons, caulkers, blacksmiths, tanners, butchers, shoemakers, hat-makers, needle makers, button makers, and so many others—who were these people in the scheme of things? Were they *gente decente*? No, they were not considered decent people by the authorities or the white establishment (even when many of them were white), although many of these less than decent people considered themselves *gente decente* by right of racial descent. Were they *gente ínfima*? To officials and the white establishment they were indeed among the vile people. Were they *gente común*? Yes, they were largely the common people, notwithstanding that the term is uninformed and does nothing to illuminate the nature of the colonial society and economy.<sup>16</sup>

"Common people" is probably the least offensive of these terms to us. After all, the people we have been discussing here and in the previous chapter sound very much like many of us. Such "common people" in the United States have been sending their children to public colleges and universities for many decades, watching them become Nobel Prize winners, executives of Fortune Five Hundred companies, distinguished physicians, scientists, attorneys, judges, university professors, and so on. Let us place a fine point on this. These public institutions were created and are sustained to serve the needs of the parents and students of the less than affluent. But they are hardly "common people." This is the lower-middle class or, if we must accommodate U.S. sensibilities, the middle class. In fact, if not in perception, many if not all of the people of urban colonial Spanish America were precisely in a



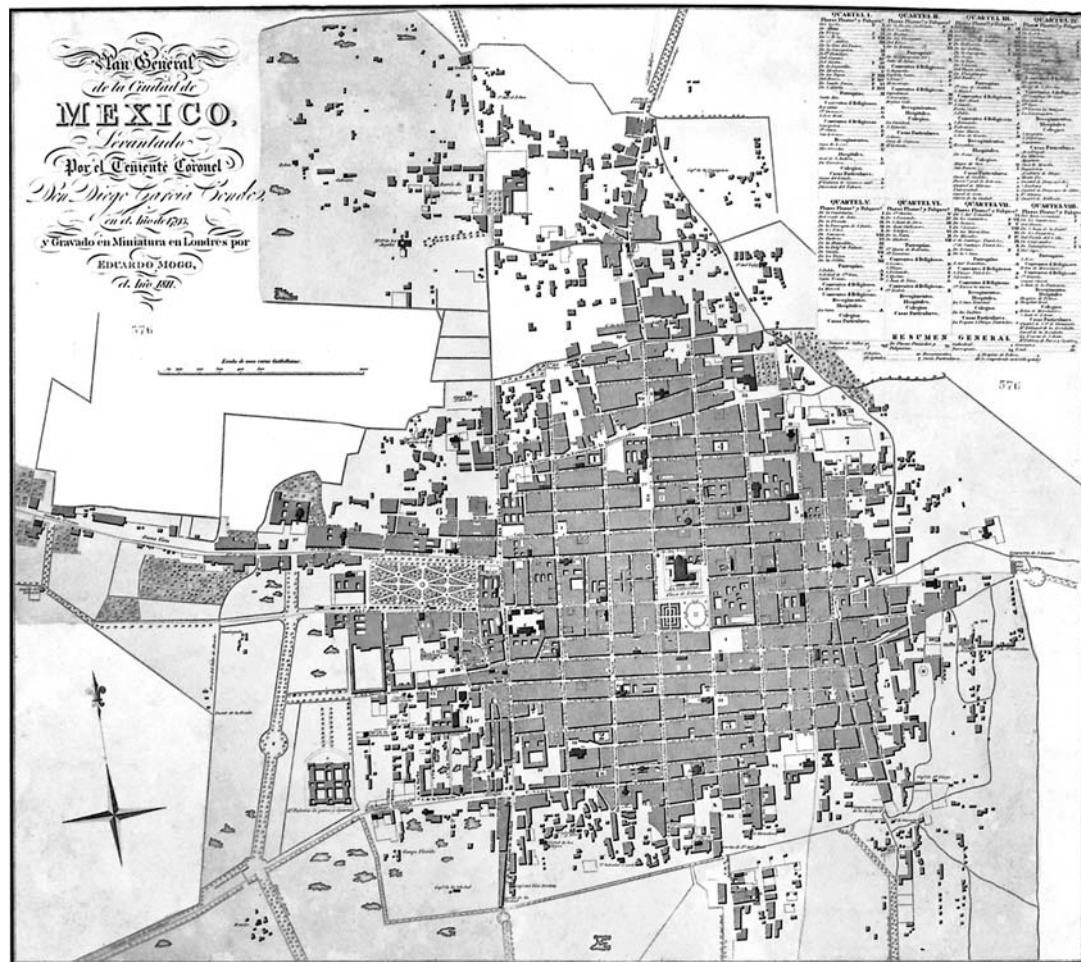


Fig. 7.3. Mexico City in 1793  
(From an 1824 lithograph of the 1793 Diego García Conde map. Courtesy of Linda Arnold)

lower-middle or a middle class. If we accept these clarifying and informative terms, we might ask whether the lower-middle and middle classes of urban colonial Spanish America produced the next generation of business leaders, scientists, college professors, and all the rest. If they did not, then we need to question why not. A class analysis permits and encourages such inquiry, whereas the disdainful and dismissive terminology resorted to by the white establishment during the colonial period closes off such inquiry.<sup>17</sup>

#### POOR FOLKS/US FOLKS

##### La clase ínfima

Most people in colonial urban Spanish America were poor, and especially so in comparison to the upper class—the elite. To the upper class, and even to many not far below in the social and economic scheme of things, most urban folks were common, vile, to be avoided when possible.

In colonial Spanish America the size of society's riffraff seems to have grown alongside the maturing European Enlightenment. During the later Bourbon period there was a strenuous effort in Spain and the colonies to clean up the streets, provide for social decorum, get people dressed, build wide avenues for decent folks to walk along, build parks and fountains, illuminate the streets, and the like.

But, alas, who were all those impoverished, practically unclothed, uncouth folks taking up space in the streets and plazas of decent people, even begging and pestering? The commissioner general of the order of San Camilo in Mexico City described them in 1787: "The riffraff of this most populous city are the most filthy, most disgusting, most obscene, most impolite, most heedless, and most discourteous and shameless, so that they are beyond human imagination."<sup>18</sup> (For a view of Mexico City in the late colonial period, see Fig. 7.3.)

However, there is more to this tendentious disparagement than meets the eye. The statement was made in the context of the game of *pelota*, the forerunner of jai alai. This vigorous and dangerous game originated in the Basque regions of Spain and was brought to the Spanish colonies by Basque immigrant merchants during the eighteenth century. Unlike its successor, jai alai, *pelota* was not played with a large basket (*cesta*) attached to one arm but rather with wrapped hands. But it was usually played on a special court and with a hard ball. By the end of the eighteenth century there were *pelota* courts in many colonies. The problem in Mexico City was that "dissolute persons and . . . the lowest plebeians . . . spoiled the occasion and caused irre-

parable damage"; so in 1788 they were forbidden to enter the stands to watch the games.<sup>19</sup>

The monks of San Camilo were especially concerned about the ríffraff and *pelota*. The monks had a court for their own use, but in 1785 they leased it to a widow for 650 pesos per year with the understanding that the court would be opened to the public for a fee. The stands were opened without charge, and the ríffraff filled them and disrupted decorum. The merchants took control of the depressing situation by retiring the widow on a pension and instituting a one-half *real* admission charge to the stands. The proceeds would go to support of the new hospital of San Andrés, an arrangement of which the king approved.

This one-half *real* charge is of importance to us. Apparently it was a threshold between dissolute and respectable. The ríffraff were to be barred entry to the games.<sup>20</sup> So anyone who could afford a half-*real* was not considered dissolute—indeed probably was not, or at least was not “immiserated.” It is informative, then, to have a sense of what a half-*real* was worth. Unfortunately, it is extremely difficult to determine its value, since the cost of living oscillated over months and years, as might any individual’s income. But there are some clues. It has been estimated that in late-eighteenth-century Mexico City the average daily income for artisans was roughly between 4 *reales* and 1 peso (8 *reales*), while nonskilled and semiskilled workers earned from 2 to 4 *reales* daily. Of course, a central problem with these rudimentary figures is that we lack sufficient data on underemployment, that is, how many days a year each worker was gainfully employed. Domestic servants tended to be relatively stable in their employ. They earned between one and one and a half *reales* daily; but, importantly, they benefited from room and board (although they were particularly vulnerable to extreme forms of exploitation and abuse, as sometimes occurred).<sup>21</sup> Many artisans and store employees also benefited from a place to sleep *in situ*, as it were, and store employees often received food. This was a lament of some *pulpería* owners—their profits were eaten up by their employees (and by rats too).

For those whose income was not supplemented by room and or board, it has been estimated also that an individual required about three-quarters of a *real* daily for basic food (such as tortillas, chiles, and frijoles) as well as clothing, rent, and general household upkeep. This means that an individual required an annual income of about 34 pesos for general subsistence, and a family of four an income of some 136 pesos. Again, a central problem was underemployment and the general absence of what we would call accident or health insurance. During the last quarter-century of the eighteenth century Mexico suffered several famines, which resulted in rising prices for basic

food items, stagnant wages, and an influx of tens of thousands of migrants to Mexico City. The traditional sources of charity, notably those of the Church, were strained. It was not unusual for more than one member of a family to be working, however, as was commonplace throughout the contemporaneous Atlantic world.

How does this knowledge affect our understanding of the one-half *real* threshold set by the Basque merchants as the divide between dissolute riff-raff and those at the lower reaches of respectability? It means that almost anyone gainfully employed even at the bottom-most level of the economy could have afforded to attend the *pelota* games at San Camilo now and again or even frequently without courting impoverishment. Clearly we are not speaking about four-fifths say or even two-fifths of the population of the city or almost certainly of any other urban habitat in colonial Spanish America. Are we speaking of a bottom fifth of the urban population? That seems plausible and consistent with what we know about cities generally in the eighteenth-century Atlantic world. But in upper-class perception of what constitutes riffraff there was (and is) something else at play—social standing demanded proper dress, and comportment too, of course. In the seventeenth century the king of Spain had on several occasions prohibited poor people from wearing clothes normally worn by the rich. In 1679 the bishop of Michoacán, Mexico, placed a fine point on the desirability of such social distinction when he protested “the notable disorder . . . in the clothes, as well as their lack of honesty because without any distinction, both nobles and plebes dress with silks and precious cloths, wear jewels of gold and pearls, and silver.”<sup>22</sup> In the eyes of the rich and well born, it is often true that clothes make the man. But who were all these “plebes” who wore such fine clothing and disported jewels of gold, pearls, and silver? The bishop protested too much. He inadvertently ravaged the term “plebes” and left it bereft of meaning, since the good cleric obviously was talking about affluent people, not those then commonly referred to as plebeian.

The Basque merchants and the monks of the Order of San Camilo had another idea. They would differentiate between the upper and lower classes, between decent folks and riffraff, by imposing a clothing requirement for admission to the games. “That the ticket salesman or the doorman should not allow any person who is not decent to enter for any reason and that those who enter must at least be dressed in military garb or with a cape, but not of those who walk around in skins or wrapped in counterpanes, sheets, or blankets or using these capes, which because only a few threads remain, are called raindrops.”<sup>23</sup>

Being properly dressed was very important to the reformers of Bourbon

Spain. Enlightened society had little place for tattered clothes, vagrancy, or disorderliness in general. Vagrancy in particular was an affront to Enlightenment principles and to the practical effort to vitalize the Spanish economy. There was sometimes a fine line between vagrancy and honest begging, however, which for centuries had been considered legitimate and even holy, as was the giving of alms to the needy. The venerated activity of begging is best exemplified perhaps in the exalted presence of the mendicant orders, such as the Dominicans, Franciscans, and Augustinians, who, at least symbolically, daily begged for their bread. The "moral" problem for the Bourbon reformers was that while begging was holy and vagrancy was not, the very act of begging contravened the essential covenant between governor and governed; that is, the Crown's "moral authority" (to play somewhat on E. P. Thompson's "moral economy") was constantly validated at the most fundamental level by assuring the availability of basic foods, especially bread, at reasonable cost. A rational, Enlightened government could do no less. Spain was to be modernized, and begging had no place in the rational state. In 1777 the king ordered the prohibition of begging in Madrid and the internment of all beggars.

Actually, the Mexican Bourbons anticipated this effort to modernize the state. Three years before the king acted against the beggars of Madrid, Viceroy Bucareli of Mexico had done exactly that for Mexico City. In 1774 the Mexico City Poor House (an asylum) was established, and all beggars were to be interned. The Mexican authorities distinguished between legitimate beggars (*verdaderos pobres*) and vagrants (*mendigos fingidos*). Both were to be taken from the streets and confined. The legitimate poor were to be rehabilitated and returned to gainful employment, while the vagrants were to be made to work either for the government or in the private economy. In Spain and Mexico the sacral act of begging had become a crime. During the next two decades the Poor House confined between six hundred and nine hundred poor at a time. Although this number was small compared to the city's total poor, the actual threat of internment seems to have lessened public begging and vagrancy somewhat for a while.<sup>24</sup>

The establishment of the Poor House and the internment of beggars and vagrants (and the expulsion of vagrants into the workforce) in Mexico City in 1774 are very revealing of administrative and elite attitudes toward the city's poor. We have seen that Bourbon reformers and administrators were incensed by begging, disorderliness, and people dressed so poorly that they belied both the effort and reality of modernization (and, I would add, the Crown's moral authority to govern). Begging was also repugnant to those observers from Protestant Europe who visited the colonies and recorded their

unfavorable impressions of the poor. Begging and people of the streets in tattered clothing were inconceivable to visitors steeped in the Protestant Ethic. So Europeans generally were exceedingly distressed by conditions of the poor in Mexico City. Some observers thought that perhaps twenty, thirty, or forty thousand people existed in a penurious and dismal condition in the capital of this great viceroyalty.

Let us explore such observations. First of all, the terms "poverty" and "poor" were profoundly ambiguous terms in Europe and in Spanish America. Furthermore, no European city contained anywhere between twenty-five and thirty thousand Indians, many of whom were poor and most of whom did not dress according to European standards. Nor did any European city have several thousand Indians daily entering to carry out trade. Additionally, the widespread begging was particularly soulful and provocative to Bourbon and foreign observers. There was immense impoverishment in Mexico City; but if it was greater than contemporaneous European poverty, it was only marginally so. And this was in part the result of the periodic famines, rising prices, and the vast in-migration of Mexicans to the capital.

When the second Count of Revillagigedo arrived in Mexico in 1789 as viceroy, he found a plebe "almost entirely naked, contented to go about covered in a blanket or sheet that served as clothes, as bed and whatever other necessity."<sup>25</sup> Thus, he ordered that workers in the tobacco factories be properly dressed, including wearing shoes. Workers in the state bureaucracy also had to be properly dressed; socks only and shawls were now inadequate. Indians who wanted to participate in public functions were required to dress like Europeans, that is, with frock coats or capes.<sup>26</sup> By the time his viceregal term ended in 1794, Revillagigedo could inform his successor that the new dress regulations for the cigar factory and royal mint (Casa de Moneda) in Mexico City had in short time managed to have dressed some ten thousand people and through their example others also. The effort had banished nakedness (*desnudez*) from the major part of the capital.<sup>27</sup> There was nothing self-righteous about Revillagigedo's congratulatory announcement to his successor. He cleaned up the streets and plazas and he cleaned up the people, as any reformist Bourbon administrator would have wanted to do. It was the Enlightenment, not class snobbery, at work here.

The degree of *desnudez* among the poor, however, even those gainfully employed workers at such places as a tobacco factory or royal mint, is often in the eye of the beholder. Viceroy Revillagigedo's self-proclaimed accomplishment does not seem to have endured long. Early in the nineteenth century the capital's newspaper, the *Diario de México*, reported that the majority of the city's population went about the streets naked except for a sheet

wrapped around them. "The plebe—lepers, mestizos, mulattoes, *chinos* or *coyotes*—go about almost naked like the bakers, covered only with a blanket . . ." <sup>28</sup> In any case, the *Diario de México* takes us closer to an understanding of just who the "plebeians" of the city were—the *castas*. Indeed there was not only a conceit operative here but racial prejudice also. In the 1780s a judge of the *audiencia* walked the streets of Mexico City and "meditated on the diversity of persons, and the enormous pleb of all *castas* who live in the interior and the extreme edges of the city." As the judge observed, the plebeians lived in the barrios, "some of which are composed of intricate alleyways, others are built between broken-down buildings between canals that made passage there almost impossible, many people live in adobe or cane-stalk huts arranged without any order on large tracts of land, separated one from the other by long distances." <sup>29</sup>

Finally to the point: the pleb of all *castas*. The real plebeians, for want of a better term, were the people of mixed-blood who resided in the "barrios" in insufficient or marginal housing. We do not know how many of these people were truly marginalized and constituted an underclass or how many were part of the lower-middle class, good people just trying to make a living, to get by in a society of debilitating racial prejudice. In any of the large urban centers of colonial Spanish America, the chronically impoverished probably numbered no more than 20 percent of the population. <sup>30</sup>

## CHAPTER 8

# *Caste and Class in the Urban Context*



Colonial Spanish-American society was organized by imperial policy into castes, as we have seen, but it was also divided into socioeconomic classes through the actions of the marketplace, even when this was distorted in favor of some and to the prejudice of others. Classes formed within the castes. Among whites, for instance, some were very rich, some were very poor, and they were not in the same socioeconomic class. Similarly, among the free colored some had achieved wealth and social status manifestly higher than others. Notwithstanding legal discrimination and racial snobbery, the dynamic of the economy sometimes breached the restrictive caste system, especially where the economy flourished and employment was widely available.

### CLASS AND CLASS INTEREST

From the very beginning of the colonial period Spanish Americans were politically active, not through the operation of political parties, legislative assemblies, and generalized suffrage, but through corporate and individual petition. When guildsmen and women, merchants, public market sellers, water carriers, street vendors, grocers, and others petitioned authorities for privilege or redress of grievance, they were contributing to an evolving class interest.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, both evolving and mature classes (those capable of acting with political coherence) manifest differing intramural interests. Thus, textile manufacturers might desire a protective tariff but want cheap imports of cotton, while local cotton producers might demand a protective tariff against both cheap imports of cotton and cheap imported textiles. Urban artisans nominally desired restricted production and high prices for



their goods, while neighbors of ostensibly the same social and economic class would have benefited from greater domestic production and more imported goods. Such was the case in Buenos Aires toward the end of the eighteenth century.

When the master shoemakers of Buenos Aires formed a guild during the 1790s, their ordinances attempted to prohibit the sale of locally produced shoes anywhere but in their stores. The problem was that the grocers (*pulperos*) made a practice of selling ready-made locally produced cheap shoes in their stores. The guild ordinances stipulated that only eight (or possibly more) grocery stores in various parts of the city should be permitted to sell such cheap shoes. All other grocers (there were several hundred others) would have to liquidate their inventories within two months after the restriction was published; thereafter any shoes they still held would be confiscated. The viceroy approved the restriction—yet another one imposed on the grocers. After two months, more than two hundred pairs of shoes had been seized. The grocers did not object to the restriction against the sale of cheap shoes in their stores, only to the short period allotted for liquidation of their inventories.

In arguing their point, the grocers reiterated the central and great social benefit they provided: they offered cheap goods to the public on credit. The grocers “sold these shoes to the public, especially the poor, as a well-recognized benefit, since we did not require full and immediate payment.” The grocers and the shoemakers reached an accord whereby there would be compensation for the confiscated shoes. In 1799, however, when the attorney for the Buenos Aires city council argued against the formation of the white and colored shoemaker guilds, one of his points was that the shoemakers’ attempt to deny the grocers the right to sell ready-made shoes would deprive the public of cheap shoes. The city council refused to approve the guilds, and that ended the matter. There is a bit more to this. The grocers not only sold cheap ready-made shoes but supplied some shoemakers with materials and purchased the finished product at a predetermined price.<sup>2</sup>

Obviously there was a conflict of interest between the master shoemakers and the grocers, yet in any meaningful sense many of them were in the same socioeconomic class. Furthermore, the interests of the master shoemakers were not always convergent with those of the journeymen, especially those who established their businesses without having taken or passed the appropriate exams and perhaps were among those who “manufactured” cheap shoes for the grocers. Restrictive monopoly and free entrepreneurial enterprise were in conflict in late colonial Buenos Aires, and we need to know much more about this throughout the colonies.

Differing economic interests within what would appear to be a single class in an undifferentiated analysis are again exemplified by the grocers of Buenos Aires. Grocery stores were places of social gathering and conviviality, and where alcoholic beverages were permitted, not infrequently places of drunkenness, general rudeness, and fighting. In 1788 the Buenos Aires city council attempted to curtail such abuses by requiring the grocers to place their counters at the door of each of their stores so that customers would not be permitted to enter for their purchases. This portended a radical change in the nature of their stores, and the grocers formally protested. Furthermore, to render the damaging restrictions unnecessary the grocers elected nine deputies to supervise their general business practices. The deputies soon proposed that a guild of grocers be formed to supervise the business practices of all members and cause the offensive regulations to be unnecessary. But the grocers went further, suggesting that each grocery store have a capitalization of at least 500 pesos. Licenses to operate a grocery store should be granted only to proper people, and by that the grocers meant *españoles* (that is, whites). The white grocers felt that *castas* and blacks would undermine order and few would be able to capitalize a well-stocked store. They should be admitted to the trade only upon careful inspection of their conduct, collateral, and financial ability to supply a proper grocery store. If the capitalizations in 1789 were fairly similar to those in 1813, perhaps between one-third and one-half of the city's grocery stores would have been forced to close.<sup>3</sup>

The Buenos Aires grocers, like those elsewhere, were placed at the bottom or near the bottom of the social and economic continuum by the arbiters of such matters. In terms of capitalization and profitability this was not entirely unreasonable. The proposal of 1789 is interesting for two reasons. First, it adds another sad example of the corrosive working of blatant racial prejudice. If the *castas* and blacks were prohibited from operating a truly small retail grocery store because of an arbitrarily established capital threshold, how could they ever generate the capital (and business expertise) to grow and move to larger enterprise? And what of their children, who might have worked in the stores and gained business knowledge? Second, the 500-peso threshold set by the grocers themselves demonstrates how members of roughly the same socioeconomic class might have astonishingly disparate interests. If we refine this somewhat and place the grocers above 500 pesos in the middle class, perhaps just at its entry, then we would place the grocers below 500 pesos in the lower-middle class. These lowly grocers would not be placed in the underclass, since they do not fit that categorization. They were entrepreneurial, hard-working, gainfully occupied fixed storekeepers, no matter how uncertain was their enterprise. In fact, they

were at least members of the lower-middle class, and this tells a great deal about them and the society and economy of Buenos Aires.

There were also many examples of a broadening class interest in urban colonial Spanish America, but one is of particular interest even from the perspective of the later industrial era. Before the industrial revolution there were factories in Europe and the Americas, and some of these were large operations organized in much the same way as later industrial factories. In both cases the workers were brought to the factory for supervisory purposes, to maintain controls and insure desired output. And in both cases the terms "wages" and "wage payments" are misnomers, because most workers were paid by the piece rather than by what we commonly know as an hourly wage. Moreover, some factories (such as those devoted to the production of pottery and ceramics) were important to the development of the industrial process but did not enlist machinery to operate machines, as in the case of the power loom. Factories for the manufacture of cigars and cigarettes resembled those that manufactured pottery and ceramics in that they anticipated later industrial factories, except that machines were little used and would not be adopted until the latter part of the nineteenth century. There were three keys to successful tobacco-product manufacture: tobacco supply, labor, and distribution. The Spanish Crown was very interested in tobacco, since it was important to royal revenues. As part of the Bourbon Reforms a state-run tobacco monopoly—the *estanco*—was established in 1765. The monopoly asserted complete control over the tobacco producers' annual crops and thus was able to set prices. It also established state-controlled factories for the manufacture of cigars and cigarettes. And, finally, it forced the closure of all retail tobacco outlets and replaced them with state-run tobacco stores.

As many later industrialists found out, when throughput was maintained, the key to success was to be found in labor productivity. And therein lay a fundamental problem. Between 1769 and 1780 state-run tobacco factories were established in Guadalajara, Oaxaca, Orizaba, Puebla, Querétaro, and Mexico City. Others were established in other colonies. The largest and most important Mexican tobacco factory was the one in Mexico City, and thanks to the work of Susan Deans-Smith we know a great deal about it.<sup>4</sup> The Bourbon reformers considered the tobacco factories excellent occupational opportunities for the urban poor, which indeed they were when compared to alternatives.

The tobacco monopoly created a very large workforce that in many respects was similar to the later wage-workers (proletariat in Marxian termi-

nology) of the industrial period. Administrators were paid a yearly salary, supervisors a daily wage, and the vast majority of workers a piecework wage. There were additional benefits, such as cigars or cigarettes to smoke while on the job (when one's quota was filled) or a chocolate allowance on Saturdays (again when one's quota was reached). Over the years there were changes in the work rules. From time to time these provoked protests, several of which spilled out into the streets of the various cities that had such factories. One onerous burden on labor did not induce a protest: Viceroy Revillagigedo's dress code, which turned out to be a very costly expense borne by the workers themselves.

#### THE TOBACCO MONOPOLY ENGENDERS A CLASS

When downtrodden urban dwellers and newly arrived migrants in search of subsistence or a better way of life took up their tasks in the tobacco factories, they were formed into a class. Their incomes were similar, and so were their economic interests. This congruence was created and nurtured, although not intentionally, by the state.

The Mexico City tobacco factory was the largest employer in Mexico, with more than twelve thousand workers. This labor force was organized hierarchically and systematically. Remarkably, when one considers labor practice in other parts of the Atlantic world, these factory workers were permitted to present grievances in the form of written petitions, and this they did either as individuals or as groups of workers. The formal complaints centered around wages, breaches of work rules, supervisory mistreatment, and the like. A modern wage class had been brought into existence. And although the grievance procedure seems to have worked well in diffusing labor unrest, three large-scale protests did occur between the founding of the factory and the end of the Bourbon period. Thus, not only did this factory wage-class have similar economic interests, but these interests were strong enough to induce what we may call strikes.

The first of these occurred in 1780, when two hundred workers from the factory marched on the viceregal palace to protest an increased workload. The second occurred in 1782, when the factory closed for inventory. Since the workers were paid by the piece, they would have lost income during the inventory closure. Workers again marched on the viceregal palace: "up went the cries and out they went to the Palace . . . the mass entered without respect for the Guard, occupying the patios, stairs and corridors. The extraordinary noise aroused Viceroy Mayorga who, on determining the cause

. . . ordered the administrator to allow them to work. The workers were thus pacified and carried the order in triumph."<sup>5</sup> They not only constituted a wage-class but an active one.

### *The Paper Riot*

The tobacco workers were building toward a remarkable "industrial" protest. In an attempt to increase profits the administrators decided to raise productivity among the cigarette rollers. Heretofore the rollers were permitted to take the cigarette paper home to prepare it for the next morning's work. The administrators' goal was to reduce "appropriation" of rolling paper by the workers at home and to improve efficiency of the rolling process through supervisory control. The workers protested through the formal grievance process but were turned down. Early in the morning of January 13, 1794, a crowd of about fourteen hundred cigarette rollers marched on the viceregal palace. Troops were called out, and by 10:30 A.M. the demonstrators were back on the job.

However, formal protest continued. The workers acknowledged that there was theft of rolling paper and substitution of inferior paper for the superior paper supplied by the factory when preparation was done at home. But they argued that paper preparation at home took between a half hour and several hours, and the work was shared by family members, including children. Their point was that they could not possibly prepare the paper in the morning at the factory and still have time to roll the required number of cigarettes. Moreover, doing both tasks the same day would be damaging to the rollers' fingers. Two weeks after the protest the factory management reversed its position and permitted preparation of the paper at home. So, far from being a "plebeian" riot or protest, this one was patently a class protest and economic in every respect. The workers had successfully protested and negotiated continuation of favorable work rules. Their political response was directed at the king: "Only with silence can we thank you. There is no other language more meaningful for a prince as perfect as your excellency."<sup>6</sup> The colonial system once again proved its elasticity and durability, and the king's "moral authority" to govern was once more sustained.

### POSTSCRIPT

The point of this chapter is that there were socioeconomic classes in the urban habitats in colonial Spanish America. At the top stood the titled nobility and social aristocracy and others of comparatively great wealth. These

people, through purchase of local office, kinship, and the incorporation of new blood, formed what in cautious terms can be called the oligarchy. An oligarchy is generally taken to mean government by a small and exclusive class of people. In this sense the urban centers of colonial Spanish America were "governed" by an oligarchy, which we may label the upper class. "Elite" would serve well also as noun and adjective. They were the elite, and they indeed were socially and economically elite. The term "governed" is in quotation marks because "oligarchy" fits better when the town or city is governmentally autonomous or nearly so, as was the case with many European city-states. In colonial Spanish America towns and cities had only limited autonomy: they were constantly monitored from above and often interfered with by provincial governors and later intendants. Nevertheless, referring to the governing elite of colonial urban Spanish America as an oligarchy serves a useful instructive purpose.

Beneath the upper class was a middle class of indeterminate size. In some places it appears to have been quite large and in its broadest definition perhaps even the largest class. We need to know much more about this class, especially, as I have proposed, the lower levels of it—the lower-middle class.

Finally, there was a lower class, *clase baja*, or, as it is usually referred to, an underclass, composed of marginalized urban dwellers. Some were street peddlers, itinerants, or day laborers, for instance. When they could not find enough work for even minimal subsistence (which often was the case with day laborers who dug ditches, for example, who did not always find work for as many days a week, month, or year as necessary for even a minimal existence), they fell into the underclass.<sup>7</sup>

Socioeconomic class in colonial Spanish America was articulated through the family, which stood at the center of urban life. We turn our attention to it now.

## CHAPTER 9

# *The Urban Family*



Colonial Spanish-American society was organized in law and custom around the conjugal nuclear family. However, many families formed through consensual unions, and indeed there were many single-parent families (overwhelmingly single female-headed families). Each member of the conjugal family was assigned specific rights and responsibilities. Some familial rights greatly benefited women and children, as we shall see, while others did not. The protective benefits of religiously sanctified marriage did not apply to women and children of consensual families or of single female-headed families. This was unfortunate, especially since the incidence of consensual families, concubinage (*amancebamiento*), and single female-headed families was very high in urban Spanish America. Although similar familial configurations also existed in rural areas, in absolute numbers and relative proportions they were largely an urban phenomenon, not infrequently amounting to a majority of all families.

Almost everything about colonial urban habitats was touched in one way or another by the family, and no institution of colonization was so affected by the urban phenomenon. The sights, the sounds, the conditions of health, the particular economy, the local church establishment, the demographic reality, and virtually all else was inflected through the idiom of the family, and in turn the family could not help being defined and redefined over and over, no matter the ideal in law and custom. The purpose of this chapter is to inquire into the impact of urbanism on the colonial Spanish-American family.

## THE IDEAL

The ideal colonial Spanish-American family was conjugal and headed by a male—the *pater familias*. This was no mere honorific. The family was a patriarchy by design. The husband and father was supposed to provide for his wife and children, conduct all business activities on behalf of his wife, and supervise the functioning or investment of his wife's dowry (the *dote*) as well as whatever marital gift he might give to her (the *arras*). The *pater familias* was also, in law and custom, responsible for the orderliness and social decorum of the family. To accomplish this the male head of family was permitted and even encouraged to apply corporal punishment to all members of the family, including his wife. "Correcting" family members in this manner was approved so long as it was not taken to the extreme. Marital infidelity was tolerated when committed by the husband but not by the wife. In the case of infidelity by a wife, beatings—including those that resulted in the wife's death—were normally considered acts of passion that went unpunished.

For her part, the wife was required to be chaste, run the household, do the cooking or oversee the household staff if there were domestic servants, insure that the children were properly dressed and behaved, and seclude herself from the outside world except when accompanied by other members of the family, as when attending church or going for a Sunday walk or ride.

For such compliance with the norms of married life, the colonial Spanish-American wife was protected and rewarded in ways that appear quite modern compared to practices in the English colonies. Upon the death of her husband, a wife held legal rights to half the couple's estate, with the remainder to be divided equally among the children (although one child could be singled out for a double share), regardless of gender. This was a legal right of enormous importance to married women as well as to their daughters. That right is precisely what was lost to women who lived in consensual unions.<sup>1</sup> The urban reality was fraught with vagary and peril, and this largely urban phenomenon was part of the dark side of the urban opportunity.

The children were supposed to be dutiful. Parents made most of their early life decisions, concerning such matters as education, career, and marriage in the case of legal minors. Children were legal minors until twenty-five years of age and therefore under their father's or widowed mother's legal tutelage. Affluent families enjoyed the privileged capacity to delay a child's entry into the economy. During the colonial period in Spanish America boys and girls in all but the truly affluent families were expected to enter the workforce as soon as possible, and this expectation prevailed in inverse proportion to the economic well-being of the family.



## THE REALITY

Urbanization mediated the ideal and underwrote the genesis of a very different family in reality. In the towns and cities of colonial Spanish America husbands indeed could "correct" their wives and children, but municipal councils sometimes assertively protected women who were abused by placing them in "safe" houses or in nunneries through the practice of *depósito* (literally, deposit). Obviously this active insinuation into the integrity of the family was overwhelmingly an urban phenomenon. The role of the *pater familias* in his children's education and economic development changed greatly with urbanization. There were more educational opportunities for both sexes and also varied economic opportunities. In this sense, the place of the child within the family sometimes changed dramatically with urbanization for these same reasons. More opportunity frequently meant earlier independence from parental influence, not to say control. However, increased and varied economic opportunity sometimes meant earlier placement of children into the urban economy, which could mean residence away from home, as was the case with many and perhaps most apprenticeships. Marital choice was greatly expanded by urbanization likewise, as was the possibility of migrating from the family domain and finding economic opportunity sufficient to sustain a marriage and family, although this proved illusory at times.

The family ideal fell apart in an even more fundamental way in the urban habitat. Everywhere the demographic imperative affected family form, but this was more pronounced in the towns and cities. Mortality rates were high in colonial Spanish America for reasons that we have seen, to which we must now add death during childbirth. On the one hand, there were many urban widows, and widows enjoyed greater legal rights than married women. Often they were appointed guardian over their children—and their inherited assets; consequently many widows administered businesses or crafts, sometimes, as earlier noted, investing in other enterprises. On the other hand, many men found it necessary to marry again, especially when they were widowers with children. This reality, coupled with the propensity for males to marry when economically secure, resulted in unions in which the husband was older than his wife by a number of years (ten not being uncommon). Furthermore, immigrant bachelors who worked in stores and as artisans often did not marry until late in their thirties and beyond. All of which means that many wives were much younger than their husbands and survived them while still fairly young and active, not infrequently with young

children. There was no *pater familias* here—the woman was now head of family and household.<sup>2</sup>

There was another peculiar urban demographic reality. Current research suggests a common imbalance in the male/female ratio. In a healthy population more boys would be born than girls, but by about age twenty-five there would be more females than males in the population.<sup>3</sup> For a community's birth rate to be adequate to sustain its population the proportion of males should be slightly greater than that of females. A male/female ratio (the number of males per 100 females) should be at least 100 and preferably 101 or a bit higher for viable population growth. In many urban settings in colonial Spanish America the male/female ratio was under 90 and sometimes significantly lower. Two consequences of such a gender imbalance compel our attention. The first is that many towns and cities could not sustain their populations, much less grow, without in-migration. This often was not a problem except that in some instances more females than males migrated to the urban opportunity.<sup>4</sup> The second is that the gender imbalance frequently allowed too few mates, whether sanctified or not, for eligible females, which resulted in many more single female-headed families (including solitaires: one-person families) than patriarchy and the ideal family model could withstand.

This unhealthy circumstance was exacerbated when there was an age difference between females and males in the marital cohort (say, ages fifteen through forty-nine), with the females being somewhat older than the males. When this occurred, as it did at times, the urban economy seems to have been inhospitable to otherwise eligible bachelors who found it necessary to migrate. This was especially true among free colored men, who suffered so many legal and social disabilities that economic performance was often undermined. However, the urban economy could be inhospitable to young white men also. Whatever the cause of gender and age imbalance, the consequences could be profound.

Patriarchy could not prevail in communities where a large number of women, regardless of race, were heads of families. These women normally had to function in the economy and were permitted to do so. Large numbers of adult single women (in more than a few places the majority of adult women) supervised family activities, administered business ventures, sold food and handicrafts in the streets or plazas, bought and sold property, and appeared at municipal council meetings to buy or lease a property or a market stall or present a grievance.<sup>5</sup> Women in large numbers entered the crafts and formed guilds, as we have seen, and single women were among them.

Single women signed contracts and brought court proceedings and served as witnesses. In other words, single women in colonial Spanish America enjoyed a vast array of legal rights not granted to married women without the consent of their husbands. This compendium of legal rights became a strong social and economic factor only with the rise of urbanization. It was in the urban setting that a critical mass was reached whereby society and economy both would take on a palpably female quality. In fact, colonial urban Spanish America was considerably more matrifocal than the popular imagination has it. Paradoxically, improved health conditions, lowered mortality rates for both women and men, and better economies did not necessarily redound in favor of female independence and economic opportunity. Sometimes the reverse was true, but this is something that needs to be studied.

#### NUCLEAR FAMILY/EXTENDED FAMILY

The colonial urban family was formed in any of three ways. Most famous were those founded upon a church marriage. There were also, however, a significant number of consensual unions—unsanctified unions, but unions no less. Often these consensual “marriages” endured as long and as productively as church-sanctified marriages. Consensual unions were commonplace for several reasons, especially among the poor, whether they were white or people of color. For one thing, although the Church generally opposed such unions, there were long periods when they were tolerated. For another, whenever parents married in the Church their illegitimate children became legitimated. Some couples with modest economic means put off sanctified marriage for a while or indefinitely because marital fees charged by the Church were a burden. Finally, more than a few single women bore children out of wedlock or in consensual union and established families nonetheless. The causes of the high degree of single female-headed families among free women of color are yet to be fully understood. Certainly imbalances in the male/female ratio and difficult economic conditions for a community suffering from racial discrimination were factors, as we have noted, but two other matters need to be explored in future research. By the eighteenth century there had been a long tradition of female slaves who bore and raised children without the continued presence of a mate—a male figurehead. Furthermore, certain West African cultures were matrilineal societies, in which children were raised without the presence of a biologic father. We do not yet understand the long-term legacy of these two factors.

No matter how they were formed, by the end of the eighteenth century colonial Spanish-American urban households counted on average between

four and six persons.<sup>6</sup> Here the term "household" is used rather than "family," because the former includes the nuclear family as well as other co-residents. These could be relatives, friends, domestics, boarders, apprentices, journeymen, or slaves. The more affluent the family, the larger the household tended to be. This was due essentially to the ownership of slaves. Poorer families often contained as many relatives as did more affluent families. If one were to subtract single-person families and older couples with no children present, the average size of the urban household would be considerably greater than four, five, or six.

The importance of the colonial urban family was greatly expanded by a generalized predilection to form consanguineous and fictive kinship groups. At all levels of society marital unions, sanctified or consensual, conduced to extend far beyond the nuclear family. It is well known that the rich tended to marry their children advantageously to enhance their position in the economy, the society, and the polity also. Landed aristocrats might marry a daughter to a wealthy merchant, who in turn might marry a son or daughter to the child of a royal bureaucrat of high standing. And the landed aristocrat and wealthy merchant now united in a consanguineous kinship family would likely marry off children laterally to other landed and merchant rich. Within a generation, then two or three generations, this kinship family could easily count hundreds of related members, who formed a powerful source of economic, social, and political support.<sup>7</sup> Among the middle and lower classes similar extensions occurred, although perhaps not so calculatedly. Artisans and small retail grocers often engendered kinship families that counted scores and sometimes hundreds of people. At all levels immigrants manifested a decided propensity to marry people from the same region in Spain, thus forming a kinship group that eventually proffered favorable consequences beyond the original intention.

The consanguineous kinship family was joined by fictive kinship. Fictive kinship, no less significant to the urban character, formed in two ways. Much remarked upon was the prevalence of ritual kinship or godparenthood, *compadrazgo*, which constituted a subtext to childrearing and family formation in colonial Spanish America. Godparents were selected from among relatives, friends, or nonrelatives, sometimes of greater status in the society. Godparents assumed certain responsibilities regarding the godchild's upbringing. They were supposed to be supportive and even provide succor in times of need. When the godparent was a relative, the kinship was consanguineous; and when the godparent was a nonrelative, ritual kinship ensued, which could be highly beneficial to the kinship group at all levels of society. An informal, unsanctified form of fictive kinship also existed, how-

ever, which occurred when parents found support for themselves and their children from friends, often neighborhood friends. These secular "relatives" therefore were fictive but not necessarily less important to a child's development. Although we know very little about the workings and importance of fictive kinship, it is clear that single female-headed families were sometimes part of a fictive kinship group that extended greater economic and social viability than one might have supposed, especially at the lower reaches of society.

Extended families and kinship formation were not urban phenomena; they also existed in rural areas. It was in the urban areas, however, that extended families and kinship units were more easily established and could more readily provide immediate as well as long-term benefits to their members. In this beneficial sense the extended family and kinship units, if not exclusive to the urban setting, were central to its essence. There are indications that some streets and even some barrios were occupied by a single kinship group and that kinship families concentrated in a particular part of town.<sup>8</sup> At mid-eighteenth century the elite (*mantuano*) of Caracas resided very close to each other. All lived within six blocks of the central plaza and generally within two blocks of another elite residence. (Since Caracas spanned only about fourteen blocks from north to south and about twelve or thirteen from east to west, people of all socioeconomic classes necessarily lived not too distant from others of their class and relatives; see Fig. 9.1.)<sup>9</sup> We need to know more about such clustering, but there is the intriguing likelihood that such kinship arrangements were important to family life in an age that long antedated modern social support services. Conversely, there are clear instances of support among extended family members and kinship groups that dissipated scarce resources rather than increasing them.

#### MARRIAGE

As an institution of propriety, marriage was most assiduously pursued by those who were concerned about social standing. This means that the rich were more likely to marry than were the poor, although many poor people did marry in the Church. Even among the more affluent, financial self-perception frequently played a role in determining when a man would decide to marry. Many men at all levels of the economy delayed marriage until they felt they were economically well off enough to support a wife and family.

The propensity of some men to delay marriage for economic reasons is exemplified in the experience of Buenos Aires toward the end of the eighteenth century. In 1778 there were 145 wholesale import-export merchants in the

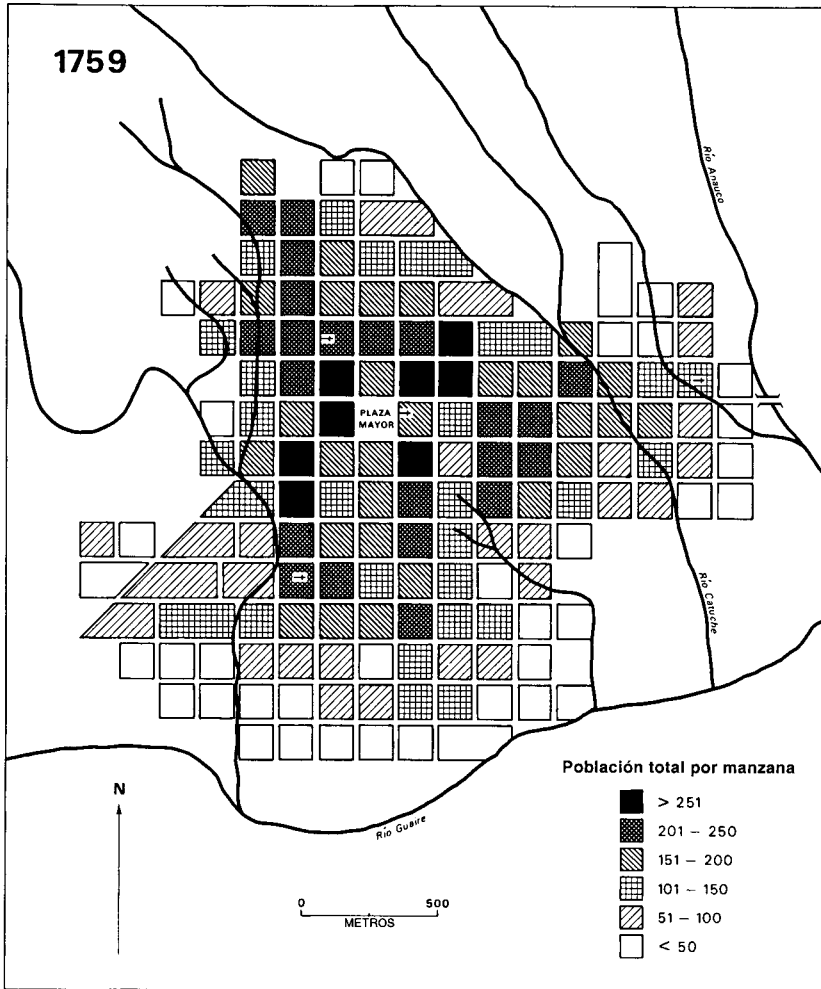


Fig. 9.1. Caracas in 1759, with Population by Block  
(Courtesy of David J. Robinson, who drew the map from archival sources)

port city, the elite of the *porteño* business establishment, and 76 percent of them were married. At that time 42.3 percent of the small retail grocers were married. Marriage rates in that year among shoemakers, bakers, tailors, and carpenters were all approximately 40 percent. A slightly higher rate of marriage prevailed among barbers and masons, who often were among the most affluent of artisans and tradesmen. Silversmiths, true to their reputation of high affluence, were married at a rate of about 65 percent, well above all groups mentioned here except the import-export merchants.

The age differential in marriages is also apparent in the Buenos Aires example. There were 111 import-export merchant couples in the city in 1778 and 67 grocer couples. The wives of 56 percent of the import-export merchants and 53.7 percent of the grocers were five to fourteen years younger than their husbands. At both ends of the economic continuum men were marrying much younger women. In fact, 24 percent of these merchants and 22.4 percent of the grocers married women more than fifteen years their junior. Only 15 percent of the merchants and 20.9 percent of the grocers married women approximately their own ages. To a small extent the reverse was also true: 5 percent of the merchants and 2.9 percent of the grocers married older women.<sup>10</sup>

Marriage was an institution that was highly sensitive to economic circumstances (both when and how it occurred and did not occur). Over the long run of the colonial centuries the urban reality was not hospitable to sanctified marriage. A distressing consequence was the high incidence of illegitimacy and abandonment of children in urban areas. In Thomas Calvo's artful but nevertheless disturbing metaphor, "the urban milieu itself spawns illegitimacy."<sup>11</sup> In some cities from a third to roughly half of all children born were illegitimate and therefore not protected by the laws of inheritance. The wide prevalence of illegitimacy contributed to a high incidence of infant abandonment. This was such an urban commonplace that foundling hospitals (*casas de niños expósitos*) were established in many cities.<sup>12</sup> The urban opportunity that provided so many possibilities that hardly existed in rural areas and attracted in-migrants by the thousands and tens of thousands had its dark side, as we have seen, and illegitimacy and child abandonment fell here.

#### MARRIAGE AND RACIAL PREJUDICE

Wherever marriage patterns have been studied for colonial urban Spanish America, racial prejudice as defined and engendered by the caste system has proven to be the single most predominant factor in marital choice. Overwhelmingly the various races married endogamously. Whites almost always married whites, and free people of color almost always married other free people of color. Urban Indians and mestizos also tended to marry endogamously, but there sometimes was considerable intermarriage between these groups.

Among whites and free people of color, the two groups most dialectally opposite in terms of racial freedom and racial restriction within the non-slave population, marriages between white males and free colored females

sometimes occurred without great public consternation, but marriages between white women and free colored males or male slaves drew greater public condemnation. Although more research needs to be done, there is the suggestion that the free colored subcastes (*pardos* and *morenos*, for instance) also tended to marry among themselves by subcaste. Each caste protected its whiteness or in many cases degree of whiteness. Considering that free people of color of lighter skin usually enjoyed greater social and therefore economic privilege than those of darker skin, it may be understandable that in the face of government-sponsored racial discrimination the free colored subcastes would protect themselves from the darker-skinned, all the way down to *negros* (the blacks).

The institution of marriage in urban colonial Spanish America, no matter how elegantly sanctified by the Church, was more than sensitive to economic circumstances; it was race sensitive also, a sacrament shrouded in racial prejudice.



*The Urban Dialogue*

Once people came together and constituted the urban habitat, set out its form, fulfilled its function, and benefited from its immediate possibilities, the city and town as well were defined in reality and in our imaginations also. But there was more to it, as Lewis Mumford exquisitely conceived and eloquently expressed. Mumford understood that in its highest definitional aspects what distinguished the city most importantly was the opportunity it provided for significant conversation (or dialogue).<sup>1</sup> By this he did not mean anything casual, but rather the profound and fundamental “discussion” by peoples and groups and classes about rights, status, place, and whatever else was locally significant. Mumford’s “conversation” and “dialogue” have been updated and invested with wide popularity by Michel Foucault’s “discourse” and “dialogue”—meaning reciprocal interaction.

What we are talking about is the daily, seasonal, and perpetual contestation between peoples of the urban habitat for power and status on the part of some, including the state and local government, and modest or even minimal rights and dignity on the part of many. This everyday contestation took place ubiquitously in society, including in rural areas. In colonial Spanish America even debt peons sometimes had ways of contesting the demeaning and debilitating dominance of the large landowners, especially when there were labor shortages. On countless occasions rural discontent bled over into riot and rebellion. But here a fundamental and defining difference between rural and urban is that in the urban setting there was greater opportunity for dialogue than in the rural.

This is because of density: density of people and density of institutions. Agency was built into the colonial Spanish American political system and was available to everyone, either as individuals or as members of corporate

bodies, even in certain circumstances to slaves. Daily and long-term discourse was enabled and nurtured by the many and varied institutions that embodied agency, such as every corporate entity, including guilds and municipal councils. Individuals could appeal to officials through the chain of administrative command, and corporate bodies could do the same. Furthermore, both individuals and corporations could appeal over the heads of immediate supervisory agencies. Indians, for instance, could bring pleadings directly to the *audiencia* or viceroy, and *cabildos* could petition directly to the Council of the Indies. Dialogue was easier to carry out in the urban setting because of the prevalence and immediacy of the mechanisms of agency and the numbers of people willing to participate.

Another characteristic of the urban habitat also facilitated dialogue, and this one seems to have been an age-old problem confronting cities in general: in some eyes there were simply too many lawyers for the general good. From the outset colonial Spanish America was a litigious society, and litigation naturally centered, inexorably one might say, in the cities and towns of the empire. As early as 1529, lawyers were prohibited from entering Peru, although this restriction did not last long. Only a few years later, in 1538, the city council of Quito prohibited a lawyer from practicing because he had wasted citizens' money on useless litigation. When informed that three lawyers were about to arrive in Buenos Aires "with the sole intent of initiating suits to acquire money," according to a *cabildo* official, the council prohibited the three from entering without direct permission from the viceroy or *audiencia*.<sup>2</sup> Notwithstanding what may have been the legal profession's penchant for litigation, by the seventeenth century there were enough lawyers in urban Spanish America to render political agency a reality for a broad spectrum of the population. Even urban dwellers at the bottom of the economic continuum could find such agency when they belonged to a corporate body such as a lay sodality, which many did, including some slaves.

#### RITUALS OF POWER

Every society has been subject to rituals of power, both real and symbolic. Leaders have historically perpetuated their hegemony over their followers through various devices, such as periodic displays of might or the winning of a battle or war from time to time, or, more symbolically, by having the largest castle or palace, the largest retinue, the grandest celebrations, to mention only a few of the more obvious possibilities. Political hegemony was announced permanently and periodically in urban colonial Spanish America in just such ways; and since society was hierarchical, groups descending

from the power establishment evolved scripted rituals and mechanisms to define and sustain their own status. Finally, those toward and at the bottom of the status continuum found their own rituals and mechanisms to assert whatever power and status they could—what Antonio Gramsci referred to as the necessary counterhegemony and E. P. Thompson might have labeled countertheater. The urban habitat was a matrix for the acting out of these rituals and mechanisms.

Assertions of royal sovereignty took place on every possible occasion. A royal ascendancy, the birth of a royal child, or the arrival of a viceroy to a colony or governor in a provincial region or city, town, or village would cause celebrations marked by parades and festivals, sometimes including bull-fights, theater productions, and dances.<sup>3</sup> At the local level a newly formed *cabildo* would require a public demonstration of the transfer of secular power, with the new *alcaldes* and other officers parading through the streets carrying their staffs of office. And if this were not enough to make the point, public hangings of criminals in the main plaza were designed to help. Main plazas customarily held a pillory where public whippings were carried out.

There were many secular parades and festivals, but normally they were not so numerous as the religious ones. The Church celebrated its place in the power structure often and at length. Several of these celebrations, which included parades and festivals, might last days or even a week or more, including celebrations of saints' days and of days particularly important to a colony or locality. In any of the celebrations, whether religious or secular, the lay sodalities would likely take part, with their identifying costumes and sometimes floats. Guilds would participate similarly.

Secular and religious celebrations of power and place were not limited to the urban areas, but it was there that density of population and resources accentuated the size and splendor of such rituals. Let us take a close look at one of these celebrations, Lima's celebration for the Immaculate Conception, which began on Saturday, October 14, 1656. That night, as the Spanish soldier Josephe de Mugaburu observed in his diary, "there were splendid fireworks."<sup>4</sup> The following day there was a pontifical Mass celebrated by the archbishop. "In the afternoon there was a great procession around the plaza where there were large altars; the viceroy . . . and all the *audiencia* attended." The following Saturday "the merchants began their celebrations . . . That night there were the greatest fireworks ever seen in this city." The first of the fireworks floats "was a serpent with seven heads, very impressive to see," set "on a cart drawn by two mules and with four Negroes in livery." The second fireworks float "represented the fountain in the plaza . . . The third was a horse with two savages, artfully elaborated . . . The fourth was another ser-

pent with an angel on top . . . The fifth, a tree with Adam and Eve and a serpent with the apple tree . . . The sixth, another carriage with the image of the Immaculate Conception . . . All the floats moved along on wheeled vehicles to the music of drums and bugles; it was a night of unforgettable fireworks."

This was a celebration possessed of great energy, like so many others in colonial Spanish America. On the following day, Sunday, "there was a great sermon and procession around the church," as well as "a pontifical Mass with the viceroy and the gentlemen of the *audiencia* present." Secular and religious authority thus commingled, and the one almost always took pains to be sanctified by the other. Further celebrations were held that night.

There were breaks in the festivities, however. On Monday, October 23, two gentlemen went to one of the public parks and fought a duel. One was wounded but recovered. On Thursday a man was killed at the same place. On November 20 a military officer and a civilian gentleman "went to fight at the same place, and Captain Urdangui was wounded seriously." On November 22 "there were bullfights and games of *cañas* in the plaza of the city." The following afternoon "four thieves were hanged in front of the side door of the [convent of] La Encarnación . . . two mulattoes, one zambo, and a Negro who stole from a shopkeeper."

The secular population now took part in the celebration more formally. On Saturday "there were bulls in the merchants' plaza":

The fountain was adorned with flowers, and six highly-decorated carriages showered the plaza with flowers. There were many *caballeros* who gave spear thrusts, and there were dummies to divert the bulls' attention in the plaza; one was inside a barrel. Eighty boards of food were brought in through the plaza and distributed to the spectators in the galleries, and they cast food out the windows to the people in the bleachers. It was something worth seeing. All this celebration was in honor of the Pure and Immaculate Conception of Our Lady.

The silversmiths began their participation in the celebration of the Immaculate Conception on Saturday, December 9:

At six in the afternoon eight carriages, well decorated with branches of flowers and plants, entered the plaza strewing many flowers. Behind these carriages there was a large sailing ship float with many young men and sailors. On entering the plaza three pieces [of artillery] fired a gun salute. One of the floats carried a lion over a globe of the world rep-

resenting the king of Spain, Philip IV . . . and an image of the Immaculate Conception, an unsheathed sword defending her purity. Behind it another very large carriage depicting Fame and three seated nymphs entered the plaza, a sight worth seeing. Behind this float there was another, very large and very costly, carrying a phoenix bird representing the Virgin, and within, many angels singing their eulogies. These carriages went around the plaza twice, and upon exiting, the ship fired as it does at sea when seeking help upon being moored on a shoal in shallow water. Within a short time the ship was rent to pieces in the plaza, this being carefully done. There were very brave bulls run, and *caballeros* who ran the bulls in the plaza.

Then on Thursday, December 14, the university students took their turn. They paraded "in masquerade with six large carriages for the celebration of the Immaculate Conception . . . More than one thousand five hundred persons turned out, a thousand with great splendor and elegantly dressed and five hundred in outlandish attire. Because it was so good, the viceroy ordered that it come out a second day, Friday." Should we be surprised that university students paraded in masks and outlandish attire? In fact, such activity was fairly generalized throughout the population of colonial Spanish America. Often masks and outlandish attire mocked ritual, public officials, and almost anything else, including matters religious. Beyond blatant and often incisive mockery, inversion of roles was acted out through the device of mask and attire. This was a time-honored tradition in Europe, and it carried over to the Spanish colonies. It occurred especially during Carnival but also at other times. Caricature and inversion are conventionally taken to have served as a release of contentious energies on the part of the governed and to have been understood that way by the state; however, many riots evolved during such colonial celebrations.<sup>5</sup>

On Tuesday, December 19, "Negroes fought bulls in the plaza. There were spear and wood chopping contests. A merry afternoon."

The city's "blacksmiths and tailors sponsored a great fireworks display: a castle and four galleons built over four pairs of carriages filled with fireworks that enveloped the castle; something worth seeing."

"On the following Sunday there was a pontifical Mass, sermon, and procession inside the cathedral. With this the celebrations came to an end."

Lima's celebration of the Immaculate Conception lasted two and a half months that year. Most celebrations in colonial urban Spanish America were of shorter duration, but all of them constituted a diversion of labor and re-

sources that in many instances might have been deployed more productively in other ways. From guilds and lay confraternities to parish churches and town and city treasuries, money was diverted from socially productive activities to those in service of sustaining state, religion, corporate, or other group status. Nonetheless, to the extent that such displays of status and affluence contributed to the elasticity and durability—notwithstanding an associated riot here and there—of the colonial regime, perhaps such diversion was not entirely socially unproductive.

#### PRIDE OF PLACE

Status in urban colonial Spanish America's social architecture was proclaimed and reinforced by the space that one occupied, just as it was in other societies. At the churches, official gatherings, reviewing stands, theaters, bullfights, concerts, and almost everywhere else, government and religious leaders, nobles, social aristocrats, leading merchants, and guildsmen were assigned the most desirable seats—or coopted them in one way or another. Sometimes desirable position in the spatial hierarchy was achieved simply by establishing and then maintaining the price of admission beyond the ability of most people to afford. The social hierarchy, with its economic and political underpinnings, was thus proclaimed on countless occasions in the towns and cities of colonial Spanish America.

But the streets were another matter. It was in the streets, and plazas as well, that the urban dialogue took place on a daily basis. There the classes defended and negotiated their rightful place in society. In fact, the poor and downtrodden, the inadequately dressed, the shoeless, the drunk, and thieves of all sorts, including adept pickpockets, roamed and often virtually controlled the streets and plazas of colonial urban Spanish America. The socially marginalized had their space and were not inclined to relinquish it. This was no minor matter. Street merchants, vendors and hawkers, respectable storekeepers and artisans, and shoppers (in some cities in the many thousands) also needed access to the streets and plazas. Dusty and muddy streets, commonly littered with garbage, raw sewage, and corpses both animal and human, did not help the social "elite" and "respectable" middle-class residents to challenge the marginalized "street people." The same could be said about urban habitats generally, throughout the coterminous Atlantic world and beyond. An early consequence of this spatial reality in colonial Spanish America and elsewhere is that "respectable" women were largely confined to their residences unless accompanied, preferably by a male or at least another

woman. "Respectable" women commonly did not shop at the neighborhood grocery stores or in the public markets. This was the responsibility (might one say privilege?) of their domestic servants.

It was not only the streets that were contested. The wide avenues (the *alamedas* and *paseos*) and the plazas and parks were favorite venues for Sunday and holiday strolls by the well-to-do and those aspiring to be considered such. On foot, on horseback, and in carriages, the affluent ritually paraded themselves and their families for recreation, as a means for children of marital age to meet eligible potential mates, and, of course, for social standing. But less "respectable" people crowded into the same space, not infrequently to the distress of their social "superiors."

This was largely a structural matter, however, and not all there was to the urban dialogue. Colonial Spanish Americans were given to public displays of humor, song, and dance to a degree that someone familiar only with Puritan New England would hardly imagine. Furthermore, all three cultural expressions could be highly ribald, lewd, and satirical. "Respectable" folks did not partake in such expressiveness, but the people of the street certainly did. No institution, no official, religious or secular, no person or event was insulated from such derisive treatment. In song and dance, a priest might be depicted lifting his robes and exposing his genitalia. The group of dances collectively known as *fandango* often incorporated explicitly sexual movements. This was the counterhegemony, the countertheater, that contributed not only character but vitality also to the public dialogue, and this dialogue may have added years to the empire's longevity. We know very little about this relationship, and we need to study it more.

The marginalized forced the "respectable" into their homes for much of their social activity. It was there that those who were offended by the ribaldry and mockery of the street or who risked ostracism if the social arbiters learned of their attendance at lower-class *fandangos* sang their songs and conducted their dances. The famous *tertulias* of the rich and generally well off were salons of good conversation, respectable dance and music, and in the eighteenth century sometimes occasions for discussing ideas of the European Enlightenment—and this did not bode well for the empire.

In both music and dance colonial Spanish Americans brought creativity and cultural diversity to their interpretations of European models, the more so at the popular end of the scale. Wherever people in rural and urban areas came into contact with indigenous and (or) African music and dance a new American version evolved. In the Pan-Caribbean region African instruments and rhythms were more influential than Indian ones, but on the mainland the components sometimes were reversed.

By the eighteenth century Mexican popular music and dance had taken on a character of their own, whether their provenance was the Spanish *fandango* or the Havana *rumba*, and their mockery and ribaldry irritated both religious and civil authorities. Popular verse was sometimes labeled "dishonest" by clerics, but we should note that *deshonestas* connotes absence of virtue and decency. Finally, in 1779 Viceroy Bucareli prohibited both sexes from attending private dances or dance schools if members of the other sex were present, with men being permitted to attend only until ten in the evening. In 1800 Viceroy Marquina prohibited schools of dance and in fact any dances where an admission was charged.<sup>6</sup> But such prohibitions did not apply to the streets, where the large repertoire of Mexican popular dance, known collectively as *sonecitos del país*, held sway. Dances and lyrics provocative to the sensibilities of religious and civil authorities, to be sure, they lent color and character to the warp and weft of the urban social fabric.

Chile was a colony fairly insulated from Indian and African dance and musical influence when compared to Mexico, but there also popular Americanized versions evolved. In the eighteenth century popular dance derived from Spanish models such as the *fandango* and *bolero* (known locally as *voletera*). But as everywhere else in the colonies the lyrics were localized, and often satirical and ribald, and the dance movements provocative. Nevertheless, the social aristocracy of Chile was inclined to a less dissolute dance and music. Particularly appealing was the *contradanza*, which was introduced to Spain with the arrival of the French Bourbons in the early eighteenth century. The *contradanza* quickly became known as the *española* to distinguish it from the English version. It traveled to Chile via Peru and quickly won the hearts of the colony's social arbiters. Also popular among the social elite was the minuet, which arrived in Chile with French sailors early in the eighteenth century.<sup>7</sup>

In Buenos Aires people of different socioeconomic classes, including those at the bottom of the continuum, danced the *contradanza* and minuet, adding to these courtly dances their own rhythms and movements. As in Mexico City, during the eighteenth century there were clerical restrictions on dancing, including the threat of excommunication.<sup>8</sup> Nonetheless, in Buenos Aires and probably everywhere else, an Americanized public and private dance and song endured and enriched the culture.

In the urban dialogue eighteenth-century reformers sought the last word. The Spanish Bourbons adopted the administrative logic of their French cousins. In rationalizing and centralizing the imperial regime, the Spanish reformers wanted to know everything possible about everyone, including place of residence, marital and family status, race, gender, age, occupation,



and place of origin. Census enumeration was refined, and censuses were carried out with increased frequency. To serve such needs, houses were numbered and streets were given names. The barrios of larger cities were divided into smaller administrative units, sometimes called *cuarteles* (this can be seen in Fig. 7.2, the map of Buenos Aires). In many cities *alcaldes de barrio* were appointed to bring municipal control and courts of justice physically closer to the people.

The Spanish Bourbons also adopted French esthetics, which caused a new view of urban beauty and influenced styles of dress and dance. All through the colonies, but with varying degrees of success, streets were paved (the first often called *Empedrado*); sidewalks and sometimes drainage were installed. Wherever space permitted streets were widened, forming avenues, often named for a viceroy, governor, or other dignitary. Parks were built or refurbished, usually with new or improved fountains at their centers. Plazas were cleaned and improved. Streets and avenues were often lined with trees and in general beautified. The French urban esthetic was geometrical in design, and this fit well with the Spanish-American colonial grid pattern.

It was not always easy to carry out the urban reform. The more affluent colonies like Mexico had an easier time improving their urban habitats than did the poorer ones. Physical limitations often were problematic, just as they were when setting out the original grid pattern. Mexico City, however, enjoyed all the circumstances for successful urban renewal. It was not a walled city, so streets and avenues inherently admitted of long and usually straight runs; and being constructed on a lakebed added the advantage of long, flat distances. Furthermore, late colonial viceroys tended to be strong and energetic administrators of the colony's great wealth.

Havana was another story. The central concern there was defense of the empire's most important port and, incidentally, its second most populous city. By the beginning of the nineteenth century roughly half the city's population resided outside the walled area, according to no organized plan. A central question was whether to destroy the wall and expand the city's plan outward. Havana had a large free colored and slave population, and white and colored alike were well aware of the painful and disastrous Saint Domingue slave revolt of the 1790s. For these reasons, it was decided to retain the wall and organize the outlying area into barrios with streets and blocks of regular size, thus setting Havana's first line of defense about a mile from the walled city. The wall was now to serve as an internal barrier against white or colored insurrection by reducing the possibility that residents of the *extramuros* would be able to unite with residents of the *intramuros*. Neverthe-

less, during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries Havana was beautified: streets paved, *paseos* constructed, and plazas improved.<sup>9</sup>

For the Spanish reformers it was more than a matter of esthetics. They had absorbed the French Enlightenment's sense of an ordered universe. True, they wanted, almost philosophically, to know who everyone was and where they resided; but such knowledge also served the goal of enforcing taxation and militia conscription. Order—political, economic, and social—in fact was central to the urban reform. This meant cleaning the streets, regulating the disposal of garbage and sewage, insisting on proper attire whether at work or in the street. Central to the new orderliness was street illumination, not so easy a goal to accomplish. The urban reformers were determined to take back the night (to borrow from a modern university theme). In some towns and cities torches were lit from dusk until 11 P.M., but these almost always were limited to the central urban area. Armed night watchmen were sometimes employed to patrol the lighted streets. Mexico City, as one might expect, was more successful in lighting its streets than were less affluent cities. Yet even there attempts to establish street illumination by the city council first in 1762 and then again during the 1780s all foundered. Finally, in 1790 Viceroy Revillagigedo successfully ordered the establishment of one thousand oil lamps to be paid for by the city council.<sup>10</sup> Mexico City was not to be confused with the City of Light, but much of the night had been regained and Bourbon sensibilities uplifted.

By the final decades of the eighteenth century the urban dialogue had become sharply defined. Two essential forces were at work to shape this definition. One was the attempt to bring order and improvements to the urban areas in the face of growing populations and French philosophical and esthetic influence, and the other a growing immediacy to provide for the defense of the empire—both from external enemies and from internal insurrection. The issue was joined and would soon erupt into urban conspiracy and insurrection. From the royal perspective, therefore, the urban reforms were only partly successful.

## *Conclusion: The Paradox*



To think about the city is to hold and maintain its conflictual aspects: constraints and possibilities, peacefulness and violence, meetings and solitude, gatherings and separation, the trivial and the poetic, brutal functionalism and surprising improvisation.

—HENRI LEFEBVRE, *Writings on Cities*

Let us go back to the beginning. The colonial Spanish American urban *form* derived from the Roman ideal, even in the walled variant of port cities such as Havana, San Juan, and Cartagena. The urban *function* derived from the western European commercial enterprise of the early modern period. The urban function fructified the commercial capitalism which in almost all instances justified and sustained its existence. The urban habitat, whether village, town, or city, gave promise of a better life, which could mean more educational, occupational, commercial, bureaucratic, and marital opportunity than was possible in the rural regions of the Spanish colonies. The city as metaphor for all urban habitats represented hope and opportunity.

But it was not unimpeded hope and opportunity, since the urban marketplace was unemotional and harsh. Although the Church provided charity and some health care, and the state provided pawn shops and (in service of its moral authority) attempted to assure affordable bread, corn, and other basic necessities, life on the urban periphery of maturing Atlantic capitalism was, to put it simply and succinctly, hard. It was hard and punishing in the urban economy of colonial Spanish America, but it was varyingly similar in New York, London, Paris, or anyplace else where capitalism prevailed and the marketplace determined. Urban life was unforgiving for those who

lacked capacity and perhaps not a little luck. But for those with the resilience to suffer the rigors and inconstancy of a market economy, and also perhaps with some luck, the economy could be forgiving. The trajectory of success or failure in the urban context often did not follow a straight line in either direction.

In many ways the great urban opportunity was flawed, even paradoxical. Single women had greater opportunity in the towns and cities than they did in the rural regions; but often there were too few men of marriageable age for them, so they frequently headed their own families, a largely urban phenomenon that led to a high incidence of illegitimacy and child abandonment. Slavery was essentially a rural phenomenon, but many towns and cities held fairly large numbers of slaves. They worked as domestics, street vendors, laborers, and artisans and in bakeries, in tanneries, on the docks, and in most other occupations. The urban slave tended to enjoy greater freedom than the rural slave, if only marginally. Some masters permitted slaves to reside in urban areas and work on their own, with the requirement that they send money back to the owner. Such slaves sometimes were among those able to purchase their own freedom and the freedom of family members. However, many female slaves were coerced into prostitution by their owners, again something we would associate with urban life. The urban opportunity was mitigated, clearly. And to this we must add the intense morbidity that resulted from the concentrations of people set on woefully unsanitary infrastructures.

It was density of population and closeness of residence that made all of this possible. At bottom it was a division of labor, with the widespread possibility of specialization (and all of society's attendant institutions in support of this), that resulted in an urban character, an urban *mentalité*. The possibility of social dialogue was much greater in the urban habitat than it was in the rural. The quotidian negotiation of one's place in society, from street, to home, to store, to the bureaucracies, to the institutions of government, conferred upon the urban setting perhaps its most significant characteristic. Life was broader and deeper in its possibilities in the towns and cities of colonial Spanish America than it was in the farmlands.

Educational opportunities also were greater in the urban areas, whether at the practical, occupational level or the scholarly. The great universities of colonial Spanish America were urban institutions, first in Mexico City, Lima, Santo Domingo, and Havana and then in other cities, as were the many colleges and seminaries.<sup>1</sup> Opportunities for basic primary education were overwhelmingly urban. But there was always a price to pay.

This having been said, then what percentage of Spanish Americans were

urbanized by the end of the colonial period, roughly 1810? It is difficult to discern, since in many small urban habitats (say, of two or three thousand inhabitants) many and perhaps a majority were seasonal residents who spent much of the year on farms or in smaller villages. Such mobility also occurred in larger urban centers.<sup>2</sup> In attempting to gauge the degree of urbanization in colonial Spanish America we should bear in mind that the United States was not officially declared urban in the majority until 1920 (50.87 percent).<sup>3</sup> Similarly, a majority of colonial Spanish Americans resided in rural areas, including small villages that did not reach the urban threshold in terms of population density or morphology. However, if we set the figure of 2,500 that the U.S. Bureau of the Census employed in 1920 as the determining factor in distinguishing urban from rural agglomerations, then by 1810 many colonies had achieved a prominent urban sector, if not in the main.

Let us take two perhaps extreme examples to make the point. In 1791 the south of Chile (the bishopric of Concepción) had a population of roughly 103,235 people. At that time some 68,000 people lived in thirteen urban centers, each with at least 2,500 inhabitants.<sup>4</sup> North of Mexico City, the *fin-de-siècle* agricultural and mining region known as the *bajío* also was quite urbanized, not surprisingly, since mining induced urban development as part of its support system. In 1790 the city of Querétaro held 30,000 people and the lesser San Juan del Río another 6,173 inhabitants. The city of Guanajuato had 32,000 people, with another 20,000 or so in the surrounding villages that could actually be considered suburbs. By the end of the eighteenth century roughly one-third of the population of the jurisdiction (intendancy) of Guanajuato resided in urban centers of at least 5,000 people. Approximately the same degree of urbanization (at the 5,000-person threshold) prevailed in the provincial jurisdiction (*corregimiento*) of Querétaro.<sup>5</sup> Spanish America was not urban in 1810, as the United States was not urban at the time of the first federal census of 1790 and would not be for almost a century and a half. Yet both societies had decidedly urban casts that modulated the tenor of the larger rural society and economy.

Finally, in its emphasis on urbanization and centralization of power, the Spanish Crown had in a very consequential way replicated the Aztec and Inca Empires. Both indigenous empires fell quickly in great measure because they were highly urbanized and centralized. Similarly, three centuries later Spanish American independence would begin, with one egregious exception, in the cities, notably Buenos Aires, Caracas, and Santiago de Chile. Loy-  
alists in Mexico City carried out a successful preemptive coup, so in Mexico it took a rural insurrection, led by Miguel Hidalgo, to ignite the patriot in-

#### CONCLUSION: THE PARADOX

dependence movement. In contrast, Peru long remained loyal to the Crown largely because Lima remained loyal. Cuba and Puerto Rico remained loyal largely because Havana and San Juan did, albeit partly because both island capitals were garrisoned with royalist troops. In an ironic way, urbanization had come full cycle.

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## *Epilogue*

From *Leaves of Grass* by Walt Whitman



A great city is that which has the greatest men and women,  
If it be a few ragged huts it is still the greatest city in the whole world.

The place where a great city stands is not the stretch'd wharves, docks,  
    manufactures, deposits of produce merely . . .  
Nor the place of tallest and costliest buildings or shops selling goods from  
    the rest of the earth.  
Nor the place of the best libraries and schools, nor the place where money  
    is plentiest,  
Nor the place of the most numerous population . . .

Where the slave ceases, and the master of slaves ceases,  
Where the populace rise at once against the never-ending audacity of  
    elected persons . . .  
Where women walk in public processions in the streets the same as the  
    men,  
Where they enter the public assembly and take place the same as the  
    men . . .  
There the great city stands.



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# Appendix

## A Comparison of Key Elements in the *Ordenanzas* of 1573 and in Vitruvius



Following are several articles from the Spanish codification of 1573 for town layout and the statements of Vitruvius from which they were drawn.<sup>1</sup>

### *Ordenanzas* of 1573

ARTICLE 40: Do not select the places of great elevation, because these are affected by winds, and access and service to these are difficult, nor in lowlands, which tend to be unhealthy; select places of intermediate elevation that enjoy fresh air, especially from the north and south, and if there are mountains or hills near the site, they should be to the east or to the west, and if there should be a need to build in high places, be it in areas not subjected to fogs; if the site is by a river, it should be placed to the east, so that the rising sun touches first upon the town before it touches the water.

### Vitruvius

*For fortified towns the following general principles are to be observed. First comes the choice of a very healthy site. Such a site will be high, neither misty nor frosty, and in a climate neither hot nor cold, but temperate; further, without marshes in the neighbourhood . . . Again, if the town is on the coast with a southern or western exposure, it will not be healthy, because in summer the southern sky grows hot at sunrise and is fiery at noon, while a western exposure grows warm after sunrise, is hot at noon, and at evening all aglow.*

*These variations in heat and the subsequent cooling off are harmful to the people living on such sites.*

*Ordenanzas*

ARTICLE III: Having selected the site for the town, it must be in an elevated place, where there are healthy conditions, protection, and fertile lands for farming and pastures, fuel and building materials, good water, natives, convenience of transport, of easy access, open to the north wind. If it be on the coast, care should be taken that it be a good harbor and that the sea should be neither to the south nor to the west; if this is not possible, do not place it near lagoons or swamps in which are poisonous animals and polluted air and water.

Vitruvius

*After insuring on these principles the healthfulness of the future city, and selecting a neighbourhood that can supply plenty of food stuffs to maintain the community with good roads, or else convenient rivers or seaports affording easy means of transport to the city, the next thing to do is to lay the foundations for the towers and walls.*

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*Ordenanzas*

FROM ARTICLE II4: The four corners of the plaza face to the four principal winds, because in this way the streets leaving the plaza are not exposed to the principal winds, which would be of great inconvenience.

[Article II4 also stipulated that emanating from the plaza should be four principal streets, one from the middle of each side as well as two from each corner.]

Vitruvius

*Let the directions of your streets and alleys be laid down on the lines of division between the quarters of two winds.*

*On this principle of arrangement the disagreeable force of the winds will be shut out from dwellings and lines of houses. For if the streets run full in the face of the winds, their constant blasts rushing in from the open country, and then confined by narrow alleys, will sweep through them with great violence . . .*

---

*Ordenanzas*

FROM ARTICLE II2: The plaza should be a rectangle, prolonged so that the length is at least half again as long as the width, because this form is best for celebrations with horses, and for any others that are to take place.

The size of the plaza should be proportionate to the population, taking into consideration that in Indian towns, since they are new and intended to

increase, the plaza should be designed with such increase in mind. It should not be less than two hundred feet in width and three hundred feet in length, nor greater than eight hundred feet in length and five hundred and thirty-two in width; a good proportion is the intermediate size of six hundred feet in length and four hundred in width.

[Article 112 also stated that the length of the plaza should be at least one and a half its width, and that if the town were situated on the coast the plaza should be located near the port and if inland at the center of the town.]

#### Vitruvius

*The size of a forum should be proportionate to the number of inhabitants, so that it may not be too small a space to be useful, nor look like a desert waste for lack of population. To determine its breadth, divide its length into three parts and assign two of them to the breadth. Its shape will then be oblong, and its ground plan conveniently suited to the conditions of shows . . . if the city is on the sea, we should choose ground close to the harbour as the place where the forum is to be built; but if inland, in the middle of the town.*

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#### Ordenanzas

ARTICLE 115: All around the plaza and the four principal streets that start from it there should be colonnades because of the great convenience that they offer to the merchants who gather here; the eight streets that leave from the four corners of the plaza are not to have colonnades that would block juncture with the plaza.

#### Vitruvius

*The Greeks lay out their forums in the form of a square surrounded by very spacious double colonnades, adorn them with columns set rather closely together, and with entablatures of stone or marble, and construct walks above the upper storey. But in the cities of Italy the same method cannot be followed, for the reason that it is a custom handed down from our ancestors that gladiatorial shows should be given in the forum.*

*Therefore let the intercolumniations round the show place be pretty wide . . .*

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#### Ordenanzas

ARTICLE 119: For the cathedral, parish church, or monastery there is to be the first assignment of solares [town lots] after the streets and plazas are laid out.

Then mark out the places for the palace, the town hall, the customs house, and the arsenal.

Vitruvius

*Having laid out the alleys and determined the streets, we have next to treat of the choice of building sites for temples, the forum, and all other public places, with a view to general convenience and utility.*

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*Ordenanzas*

ARTICLE 124: The cathedral of inland places should not be placed at the plaza, but at some distance . . . and so that it can be seen from all sides, because it lends greater adornment and authority, and arrange it in such fashion that it is raised above the ground level so that it will be approached by steps. Near it on the main plaza the palace, the town hall and customs should be built so that they do not detract from the cathedral but give it greater importance.

Vitruvius

*For the temples, the sites for those of the gods under whose particular protection the state is thought to rest . . . should be on the very highest point commanding a view of the greater part of the city.*

*The treasury, prison, and senate house ought to adjoin the forum, but in such a way that their dimensions may be proportionate to those of the forum.*

# Notes



## INTRODUCTION

1. For example, see José Luis Romero, *Latinoamérica: Las ciudades y las ideas*. Romero speaks of “upper classes, middle sectors” and “popular classes” (132–133). This I would call a passive invocation of class terminology. In a similar vein, see Timothy E. Anna, *The Fall of the Royal Government in Mexico City*, 12–25, and his discussion of Luis Villoro’s widely known social classifications, 10–13. The pioneering exploration of class in the late colonial society was Lyle N. McAlister, “Social Structure and Social Change in New Spain,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 43:3 (Aug. 1963), 349–370. McAlister wrote just prior to a great outpouring of social and economic historical studies. Writing about New Spain, he suggested that “a modern class system—upper, middle, and lower groups—based on the ownership and use of property may be discerned.” I am particularly interested in this book in what he referred to as the “lower class,” which “comprised less affluent shopkeepers, peddlers, and artisans operating outside the guilds; servants, laborers, and a mass of landless, propertyless, and jobless idlers and vagabonds.” In fact, McAlister thought, “it might be practicable to analyze colonial social structure in terms of economic classes.” McAlister, understandably in the face of Marxist influence on social theory of the time, saw the limitation in applying a class analysis to be the absence of shared value systems and class consciousness. Considering the time in which he wrote, I am confident that he could not have gone further, as I do in this book. Finally he thought that economic class as a concept probably “can best be used for studying social development over a period extending beyond the colonial era rather than for the colonial period itself.”

2. Gilbert M. Joseph and Mark D. Szuchman, eds., *I Saw a City Invincible: Urban Portraits of Latin America* (Wilmington, Del.: SR Books, 1996), xi.

## CHAPTER I

1. Robert E. Dickinson, *The West European City*, 3. For comments on varied interpretations of the term "urban" and suggested readings, see R. J. Johnson et al., *The Dictionary of Human Geography*. How the term was viewed during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in relation to the growth of capitalism can be seen in Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*. The issue of the economic origins of urbanism is explored in Manuel Castells, *The Urban Question: A Marxist Approach*. A more accessible discussion of this matter is to be found in Harold Carter, *An Introduction to Urban Historical Geography*, 1-17. For a brief discussion of anthropological and sociological definitions of urbanism, see Castells' Chapter 5: "The Myth of Urban Culture," 75-85.

2. Carla Rahn Phillips, *Ciudad Real, 1500-1750: Growth, Crisis, and Readjustment in the Spanish Economy*, 36.

3. Dickinson, *The West European City*, 3. I have been unsuccessful in an attempt to estimate the degree of time-discipline in urban colonial Spanish America. It is clear that time-discipline and time-thrift are distinguishing characteristics of urban habitats as compared to the rural, where time-obedience dictates the day's organization. In the rural economy the organization of time is in thrall to task, and rural tasks normally can be scheduled by "traditional" means, that is, without resort to a clock or personal watch. The urban (and later industrial) economy, in contrast, requires a more precise awareness of time for the scheduling and performing of activities. It has been argued that those societies where personal watches were widely owned industrialized earlier than those where personal watches were not widely possessed. There were public clocks and personal watches in colonial Spanish-American towns and cities, but we do not know how many and, in the case of watches, how widely held they were. It is certain that the Spanish Crown from an early date wanted at least one public clock in the colonial urban centers. In 1553, for instance, the Crown ordered the establishment of a clock in the city of Santiago de Guatemala (Francisco de Solano, ed., *Normas y leyes de la ciudad hispanoamericana*, 1:155).

There is a strong likelihood that the Jesuits were the first to bring clocks to the New World, obviously for religious purposes. In 1612 the only public bell-ringing clock in Quito was a small one maintained by the Jesuits, and it could not be heard in all parts of the city. The municipal council took up the issue of contributing to the installation of a larger clock; but as in the instance of Santiago de Guatemala, we do not know if the Crown and secular authorities were promoting a secular benefit from public clocks or a religious one, that is, calling the public to prayers and announcing special occasions (Solano, *Normas y leyes*, 2:35-36). Perhaps future research will enlighten us about this. This general discussion is based largely on David S. Landes, *Revolution in Time: Clocks and the Making of the Modern World*. See also E. P. Thompson, "Time, Work Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism," *Past & Present* 38 (Dec. 1967), 56-97.

4. Dickinson, *The West European City*, 252.

5. Ibid., 253.
6. Ibid., 252.
7. I have taken the first three terms and their population parameters from John V. Lombardi, *People and Places in Colonial Venezuela*, 56.
8. Marc Simmons, "Settlement Patterns and Village Plans in Colonial New Mexico," in *Hispanic Urban Planning in North America*, ed. Daniel J. Garr, 37-51, 39.
9. Ibid., 50, n. 34.
10. Frank Moya Pons, *The Dominican Republic: A National History*, 46-49.
11. For this discussion I have followed Henri Pirenne, *Medieval Cities: Their Origins and the Revival of Trade*, 56-105.
12. Phillips, *Ciudad Real*, 8-11.
13. This discussion of Spain's urbanization and commercial activity is from Jaime Vicens Vives, *An Economic History of Spain*.
14. Quoted in Dan Stanislawski, "Early Spanish Town Planning in the New World," *Geographical Review* 37 (1947), 94-105, 95.
15. Quoted by Richard M. Morse, "Some Characteristics of Latin American Urban History," *American Historical Review* 67:2 (Jan. 1962), 317-338. I changed one word in Morse's translation. See also Erwin Walter Palm, "Los orígenes del urbanismo imperial en América," in *Contribuciones a la historia municipal de América*, ed. Rafael Altamira y Crevea et al., 241-268.
16. Palm, "Los orígenes del urbanismo imperial en América," 242-243. The English translation was done by J. Carlos Vázquez Villa.
17. Quoted in Stanislawski, "Early Spanish Town Planning," 95.
18. Quoted in *ibid.*, 96. A slightly different version is in Morse, "Some Characteristics of Latin American Urban History," 319.
19. Palm, "Los orígenes del urbanismo imperial en América," 256.
20. Quoted in Stanislawski, "Early Spanish Town Planning," 96.
21. Ibid., 97.

## CHAPTER 2

1. This quotation and the following one are from the preeminent scholar of the pre-Columbian city, Jorge E. Hardoy, "Two Thousand Years of Latin American Urbanization," in Jorge E. Hardoy, ed., *Urbanization in Latin America: Approaches and Issues*, 3-55, 7. The basic information about the pre-Columbian city is from this source and from Hardoy, *Pre-Columbian Cities*. The population figure for Teotihuacán is from "Two Thousand Years of Latin American Urbanization," 13.
2. On *chinampas*, see the excellent discussion in Ross Hassig, *Trade, Tribute, and Transportation: The Sixteenth-Century Political Economy of the Valley of Mexico*, 47-53.
3. All of the Cortés quotations in this chapter are from Irwin R. Blacker and Harry M. Rosen, eds., *Conquest: Dispatches of Cortez from the New World*.



4. All of the Díaz del Castillo quotations in this chapter are from Bernal Díaz del Castillo, *The Discovery and Conquest of Mexico*.

5. There were actually three principal causeways, but secondary causeways sometimes induced foreign observers to think that there were four causeways.

6. Pedro de Cieza de León, *The Incas of Pedro de Cieza de León*, ed. Victor Wolfgang von Hagen, 144.

7. For a discussion of the multiple uses of Maya residences and palaces, see Jessica Joyce Christie, ed., *Maya Palaces and Elite Residences: An Interdisciplinary Approach*.

### CHAPTER 3

1. Daniel J. Garr, ed., *Hispanic Urban Planning in North America*, 5.

2. The translations from the *Ordenanzas* of 1573 and from Vitruvius are from Dan Stanislawski, "Early Spanish Town Planning in the New World," *Geographical Review* 37 (1947), 94–105. Longer and somewhat more formal translations of the *Ordenanza* articles can be found in Garr, *Hispanic Urban Planning*.

3. Much of this discussion comes from Robert C. Smith, "Colonial Towns of Spanish and Portuguese America," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 14:4 (Dec. 1955), 3–12.

4. Robert J. Mullen, *Architecture and Its Sculpture in Viceregal Mexico*, 25.

5. Jorge E. Hardoy, "Two Thousand Years of Latin American Urbanization," in Jorge E. Hardoy, ed., *Urbanization in Latin America: Approaches and Issues*. The data in this section are all from Hardoy. For the period 1580–1630, Hardoy has an index of 2.88.

6. Excellent discussions of the relationship between urban and rural areas can be found in such books as Ricardo Sánchez et al., eds., *La ciudad y el campo en la historia de México*; and Jorge Silva Riquer and Antonio Escobar Ohmstede, eds., *Mercados indígenas en México, Chile y Argentina, siglos XVIII–XIX*.

### CHAPTER 4

1. These examples are from John Preston Moore, *The Cabildo in Peru under the Hapsburgs*, 60, as is much of the information about town government in general. See also Constantino Bayle, *Los cabildos seculares en la América española*.

2. Jane Erin Mangan, "Enterprise in the Shadow of Silver: Colonial Andeans and the Culture of Trade in Potosí, 1570–1700," 46–48.

3. For an important discussion of citizenship in colonial Spanish America, see Tamar Herzog, *Defining Nations: Immigrants and Citizens in Early Modern Spain and Spanish America*.

4. In this and the next paragraph I am following Moore almost word for word: *The Cabildo in Peru under the Hapsburgs*, pp. 89–90.

5. John Preston Moore, *The Cabildo in Peru under the Bourbons*, 60.
6. For an excellent discussion of a town council's efforts to supply and distribute potable water to the urban population, see Stephen Webre, "Water and Society in a Spanish American City: Santiago de Guatemala, 1555–1773," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 70:1 (Feb. 1990), 57–84.
7. This broad subject is discussed masterfully in Magnus Mörner, *La corona española y los foráneos en los pueblos de indios de América*. Important information about Indian towns can be found in the books by Charles Gibson, James Lockhart, and Murdo MacLeod listed in the Bibliography.
8. Thomas Gage, *Thomas Gage's Travels in the New World*, ed. J. Eric Thompson, 145–146. For a fuller and more complex discussion of indigenous urbanization in central Mexico, see James Lockhart, *The Nahuas after the Conquest*, 30–44. For Guatemala, see Robinson Antonio Herrera, "The People of Santiago: Early Colonial Guatemala, 1538–1587," 319–348. See also Sonya Lipsett-Rivera, *To Defend Our Water with the Blood of Our Veins: The Struggle for Resources in Colonial Puebla*.
9. Paul Lokken, "Marriage as Slave Emancipation in Seventeenth-Century Rural Guatemala," *The Americas* 58:2 (Oct. 2001), 186–187.
10. Rina Cáceres, *Negros, mulatos, esclavos y libertos en la Costa Rica del siglo XVII*, 91–97; Ben Vinson III, *Bearing Arms for His Majesty: The Free-Colored Militia in Colonial Mexico*; Jane Landers, *Black Society in Spanish Florida*.
11. "Fundación de un pueblo de pardos libres en Paraguay para vigilancia y freno de invasiones portuguesas: Instrucción y normativas del Gobernador D. Pedro Melo," in Francisco de Solano, *Normas y leyes de la ciudad hispanoamericana*, 1:236–249; Germán de Granda, "Origen, función y estructura de un pueblo de negros y mulatos libres en el Paraguay del siglo XVII (San Agustín de la Emboscada)," *Revista de Indias* 43 (Jan.–June 1983): 230–264; Agustín Blujaki, *Pueblo de pardos libres: San Agustín de la Emboscada*.
12. For this discussion of El Cobre I am closely following the extraordinary book by María Elena Díaz, *The Virgin, the King, and the Royal Slaves of El Cobre: Negotiating Freedom in Colonial Cuba, 1670–1780*, 9–10.
13. *Ibid.*, 268–269.
14. *Ibid.*, 324–325.
15. *Ibid.*, 326.

## CHAPTER 5

1. Not everyone agrees that there was a true Baroque style in colonial Spanish America. For a discussion, see George Kubler, "El urbanismo colonial iberoamericano, 1600–1820," in Francisco de Solano, ed., *Historia y futuro de la ciudad iberoamericana*, 27–45. One of those who favors the Baroque is Pál Kelemen, *Baroque and Rococo in Latin America*.
2. Jorge Juan and Antonio de Ulloa, *A Voyage to South America*, 2:35–39.
3. William Bullock, *Six Months' Residence and Travels in Mexico*, 86–88. The book was first published in 1824.

4. Jay Kinsbruner, *Not of Pure Blood: The Free People of Color and Racial Prejudice in Nineteenth-Century Puerto Rico*.
5. Louisa Schell Hoberman, *Mexico's Merchant Elite, 1590–1660*, 140–141.
6. The Mexico City information for 1813 is from Jay Kinsbruner, *Petty Capitalism in Spanish America*, 129–135.
7. Gabriel Haslip-Viera, *Crime and Punishment in Late Colonial Mexico City, 1692–1810*, 10–11.
8. Bullock, *Six Months' Residence and Travels in Mexico*, 84–86. Based on an unspecified sample, R. Douglas Cope has noted that in Mexico City during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries there existed in the central core of the city “a vertically segregated society, divided primarily along class rather than racial lines. The wealthy dwelled upstairs, above the malodorous, disease-ridden streets and canals; the poor lived downstairs, at times bereft of protection from the elements” (*The Limits of Racial Domination: Plebeian Society in Colonial Mexico City, 1660–1720*, 32).
9. John Miller, *Letters from the Havana during the Year 1820*, 60–61.
10. Juan and Ulloa, *A Voyage to South America*, 1:79.
11. Concolorcorvo [Alonso Carrió], *El Lazarillo*, 283. First published in Lima, 1775–1776.
12. Ilarione da Bergamo, *Daily Life in Colonial Mexico: The Journey of Friar Ilarione da Bergamo, 1761–1768*, ed. Robert Ryal Miller and William J. Orr, 88.
13. Donald B. Cooper, *Epidemic Disease in Mexico City, 1761–1813*, 19.
14. Quoted in *ibid.*, 30.
15. Quoted in *ibid.*, 21.
16. For a view of this modernizing effort as an expression of the Crown's furtherance of royal absolutism, see Charles F. Walker, “The Upper Classes and Their Upper Stories: Architecture and the Aftermath of the Lima Earthquake of 1746,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 83:1 (Feb. 2003), 53–82.
17. Miguel León-Portilla, ed., *The Broken Spears: The Aztec Account of the Conquest of Mexico*, trans. Lysander Kemp (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 92–93.
18. Cooper, *Epidemic Disease in Mexico City*, 50–55.
19. The information in this and the preceding paragraph is from *ibid.*, 86–186. For a fascinating account of smallpox in the Americas, see Elizabeth A. Fenn, *Pox Americana: The Great Smallpox Epidemic of 1775–82*. Fenn creatively traces the arrival of a smallpox epidemic of 1780 in Mexico City and its outward spread, first to the south and east and then to the north.
20. Daniel J. Santamaría, “La población: Estancamiento y expansión, 1580–1855,” in José Luis Romero and Luis Alberto Romero, eds., *Buenos Aires: Historia de cuatro siglos*, 1:211–223.
21. Josephe Mugaburu and Francisco Mugaburu, *Chronicle of Colonial Lima: The Diary of Josephe and Francisco Mugaburu, 1640–1697*, trans. and ed. Robert Ryal Miller, 36.
22. Juan and Ulloa, *A Voyage to South America*, 2:83–84.

23. *Ibid.*, 2:102. Actually it was not quite this simple. After the 1746 earthquake, officials in Lima determined that two-storied buildings that survived either had to be destroyed and replaced by one-storied buildings or had to have their upper story or stories removed. As it happened, the houses two or more stories tall belonged to the elite, who defended their right to such edifices. In their arguments they emphasized that taller buildings befitted their owners' social standing in the community and indeed separated the *gente decente* from the lower classes. The viceroy finally conceded to the elite, and two-storied residences continued to be built in Lima. An interesting sidelight to the debate is that some of the two-storied buildings that were constructed partly with adobe and or *quincha* (wattle and daub), building materials of the pre-Columbian cultures, survived the earthquake. In the rebuilding of Lima many upper-storied residences employed the much safer flat roofs of pre-Columbian times as well as adobe and *quincha* construction materials. For a fuller discussion, see Walker, "The Upper Classes and Their Upper Stories," 53–82.

# CHAPTER 6

1. For an example of an early-modern French nobleman who was actively involved in economic endeavors but was not a capitalist, see Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *The Territory of the Historian*, 133–79.

2. John E. Kicza, *Colonial Entrepreneurs: Families and Business in Bourbon Mexico City*, 78–79. The information about Aldana and the quotations are from these pages.

3. This information about Aldana's possible grocery store ownership is from Jay Kinsbruner, *Petty Capitalism in Spanish America*, 46.

4. Jay Kinsbruner, *Chile: A Historical Interpretation*, 27–29.

5. Kicza, *Colonial Entrepreneurs*, 65. This information is from Kicza in paraphrase and in quotation. Some of the paraphrased words are Kicza's.

6. *Ibid.*, 73–74.

7. Quoted in *ibid.*, 74–75.

8. *Ibid.*, 103–104.

9. Kinsbruner, *Petty Capitalism*, 61–67, and *passim*. The Caracas information in this and the following paragraphs is from this source. I have taken from my book directly without quotation marks and in paraphrase.

10. Daniel Defoe, *The Complete English Tradesman*, 1:269. The book was first published in 1726.

11. See, for instance, Jane Erin Mangan, "Enterprise in the Shadow of Silver: Colonial Andeans and the Culture of Trade in Potosí, 1570–1700," 174–179.

12. Kinsbruner, *Petty Capitalism*, 2–9. Again I have taken material from this book without quoting. Further information about grocery store inventories is in Carlos Mayo, ed., *Pulperos y pulperías de Buenos Aires, 1740–1830* (Mar del Plata: Universidad Nacional de Mar del Plata, 1998).

13. Kinsbruner, *Petty Capitalism*, 40.

14. See, for instance, the brilliant discussion in David M. Potter, *People of Plenty: Economic Abundance and the American Character*, 96–97 and passim.

15. Kinsbruner, *Petty Capitalism*, 78.

16. Information for this paragraph and the preceding one from *ibid.*, 80–81, 87–88.

17. *Ibid.*, 24–25.

18. *Ibid.*, 40.

19. *Ibid.*, 34–35, n. 27. One of the least studied and least understood aspects of the colonial economy is the so-called patron/client relationship. Examples usually given were not patron/client relationships at all, since the “client” often had considerable leverage with regard to his or her “patron.” So-called clients could declare bankruptcy, close their businesses, flee, and so on, as many did. Furthermore, the “patron” sometimes had to continue providing loans or goods on credit in the hope of redeeming his or her exposure. In the López-Salazar relationship, however, we see a fairly true patron/client relationship, in that López probably could have closed Salazar down by stopping further financial support. She clearly interfered with Salazar’s business operations by placing a surrogate directly within her business operation. Furthermore, Salazar, as a shopstall operator, had no standing before the merchant tribunal. She could have fled, perhaps her only means of thwarting the power of her benefactor. In classic terms, López clearly possessed power to hurt, and Salazar clearly had few options other than to acquiesce to her “patron’s” demands as well as her financial support.

For discussions of the patron/client relationship in classic terms, see James Lockhart and Stuart B. Schwartz, *Early Latin America: A History of Colonial Spanish America and Brazil*, 5; Richard Graham, *Patronage and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Brazil*, 24–25; and Ernest Gellner, “Patrons and Clients,” in Ernest Gellner and John Waterbury, eds., *Patrons and Clients in Mediterranean Societies*, 1–6. For an intelligent discussion of the patron/client paradigm, even as far away as the frontier, see Cheryl English Martin, *Governance and Society in Colonial Mexico*, 86. Stephanie Blank discusses the patron/client relationship in “Patrons, Clients, and Kin in Seventeenth-Century Caracas: A Methodological Essay in Colonial Spanish American History,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 54:2 (May 1974), 260–283; and “Patrons, Brokers, and Clients in the Families of the Elite in Colonial Caracas, 1595–1627,” *The Americas* 36:1 (July 1979), 90–115. Blank’s definition of the patron/client relationship is interesting for the early colonial period in Caracas, when the state was weak. It suggests that commercial capitalism needed a strong state governmental apparatus in order to mature.

20. Lyman L. Johnson, “Artisans,” in Louisa Schell Hoberman and Susan Migden Socolow, eds., *Cities and Society in Colonial Latin America*, 227–250.

21. For examples of apprenticeship arrangements, see Mangan, “Enterprise in the Shadow of Silver,” 262–264; and Robinson Antonio Herrera, “The People of Santiago: Early Colonial Guatemala, 1536–1587,” 189–190.

22. Kicza, *Colonial Entrepreneurs*, 212.

23. Dorothy Tanck Estrada, *La educación ilustrada (1786–1836): Educación primaria en la Ciudad de México, 196–202*, and passim. I have lowered her estimate somewhat.

24. Lyman L. Johnson, “The Artisans of Buenos Aires during the Viceroyalty, 1776–1810,” 247–256. For an excellent discussion of journeymen and housing costs in Buenos Aires, see also Johnson, “The Price History of Buenos Aires during the Viceregal Period,” in Lyman L. Johnson and Enrique Tandeter, eds., *Essays on the Price History of Eighteenth-Century Latin America*, 137–171.

25. Colin M. MacLachlan and Jaime E. Rodríguez O., *The Forging of the Cosmic Race: A Reinterpretation of Colonial Mexico*, 223. Discussions about class or economic groups can be found in many places, including Enrique Florescano, ed., *Orígenes y desarrollo de la burguesía en América Latina, 1700–1955*.

26. On the perils of importing terminology from one society to another, see Alfred Cobban, “The Vocabulary of Social History,” *Political Science Quarterly* 71:1 (March 1956), 1–17.

#### CHAPTER 7

1. For exceptions in New Spain, see Ben Vinson III, *Bearing Arms for His Majesty: The Free-Colored Militia in Colonial Mexico*.

2. This discussion is based on my *Not of Pure Blood: The Free People of Color and Racial Prejudice in Nineteenth-Century Puerto Rico*. It is always profitable to consult Magnus Mörner, *Race Mixture in the History of Latin America*.

3. Christopher H. Lutz, *Santiago de Guatemala, 1541–1773*, 150. I am quoting Lutz, not a document.

4. *Ibid.*, 150–151. Again, I am quoting Lutz, not a document. The following quotation is also from this source.

5. These proclamations were recorded by the Mugaburus, *Chronicle of Colonial Lima: The Diary of Josephe and Francisco Mugaburu, 1640–1697*, trans. and ed. Robert Ryal Miller, 124–125, 144.

6. Jay Kinsbruner, *Petty Capitalism in Spanish America*, 82.

7. Lutz, *Santiago de Guatemala*, 152–153. I have paraphrased Lutz.

8. Kathleen Waldron, “A Social History of a Primate City: The Case of Caracas, 1750–1810,” 74–75, 79.

9. I have taken directly from my *Not of Pure Blood*, 30, n. 36. See also Carlos Larrazábal Blanco, *Los negros y la esclavitud en Santo Domingo, 106–128, 184*.

10. Waldron, “A Social History of a Primate City,” 76–77.

11. Mörner, *Race Mixture*, 44.

12. *Ibid.*, 63.

13. Kinsbruner, *Petty Capitalism*, 75, 58.

14. The entire discussion of the shoemakers’ guild in Buenos Aires is from Lyman L. Johnson, “The Artisans of Buenos Aires during the Viceroyalty, 1776–1810,” 20–145. All quotations are from documents in Johnson.

15. During the late eighteenth century the Crown disbanded segregated free colored militia units as part of a generalized military reform. Sometimes the free colored militiamen litigated strenuously against the effort, since while identified as free colored militiamen they were entitled to several significant perquisites, including, significantly, freedom from tribute payment. See Vinson, *Bearing Arms for His Majesty*.

16. The Church also contributed to the legitimacy of such vague, normative terminology by officially employing the phrase *gente ordinaria* to describe large portions of the colonial society (Lutz, *Santiago de Guatemala*, 79).

17. The socioeconomic origin of business leaders, at least with regard to “elite” business leaders, in the United States from colonial times through the industrial period is somewhat controversial. Business leaders have produced the majority of future business leaders throughout our history. See, for instance, the examples in Seymour Martin Lipset and Reinhard Bendix, *Social Mobility in Industrial Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967). But this does not say anything about business executives below the “elite” or executives and owners of smaller businesses. Take, for instance, the example given by Joseph A. Kahl, *The American Class Structure* (New York: Rinehart & Company, Inc., 1957), 268–271. From a substantial sample, we see that 31 percent of executives or owners of large businesses in 1952 had fathers who themselves were business leaders. This was by far the largest group in the sample, and it confirms other studies. If we look at the statistics from another angle, however, we can draw a different conclusion about upward mobility at that time in the United States. We find that 53 percent of important (that is, “elite”) business leaders in 1952 had fathers of varyingly humble background (owners of small businesses, farm tenants and owners, clerks and salesmen, foremen, skilled workers, semiskilled and unskilled workers). The “rags to riches” stories of Horatio Alger validate the “American Dream” for very good reason. I do not mean to compare an example of U.S. mobility in 1952 with colonial Spanish America, only to challenge us to make the inquiry.

18. Quoted in Juan Pedro Viqueira Albán, *Propriety and Permissiveness in Bourbon Mexico*, 198.

19. Quoted in *ibid.*, 187.

20. *Ibid.*

21. The information about wages and cost of living in Mexico City is from Susan Deans-Smith, *Bureaucrats, Planters, and Workers: The Making of the Tobacco Monopoly in Bourbon Mexico*, 191–200; and Michael C. Scardaville, “Crime and the Urban Poor: Mexico City in the Late Colonial Period” (Ph.D. diss., University of Florida, 1997), 67–79. Excellent essays on prices in other cities can be found in Lyman L. Johnson and Enrique Tandeter, eds., *Essays on the Price History of Eighteenth-Century Latin America*. For an example of exploitation and abuse of domestic servants, see Ann Zulawski, “Social Differentiation, Gender, and Ethnicity: Urban Indian Women in Colonial Bolivia, 1640–1725,” *Latin American Research Review* 25:2 (1990), 93–113.

A small debt to an employer sometimes “was used as a pretext for keeping women in virtually perpetual servitude” (104).

22. Quoted in Viqueira Albán, *Propriety and Permissiveness*, 7.

23. Quoted in *ibid.*, 200.

24. For this discussion of begging and the Poor House, I have followed Silvia Marina Arrom, *Containing the Poor: The Mexico City Poor House, 1774–1871*, 1–87.

25. Quoted in Norman F. Martin, S.J., “La desnudez en la Nueva España del siglo XVIII,” *Anuario de Estudios Americanos* 29 (1972), 280.

26. Viqueira Albán, *Propriety and Permissiveness*, 179.

27. Martin, “La desnudez,” 280.

28. Quoted in Jesús Romero Flores, *México: Historia de una gran ciudad*, 367.

29. Quoted in Viqueira Albán, *Propriety and Permissiveness*, 177.

30. In *La ciudad sumergida: Aristocracia y plebe en Lima, 1760–1830*, Alberto Flores Galindo argues that the “plebeian” population of Lima during the last decades of the eighteenth century was less than 38 percent of the city’s population (and possibly considerably less). To Flores Galindo, the plebe of Lima were defined not only by “ ‘ignorance,’ mestizaje, economic penury or the lack of defined employment, but, above all, by the fundamental fact of not owning slaves” (126–127). This obviously was a contextual definition, since Lima was far more a slave city than, for instance, Mexico City. But one wonders about the poor artisans, bakers, and grocers who did own slaves. Has Flores Galindo’s characterization elevated them to his “*capas medias*”/“*media clase*”? Many of them probably belong there anyway, slave owners or not.

## CHAPTER 8

1. The definition of “class” is controversial. In the United States we officially constitute class by family or individual income. However, individuals often self-select a class with which to identify. Thus, students of mine over the years have almost always considered themselves members of the middle class, even when attending a public university dedicated to the education of students whose parents are of the lower-middle class. Karl Marx considered mutual interest (class interest, as it were) essential to the formation of a mature class. In this book I hold both income and interest to be worthy of consideration. In colonial Spanish America urban food and tax riots often were founded upon or induced cross-class alliances, including temporary alliances between the lowest and highest classes. Similarly, in the United States people obviously from one socioeconomic class often cross class lines when voting about such issues as relations with Cuba, abortion, the environment, and many other matters. That is, mutual interest based on economics sometimes gives way, even glaringly, to other sectarian interests.

2. Jay Kinsbruner, *Petty Capitalism in Spanish America*, 95–96.

3. *Ibid.*, 92–93.



4. Susan Deans-Smith, *Bureaucrats, Planters, and Workers: The Making of the Tobacco Monopoly in Bourbon Mexico*, and “The Working Poor and the Eighteenth-Century Colonial State: Gender, Public Order, and Work Discipline,” in William H. Beezley, Cheryl English Martin, and William E. French, eds., *Rituals of Rule, Rituals of Resistance: Public Celebrations and Popular Culture in Mexico*, 47–75. All of the information about the tobacco monopoly is from these two sources.

5. Quoted in *Bureaucrats, Planters, and Workers*, 237, and “The Working Poor,” 61.

6. Quoted in *Bureaucrats, Planters, and Workers*, 239, and “The Working Poor,” 62. At times I have adopted some of Deans-Smith’s language, which seemed unavoidable to me. Professor Deans-Smith was kind enough to read this chapter for me in manuscript.

7. Current research into the economic activities of Indian villages and towns shows them to have been integrated into local and regional economies, producing and exchanging a wide variety of goods. Future research into the social ramifications of this economic activity should prove extremely significant. See Jorge Silva Riquer and Antonio Escobar Ohmstede, eds., *Mercados indígenas en México, Chile y Argentina, siglos XVIII–XIX*.

## CHAPTER 9

1. Susan Migden Socolow, *The Women of Colonial Latin America*, 9, 65. This does not mean that women in consensual unions had no inheritance rights with regard to the male’s estate. The unmarried woman had a legal right to whatever portion of the estate she had contributed in the form of investment, whether as capital or labor in return for a percentage of ownership or share of profits. It helped always to have notarized documentation of such input. Additionally, individual courts might protect a consensual widow financially, but so far as we know this was discretionary. In addition to Socolow’s book, another informative companion piece to this chapter is Richard Boyer, *Lives of the BIGAMISTS: Marriage, Family, and Community in Colonial Mexico*.

2. For an excellent example of this among the elite of Caracas in the eighteenth century, see Robert J. Ferry, *The Colonial Elite of Early Caracas: Formation and Crisis, 1567–1767*, 219–321.

3. On this general issue, see Roland Pressat, *Démographie statistique*, 22–24, and *Population*, 37, 42.

4. See Michael M. Swann, *Migrants in the Mexican North: Mobility, Economy, and Society in a Colonial World*. Swann comments on the literature concerning female migration, 118–122.

5. On the multiple occupations of women in Santiago de Guatemala, including sorcery, see Martha Few, *Women Who Live Evil Lives: Gender, Religion, and the Politics of Power in Colonial Guatemala, 1650–1750*, 101–102.

6. Linda Greenow has summarized the data on family size in “Spatial Dimensions of Household and Family in Eighteenth-Century Spanish America,” 12–15.

7. For a lustrous example of this, as well as first-cousin marriage among the elite of Caracas during the eighteenth century, see Ferry, *The Colonial Elite of Early Caracas*, 230–235.

8. See Greenow, “Spatial Dimensions of Household and Family”; and Michael M. Swann, *Tierra Adentro: Settlement and Society in Colonial Durango*, 311, n. 38.

9. Ferry, *The Colonial Elite of Early Caracas*, 217–221.

10. The information about the Buenos Aires import-export merchants is from Susan Migden Socolow, *The Merchants of Buenos Aires, 1778–1810: Family and Commerce*, 15, 37. The information about the grocers is from Jay Kinsbruner, *Petty Capitalism in Spanish America*, 114–116. I have paraphrased and taken directly from the book without quotation marks.

11. Thomas Calvo, “The Warmth of the Hearth: Seventeenth-Century Guadalajara Families,” in Asunción Lavrin, ed., *Sexuality and Marriage in Colonial Latin America*, 287–312.

12. Socolow, *The Women of Colonial Latin America*, 76–77.

#### CHAPTER 10

1. “Perhaps the best definition of the city in its highest aspects is to say that it is a place designed to offer the widest facilities for significant conversation. The dialogue is one of the ultimate expressions of life in the city: the delicate flower of its long vegetative growth” (Lewis Mumford, *The City in History*, 116).

2. John Preston Moore, *The Cabildo in Peru under the Hapsburgs*, 192–193. For a similar jaundiced view of lawyers in late colonial Mexico City, see Hipólito Villarreal, *Enfermedades políticas que padece la capital de esta Nueva España*, 129–131.

3. For an excellent example of one town council’s problems in celebrating the ascension of a king and the death of his predecessor, see Frances L. Ramos, “Succession and Death: Royal Ceremonies in Colonial Puebla,” *The Americas* 60:2 (Oct. 2003), 185–215.

4. Josephe Mugaburu and Francisco Mugaburu, *Chronicle of Colonial Lima: The Diary of Josephe and Francisco Mugaburu, 1640–1697*, trans. and ed. Robert Ryal Miller, 40–43. All of the information and quotations about the Lima celebration of the Immaculate Conception are from this source. For a vivid account of a seventeenth-century *mascarada* (masquerade) celebration, see Irving A. Leonard, *Baroque Times in Old Mexico*, 124–129.

5. For excellent discussions, see Linda A. Curcio-Nagy, “Giants and Gypsies: Corpus Christi in Colonial Mexico City,” in William H. Beezley, Cheryl English Martin, and William E. French, eds., *Rituals of Rule, Rituals of Resistance: Public Celebrations and Popular Culture in Mexico*, 1–26; and Cheryl English Martin, *Governance and Society in Colonial Mexico*, 97–124.

6. Maya Ramos Smith, *La danza en México durante la época colonial*, 28–45.

7. Eugenio Pereira Salas, *Los orígenes del arte musical en Chile*, 206–213.

8. John Charles Chasteen, "Patriotic Footwork: Social Dance and the Watershed of Independence in Buenos Aires," in Victor M. Uribe-Uran, ed., *State and Society in Spanish America during the Age of Revolution, 173-191*.
9. Carlos Venegas Fornias, *La urbanización de las murallas: Dependencia y modernidad*, 15-16.
10. Juan Pedro Viqueira Albán, *Propriety and Permissiveness in Bourbon Mexico, 178*.

## CHAPTER II

1. See Carmen Castañeda, "Student Migration to Colonial Urban Centers: Guadalajara and Lima," in David J. Robinson, ed., *Migration in Colonial Spanish America*, 128-142.
2. Ibid.
3. See, for instance, Sam Bass Warner, Jr., *The Urban Wilderness: A History of the American City*, 70.
4. Jay Kinsbruner, *Chile: A Historical Interpretation*, 23.
5. D. A. Brading, *Miners and Merchants in Bourbon Mexico, 1763-1810*, 226-227. See also Castañeda, "Student Migration to Colonial Urban Centers."

## APPENDIX

1. The translations from the *Ordenanzas* of 1573 and from Vitruvius are from Dan Stanislawski, "Early Spanish Town Planning in the New World," *Geographical Review* 37 (1947), 94-105. Longer and somewhat more formal translations of the *Ordenanza* articles can be found in Garr, *Hispanic Urban Planning*.

## Glossary



- Accesoria* room, recess, or nook in a building, often used as a store  
*Alameda* park or avenue  
*Alcalde* magistrate-administrative officer, most often of municipal council  
*Alférez real* royal standard bearer and officer of municipal council  
*Alguacil mayor* chief constable of municipal council  
*Alhóndiga* municipal public granary  
*Arancel* list of legal prices  
*Ayuntamiento* municipal council, also called *cabildo*  
*Barrio* administrative subdivision of urban jurisdiction  
*Bodega* in some places a retail grocery store different in inventory and larger in scale than a *pulpería*; also simply a storage room  
*Bodeguero* owner of a *bodega*  
*Cabildo* municipal council also known as *ayuntamiento*  
*Cabildo abierto* municipal council meeting to discuss urgent matters open to all leading residents  
*Cacique* leader, usually hereditary, of Indian community; in Andean regions known as *kuraka*  
*Cajero* clerk  
*Casta* person of mixed racial descent  
*Caste* any of several legal categories to which all Spanish Americans were assigned according to their race  
*Ciudad* city  
*Comerciante* large-scale merchant, in some places importer and/or exporter, in other places simply large wholesale merchant  
*Consulado* the merchant tribunal  
*Encomendero* holder of an *encomienda*  
*Encomienda* grant of Indian labor  
*Escribano* notary  
*Fandango* group of popular dances or a single popular dance

- Fiel ejecutor* municipal officer charged with supervision of retail stores, including weights and measures
- Gobernador* provincial governor
- Hacendado* owner of any large landed estate
- Kuraka* see *cacique*
- Mulato* first-generation person of mixed white-black parentage
- Panadería* wholesale bakery, could have retail outlet
- Panadero* owner of a *panadería*
- Pardo* free person of color, usually of lightest skin shade within the caste
- Paseo* wide street or avenue
- Pelota* game of Basque origin that anticipated jai alai
- Pósito* granary maintained by municipal councils for times of scarcity and to influence market prices
- Procurador* generally, legal council to corporate body
- Pueblo* town
- Pulpería* small retail grocery store
- Pulpero* owner of a *pulpería*
- Pulque* alcoholic drink easily fermented from juice of maguey plant
- Pulquería* tavern that sold pulque
- Regatón* itinerant huckster, regrater, who intercepted for later resale goods being brought to urban markets
- Regidor* municipal alderman
- Seña* private small currency issued by stores in Caracas and some other places
- Sociedad de castas* organization of colonial Spanish-American society into legal castes
- Solar* building lot
- Tertulia* social gathering among people of means for entertainment and discussion
- Tlaco* private small currency issued by stores in Mexico
- Vecino* municipal resident considered eligible to attend open municipal council meetings

## Selected Bibliography



Since notes have been kept to a minimum in this book, I have included in the Bibliography not only the works cited but also studies that nevertheless informed the writing of the book and would be of interest to a reader. Whenever possible, I have avoided including unpublished doctoral dissertations since these are rarely available in libraries.

Some excellent places to begin a study of Spanish-American urban development during the colonial period are Francisco de Solano, ed., *Estudios sobre la ciudad iberoamericana* (Madrid: Instituto "Gonzalo Fernández De Oviedo," 1975), especially Solano's essay "El proceso urbano iberoamericano desde sus orígenes hasta los principios del siglo XIX: Estudio bibliográfico," 727–858; Richard P. Schaedel et al., eds., *Urbanization in the Americas from Its Beginnings to the Present* (The Hague: Mouton, 1978); Jorge E. Hardoy et al., *Urbanización en América Latina: Una bibliografía sobre su historia*, 2 vols. (Buenos Aires: Instituto Torcuato Di Tella, 1975); and Hardoy's *Cartografía urbana colonial de América Latina y el Caribe* (Buenos Aires: Grupo Editor Latinoamericano, 1991). Valuable introductions are Richard L. Kagan, *Urban Images of the Hispanic World, 1493–1793* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000); Francisco de Solano, *Ciudades hispanoamericanas y pueblos de indios* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones, 1990); José Luis Romero, *Latinoamérica: Las ciudades y las ideas* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI Argentina Editores, S.A., 1976); and Graziano Gasparini, ed., *Arquitectura colonial iberoamericana* (Caracas: Armitano Editores, 1997). Gasparini's bibliography (553–565) is very helpful.

Three other anthologies are extremely important introductions: Jorge E. Hardoy, ed., *Urbanization in Latin America: Approaches and Issues* (pb.; Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1975); Jorge E. Hardoy and Richard P. Schaedel, eds., *Las ciudades de América Latina y sus áreas de influencia a través de la historia* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones SIAP, 1976), and Louisa Schell Hoberman and Susan Migden Socolow, eds., *Cities and Society in Colonial Latin America* (pb.; Albuquerque: University of New Mexico

Press, 1986). Still of value are Woodrow Borah, "Trends in Recent Studies in Colonial Latin American Cities," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 64:3 (Aug. 1984), 535–554; and Fred Bronner, "Urban Society in Colonial Spanish America: Recent Trends," *Latin American Research Review* 21:1 (1986), 7–72. Additionally, suggestions for further readings can be found in my books listed below. Many "coffee-table" books about colonial cities contain excellent plates of houses, public buildings, churches, and maps. Online catalogs almost always include examples of such books.

Laws governing the founding and administering of urban habitats as well as almost everything pertaining to the urban economy and society are found in the *Recopilación de leyes de los reynos de las Indias*, 3 vols. (Madrid: Consejo de la Hispanidad, 1943); Richard Konetzke, ed., *Colección de documentos para la historia de la formación social de Hispanoamérica, 1493–1810*, 2 vols. (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1953–1959); and Francisco de Solano, ed., *Normas y leyes de la ciudad hispanoamericana*, 2 vols. (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1996).

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