

**CRIOLLOS--THE BIRTH OF A DYNAMIC NEW  
INDO-AFRO-EUROPEAN PEOPLE AND CULTURE ON HISPANIOLA**

by

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*Certainly fanaticism and militarism were underlying factors of the reconquista...but it must be recalled that the centuries of reconquest produced not only conflict, but the unique pattern of convivencia in which Christians, Jews, and Muslims lived in relative tolerance and learned from and influenced each other. The Spaniards who went to the New World were heirs to the traditions of both conquest and convivencia.<sup>1</sup>*

**--The tripartite criollos of Hispaniola--**

The tripartite nature—Indo-Afro-European--of both Hispaniola's people and its culture has been little recognized or explored. In large part, this is because studies, particularly studies of the island's conquest and colonization, have focused on Spaniards and Santo Domingo, which was their capital and administrative center. In Santo Domingo, as best they could, Spaniards reproduced their European infrastructures and European cultural patterns. Nonetheless, Santo Domingo<sup>2</sup> was a frontier city. The culture that evolved there was not a perfect European replica because of:

- the background and nature of the colonists and involuntary emigrants;

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<sup>1</sup>Ida Altman, *Emigrants and Society: Extremadura and America in the Sixteenth Century* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989), 43.

- the island's indigenous people, the Tainos, who had their own cultural beliefs and traditions;
- the island's unique geography and climate;
- and also because of the distance of the colony from the Iberian motherland.

The Spanish colonists were even less successful at replicating their European infrastructures and European culture in the countryside than they were in the capital. In Hispaniola's countryside--in the gold mining regions, in the rural villages and pueblos, on the sugar ingenios, and in the uncontrolled regions of the island--Spaniards were outnumbered by a minimum of six-and-a-half or eight-and-a-half to one by Indians, Africans and "others" in the 1530s (see Table 1), long after the Indians were supposed to have disappeared and long before most of the African slaves arrived.<sup>3</sup>

Where did all these "others" come from? Most documents and chronicles of the era make it clear that "Spaniards" began fathering *criollo* children with Taíno women (*indias*) almost from the moment that Christopher Columbus's ships made landfall on Hispaniola on December 9, 1492.<sup>4</sup> Royal policy officially encouraged

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<sup>3</sup> The author's doctoral dissertation explores this topic in more detail. Lynne A. Guitar, "Cultural Genesis: Relationships among Indians, Africans and Spaniards in rural Hispaniola, first half of the sixteenth century," Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee December 1998.

<sup>4</sup>The word "Spaniards" appears in quotes because it is unclear how many of the men who came to Hispaniola from Europe were of mixed Spanish-African inheritance. There were "*ladinos*," Hispanicized Africans among them, who were not distinguished from Spaniards in the records, a subject treated in more detail in the above-mentioned dissertation.

I use the word "criollo" (usually defined as "American born") or the term "mixed-blood" throughout this paper, even though "criollo" was not used in the documents of the era. I do this because the term "mestizo" (literally "mixed"),

intermarriage between Spaniards and indias from 1501 on. The Spaniards took Indian wives because very few Spanish women emigrated to Hispaniola.<sup>5</sup> They also took African wives. There were African women on the island from at least 1501, for that is when one (who apparently was not a slave) appears in the official records as the founder of a medical dispensary.<sup>6</sup> Throughout the sixteenth century, the African population on the island—both slave and free--increased dramatically, particularly once the cane sugar industry replaced gold mining as the focus of the economy in the 1520s, with its concomitant increase in the importation of experienced supervisors and both legal and illegal African slave laborers. As the number of Africans on the island increased, so too did the frequency of their conjugal joining with both Spaniards and Taínos.

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which was used in the documents and chronicles, had and still retains the concept of mixed European and Indian bloodlines, without considering the African component.

<sup>5</sup>Male immigrants from Iberia to the Indies outnumbered females by a 17:1 ratio through 1539, although more Spanish females began arriving afterward. Peter Boyd-Bowman estimated that only 308 out of 5,481 Spanish immigrants to the New World between 1493 and 1519 were female. The overall ratio from 1493-1580 was 7.2:1. Boyd-Bowman, *Patterns of Spanish Emigration to the New World (1493-1580)* (Buffalo, NY: Council on International Studies, State University of New York, April 1973). See also Analola Borges, "La mujer-pobladora en los orígenes Americanos," in *Anuario de Estudios Hispanoamericanos* (1972): 389-444; and Richard Konetzke, "La emigración de mujeres españolas a América durante la época colonial," in *Revista Internacional de Sociología* 3(9-10), 1-28: 1945.

<sup>6</sup>Nearly every royal document dealing with the importation of African slaves to Hispaniola in the sixteenth century mandates ratios of one female to every three males--or more. See, for example, Archivo General de Indias (hereafter, AGI), Indiferente General 424, L21, which contains hundreds of slave permit records from May 21, 1547-August 27, 1549. For more detail about African women on Hispaniola, see Celsa Albert Batista, *Mujer y esclavitud en Santo Domingo* (Santo Domingo: Ediciones CEDEE, 1993). For the African woman who founded the dispensary, see page 19.

Each of the three different groups of people--Indian, African and European--had its own complex multi-ethnic history. On Hispaniola, however, in the capital and in the other Spanish-dominated towns and cities, they all lived together, worked together, and forged closely linked networks of kinship and patronage together across all ethnic lines,<sup>7</sup> creating a new people and a new culture that were outwardly “Spanish” but very, very different from their pure Iberian counterparts. And some of these Spaniards, Taínos and Africans did *not* opt to live peacefully together, outwardly adopting Spaniard dress and customs. Some of the Africans and Indians rebelled.

### The first cimarrones

From the first entry Columbus made in the diary of his initial voyage to the Caribbean, the Taínos were dubbed a “pacific” people. It must be remembered, of course, that he had ulterior motives—Columbus wanted to convince King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella that the Taínos were a peaceful people who were ripe for conversion, so that they would send him back to Hispaniola as governor and viceroy. There are numerous records which demonstrate that the Taínos were not really all that pacific when pressured.<sup>8</sup> Nonetheless, their standard response to

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<sup>7</sup>See Stephanie Blank, "Patrons, Clients and Kin in Seventeenth-Century Caracas: A Methodological Essay in Colonial Spanish American Social History," in *Hispanic American Historical Review* 54(2), May 1974: 260-283; Paul Charney, "The Implications of Godparental Ties between Indians and Spaniards in Colonial Lima," in *The Americas* 47(3), Jan 1991: 295-314; George M. Foster, "Cofradía and Compadrazgo in Spain and Spanish America," in *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 9(1), Spring 1953: 1-28; and Sidney W. Mintz and Eric R. Wolf, "An Analysis of Ritual Co-Parenthood (Compadrazgo)," in *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 6(4), Winter 1950: 341-368.

<sup>8</sup>Columbus himself ran into trouble with a group of aggressive Taínos on the

the invasion of parts of their island by Europeans was, first, to try to join with them in reciprocal kinship and trade relations, as they would have done with any powerful Indian group.<sup>9</sup> Since the “reciprocity” was so one-sided, however, many Taínos packed up and moved into regions outside Spanish control, which the Spaniards interpreted as a rebellious act, an act of *cimarronaje*—they called the “runaways” *cimarrones*.<sup>10</sup>

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northeast coast in 1493, which both he and later historians tried to explain away by dubbing the group “Ciguayos,” not Taínos. There is no denying that it was Taínos, however, who won the first major battle between Amerindians and Europeans, which took place at La Vega in March of 1495. Having demonstrated their superiority, the Taínos went home, for it was not their custom to fight to the death. Surprised, and not knowing Taíno customs, the Spaniards promptly declared *themselves* the winners, explaining the “miracle” of the Taínos’ apparent cowardice (for hadn’t they “run away”?) as the intercession of the Virgin Mary—this is the origin of the legend surrounding the current patroness of the island, La Virgen de las Mercedes.

<sup>9</sup>See István Szászdi León-Borja, “Guatiao, los primeros tratados de Indias,” in *Actos del IX Congreso del Instituto Internacional de Historia del Derecho Indiano* (Madrid: Editorial Complutense, 1991): 405-438.

<sup>10</sup>The first documentary evidence of the word “cimarron” used to refer to runaway Indians is a letter written by Gonzalo de Guzmán to the crown on Sep 18, 1530. AGI, Audiencia de Santo Domingo 54, R1, No. 34; available in *Colección de documentos inéditos relativos al descubrimiento, conquista y organización de las antiguas posesiones españolas en Ultramar*, 25 volumes (Madrid: Establecimiento Tipográfico, 1885-1932) (hereafter, CDIU), Vol. 2(4), 145-148. By mid-decade, the term was in common use and can be found in many documents as synonymous with “*indios alzados*,” which was defined as Indians who ran away or who otherwise resisted or refused to be subjugated, and “*indios bravos*,” which implied “wild” or “savage” Indians. By 1544, cimarron was also used in the documents as synonymous with “*negros alzados*.” See José Juan Arrom and Manuel A. García-Arévalo, *Cimarron* (Santo Domingo: Fundación García-Arévalo, 1986) and Carlos Esteban Deive, *Los guerrilleros negros: Esclavos fugitivos y cimarrones en Santo Domingo* (Santo Domingo: Fundación Cultural Dominicana, 1989), 12. Esteban Mira Caballos, however, notes that in the earlier decades of the island’s conquest, the Spanish documents recognized only two kinds of Indian resistance and made a clear distinction between them: *Indios alzados*, he writes, were those Indians who fought, refusing to accept Spanish domination. They were punished with enslavement. Indians who simply fled from their encomenderos, however--if

More Taínos than ever slipped away to peripheral parts of the island after Governor Nicolás de Ovando arrived in Santo Domingo in 1502 with a huge fleet of ships and thousands of Spaniards, putting a heavy strain on the local resources and, therefore, on Spanish-Indian relations. Peter Martyr wrote that, "Many of the Indians, when their caciques or leaders call them... flee to the forests and mountains and survive during this time with forest fruits, hiding themselves so as not to suffer from that work [assigned by Spaniards]." <sup>11</sup> Most of the Spaniards who were questioned in the course of the Jeronymite Interrogatory in 1517 testified that flight was a frequent Indian response to attempted domination. Juan Mosquera, for example, said he had personally observed Indians fleeing to the mountains, although he said they fled in order to consume "spiders and tree roots and lizards," the inference being that Indians needed Spanish guidance even to know what was good to eat. Gonzalo de Ocampo, Juan de Ampies, Marcos de Aguilar, Fray Pedro Mexía, and Jerónimo de Aguero all had experience with Indians who chose to flee rather than to live with and serve Spaniards. Aguero's exact words were that, "Indians want very much never to see Spaniards... so they frequently go to the mountains." <sup>12</sup>

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caught--were whipped and put back to work. Mira Caballos, "El pleito Diego Colón-Francisco de Solís: El primer proceso por malos tratos a los indios en La Española (1509)," in *Anuario de Estudios Americanos* 50(2), 1993, 320.

<sup>11</sup>Peter Martyr D'Anghiera, *Pedro Martir de Angleria, Primer Cronista de Indias: Decadas del Nuevo Mundo* (Santo Domingo: Sociedad Dominicana de Bibliofilos, 1989), Fourth Decade, Book 10.

<sup>12</sup>AGI, Indiferente General 1624; text available in César Herrera Cabral, *Colección César Herrera*, unpublished documents, Vol. 21, No. 335 (some pages at the beginning are missing), and Emilio Rodríguez Demorizi, *Los dominicos y las encomiendas de indios de la Isla Española* (Santo Domingo: Editora del Caribe,

Of course, it was not just Taínos who fled from Spanish domination on Hispaniola, but also other Indians who were brought to the island as slaves--and Africans. It did not take “*ladinos*” (Africans who had been baptized Catholic, spoke Castilian, knew Spanish customs, and were otherwise virtually indistinguishable from Spaniards, at least in the records) long to discover that their roles on Hispaniola were to be far more difficult, and with fewer compensating benefits, than their roles as primarily domestic servants and *criados* had been back in Spain. Nor did it take *bozales* (Africans brought directly from Africa) long to discover that slavery among Spaniards was far different than back in Africa.<sup>13</sup> Although individuals, no doubt, fled from Spaniards the moment they were brought to the Americas, the first rebellion of African slaves in the New World is generally recognized as the one which took place on Hispaniola on Christmas Day, 1521. Celsa Albert Batista points out, however, that Governor Ovando's 1503 letter to the

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1971), 273-354. The pattern was the same in other Spanish colonies. See, for example, Peter Bakewell, "Mining in Colonial Spanish America," in *The Cambridge History of Latin America*, ed. Leslie Bethell (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1989), Vol. 2, 300; and Lolita Gutiérrez Brockington, *The Leverage of Labor: Managing the Cortés Haciendas in Tehuantepec, 1588-1688* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1989), 145. Note that the Taínos did not all necessarily flee to the mountains permanently. Some would have gone to the mountains temporarily to hunt, to fish in the mountain lakes and rivers, or to gather forest products, and others to practice rituals that were forbidden under the Spaniards.

<sup>13</sup>See Philip Curtin, *The Rise and Fall of the Plantation Complex* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) and *Economic Change in Precolonial Africa: Senegambia in the Era of the Slave Trade* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1975); Carlos Esteban Deive, *Los guerrilleros negros: Esclavos fugitivos y cimarrones en Santo Domingo*; Herbert S. Klein, *African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Martin A. Klein and G. Wesley Johnson, eds., *Perspectives of the African Past* (Boston, Little, Brown & Co., 1972); and John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1680* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

crown complaining about the Africans teaching Indians "their 'bad customs,'" was actually "a complaint about the first [African] rebellions" on the island.<sup>14</sup>

The Spanish conquistadores and settlers on Hispaniola tried hard to convince themselves that Africans were content to be slaves, but dozens of documents make it clear that, from at least 1502, many of them fled to the mountains and remote regions of the island outside of Spanish control. There they joined ranks with Taíno rebels or became members of isolated Taíno groups. "[B]oth the negroes and the Indians have fled to the mountains," testified Juan de Ampíes in 1517.<sup>15</sup>

It is important to understand that neither the Indians nor the Africans ran away because they refused or were unable to change their "cultural forms," but because they were flexible enough to change their circumstances and their customs for a lifestyle they believed to be more acceptable, even if it meant moving to less hospitable parts of the island.<sup>16</sup> Some people will always prefer a life of

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<sup>14</sup>Celsa Albert Batista, *Mujer y esclavitud en Santo Domingo*, 26.

<sup>15</sup>AGI, Indiferente General 1624; text available in Herrera, *Colección César Herrera*, unpublished documents, Vol. 21, No. 335 and Rodríguez Demorizi, *Los dominicos y los encomiendas*, 273-354.

<sup>16</sup>Robert Charles Padden, "Cultural Adaptation and Militant Autonomy among the Araucanians of Chile," in *The Indian in Latin American History: Resistance, Resilience, and Acculturation*, ed. John E. Kicza (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1993), 73. For one of the best comparative collections, see Richard Price, ed., *Maroon Societies: Rebel Slave Communities in the Americas* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979). See also Steve J. Stern, *Resistance, Rebellion, and Consciousness in the Andean Peasant World, Eighteenth to Twentieth Centuries* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), 10-11. His examination of insurrections among modern-day Andean peasants as a result of "preexisting patterns of 'resistant adaptation'" has antecedents in Indian culture.



freedom, "however precarious," to domination and/or enslavement, notes David Barry Gaspar.<sup>17</sup>

It was in the cimarron communities, outside of Spanish control but not outside of Spanish influence, that the cultural form recognized as "campesino" evolved on Hispaniola, with its strong Taíno and African influences. The consequences will be discussed in more detail in the "Cultural maintenance, cultural evolution" section that follows. But first, we must explore one of the other important reasons why the tripartite nature of criollo people and culture is so poorly understood—differences in categorization between the sixteenth century and the modern era.

#### Differences in categorization

The documents that mention categories and quantities of people on early Hispaniola are often evasive and manipulative, and demographically inaccurate. They are inaccurate, that is, if judged by today's standards and today's terms. One of the most obvious "inaccuracies" in the demographic record is the missing categories in the censuses of Hispaniola from the first half of the sixteenth century. There are no categories for mixed-blood peoples! Censuses contain categories only for three categories--Spaniards, Indians and Africans--or for slaves (and/or commended Indians) as opposed to free people. Clearly, the early colonists had not yet come to terms, literally, with the genetic mixture in the Americas.

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<sup>17</sup>David Barry Gaspar, *Bondsmen and Rebels: A Study of Master-Slave Relations in Antigua* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), 182.

To further complicate matters, "race," as such, was not an important marker to the sixteenth-century colonists, to the census takers, nor to the crown or the church and their advisors back in Spain. It was not until the 1580s, for example in the history book written by Fray Juan González de Mendoza, that "mestizos" emerged as a separate category of people on Hispaniola.<sup>18</sup> In Cuba, too, categories of people did not include mestizos or mulattoes or other categories for mixed-blood peoples until the 1580s, "though there obviously must have been" mixed-blood criollos on the island long before then.<sup>19</sup>

Birthright, social status, and economic and political clout were the important categoric differentiators.<sup>20</sup> A clear example of status-based demographic counts is

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<sup>18</sup>In his book, published in 1586, he wrote that fewer than 200 Indians still lived on Hispaniola, where "most [residents] are mestizos, sons of indias and Spaniards, or negroes." Fray Juan González de Mendoza, *Historia de las cosas más notables, ritos y costumbres del gran Reyno de la China* (Madrid, 1586), as presented in Juan López de Velasco, *Relaciones geográficas de Santo Domingo*, ed. Emilio Rodríguez Demorizi (Santo Domingo: Editora del Caribe, 1970), 8.

<sup>19</sup>The first census in Cuba listing mestizos was in 1582. Franklin W. Knight, *The Caribbean: The Genesis of a Fragmented Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 44-45.

<sup>20</sup>The offspring of Spanish men by Indian women "was regarded as in no way racially different from the Spaniards," writes Hugh Thomas about colonial Cuba. He notes, however, that "imperial-born Spaniards... from the beginning" were held to be socially superior. Hugh Thomas, *Cuba: The Pursuit of Freedom* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 1,512. Sidney Mintz agrees, noting that the colonists were virtually "color-blind--so far as getting the job done was concerned." He stresses demographic and economic forces as the categoric differentiators throughout the colonial era. Mintz, *Caribbean Transformations* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 66. Richard Boyer found political forces to be the strongest differentiators in seventeenth-century Mexico. "A common mistake," he writes, "... has been to assume that the designations are descriptive rather than political." Boyer, "Negotiating *Calidad*: The Everyday Struggle for Status in Seventeenth-Century Mexico," an unpublished paper presented at the Society for Historical Archaeology conference on Historical and Underwater Archaeology, Vancouver, BC, Jan 1994, 3. See also Leonico Cabrero,

Governor Francisco Manuel de Lando's 1530 census of Puerto Rico. He did not list a category for counting any mixed-blood peoples, but neither did he count any Spaniards who only owned a single slave woman (of any ethnic background), nor did he count the single slave women, free Africans, minor children, nor any of the slaves owned by poor whites or transients.<sup>21</sup>

### The "invisible" categories

Many of the children born in the Spanish New World colonies were politically and economically powerless; therefore, they were held in low esteem and are generally invisible in the historical documentation. A group of Spanish residents in

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"Visión del indio americano en tiempos de Carlos V," in *Cuadernos hispanoamericanos* 107-108 (Nov-Dec 1958): 168-180; Douglas Cope, *The Limits of Racial Domination: Plebian Society in Colonial Mexico City* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1994); Lewis Hanke, "Indians and Spaniards in the New World: A Personal View," in *Attitudes of Colonial Powers Toward the American Indian*, ed. Howard Peckham and Charles Gibson (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1969): 4-18; Elizabeth Anne Kuznesof, "Ethnic and Gender Influences on 'Spanish' Creole Society in Colonial Spanish America," in *Colonial Latin American Review* 4(1), 1995: 153-175; Miguel Angel Ladero Quesada, "Spain, circa 1492: Social Values and Structures," in *Implicit Understandings: Observing, reporting, and reflecting on the encounters between Europeans and other peoples in the Early Modern Era*, ed. Stuart B. Schwartz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996): 96-133; Magnus Mörner, *Estratificación social Hispanoamericana durante el periodo colonial* (Stolckholm: Institute of Latin American Studies, Nov 1980); Anthony Pagden, *Lords of all the World: Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain, and France, c. 1500-c. 1800* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995); Danilo de los Santos and Valentina Peguero, "Visión cultural en La Española del siglo XVI," in *Eme Eme: Estudios Dominicanos* 5(26), Sep-Oct 1976: 3-10; Stuart B. Schwartz, "Colonial Identities and the *Sociedad de Castas*, in *Colonial Latin American Review* 4(1), 1995: 185-201; and Emilio Willems, "Race, sex, and miscegenation," Chapter 5 in *Latin American Culture: An Anthropological Synthesis* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975: 5-50.

<sup>21</sup>Jalil Sued-Badillo and Angel López Cantos, *Puerto Rico Negro* (Río Piedras, PR: Editorial Cultural, 1986), 83-93.

Santo Domingo, for example, did not differentiate mestizos from Africans. In a letter of 1528 or 1529, they suggested to the crown that "negros or mestizos, with their women" be shipped to the island to repopulate the interior villages.<sup>22</sup> In a similar vein, Captain Francisco de Barrionuevo, who negotiated the peace treaty with the rebel Taíno cacique Enriquillo in 1534, observed that in the island's rural regions, "there are many mestizos, sons of Spaniards and indias, who generally are born on the small farms and depopulated towns." Then, despite the large numbers of mestizos he had observed and mentioned several times, he made the seemingly paradoxical statement that: "Outside of this city [Santo Domingo], you could say that everything is depopulated."<sup>23</sup> He meant, of course, that outside of Santo Domingo there were few powerful Spaniards in residence, and that most of the mixed-blood criollos outside of Santo Domingo lived more as Indians or as Africans than as Spaniards, thus they were politically and economically powerless. They were not worth counting. They were virtually invisible. (Barrionuevo's contemporaries would not have found his observations paradoxical.)

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<sup>22</sup>Roberto Martí, *Santo Domingo en los manuscritos de Juan Bautista Muñoz* (Santo Domingo: Fundación García-Arévalo, 1981), Vol. 1, 292-293.

<sup>23</sup>Barrionuevo's report to the crown dated Aug 26, 1533. Martí, *Manuscritos de Juan Bautista Muñoz*, Vol. 1, 367. Barrionuevo described the mestizos in his report as "loud and unruly, liars, and friends of everything evil," to further demonstrate how worthless they were, in his viewpoint, and how much they needed strong Spanish guidance. He suggested that they be sent to Spain when very young and not allowed to return to Hispaniola "unless they turn out good." He also wrote that there were "some agitated rebellious negroes and Indians among" the mestizos he saw, including one African with Enriquillo in Bahoruco and another African leader with twenty followers at Punto del Tiburón. They stood out from the others because, as an armed threat, they had gained power and had become real people who had to be dealt with.

At least Barrionuevo was able to penetrate into Enriquillo's mountain stronghold in Bahoruco. The peoples who had fled Spanish domination--Indians, Africans and mixed-blood criollos alike--were generally left out of the island's censuses because *they could not be counted* by the census takers, had they been deemed worthy of counting. You cannot count people who are purposely hiding from you.

Even the words "*mestizo*" and "*mulato*" appear but rarely in the early documents of discovery and settlement, which emphasizes how unimportant these categories were (and, generally, the people in them) to contemporary Spaniards.<sup>24</sup> In a letter from the crown to the Jeronymite friars on Hispaniola dated November 15, 1516, there is mention of "the mestiza daughter of Juan Tostado,"<sup>25</sup> and the 1530 will of Pedro de Vadillo identifies several of those to whom he made bequests as "indio" or "mestizo."<sup>26</sup> Most documents, however, for example the 1528 letter legitimizing the son of Francisco Tostado, simply describe such children as "the son he had with an india."<sup>27</sup> Or Spaniards of the era referred to such children as

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<sup>24</sup>Note that none of the terms such as *zambo*, *grifo* or *alcatraz* that were later used to designate the mixed progeny of African and Indian parents appears in any of the documents pertaining to Hispaniola in the first half of the sixteenth century that have been preserved at the AGI or in the Dominican archives and collections.

<sup>25</sup>D. Manuel Serrano y Sanz, *Orígenes de la dominación española en América* (Madrid: Nueva Biblioteca de Autores Españoles, 1918), Vol. 1, DXLVI.

<sup>26</sup>*Documentos inéditos para la historia de Colombia, coleccionados en el Archivo General de Indis de Sevilla por Juan Friede de orden de la Academia Colombiana de Historia*, 10 vols. (Bogotá: Academia Colombiana, 1955), Vol. 2, 118-126; English translation in John H. Parry and Robert G. Keith, *New Iberian Worlds: A Documentary History of the Discovery and Settlement of Latin America to the Early Seventeenth Century* (New York: Times Books, 1984), Vol. 2, 349-353.

<sup>27</sup>Fray Cipriano de Utrera, *Noticias históricas de Santo Domingo (documentos y*

"*natural* ['native'] and raised on this island."<sup>28</sup> As for mulattoes, the only times the description is used in the documents of early Hispaniola appears to be in reference to slaves brought to the Indies from Spain, not to persons born in the Indies.<sup>29</sup>

### Ethnic fluidity

The very fact that they were not separately categorized, however, gave some of Hispaniola's early residents an advantage—the advantage of ethnic fluidity. For example, some mixed-blood criollos were just as economically and politically powerful as Spaniards. Categorically, they were counted among the colony's Spaniards—even when they were what we would call “illegitimate” today. The difference between them and their powerless counterparts, generally, was their recognition and acceptance by their fathers, and the level of political and economic power their fathers had. This pattern, like many others, was imported from Spain. "Society was still sufficiently fluid even at the highest levels that

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*noticias*), ed. Emilio Rodríguez Demorizi (Santo Domingo: Editora Taller, 1983), 141. Originally from AGI, Contratación 5090. The boy was declared officially legitimate because both of his parents were single, therefore they could have been married, at the time of his procreation and birth. When Tostado died in 1528, the boy inherited his ingenio, and was still listed as the owner in 1547.

<sup>28</sup>From a crown request to the Audiencia of Santo Domingo to look into Juan Marqués's petition for a land grant for himself and his mestizo son, dated Feb 17, 1537. AGI, Audiencia de Santo Domingo 868, L1, f48.

<sup>29</sup>See AGI, Indiferente General 1962, L5, ff330v-331 (cédula for "*una esclava mulata*" dated Feb 16, 1538); Indiferente General 1963, L7, ff4r-4v (cédula for "*un esclavo mulato cristiano*" dated Sep 5, 1539), and ff14v-15 and 18r-18v (cédulas of same date for "*una esclava mulata*" and "*una esclava mulata cristiana*," respectively). See also Indiferente General 1963, L8, ff188v-189, which is a royal prohibition forbidding the further shipment of any mulatto slaves to the Indies, dated May 1, 1543.

integration of illegitimate children into the main line of the family was common," notes Ida Altman. "Especially if there were no legitimate heirs."<sup>30</sup>

Society was even more fluid in frontier colonies like Hispaniola than it was in Spain. Many children born of Indian mothers and Spanish fathers on Hispaniola were raised as "Spaniards," as integral family members, even as their fathers' legal heirs. And many other politically and economically active "Spaniards" on Hispaniola were of mixed Spanish and African parentage.<sup>31</sup> There were multiple reasons for this. Firstly, it was because so few European women emigrated to Hispaniola that the conquistadores turned to female partners among the Indians and, later, among the African slaves, which was made easier because of the Spaniards' widespread and long-standing acceptance of miscegenation. Many of these relationships, mind you, were forced upon the women, whose rape, scholars have noted, "is symbolic of the very conquest itself."<sup>32</sup> Other women entered into the relationships at the request of their caciques, in an attempt to build kin relations between the two peoples. Still others did so because these relationships offered

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<sup>30</sup>Altman, *Emigrants and Society*, 151-152. See also Kuznesof, "Ethnic and Gender Influences on 'Spanish' Creole Society in Colonial Spanish America"; and Colin M. Maclaughlin, "The Eagle and the Serpent: Male over Female in Tenochtitlán," in *Pacific Coast Conference on Latin American Studies Proceedings* 5 (1976): 45-56.

<sup>31</sup>Gwendolyn Midlow Hall recognized a similar pattern in her study of Louisiana 400 years later. "The extent of race mixture and emancipation in French Louisiana has been minimized by excessive reliance upon Spanish censuses, which overlooked the passing of mixed-bloods into the 'white race.'" Midlow Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana: The Development of Afro-Creole Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), 239.

<sup>32</sup>Elinor C. Burkett, "Indian Women and White Society: The Case of Sixteenth-Century Peru," in *Latin American Women: Historical Perspectives*, ed. Asunción Lavrin (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1978), 105.

not only personal advantages (albeit they also exposed the women to the possibility of more personal abuse and exploitation), but also offered potential for socio-economic mobility for their children.<sup>33</sup>

Not only mixed-blood children were counted as Spaniards. Many, but not all, of the non-European women who "married" Spaniards (whether or not the marriage was blessed by the Church), as long as they learned Spanish, were baptized, wore Spanish clothing and adopted other outwardly Spanish customs, were counted among the "Spanish" residents of Hispaniola.

Which category an individual was placed in on censuses or how one was described in documents often varied, depending upon who was taking the census or writing the document. And the category or description could change, depending

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<sup>33</sup>For more detailed studies of rape vs. choice, and the gendered ramifications of the conquest of the Americas, see Solange Alberro, "Beatriz de Padilla: Mistress and Mother," in *Struggle and Survival in Colonial America*, ed. David G. Sweet and Gary B. Nash (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981): 247-256; Richard Boyer, "Women, *La Mala Vida*, and the Politics of Marriage, in *Sexuality and Marriage in Colonial Latin America*, ed. Asunción Lavrin (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989): 252-286; Paulino Castañeda Delgado, "El matrimonio legítimo de los indios y su canonización," in *Anuario de Estudios Hispanoamericanos* 31 (1974): 157-188; Cope, *The Limits of Racial Domination*; Mona Etienne and Eleanor Leacock, "Introduction: Women and Anthropology: Conceptual Problems," in *Women and Colonization: Anthropological Perspectives*, ed. Mona Etienne and Eleanor Leacock (New York: Praeger, 1980); Jane Landers, "African and African American Women and Their Pursuit of Rights through Eighteenth-Century Spanish Texts," in *Haunted Bodies: Gender and Southern Texts*, ed. Anne Goodwin-Jones and Susan Donaldson (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1998): 56-76, and "'In Consideration of her Enormous Crime': Rape and Infanticide in Spanish St. Augustine," in *The Devil's Lane: Sex and Race in the Early South*, ed. Catherine Clinton and Michele Gillespie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997): 205-217; Marietta Morrissey, *Slave Women in the New World: Gender Stratification in the Caribbean* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1989); and Irene Silverblatt, *Moon, Sun, and Witches: Gender Ideologies and Class in Inca and Colonial Peru* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987).



upon the goal of the census taker or writer. Consider, for example, the law suit initiated in 1547 by Hernando Botello of Santo Domingo, who accused Francisco Alvarez of raping his daughter. The cover page of the law suit initially stated that his daughter was "*La India Uamada*." But this was crossed out and the words, "*Ines Ursula, mestiza*" were written above it.<sup>34</sup> Clearly, in Santo Domingo's society of the 1540s, mestizo was a fluid category with more political and social clout than the category of Indian<sup>35</sup>--but it is also clear that Uamada/Ines slipped back and forth between the two categories.

Even pure Indians, however, could have changed their categorical status in early colonial Hispaniola. They would have done so by becoming ladinoized--by adopting Spanish names (which most had done anyway within one generation of the initial encounter), the Castilian language, Spanish-style clothing, manners and customs, and the Catholic religion.<sup>36</sup> Unfortunately, the ecclesiastical records that

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<sup>34</sup>AGI, Justicia 829, N4, Dec 1, 1547-Sep 26, 1548.

<sup>35</sup>For another example, there is the case of the conquistador Andrés de Tapia and his son Hernando, whom he acknowledged was his son, but whom he did not hold in high enough esteem to send money for his maintenance nor travel back to the Indies. Hernando de Tapia was obviously a mestizo, for he was the child of a Spaniard and an india, but he was referred to in all of the documents as "el indio Hernando de Tapia"--an indication of his powerlessness. More detail is provided about this case in Lynne Guitar, "Willing it so: Intimate glimpses of encomienda life in colonial Hispaniola," in *Colonial Latin American Historical Review*, 7(3), Summer 1998: 245-264.

<sup>36</sup>Susan R. Parker's studies have demonstrated that Indians in St. Augustine, Florida, were consistently under counted because of the individuals and families who moved into the town and "became" Spanish, "to all effects and purposes." She even uncovered documentary evidence of two ladinoized Indians, Francisco and Antonio Xávier, who married white women, which "runs counter to the widely accepted assumption that" marriages between Spaniards and Indians were always between Spanish males and Indian females. Susan R. Parker, "Spanish St. Augustine's 'Urban' Indians," in *El Escribano: The St. Augustine Journal of History*

might allow scholars to trace any such ethnic "passing" for Hispaniola have disappeared.<sup>37</sup> The Indians there had sufficient motivation, however, to choose to slip into the category of Spaniard, or more likely mestizo, for by doing so they would have had more social and economic flexibility, and they would have avoided the requirement of paying tribute.<sup>38</sup> Perhaps that is what the two Taíno caciques García Hernández and Francisco de Torres had in mind in 1541 when they pleaded for liberty for themselves and their people. They certainly had learned how to use the Spanish judicial system well enough. They promised the crown that they would maintain a Spanish-style village in San Cristóbal de Manabao, with a church, if freed from the onerous duty of providing tribute services to the Spaniard, "Doña Leonor." And their plea cited the Cédula of Madrid, November 5, 1540, which ordered the *oidores* of Santo Domingo to see that "all Spaniards having Indians whom they treated as *naborías* and as slaves, selling them and

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30 (1993), 2 and 5.

<sup>37</sup>There is documentary evidence that all of the parish records were moved from Santo Domingo to Cuba for safekeeping when Sir Francis Drake began his attacks in the 1580s, but the records themselves have not surfaced, if they still exist. Records from the 1590s on, however, have been analyzed and reported in José Luis Sáez, ed., *La iglesia e el negro esclavo en Santo Domingo: Una historia de tres siglos* (Santo Domingo: Patronato de la Ciudad Colonial de Santo Domingo, Colección Quinto Centenario, 1994).

<sup>38</sup>See Charles Gibson, "Indian Societies under Spanish Rule," in *Cambridge History of Latin America*, ed. Leslie Bethell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), Vol. 2, 399. See also Cope, *The Limits of Racial Domination*. In colonial Guatemala, William F. Fowler, Jr., found that Indians who became ladinoized had taken "a conscious decision made in the context of active resistance and self-preservation.... Ladinos were and are very clearly people who have escaped the onerous exploitation officially sanctioned by the state." Fowler, "Colonial Economy and Land Tenure in Southeastern Guatemala, 1550-1635," an unpublished paper, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN, March 30, 1994: 11.

transporting them to others, etc., were to be freed, though they could live with their owners if they wanted to do so." García Hernández and Francisco de Torres won the suit,<sup>39</sup> but thereafter they disappear from the documentary record.

### **--Cultural maintenance, cultural evolution--**

#### Women as cultural mediators

Much of archaeologist Kathleen Deagan's work, which examines differences in material culture in the Caribbean and circum-Caribbean before and after European colonization, is based on her theory that the indigenous cultural attributes that survived are primarily those in the female domain. Clara Sue Kidwell agrees, calling Indian women "the first important mediators of meaning between the cultures of two worlds."<sup>40</sup> African women, too, were cultural mediators on Hispaniola.

Both Indian and African women slipped fluidly between and among cultures, particularly those women who married or maintained sexual relations with Spaniards. They had to adapt to styles of dress and speaking and other outwardly Spanish-appearing customs, but they grew and gathered the foods that had traditionally been grown and gathered by the Taínos on the island--adding protein from pigs and chickens and cattle, and cultigens such as garlic, cabbage, carrots

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<sup>39</sup>AGI, Justicia 58 and a related document in AGI, Audiencia Santo Domingo 49, No. 117. Partial transcriptions available in Fray Cipriano de Utrera, *Polémica de Enriquillo*, ed. Emilio Rodríguez Demorizi (Santo Domingo: Editora del Caribe, 1973), 484-485.

<sup>40</sup>Kidwell, "Indian Women as Cultural Mediators," 97.

and citrus fruits that were brought over from Europe and thrived, as well as African poultry such as guinea hens, and African vegetables such as okra and eggplant. They cooked this amplified range of food choices for their families in traditional Taíno and African ways (albeit often modified to please the tastes of their "husbands" and/or masters), storing it in traditional (albeit modified) Taíno and African straw, ceramic and gourd containers.<sup>41</sup> They raised and gathered traditional herbs and non-edible plants, and used them in traditional ways for spices, tints and dyes, poisons, purgatives, unguents and other curatives. It is also evident that they passed on some of their language and traditional concepts of worship, art and architecture, as well as their ways of thinking about music, song

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<sup>41</sup>In many case, those containers--of straw, wood, gourds and ceramics--were made in traditional ways but in shapes that were modified by new cultural influences and with reduced (or missing) artistic embellishment. See in particular, Kathleen Deagan, ""Sixteenth-Century Spanish-American Colonization in the Southeastern United States and the Caribbean," in *Columbian Consequences*, ed. David Hurst Thomas (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990): 225-250; Manuel A. García-Arévalo, "Transculturation in Contact Period and Contemporary Hispaniola," in *Columbian Consequences*, ed. David Hurst Thomas (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990), and *El Arte Taíno de la República Dominicana* (Santo Domingo: Museo del Hombre Dominicano, 1977); and Greg C. Smith, "Indians and Africans at Puerto Real: The Ceramic Evidence," in *Puerto Real: The Archaeology of a Sixteenth-Century Spanish Town in Hispaniola*, ed. Kathleen Deagan (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1995): 335-374.

Paul Hoffman, in a discussion on Jan 10, 1998, in Seattle at the annual American History Association and Conference on Latin American History, made the observation that, in Classic Taíno society, nearly every family manufactured their own domestic pottery. Under Spanish domination, there were fewer and fewer potters as the manufacture of ceramics became more industrialized. His point is well taken and is one of the arguments anthropologists use in their attempts to explain the simplified shapes and designs of "criollo" wares. On the other hand, after 1492, the privileged groups of Classic Taíno artistic specialists who designed and produced prestige goods for the caciques and other nitaínos, for elite gift exchange, and for religious ritual, disappeared. It was primarily domestic artisanry that survived, which is normally simpler.

and dance, kinship, reciprocity, child raising, and ownership--particularly land and resource ownership.<sup>42</sup>

In all of these areas on Hispaniola, a combination of historical, ethnohistorical and archeological evidence shows a high retention level, particularly in the countryside, of Indian traditions, complemented, reinforced and modified by African cultural traditions.<sup>43</sup> Sometimes, however, it is difficult to

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<sup>42</sup>Bonnie G. McEwan's studies provide archaeological material evidence of these cultural retentions in mixed Spanish-Indian households, but she notes that the percentage of European vs. Indian or African artifacts are in direct proportion to the status of the Spaniard in the household. The wealthier households had more Spanish material goods and indicate fewer indigenous or African retentions. McEwan, "Domestic Adaptation at Puerto Real, Haiti," in *Historical Archaeology* 25(4), 1991: 11.

<sup>43</sup>Africans and their cultural traditions increasingly dominated the attention of the Spaniards taking the island's censuses and writing the documents by the 1540s, as well as the attention of most of the region's historians and anthropologists. In part, Africans dominated the Spaniards' attention because they were spending so much money on African slaves--big financial investments create big worries. In part it was because the number of Africans on the islands was increasing decade by decade, especially in proportion to the decreasing numbers of Spaniards on Hispaniola as well as the decreasing number of pure Indians. And in part it may have been because, physically, Africans were easy to differentiate from Spaniards on the island. Ladinoized Indians and many criollos, on the other hand, were much more difficult to distinguish.

Among the growing number of studies of African influences on Caribbean culture, the most important for Hispaniola are: Gonzalo Aguirre-Beltrán, "Influencias africanas en el desarrollo de las culturas del Nuevo Mundo," in *Boletín Museo del Hombre Dominicano* 7(11), Sep 1978: 185-198; Roger Bastide, *African Civilizations in the New World*, trans. Peter Green (New York: Harper & Row, 1971); Carlos Esteban Deive, "La herencia africana en la cultura Dominicana actual," in *Ensayos sobre la cultura Dominicana* (Santo Domingo: Fundación Cultural Dominicana, 1988): 105-141 and *El indio, el negro y la vida tradicional Dominicana* (Santo Domingo: Ediciones Museo del Hombre Dominicano, 1978); Karen Fog Olwig, *Cultural Adaptation & Resistance on St. John: Three Centuries of Afro-Caribbean Life* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1985); Franklin J. Franco, *Los negros, los mulatos y la nación Dominicana* (Santo Domingo: Editora Nacional, 1970); Gwendolyn Midlow Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana and Social Control in Slave Plantation Societies: A Comparison of St. Domingue and Cuba* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1971); Amadeo Julián,

determine which is which, for there was extensive overlap. The anthropologist Maya Deren suggested that it is the areas of overlap, the areas where she found "cultural convergence" between peoples of Indian and African backgrounds, that have left the most powerful cultural imprints on the island.<sup>44</sup> This author agrees. It is a mistake, however, to concentrate too much time and energy on attempts to determine which cultural traits began where, as so many anthropologists and historians have attempted to do. What is important are the processes, for they demonstrate how remarkably resilient human ingenuity has been across time, how even the supposedly powerless are able to negotiate and jockey for some measure of control over their lives.

Women, then, played an incredibly important role as individuals in the processes of biological and cultural genesis on Hispaniola, even though they were

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*Bancos, ingenios y esclavos en la época colonial* (Santo Domingo: Amigo del Hogar, 1997); Carlos Larrazábal Blanco, *Los negros y la esclavitud en Santo Domingo* (Santo Domingo: Julio D. Postigo e Hijos, 1967); Maurice Lemoine, *Bitter Sugar*, trans. Andrea Johnson (Chicago: Banner Press, 1981); Fradique Lizardo, *La cultura Africana en Santo Domingo* (Santo Domingo: Editora Taller, 1979); Sidney W. Mintz and Richard Price, *The Birth of African-American Culture: An Anthropological Perspective* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992); Carlos Moore, Tanya R. Sanders and Shawna More, eds., *African Presence in the Americas* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1995); Richard Price, *First Time: The Historical Vision of an Afro-American People* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983); Miguel Rojas Mix, *Cultura afroamericana: De esclavos a ciudadanos* (Madrid: Ediciones Anaya, 1988); John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1680* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); and James Walvin, *Questioning Slavery* (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle Publishers, 1997).

<sup>44</sup>Maya Derin's study of Haiti was one of the first to point out the many areas of "cultural convergence" among the Taínos and the various West African peoples who were brought to the island as slaves. Derin, *Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti* (New York: McPherson & Co., 1991). See especially 61-71 and Appendix B, 271-286.

categorized as powerless by Spanish males--doubly so when you consider that so many of them were females from peoples who had been conquered and/or enslaved. In the process, they gave birth to a dynamic new multiethnic people and culture on Hispaniola and across the Americas.<sup>45</sup> Indian and African women on Hispaniola also played important roles, notes Kidwell, due to the influence that they had "on their husbands or consorts and on the children of those liaisons."<sup>46</sup>

### The roles of the mixed-blood criollos

The mixed-blood children on Hispaniola, like their mothers, were cultural mediators. Their roles, perhaps, were even more important than those played by their mothers, for these first American criollos could cross back and forth not only between or among ethnic categories, but back and forth across language and cultural boundaries. "Those who opened paths across those boundaries could acquaint, interpret, indoctrinate, express complaints, help manage or moderate conflict, and pass orders or instructions," writes Eugene Lyon. He adds that, "on a smaller scale but in an equally vital way, these persons functioned in much the

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<sup>45</sup>In explaining cultural change, Fernando Ortiz coined the term "transculturation" to replace "syncretism," for the old term did not place enough emphasis on the dynamic, creative input of Indians and Africans. Fernando Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*, trans. Harriet de Onís (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), 98. For an in-depth discussion of the processes of cultural evolution (today often called "creolization"), see Mintz and Price, *The Birth of African-American Culture*. Paul E. Lovejoy has recently suggested that the entire concept of creolization be re-examined. Paul E. Lovejoy, "Identifying Enslaved Africans: Methodological and Conceptual Considerations in Studying the African Diaspora," *Identifying Enslaved Africans: The "Nigerian" Hinterland and the African Diaspora*, ed. Paul E. Lovejoy (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, forthcoming).

<sup>46</sup>Kidwell, "Indian Women as Cultural Mediators," 98.

same way as did diplomats between hostile or potentially hostile states in early modern Europe."<sup>47</sup> Barrionuevo, for example, might never have been able to negotiate peace with Enriquillo had it not been for the services of the mestizo translator he had with him, whose help he acknowledged in his report to the crown.<sup>48</sup>

The bulk of the population on Hispaniola was, no doubt, multiethnic criollos, not "Spaniards," by the 1550s--the sons and daughters of Spaniards, Indians and Africans--even if they appeared as Spaniards in the censuses and documents with demographic information. Criollos certainly comprised the "many mestizos" that Barrionuevo reported thriving in the rural regions of the island in 1533. No doubt, they were the bulk of the "more than twenty Spaniards and 150 Africans and Indians" Diego Caballero bragged about having on his ingenio in his petition of 1538. They were probably also the bulk of the uncounted thousands of "others," the unnamed "Spaniards," and the "Indians-with-a-question-mark" reported on the judicial census of 1530, on Alonso de Avila's ecclesiastical census of 1533, and on don Alonso de Fuenmayor's administrative census of 1545 (Table 1). And no doubt it was mostly those same mixed-blood criollos, not "500 households of Spaniards" and "even more Indians," that the British traveler Robert Tompson observed when he made a brief stop in Santo Domingo in 1555.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup>Eugene Lyon, "Cultural Brokers in Sixteenth-Century Spanish Florida," in *Pedro Menéndez de Avilés*, ed. Eugene Lyon (New York: Garland Publishing, 1995): 329-336.

<sup>48</sup>Report of Sep 1, 1533. Marté, *Manuscritos de Juan Bautista Muñoz*, Vol. 1, 363-367.

<sup>49</sup>Robert Tompson, "Robert Tompson's Voyage to the West Indies and Mexico," in



Multiethnic criollos were the heirs to the mines and the great sugar estates of Hispaniola, and of the cattle ranches and tobacco plantations that took over the economy later. They were also the supervisors, the agricultural workers, technicians, blacksmiths, carters, cowboys, skinners, carpenters, shoemakers, domestics.... They were included among the runaways and the cimarrones that terrified the island's colonists because they lived outside Spanish control. They were included among the dealers in contraband that caused the crown to order the northern half of the island abandoned in 1605. They were among the *buccaneers*<sup>50</sup> and their "Indian" tracker companions that Alexandre Olivier Exquemelin reported inhabiting most of the island in the 1770s.<sup>51</sup> And they were unquestionably among the "certain creoles... who have hair like that of the Indians, which is to say, straight and very black, and who pretend to be descendants of the primitive natives of the island" that Méderic Louis Elie Moreau de Saint-Mery described during his visit to the eastern, Spanish side of Hispaniola in 1783. Moreau de Saint-Mery made the

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*Colonial Travelers in Latin America*, ed. William C. Bryant (Newark, DE: Juan de la Cuesta, 1972): 58. Just what ratio of Hispaniola's population was criollo at mid-century is impossible to determine, but based on these and other reports, criollos must have surpassed Spaniards by a minimum 6:1, Indians by 12:1, and at least equalled the number of Africans. Thousands of others had left the island for new "Spanish" colonies.

<sup>50</sup>So-named because they used Taíno-style *bucans* to smoke beef from the cattle that had run wild on the island.

<sup>51</sup>Alexandre Olivier Exquemelin, *The Buccaneers of America: A true account of the most remarkable assaults committed by the English and French buccaneers against the Spaniards in America* (Santo Domingo: Editora Taller, 1992).

observation that "the great majority of the Spanish colonists are mestizos, who have still more of an African characteristic."<sup>52</sup>

Multiethnic criollos were not just to be found in Hispaniola's rural regions, of course. They were also residents in the "Spanish" towns of the island, even in the capital. In 1538, for example, it was reported that "more than 100 Spaniards and 600 negroes and Indians" lived in and around Buenaventura and Azua,<sup>53</sup> but many of them were most likely multiethnic criollos. "Racial" categories, after all, were social constructions that could and did change depending upon one's background and current circumstances--then as now.

**--Hispaniola as a seasoning, provisioning and  
proving ground for Spain's expansion  
into the Americas--**

Seasoning of people on Hispaniola

There were also thousands of multiethnic criollos among the "Spanish" conquistadors and settlers who left Hispaniola to conquer and settle the other Caribbean islands and mainland regions. Being able to slip fluidly between and among cultures, they were better able to understand, negotiate with, manipulate and control the new peoples and new conditions they encountered than were their

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<sup>52</sup>Méderic Louis Elie Moreau de Saint-Mery, *Descripción de la parte Española de Santo Domingo*, trans. C. Armando Rodríguez (Santo Domingo: Editora Montalvo, 1944), 95 and 50, respectively.

<sup>53</sup>AGI, Audiencia de Santo Domingo 868, L1, f125v.

pure Spanish counterparts, especially those who came directly from Iberia.<sup>54</sup>

When Juan Ponce de León left Hispaniola to settle the island of Puerto Rico in 1512, for example, he took his family members, friends and fellow soldiers with him, as did Miguel Díaz, who replaced him. Their family members, friends and fellow soldiers undoubtedly included ladinoized Africans, Indians and mixed-blood criollos.

The conquistadores and settlers who left Hispaniola for other New World colonies also took along some of their commended Indians, and slaves of Indian, African and mixed descent.<sup>55</sup> These peoples were already "seasoned." That is, they were at least somewhat accustomed not only to the climate, diseases and foods of the Americas, but to living with and working for Spaniards, thus they provided not only their labor, but served as models in the new regions. Another benefit of taking seasoned slaves was that the "weakest" among them had already died off. A letter to the Emperor from Governor Cerratos dated July 15, 1546, explained these benefits as he described how "*negros bozales*" were first brought to Hispaniola, where they were "instructed and then sold" as workers for the colonies of Tierra Firme.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup>Europeans who had been "seasoned" on Hispaniola also fared better in the other Spanish-American colonies than did Spaniards who came directly from Iberia.

<sup>55</sup>AGI, Indiferente General 421, L12, f116v; and Indiferente General 195, L1, f9. See also AGI, Indiferente General 421, L11, ff300-303; text in *CDIU*, Vol. 5(9), 248-256.

<sup>56</sup>Marté, *Manuscritos de Juan Bautista Muñoz*, Vol. 1, 413-413-414.

Hispaniola's oidores complained in 1528 that the above scenario happened repeatedly. In the settlement of Cuba, for example, they claimed that Diego Velázquez took along with him most of the populace of seven of the island's pueblos.<sup>57</sup> Seasoned peoples of all ethnic backgrounds from Hispaniola also settled New Spain, a region that included much of today's U.S. southwest. They went to Jamaica with Juan de Esquivel. They went on the expeditions of Diego de Nicuesa, Alonso de Ojeda and others to settle Tierra Firme. They went with Gil González and Diego López de Salzado to settle the Capes of Honduras and Higüeras. They went to Nicaragua, to Colombia, to San Miguel de Gualdape in today's South Carolina with Lucas Vásquez de Ayllón and Fray Antonio de Montesinos, and to the pearl island, Cubagua (today's Isla Margarita). And they went to Peru.<sup>58</sup>

#### Hispaniola as provisioning grounds

Hispaniola was not only a seasoning grounds for the people who settled and built the other New World colonies, it also was a provisioning grounds. Conquistadores leaving Hispaniola for new territories took cassabe with them. They were accustomed to eating it, and it did not go wormy or moldy as did *bizcocho* (ships' biscuits made from wheat). And they took horses and cattle, pigs and chickens that were initially imported to Hispaniola, but over time had adapted

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<sup>57</sup>Marté, *Los manuscritos de Juan Bautista Muñoz*, Vol. 1, 331-332.

<sup>58</sup>See *CDIU*, Vol. 17, 23-31. This document is a long list that summarizes many of the licenses for "discovery and conquest" in the Indies that were issued by the crown through the 1560s.

to the local conditions, hence survived better than animals carried directly from Spain--not to mention that they were much cheaper and easier to get because they were less distant. After new regions were conquered, Hispaniola also provided such things as fruit trees, vegetable seeds, and sugar cane stock for the new colonies.<sup>59</sup>

### Hispaniola as a proving ground

Needless to say, the conquistadors and settlers of the new Spanish-American colonies also took with them their basic infrastructures: economic, governmental, judiciary, labor and tribute systems, including the systems of *encomienda* and slavery as they had evolved and been refined on Hispaniola. They took along their concepts of proper social hierarchy, too. Europeans were at the top of the list of the elites, of course. They took along their concept of proper socio-economic goals: get title to lots of land, Indians and slaves, and thus get rich, but do so using favors accrued through kinship and patron-client linkages, and other peoples' labor. Finally, they took along with them their values and concepts of proper cultural traditions, including dress and personal adornment, property and material possessions, the structure and use of time, religious worship, agriculture

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<sup>59</sup>See Alfred W. Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), "Metamorphosis of the Americas," in *Seeds of Change*, ed. Herman Viola and Carolyn Margolis (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), and *The Columbian Exchange*; John J. Johnson, "The Introduction of the Horse into the Western Hemisphere," in *Hispanic American Historical Review* 23(4), Nov 1943: 587-610; and Elizabeth J. Reitz, "The Spanish Colonial Experience and Domestic Animals," in *Historical Archaeology* 26(1), 1992: 84-91.

and foodways, architecture and use of space, art and artisanry, kin and non-kin relationships, reciprocity and social behavior, and work regimes.

The infrastructures, patterns, values and beliefs that the Spanish residents of Hispaniola took with them to the new colonies throughout the Caribbean, South America, Central America and North America had their origins in Europe, but they could not be implanted intact in the new lands. Although the Europeans were politically, socially and economically dominant, Indians and Africans outnumbered Europeans from the outset. And very quickly, mixed-blood peoples, too, outnumbered Europeans.

All of the imported European infrastructures, patterns, values and beliefs were tempered and modified--in some instances only slightly, in others much more noticeably--by the conquistadores' and colonists' experiences with other peoples, and vice versa. Hispaniola was a vast "proving ground" for the first-ever meeting and blending of Indians, Spaniards and Africans--and of their cultures.

### **--Hispaniola, Mother and Myth—**

In a very real sense, then, Hispaniola was the birthplace of what would come to be called "Americans" and of "American" culture—a people and a culture that are tripartite: Indian, African and European. Although he did not live beyond the initial conquest of the Caribbean, Peter Martyr D'Anghiera's sobriquet for

Hispaniola proved to be very accurate. He called Hispaniola "mother of the other islands."<sup>60</sup>

Hispaniola, however, was not only the birthplace of American people and culture, it was also where the myth was born that it had a predominantly *Spanish* people and culture, when the truth is that the peoples and cultures of what would come to be called Spanish-America are far more Indian and African than Spanish. The international dominance of the United States in our modern era, where Afro-Americans have become a powerful political minority, is reflected in the fact that Africans' roles in the creation of the history and cultures of "Spanish" and Caribbean America are being positively re-evaluated. Indians' roles in history and cultural development, however, are ignored (Indians are still relatively powerless in the U.S., although many groups are working to change that).

Indians are only valued in the classic sense, in the past tense--to *be* Indian today is to be considered backward, primitive, an anchor to progress. Indians are so negatively valued that their very survival on the island of Hispaniola, where the peoples of three continents first came together to create the dynamic criollo race, is totally denied. The myth of Taíno extinction lives on in the Dominican Republic, recognized as a myth only by a few academics and a few politically and culturally active groups in Cuba, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Classic Taíno culture did, indeed, disintegrate on Hispaniola as plagues and exploitation wiped out a probable 80-90% of the Taíno population, the same 80-90% of the indigenous populations that

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<sup>60</sup>Peter Martyr D'Anghiera, *Pedro Martir de Angleria, Primer cronista de Indias: Decadas del nuevo mundo* (Santo Domingo: Sociedad Dominicana de Bibliófolos, 1989), Fourth Decade, Book 10.

plagues and exploitation wiped out in other tropical regions of the Americas. Instead of focusing on the massive die-out, however, it's time to focus on the 10-20% of the Taíno population that *survived* the Spanish conquest, and their contributions to the dynamic criollo culture of today's Dominican Republic.