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The Inter-Atlantic Paradigm: The Failure of Spanish Medieval Colonization of the Canary and Caribbean Islands

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The year 1492 in Spanish history is an unforgettable date. Within the span of a few months, Spain ended a struggle for political unity on the peninsula lasting centuries and embarked upon a colonial enterprise that was to encircle the globe. But 1492 seduces the imagination, inclining one to read history's momentous consequences into the minds of the protagonists at the time. The historian is tempted to make the actors of 1492 larger than life, multiplying the importance of their actions by the eventual consequences, but this would hinder an understanding of 1492 from the perspective of the people who experienced it.

The first American encounter with the Taíno Indians of the Caribbean can best be understood by comparing the events in Spanish history immediately before and during the arrival of the Spanish in the Indies in 1492. Thus, rather than comparing Columbus's colonization of the Caribbean (1492) with the Spanish presence in Mexico under Cortés (1521), it makes more sense to focus upon the integration of the larger Canary Islands (1478–1526) into Spanish rule for an interpretative key to the first stage of the encounter.

The comparative context for analyzing how Spain ended its medieval history and embarked upon empire building could be entitled the inter-Atlantic paradigm. By 1492 Spain had spent more than a hundred years acquiring island possessions both in the Mediterranean (Balaric Islands) and the Atlantic (Canary Islands), and nearly a decade had passed before it was clearly recognized that the Caribbean islands were part of a New World. In this article, I

This research was made possible with a grant from the Professional Staff Congress and the Research Foundation of the City University of New York. After I submitted the article based on this research to *CSSH*, Dr. Augustin Guimera Ravina presented me with a copy of his insightful essay, "¿Canarias, ensayo de la colonización americana?: el repartimiento de la tierra en La Española" (*América y La España del siglo XVI*, II:175–90 [Madrid: Instituto Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo], 1983). Although his essay adopts some of the same analytical perspectives found in my study, notably the ecological emphasis, both articles retain their integrity as original works.

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hope to show that the failure to colonize simultaneously the Atlantic islands and to derive profit from the enterprise stimulated the development of a new approach to Spain's presence in America. The Spanish approach to colonization suffered considerable adaptation in the transition from Caribbean islands to American mainland, an idea developed elsewhere (Lockhart and Schwartz 1983:61–85; Stevens-Arroyo 1989; see Borges Morán 1987:20–21, 112–5). But careful comparison with the Canarian experiences is crucial to fleshing out the complexities of the process.

In analyzing how the Canaries and the Indies were affected by a medieval notion of colonization, it is useful to rethink medieval history. Glick (1969) suggested that the *Reconquista* be analyzed as a process of acculturation. The value of his approach is the importance it places on adaptation to economic and social circumstances. Although key elements, such as repopulation, confrontation, economic interdependence, and tolerance, were always present in the seven centuries of Reconquista, their impact varied from time to time and place to place. In a sense, medieval Spain was like a gin rummy game, in which the players were constantly seeking then rejecting their cards as the opportunities and challenges altered the situation. In order to analyze shifts in meaning and application of social relations, legal institutions, and popular culture, Glick (1979) focused upon what he called “the ecological niche.” When social and racial groups enjoyed relative prosperity, resources were maximized with mutually beneficial, albeit uneven, success. When, on the other hand, severe conflicts developed because of a mismatch between resources and needs, antagonisms resulted.

The colonization of the Canary Islands and Caribbean may be described as a search for a new ecological niche outside of the Iberian peninsula. And this notion of adaptation to habitat is an interpretative key that measures the colonial paradigm used on each side of the Atlantic. Fortunately, there are excellent studies of the separate histories of each of the Caribbean and Canary islands, although most have not been written from a comparative perspective. Both archipelagos seem to suffer from what Balben Behrmann (Tejera Gaspar 1987:14) called a “cultural *cul de sac*,” in which the residents of each island examine only their own island. Thus, Puerto Ricans study Puerto Rico; Cubans, Cuba; and Canarians, Gran Canaria; and so forth. Drawing upon these specialized sources, this analysis begins a comparison of Spanish colonization in the Indies with what occurred in the Canaries. Although the outline is drawn with broad strokes, I hope to show that the experiences on the islands provided a major stimulus to modify and change policies which had characterized the medieval Reconquista encounter with Muslims and Jews, thus boosting the development of a new imperial mode for later subjugating Mexico, Peru, and much of the American continents.

I do not pretend that I am the first to discover the inter-Atlantic paradigm. Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas joined the conquest of the Canaries to that of the Caribbean islands in his monumental *Historia de las Indias* (I:17–27), which

led Lewis Hanke to observe that Las Casas was reflecting his era by viewing the Canaries and the Indies as parallel steps of the same thrust of Spain into the Atlantic (cited in Pérez Fernández 1989:17, n. 7). More recently, Felipe Fernández-Armesto has suggested:

The completion of the conquest of the Canary Islands is very close in time to the first conquests in the New World and the last in the Iberian peninsula. Indeed, the overlap is striking, as the conquests of the greater Canaries, from 1478 to 1496, encompassed the years of the Granada War and of Columbus's first two voyages. The crucial question is whether there was any conceptual continuity, because, if people thought of all three conquests in the same way, then there may have been a basis for continuity in other respects—institutional, economic, social . . . the Canary Islands really do look like a conceptual “half-way house” between Spain and America (Fernández-Armesto 1987:212–3).

Those searching for the “conceptual continuity” suggested by Fernández-Armesto ought to highlight four key notions in analyzing the Spanish mentality when it encountered peoples of different cultures, races, and religions. First, throughout the medieval Reconquista on the Iberian peninsula, the Spanish used repopulation, not military force, as their principal weapon of domination. The settler, often little more than a relocated farmer, not the soldier, ultimately decided the ruler of a region. Without people to colonize it, a region could neither be held nor produce any valuable return to the crown, so increasing population was the key to economic and political progress (McKay 1977:67–78). The demand for permanent settlers was generally greater than the supply in Christian Spain, and repopulation of a new territory usually elevated the status afforded Spanish peasants. Moreover, the process of repopulation sometimes outpaced control from the crown and lent an extra-judicial character to the commoners' acquisition of land (González Jiménez 1987:I, 4–5). By using the *presura*, which gave rights to squatters, commoners were often able to attain property ownership. Moreover, in exchange for protection from enemy attack, settlers promised to supply work and produce to *infanzones* (lesser noblemen practiced in warfare). Known as the *behetría*, this convention became the *ecomienda* (MacLachlan 1988:153, n. 22; McKay 1977:42, 47–49).

Second, repopulation was not always possible along the medieval frontier. If the region could not entice Christians to settle permanently as either farmers or herders, then there was little sense in conquering it (González Jiménez 1980; see my summary in Stevens-Arroyo 1989:87–88). Instead of permanent settlement, confrontation became a second encounter pattern of the Reconquista. Armed bands on horseback would periodically raid Moorish regions to extract tribute. When it was not forthcoming, the *hidalgos* pillaged in search of booty. Angus McKay insightfully described the alternative to repopulation as “the protection rackets” (1977:17–21). Nor were these warriors reluctant to serve Muslim lords. The much romanticized El Cid, Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar, was one of the most famous of such knights who often behaved like brigands (Fletcher 1990:156–64, *et passim*).

These two processes, repopulation and confrontation, were mediated by a complex network of legal and ecclesiastical institutions governing contact with Muslims as Church and crown sought to maximize their control over both processes. The seven centuries of Reconquista defy easy characterization. They witnessed alternating roles as aggressor and peacemaker for all participants. In a given circumstance, an advocate of peace could urge war just as easily. As I have observed in another place:

When one assesses the pattern of Christian-Moorish encounter diachronically, a counterbalanced amalgam of alternating violence and tolerance emerges. The carrot and the stick were never absent from any period of the *Reconquista*. Indeed, I think that either approach would have been ineffective without the imminent possibility of its opposite (1989:86).

Third, in addition to repopulation and confrontation, another element essential to this analysis lies in economic interdependence. As the Christians advanced southward, they found it increasingly advantageous to retain the existing population in order to maintain the economy. They usually divided up land with those living there but only through the punitive use of *repartimiento*, in which the conquered peoples were forced to work for the victors. Slaves were included in these awards, although not every Moor in the repartimiento was a slave. This forced labor became so indispensable both in urban and rural areas that it was said, “Quien no tiene moro, no tiene oro” (cited in Burns 1990:7–8). The repartimiento was simultaneously a reward to the victors and a punishment for the vanquished. Without continuing violence, this institution also defined the superiority of the Christians over the Moors (and Jews), much as Islamic law had subordinated conquered Christians (*mozarabs*) as a people of the book (*dhimmi*) within a framework of tolerance. Hence, without a dissipation of hostilities among races in Spain, there was a softening of the vision of the other that established an interdependent economic mode. John Hawkins, in developing his concept of a reciprocal process of social role definition, views this tense coexistence as the foundation of a similar phenomenon in the Americas (1987:31–44, *et passim*).

Fourth, after the conquest of Seville, the capital of Al-Andalus in 1248, the integration of the conquered into the Spanish economy assumed a new more tolerant configuration. If the Moorish and Jewish inhabitants had been expelled, it would have overextended military forces, requiring an even larger army to enforce the repartimiento and to hold the newly conquered in subjugation (Fernández-Armesto 1987:59–60). Rather than depopulate the region of Moors and Jews and then repopulate it once again with Christians from the north, Kings Fernando III and Alfonso X initiated policies to preserve much of the original economy by enticing the non-Christian population to remain (Fernández-Armesto 1987:66–69). This launched an epoch of concessions to non-Christian tolerance and cautious acceptance of the other, even when eventual conversion to Christianity was anticipated. Américo Castro called this aspect of an encounter between Christians and Moors *convivencia*, the

emphasizing of harmony and pluralism among the different peoples of Spain, although others would see it more as a symbiotic *modus vivendi* (Burns 1990: 18; Glick 1969:153).

The confessional institutions of the Christians, Jews, and Muslims during the Reconquista on the peninsula clearly defined the law, customs, and practices that were the basis for mutual understanding among the three groups. Fundamentalism and fanaticism could arise, but the backbone of all three faiths was their belief in the revealed Word of God expressed in scriptures they all held in reverence. The interpretations of this revelation by each faith was intensely debated but was based on commonly accepted rules of exegesis and logic. Thus, rational explanations were always applicable to religious and social differences among the groups. This religio-philosophic commonality provided the foundation for shared relations of cultural symbiosis or *convivencia*, the fourth characteristic of medieval encounter in this analysis.

Repopulation and confrontation, economic interdependence, and cultural symbiosis were ingredients in the stewpot of medieval Spain. But the pot began to boil over as the medieval period was shaken by a series of catastrophes. The trauma of the Black Death and the brutality of dynastic civil wars in Spain caused widespread economic decline. On the one hand, these disasters forestalled a climax to the reconquest of all of the Iberian peninsula (McKay 1977:165–173). But when combined with the accompanying disintegration of faith in the Church and God's providence, such forces also altered the world view of the general population. It was a time throughout Europe of "economic chaos, social unrest, high prices, profiteering, depraved morals, lack of production, industrial indolence, frenetic gaiety, wild expenditure, luxury, debauchery, social and religious hysteria, greed, avarice, maladministration, decay of manners" (Tuchman 1978:xiii–xvi). In such a climate, the precarious balance of the four elements of medieval encounter with the other was rudely interrupted by added cruelty in warfare, pogroms, riots, and revolts (McKay 1977:173–187).¹

In these difficult circumstances, the crowns of Aragón and Castile were joined by the marriage of Ferdinand and Isabella in 1469 (Ladero Quesada 1990:25–26). After a decade of conflict to settle dynastic claims, these monarchs used the Catholic religion and the expulsion of the Moors as legitimation for a unified monarchy (Lomax 1978:178). The military campaign to conquer Granada (1482–92) became not just the ultimate triumph of a Christian over a Moorish army but the incarnation of Christianity's power over Islam. Granada was conquered not so much for its modest wealth as for the symbolism it afforded an emerging centralized monarchy. Ferdinand and Isab-

¹ In "The New Story," a 1977 essay of considerable insight, Thomas M. Berry, C. P., analyzes a shift in Christian spirituality on account of the Black Death from a creative optimism to a redemption paradigm, which presumed human weakness and sin. The effects of the plague upon Western civilization are viewed as pervasive, radical, and enduring until the present. See *The Dream of the Earth* (Sierra Club Books: San Francisco, 1988), 123–37.

ella also used the war to undermine the feudal role of noblemen in warfare. The army sent against Granada was directly under the crown. Unlike the previous stages of the Reconquista, there was not a gradual process of subjugation, eventually capped by repopulation. Instead, military victory was sought as quickly as possible for reasons of state, even if the policies resulted in destroying the economy. A scorched earth policy of destruction and siege was launched to break Granada's ability to resist. Although the monarchs attempted to restore a tolerant mode of cooperation once the conquest was completed, the conquered were not disposed to forget easily such a recent and unrelenting hostility (Ladero Quesada 1990:3, n. 6). An irreparable fear of treachery on both sides became characteristic of Spanish-Morisco relations after 1492.

The history of medieval expansion on the peninsula forms the backdrop for the Atlantic conquests. The Spanish movement into the seven Atlantic islands off the northern coast of Africa spans the century and a half which marks Spain's last medieval phase. When the Spanish began colonizing the Canary Islands in 1341, the medieval modes of repopulation were universally practiced. By the time the final conquest of the Greater Canaries was launched a hundred and forty years later, the crueler Granada campaign was underway. Not surprisingly, the mode of encounter with the natives of the Canaries reflected the changes taking place on the continent.

The medieval mode of colonization, clearly marked by the earliest European expansion into the Canaries, was begun by the Genoese (1312), Mallorcan, Catalán (1320–30), and Portuguese (1341) expeditions. From Avignon, Pope Clement VI invoked a crusade in 1344–45 against the island aborigines—as if they were Muslims—and allowed the sale of indulgences to raise money for an expedition that would have placed the islands directly under papal fiefdom. But the Kings of Castile and Portugal asserted their rights of conquest, forcing the papacy through the next several decades to limit its activity to sponsoring peaceful evangelization by the Franciscans. This included the erection of a diocese in Telde (Gran Canaria) in 1351. But at the same time, Portuguese and Castilian raiders continued to take the natives as slaves. Such radically contrasting modes of European contact, the one peaceful and the other violent, sent contradictory messages to the island natives about the Europeans' intentions. Not surprisingly, the positive impact of missionary efforts was negated by the violence of armed attacks and by the deaths of many of the Franciscans (Aznar Vallejo 1990:5–6; see the chronological listing by Pérez Fernández 1989:143–87).

The Norman knight, Jean de Béthencourt, Lord of Grainville, made the medieval mode of settlement permanent by populating the islands with Europeans. In 1403, Béthencourt pledged fealty to King Enrique III of Castile. This submission to a Spanish, rather than a French, king has been interpreted as a ruse to attract resources to the repopulation process of the three northernmost islands in the Canaries by a feudal lord who saw the difficulties of

repopulation through individual enterprise (Fernández-Armesto 1987:179–82). Columbus duplicated such recourse to a foreign monarch several generations later.

Béthencourt and the knights who accompanied him subjugated the natives through military action, dividing land and people in repartimientos, the spoils of war, similar to what had occurred in Spain. He was able to attract some European farmers and their families to begin agriculture, but the attempt to make a profit from the islands met with limited success and depended more on the sale of natives from neighboring islands in the slave trade (Fernández-Armesto 1987:184). At this point, repopulation of the Canaries paralleled the same process on the peninsula. “Far from ‘going native,’ the settlers imitated metropolitan society” (Fernández-Armesto 1987:182), and the peninsula’s alternating patterns of raids and repopulation are found. Even after the Spanish nobleman, Fernán Peraza, replaced the Normans by asserting a feudal title inherited through the Las Casas family, this pattern remained the same. The European foothold on the islands reproduced peninsular society, but from inside their walled fortresses or monastic cloisters, they could scarcely claim to have colonized the island natives.

Portuguese paladins, successful in settling Madeira and the Azores, attempted conquest of the larger islands of Canaries in 1415 and again in 1424, leapfrogging over the Spanish presence in the smaller northern islands and in Gomera to the west. But the Portuguese became bogged down, first by disputes over jurisdiction and then by defeat in the war with Castile (1474–79). To resist and fight off the Portuguese drive, the Spanish crown allowed the Perazas to increase the pace of domination by confrontation, resulting in raids on native villages on Gomera to extract booty by force and by terror (Fernández-Armesto 1987:204).

After they inherited the Canarian colonies, Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand entertained contradictory notions about what should be done with the natives. They alternated between an abusively pragmatic approach to produce wealth and other, more sublime, concerns about evangelization and cultural protection (*cf.* Floyd 1973:230). The reasons for this ambivalence lay not so much with royal hypocrisy nor with a conflict between a conniving Ferdinand and a saintly Isabella but in the need to reconcile interests of state with modes of encountering the other who did not follow the behavior of either Muslim or Jew.

The existence of the Canaries was recorded in Greco-Roman times, when they had been called the Hesperides (Pérez Fernández 1989:83–84; citing Pliny, *Historia Natural* I:67, V:1, p. 63 n. 13). The reappearance of the islands to the European world triggered the need to decide the religious status and legal rights of the native Canarians, drawing the attention of Boccaccio and Petrarch (Fernández-Armesto 1987:244). Two contradictory trends emerged. On the one hand, the aborigines were seen as inferior humans, the *antípodas* of a lesser world (Pérez Fernández 1989:60 n. 6); on the other, their stateless

society was interpreted as characterizing their noble and unspoiled state. The mode of encounter attached to the first attitude was a ruthless, military approach; the more benign view of the other gave room for tolerance of the natives (Fernández-Armesto 1987:221–52).

Discussion of the papal pronouncements over nearly two hundred years is beyond the scope of this essay,² but most of the arguments about the native Canarians resurfaced in the case of the Taíno inhabitants of the Indies. Early discussion of Native American rights was framed by the people in the Canaries and the Caribbean, not by the experience with Aztecs, Mayans, or Incas. Ultimately, it was recognized that both the peoples of the Canaries and those of the Indies were not infidels because they were not guilty of rejecting Christ. This distinction was at the core of Spain's legal claim to rule non-infidel kings by papal donation (Zavala 1968[1943]:5–28). Moreover, unlike the Muslims who surrounded Christendom in the empires of the East, posing a massive military and religious threat, the people of both sets of islands, who possessed neither an army nor a theology, were relatively defenseless before the sword and the cross.

Thus on both sides of the Atlantic, the Spanish encounter with island peoples provoked serious dissent about the direction of colonization policy. The arbiter for debates in both places was the Spanish Crown, which imposed a coherent policy by asserting royal control over new lands. As in Granada, Ferdinand and Isabella sought to maximize their influence at the expense of feudal rights, although that required legitimating the administration of the island colonies by *infanzones* and *hidalgos* rather than the first wave of medieval nobles turned conquerors.

Ironically, the use of Catholicism as a symbol of Christian unity to urge Ferdinand and Isabella towards expelling Muslims and Jews had a different impact in the Canaries and the Indies. Proof of Christian superiority lay in converting to the Gospel natives who had not yet received revelation. Hence in 1477, reiterated in 1485, Queen Isabella ordered the manumission of Canarian natives who had been sold as slaves in Castile (Rumeau de Armas 1969:37 *et passim*). The freed aborigines were returned to the islands under

² The work by Silvio Zavala, "Las conquistas de Canarias y América," *Tierra Firme*, vol. 1 (1935), pt. 4:81–112, vol. 2 (1936), pt. 1:89–115, compares documents and institutional functions utilized in the conquest of the Canaries with those of New Spain in particular. Dominik J. Wölfel's study of the juridic process in the Canaries is classic, especially his "La curia romana y la corona de España en defensa a los aborígenes de Canarias," *Anthropos*, 25 (1930). Also see Antonio Pérez Voiturez, "Aspectos jurídicos internacionales de la Conquista de Canarias," in vol. 2 of Agustín Millares Carlo's revision of Millares Torres' nineteenth-century work, *Historia General de las Islas Canarias* (3rd ed., Las Palmas, 1977). Antonio Rumeu de Armas in his *Política Indigenista de Isabel la Católica* (Valladolid, 1969), is a most satisfying study because it limits the comparison to the Canaries and the Caribbean, while following events in chronological order. In English, the work of James Muldoon, *Popes, Lawyers, and Infidels* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1979), integrates the Canarian questions into a larger medieval European context.

the protection of the church (Pérez Fernández 1989:166, 170). This mixture of violent confrontation by enterprising warriors and protection of native rights by the crown was no more effective in Gomera than the previous contradictions of enslavement and evangelization in Tenerife and Gran Canaria. Indeed, the combined effect of the inability to finance colonial enterprise through the slave trade as the result of royal decree, the shortage of cash to pay mercenary police to subdue the natives, and the lack of immediate rewards to entice settlers into repopulation dealt private colonization in the Canaries a devastating setback.

When the last Peraza was slain by the natives in 1488, his widow, Beatriz de Bobadilla, was forced to appeal to the crown to defend Christian territory and prosecute a war of subjugation. Royal intervention eventually led to a forfeiture of hereditary claims to Gomera, and the islands became royal possession (*realenga*). Columbus's family faced a similar choice in America, and only the brief success of gold mining in Hispaniola allowed him any pretense of forming a medieval dynastic control of his discoveries before he surrendered his claims to the crown (Floyd 1973:45–74, *et passim*).

Thus, whatever may have been the role of piety in motivating the Catholic kings to outlaw slavery of the natives on both sides of the Atlantic, these policies had convenient results. By championing the conversion of the natives, the monarchs supplanted papal claims to fiefdom over non-infidel pagans. By outlawing slavery, the monarchs stripped entrepreneurial nobles of the source of income they needed to finance colonization. The larger islands of the Canaries—La Palma, Gran Canaria and Tenerife—joined Gomera in providing the theater for the crown's efforts at a new type of conquest justified by evangelizing purposes (Aznar Vallejo 1990:12–16).

The military attacks on Gran Canaria and Tenerife were put in the hands of Pedro de Vera and Alfonso De Lugo, experienced warriors who were commissioned without the feudal trappings of hereditary title (Aznar Vallejo 1983:42). They were the monarchs' mercenaries. Veteran soldiers, such as de Vera and de Lugo in the Canaries, did not entertain philosophical ambivalence when they encountered the natives (*cf.* Todorov 1984:116–9 *et passim*). They understood war and exploitation better than legal debate. Confrontation was the way to conquest, and repopulation was of secondary importance. Hence, the final subjugation of the two most populated Canary Islands, Gran Canaria (1483) and Tenerife (1496), followed in the path of the Granada campaign and was achieved efficiently with relative speed. Others who served as mercenary warriors without the possibility of gaining formal recognition and respect included Pánfilo de Navarez, Hernán Cortés, Francisco Pizarro, and Diego de Almagro in America. These men shared experiences and honed their tactics for conquering the natives on both sides of the Atlantic (see Hawkins 1987:48–50).

Although the ruthless *conquistadores* had more or less a free hand in

subduing the natives, their attempts at ruling tell a different story. Indeed, only Cortés became prosperous (MacLachlan and Rodríguez 1980:76–91). The medieval model for colonization placed restraints on the confrontational methods of the conquistadores. How these restraints unraveled and how ruthless pragmatism dominated Spanish contact with the natives has been described elsewhere (Stevens-Arroyo 1989). The tug of war between medieval repopulation and an imperialistic pattern of subjugation frames the failure of Spanish medievalism in the Canarian colonizations. Because the discovery and settlement of the Indies under Columbus was sandwiched between the two key dates of colonization in the Canaries, the two archipelagos were joined in Spanish history, forming the genesis of the inter-Atlantic paradigm.

The medieval mentality providing conceptual continuity between the peninsular Reconquista and the initial stages of penetration into the Atlantic did not suddenly disappear like wine from a bottle, never more to return. The transition from a failed medieval system emphasizing repopulation to a more ruthless imperial mode of colonization zigs and zags like a sailboat tacking against the wind. Even after the corner is turned and a medieval repopulation is no longer sought for the colonies, vestiges of the old system endure. Ironically, the less distinguished conquistadores furthest removed in birth from titles and the medieval trappings of nobility were at times the most eager to acquire these embellishments (Lockhart and Schwartz 1983:78–80).³ Nonetheless, although elements may evoke the medieval system of repopulation and the Reconquista in the Spanish experience on the American continents, the juridic norms and colonial policies underwent a profound transformation when the medieval model failed to bring prosperity for the settlers and conversion of the natives in the Canaries and the Caribbean at the same time.

However important this legal (dare I say ideological?) change in Spanish thinking about those they conquered, it would be a mistake to view this as nothing more than a political process. If one draws the historic picture with only the brush of legal norms and pragmatic decisions, a dynamic dimension is lost. The natives of both the Canaries and the Caribbean islands were actors in the drama. Their behavior and reactions to the Spaniards provoked the failure of the medieval model and stimulated new and interactive policies. Hence the story is not complete without carefully considering how the natives shaped the conceptual continuity between both sets of Atlantic islands.

Initially, the Spaniards found similarities in social and economic organization between the natives in the Canaries and the Indies. Columbus's diary (Hulme 1986:27, 37; Borges 1972:201–11) is replete with comparisons of the

³ This trend may be related to the phenomenon described by Franz Fanon in his *Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1963), wherein the newly liberated person seeks the status of ruler by repeating all of the abuses of the old regime. Fanon argues that since any other form of power is unknown to an oppressed people, they believe there is no option for a ruler except to be oppressive.

Taínos in the Caribbean with the natives of the several Canaries (Guanches and Canarians).⁴ Both populations had only rudimentary tools for their economies and little warfare technology to resist the Spaniards. Nonetheless, both native peoples had well-adapted social and economic systems which maximized the habitat of the islands.

Most archaeologists are certain of the biological origins of the Guanches in North Africa among a proto-Berber people and of a sequence of migrations (Tejera Gaspar and González Antón 1987:32–33), possibly the result of interventions by Phoenicians, Romans, and Mauritians on different expeditions (Tejera Gaspar and González Antón 1987:21–23 *et passim*; Pérez Ortega 1988:28–133). In the absence of iron, these ancient settlers lost contact with the Mediterranean civilizations and reverted to a stone culture (Arco Aguilar 1988:17–18, 51; Pérez Ortega 1988:93–94). They preserved, however, ceramic traditions, agricultural processes, and sheepherding from their North African origins. As a general pattern, the natives moved from the mountainous interior of the islands to the coast, grazing sheep and goats on the higher elevations and harvesting grains on the coastal plains (Arco Aguilar 1988:41–50). Yet the ecology was different on the seven islands, so their isolation from each other and the separate waves of migration produced significant differences between the Cro-Magnon and Mediterranean types in the population. The explanation of these differences has sometimes taken an unfortunate racist interpretation that has bedeviled Canarian studies (Tejera Gaspar and González Antón 1987:23–30). Moreover, the differences in relative cultural terms was intensified because the natives did not travel between islands. The people of one island could not understand another's dialect, despite a common linguistic heritage (Tejera Gaspar and González Antón 1987:18). As discussed later, the Spaniards used these differences to divide and conquer each island, sometimes employing natives from one island against those of another.

The Taínos also migrated to their archipelago in waves. Originating in the Orinoco Delta, these peoples, Arahucan speakers, were linguistically related and forged the culture called Taíno. Replacing a more primitive people, the Siboney, everywhere but in western Cuba, the range of the Taínos extended from Puerto Rico in the east, to the Lucayo Islands on the north, Jamaica on the south, and to the eastern half of Cuba on the west (Stevens-Arroyo 1988:26–30). The Taínos mastered their ecology in a type of organization that I have described as a “harvesting economy” (1988:49–51). Without livestock, they exploited their tropical habitat by utilizing *yuca* (manioc) as a staple with

⁴ Technically, each island calls the original inhabitants by that proper name: those of Gomera are Gomerians, those of Gran Canaria are Canarians, (or Kanarians), the Bibaches are from Hierro, and so forth. “Guanche” is usually attributed to the inhabitants of Tenerife alone. I have taken this license here not to overburden the article with distinctions not required for my purposes and note that some scholars from Las Casas to the present day use Guancho for all native inhabitants (Concepción 1989:13; *cf.* Tejera Gaspar and González Antón 1987:18).

various other tuber crops, forest fruits, and fishing for a well-developed system (Sauer 1966:48–65).

Unlike the Guanches, the island peoples were in frequent contact with each other. Although they maintained regional differences that require careful interpretation, they preserved far greater linguistic and social cohesiveness in the Caribbean than in the Canaries. Even when the Caribs of the Lesser Antilles are included, their hostility and frequent conflicts with the Taínos testify to the accessibility of the island peoples with each other rather than the opposite (Stevens-Arroyo 1988:34–35). Moreover, some scholars suggest that there have been far more similarities and cooperation between the Taínos and Caribs than the Spanish chronicles depict (Hulme 1986:13–43, *et passim*; cf. Stevens-Arroyo 1988:6, 14–15, 98–101).

The similarity of the social organizations of Guanche and Taíno society is most striking. Even when misinterpretations by the Spanish chroniclers are allowed, serious study of the sources does not seem to indicate the existence of what some consider to be the basic requisites for a state society: legitimized force, institutionalized authority generated by a class structure, and a literate tradition and state taxes.⁵ People on both sides of the Atlantic clearly lived in stateless societies based principally on kinship. Taínos apparently developed intricate relationships among locally based communities and have been described as living in a kind of proto-chieftdom structure (Stevens-Arroyo 1989:48–49). The same can be said of the political organization on the Canary Islands before the Europeans arrived, despite variations most notable on heavily populated Tenerife (Tejera Gaspar and González Antón 1987:86–90; cf. 108–14). On both sides of the Atlantic, the role of the shaman often conflicted with the centralized power of the kinship head, and the principal chiefs were not without challenges to their authority (Tejera Gaspar and González Antón 1987:111, 114–7; Stevens-Arroyo 1988:48–49).

One effect of stateless society upon Guanches and Taínos was that they did not know when they had been conquered. Far from docile or inefficient defenders of their homelands, the Guanches and Taínos proved tenacious in fighting against insuperable odds. They made the habitat of the islands into a weapon. Knowledge of terrain, climate, and seasons enabled the island peoples to wage war on the Spaniards with bloody results; and only the cruel forces of biology proved an implacable foe. In fact, the Spaniards lost more soldiers in colonizing the Canaries and the Indies than did Cortés in Mexico. The Guanches and the Taínos fought on, as did the Mayans, long after the

⁵ Thomas Hall's studies analyze the resistance of stateless societies to inclusion in a world system. Problems similar to those of the Spaniards with the Guanches and Taínos can be ascribed to the colonizing effort of Comanches, Zapotecs, and other native peoples in Texas and New Mexico. See Hall's *Social Change in the Southwest, 1350–1880* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1989) and "Incorporation in the World-System: Toward a Critique," *American Sociological Review*, 51(1986), 390–402.

Spaniards thought victory had been won because a local ruler had been either killed or converted. On the other hand, the armies of the Aztec and the Incan emperors fell into initial confusion when their state-based chain of command was destroyed (Todorov 1984:105–19; MacLachlan and Rodríguez 1980:72–73).

Judged on this basis, the similarities of the Guanches and Taínos upon encountering the Spaniards were greater than the differences, but comparing the two societies must also include a time dimension. Perhaps the most important difference between the Guanches and the Taínos was the length of time which elapsed from the initial contacts with the Europeans until the definitive conquest. For nearly a century and a half, Europeans sporadically landed on the Canary Islands, either to take slaves or make converts. The Guanches resisted the slave traders and occasionally killed the missionaries, but by 1488, when the final Spanish drive began, some natives had returned to Guanche society with knowledge of European language and culture. In a sense, just as the Spaniards had time to adapt and modify their colonization of the Canaries, the natives also had opportunity to accommodate themselves to the Europeans.

Such was not the case with the Taínos. Most of them passed through the entire process of contact, confrontation, evangelization, and colonization within one generation. Columbus probably hoped that by taking Taínos back with him to Spain, he would gain the same kind of advantage with the natives that had benefited the colonizers of the Canaries (*cf.* Todorov 1984:43–45). But the existing routes of communication among the Caribbean peoples meant that the bad news could outrun the good. In fact, Hatuey, a cacique from Española reportedly alerted the Taínos in Cuba to resist the advancing Spaniards (Floyd 1973:112–4). The first Hispanicized Taíno to effect an historical role is Enriquillo in 1519, more than twenty-five years after Columbus began his efforts at colonization (Floyd 1973:192–3). This strengthened the idea that slowness of penetration assisted the Spanish in colonizing the Canarian natives.

The relative difference in size of the archipelagos and their populations merits comparison. Puerto Rico is one-tenth the territorial size of Cuba and about one-fifth that of Española. Yet all of the Canary Islands together would fit inside only two-thirds of Puerto Rico. The demographics of both areas reflect this disparity in size. Some estimate the native population in all seven Canary islands at the time of European arrival in the fourteenth century as high as 70,000 (Concepción 1989:41), while others put it as low as 30,000 (Tejera Gaspar and González Antón 1987:158–9). After the bitter wars on the most densely populated Tenerife, the largest of the Canaries, and on the only slightly smaller Gran Canaria, the number of native inhabitants began to decline. By the sixteenth century, the number of natives dropped to only about 10,000 of some 40,000 total inhabitants, including Europeans (Aznar Vallejo

1990:19). Disease and abuse were effective killers of the Guanches but apparently not in proportions like those that afflicted the Taínos (Tejera Gaspar and González Antón 1987:161 *et passim*).

In the Caribbean, Moya Pons (1987:181–9) offers carefully drawn charts that establish the entire Taíno population of Española at about 300,000 when the Spanish arrived. The population of Puerto Rico would have been about one-eighth of that or 37,500 (Silvestrini and Luque de Sánchez 1987:91). All told, the Taíno population in the four major Antillean Islands in 1492 may have reached 500,000. But the demographic demise of the Taínos in the space of one generation was catastrophic. Whatever the original numbers may have been, by 1550 the native population recorded in the various censuses taken by Spanish officials in Española, Cuba, and Puerto Rico scarcely reached 15,000.⁶

The lingering presence of Guanches in the Canaries allowed for a shallow semblance of economic interdependence and *convivencia*, while the rapid demise of the Taínos in the Caribbean rendered useless the pretense of these aspects of the medieval mode of colonization. In both places, nonetheless, there was a perceived need to legitimate Spanish society by referring to established medieval practice. Adapting Hawkins (1987:6–9; 188–194; see xvi), I would compare this maintenance of medievalisms to a kind of political language that employs the grammar of the medieval experience but with words which have acquired new lexical meanings. As suggested above, control over Canarian colonization passed from the adventurous nobility seeking hereditary titles to the Spanish crown in ways that broke with the Reconquista model. The final military victory in 1496 in Tenerife definitively subdued the native chiefs. As the work of Aznar Vallejo has shown, after conquest the Canary Islands were incorporated into the Spanish system, which used traditional medieval norms. Not only were the official instruments and offices of Spanish power established, but institutions, such as the brothel, were also brought to the islands as part of the process of assimilating the colonial society to the Spanish kingdom, much as what had taken place during the Reconquista on the peninsula (Aznar Vallejo 1983:108–9 n. 21). Although Columbus's legal claims presented significant impediments to this course in the Caribbean, the same patterns of licensing these official institutions is followed, even to the brothel (Deive 1988:124).

Far more successful in sustaining a constant population and proximity to Spain, the Canaries provided a distinct advantage over the Caribbean, where

⁶ The question of population estimates in America is much debated and has become highly technical. I suggest consulting the discussion of estimates for Taíno population described by Moya Pons (1987). Debate about these numbers, however, should not obfuscate the issue. There was a rapid and drastic demographic decline among the Taínos, unprecedented for the time, which was due in no small measure to diseases brought by the Europeans. See Kirkpatrick Sale, *The Conquest of Paradise* (New York: Penguin Books, 1990) for a dramatic retelling of this process.

the population of each island remained extremely small. When the conquests of Mexico and Peru eventually siphoned off immigration to the Canaries and to the Caribbean, both areas began a period of slow demographic increase of island inhabitants. Because of their smaller colonial population base after the ravages of disease had decimated the Taínos, the Caribbean islands lagged behind the Canaries in relative development. In the case of Puerto Rico, for instance, as late as 1582, there were only 170 settlers and their households in the city of San Juan after seventy-five years of colonization (Silvestrini and Luque de Sánchez 1987:103). In both Puerto Rico and Española at the close of the sixteenth century, there were more black slaves than Taínos, and most Spaniards were soldiers, not colonists (Silvestrini and Luque de Sánchez 1987:88–104; Moya Pons 1978:71–72). Given the mainly rural nature of the settlements, with uninhabited wide-open spaces and the scarcity of city dwellers, the institutions of the initial colonization effort, as well as the medieval pretenses of economic interdependence and *convivencia* between natives and settlers, withered.

However, the colonies did not differ only in relative population numbers. The racial composition of the Canaries was not drastically affected by intermarriage with the Guanches because the natives were essentially Caucasian. The early Canarian population also includes Portuguese settlers and gives evidence of more European women than in the Caribbean. In fact, some colonists returned from the Caribbean to the Canaries during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, apparently for family reasons (Borges 1977:13–14). As will be seen, the Caribbean acquired a more diverse racial composition.

Although the Guanche continued herding sheep and goats (Concepción 1989:61–62), from the sixteenth century, the most important economic event in the Canaries—and one that ensured their successful colonization—was the introduction of cash crops, such as sugar, in relative proximity to the peninsula (Aznar Vallejo 1983:260–4; Fernández-Armesto 1982:80, n. 56, 81–86). In the Caribbean Columbus no doubt had the Canarian example was in mind when he attempted to establish a sugar industry (Floyd 1973:176 n. 50; Borges 1972:228 n. 65). However, the Canaries initially employed the native Guanches as slaves in sugar cultivation (Marrero Rodríguez), while the Caribbean relied chiefly on African slaves for sugar workers.

The establishment of a cash crop in the Canaries during the sixteenth century, however, depended upon sustaining a local food production sufficient to maintain the colonists. In other words, sugar could only be cultivated by settlers for export if food was in enough supply from local sources. Thus, although there are frequent reports that the natives ran away from their lords or that they rustled cattle and ate their master's animals with no sense of compunction, especially on Gomera, where Hispanization was weak (Aznar Vallejo 1983:201–2; Tejera Gaspar and González Antón 1987:172–4, 184–

9), or even occasionally revolted (Pérez Ortega 1988:157–60, 165–7), the Guanches nonetheless made a substantial economic contribution to the survival of the Spanish colonies. The Guanches provided meat and some basic grain crops to sustain the settlers, who were then free to turn to sugar cultivation.

This most definitely was not the case in the Caribbean. Columbus expected the Taínos to feed the hungry Spaniards. While native hospitality had provided for his tiny expedition in 1492, the 1,300 men who came the next year, in 1493, went hungry because “one Spaniard ate in a day what a Taíno ate in a week.” Within forty days of their arrival in the New World, more than half the expedition returned to Spain, leaving the Admiral with only four ships and several hundred men. It is likely that the Taínos refused to supply the Spaniards with any more food simply because they could not, but Columbus interpreted their actions as rebellion. In 1494, he launched the first of his attacks upon the natives and, like the Peraza in the Canaries, became another colonizer inclined to take slaves in order to finance his enterprise.

Significantly, the Taínos did not participate in the food economy of the Indies to the degree of the Guanches because the Spanish were generally unwilling to eat Taíno food. Although the Guanches and the Canarians provided meat and familiar grains, the Taínos had a diet consisting largely of native tuber crops, such as manioc, tropical fruits, and fish. The Spaniards disdained such sustenance, instead preferring to face starvation because they were unable to bring sufficient supplies with them or to plant familiar crops that would flourish in the tropics.

It was in the face of this threat of death from hunger or from rebellious natives that the revolt of Francisco Roldán took place in 1497. A participant in the wars of Granada, Roldán was a lieutenant of Columbus, who was sent ahead of the other colonists to the interior of Española to gather food. Roldán and his some seventy-five men were unable to fulfill their mission and returned to find that Columbus had departed from the colony, leaving his brother Bartolomé in charge. Angry that they were denied access to the store of food in the settlement of Concepción and aware that they could not return to Spain because there were not enough ships to carry them back, Roldán and his men took matters into their own hands. They raided Isabela in the north, killing livestock for meat and stealing horses from Diego Colón. They then retreated to Xaraguá in the south of the island, where they abandoned a European way of life.

Although the chronicles are uniformly condemnatory of Roldán and his actions, he was the pioneer in what became the *criollo* adaptation to life in the Indies. Roldán and his men abandoned the pretense of class distinction based on European origins. They apparently forgot such Christian customs as monogamy and usurped the roles of cacique and warrior for themselves. Defending the Taínos among whom they lived against other Spaniards, as well as against Taínos, they integrated themselves into the native society, offering the

Indians weapons and military knowledge in exchange for food and prestige (Floyd 1973:39–44).

Roldán's revolt was never really suppressed. Columbus dealt from a weakened position and could only negotiate a truce by offering amnesty to the insurgents. (Roldán himself was killed when the ship he boarded in return to Spain suffered shipwreck almost immediately after leaving Española in 1502.) In contrast to the Canary Islands, where Guanches and Canarians had gradually integrated themselves into Spanish society by supplying part of the food in the colony, in the Caribbean, the Spaniards had to assimilate in order to find food.

The entire enterprise in the Indies was on tenuous grounds for the first ten years. Its value was only ensured by the discovery of gold in the decade or so before the Mexican conquests; yet the horde of Spaniards who came to the Indies looking for instant wealth had neither the conceptual nor practical notions of colonization to insure the success of their enterprise. In 1502, for instance, some 2,500 colonists arrived under the administration of Nicolás de Ovando, who was sent by the crown to circumscribe the powers of Columbus. Within two months, we are told, half of this expedition died from hunger and tropical disease (Moya Pons 1987:33–34). Those who survived traded their wealth, titles, and even clothes to the ragtag survivors of Roldán's rebellion for Taíno servants to feed them.

Ovando, a member of the military order of Alcántara, was commissioned by the Crown to protect the Taínos from abuse under the Columbus family's administrations. While forced to recognize Columbus's claims to the governorship on account of the contract of discovery, the monarchy insisted that the Taínos, like the Guanches, were vassals of the kingdom and not property of the colonists. This was a ruse similar to that in the Canaries against the Peraza to undercut the financial stability of the Columbus family enterprise. In a text that begins, "*Que solamente lo sepáis vos e non otras personas* (that only you will know this and no other persons)," Ovando was secretly told that in his defense of native rights he nonetheless was to relocate the Taínos near royal possessions, so that they might produce wealth for the crown (Moya Pons 1987:23–32).

Ovando sought to reverse by decree what Roldán had won on the battlefield: to take the Taínos from the rebels—because the Indians were now free—and instead commend the Taínos to colonists designated by the Crown. No land was involved, as in the repartimiento. Only the service of persons was awarded, and that under royal supervision. Titles were granted to administer the territorial property (*realengo*) of the crown. The Taínos were expected to work for their new masters under the rules of *encomienda* in exchange of the privileges of conversion. This reversed the arrangement begun in medieval Spain as the *behetría*, where a frontier settlement sought the defense of *inanzones* in exchange for tribute but without the intervention or

recourse to a feudal lord. Instead of coming from the initiative of the protected, in the Indies the *encomienda* served the interests of the protectors.

The *encomienda* was bitterly attacked a decade later by Las Casas and other Dominicans because of the abuses it engendered. Rather than protection or conversion, the structure legitimized exploitation. In some ways, it was scarcely different from the *repartimiento*, which was considered punitive. Despite these limitations, the crown preferred the *encomienda* in the Indies to the lawlessness of Roldán. When colonists in the New World converted the modest powers of an *encomendero* into the pretensions of a feudal lord, the monarchy acceded to Las Casas' desire for eventual abolition (*cf.* Delgado 1955:145). But the reason the *encomienda* assumed such titanic importance in the Caribbean was based on the need for food in a new ecological niche in which the Spaniards could find little that was familiar.

Ovando also insisted on Christian rules for marriage, forcing Spaniards living with Taíno women to marry in Catholic rites. But no *encomiendas* were conferred on those who married natives because it was thought that the Spaniards had dropped in social prestige (Delgado 1955:146; Moya Pons 1987:41–42). Thus Ovando refeudalized the colonial society that had briefly escaped European ways under Roldán. The distinctions of Spaniard over fellow Spaniard were reinforced and even accentuated because only those of acceptable background could hold Taínos, and only those who held Taínos could become wealthy.

Thus the nature of the *encomienda* and its imperial purposes developed in the Caribbean because of the need for food and the drastic demographic decline of the Taínos. These factors affected the stability of the early colonial institutions, which, like those in the Canaries, were imitations of medieval society. As a result, while the Canaries languished as pale reflections of a traditional peninsular society, the colonies of the Caribbean were spectacular failures in the shadow of the triumphs in Mexico and Peru. The social distance between the natives and the settlers also played a role in undermining the viability of the medieval model of colonization. This question of social distance can be analyzed in terms of the religious incorporation of the natives because the symbolism of religion generally reflects the patterns of the society in which it occurs.⁷

The Guanches on Tenerife were provided with a religious legitimation in the local devotion to Our Lady of Candelaria (Aznar Vallejo 1986; Hernández González 1990:48–54). The genesis of this Marian cult and a testimony to its impact are found in the work published in 1580 by the Guatemalan-born Dominican friar, Alonso Espinosa. He suggests that the statue of Our Lady of Candelaria venerated by the Guanches was “carried by angels” to Tenerife

⁷ For this useful concept, I am indebted to the work of Dr. Ana María Díaz Stevens, who develops this idea masterfully in her work, *Oxcart Catholicism on Fifth Avenue* (South Bend, Ind: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993).

(1980[1594]:56). Historians suppose that the image was left on the beaches of the island sometime around 1390 (Rodríguez Moure 1913:17–21), possibly by Mallorcan sailors who intended to invoke heaven's blessings on later evangelization. Attributing supernatural powers to the statue, certain Guanche *menceyes*, or chiefs, moved the image to caves further inland, where they invoked the powers of the unnamed feminine numen to bring fertility upon their herds.

The identification of Our Lady of Candelaria as a uniquely Canarian madonna is significant for this study. Devotion to Our Lady of Candelaria provided a common ground within Christianity to unite elements of the native Guanche culture and the Spanish colonists. Although the importance of the event was largely symbolic and of itself did not insure either the conversion of or respect for the native peoples, the event represented the shrinkage of social distance between the Guanches and the Spanish settlers. In 1601, the descendants of the *menceyes* of the south of the island, instead of the Spanish lords, claimed exclusive right to carry the sacred image in procession. The Guanche chiefs won this appeal to law, and the tradition was interpreted as proof of the nobility of the native culture (Rodríguez Moure 1913:166–71; Aznar Vallejo 1983:205, n. 231). Mexico's Our Lady of Guadalupe is a parallel devotion which also reduced the social distance between the Spanish religion and the natives.⁸

More vital to the process of augmenting the status of the natives through religious incorporation were the native converts who contributed to the evangelization of the Guanches. The tale of La Candelaria includes the role of Antón the Guanche, who in 1446 brings tidings to his people of the value of their veneration of the Madonna (Rodríguez Moure 1913:23–35; Turrado 1987:25–26). One woman, Francisca de Gazmira, is credited with powerful preaching that attracted many to the new faith, suggesting to at least some commentators that the role of women in the old religion (Tejera Gaspar and González Antón 1987:116–8) was utilized to advocate Christianity (Fernández-Armesto 1987:210). Lastly, the chiefs who converted to Christianity, such as don Fernando de Guanartame of Gran Canaria, induced many of their tribesmen to follow suit.

The status enhancement of the Guanches within Catholicism contributed to their social role, which was understood in feudal terms. A careful reading of the accounts of Candelaria shows that usually the ruling families were converted. In medieval fashion, the Spaniards expected that once the king had

⁸ The pastoral implications of such a native Madonna would have been known to the colonizers in Mexico. Immigrants from the Canaries were frequent among American colonizers (Borges 1977), and Hernán Cortés wore a medal to our Lady of Candelaria around his neck (Turrado 1987:115–6). Given the nebulous origins of the events that helped create the cult of Guadalupe, the positive pastoral experiences in the Canaries may possibly have influenced the Mexican church (see Fernández Armesto 1982:198 n. 93).

accepted the faith, their vassals would be obliged to also embrace Christianity as a consequence. Access to the statue of Candelaria, as described above, was limited to the descendants of the menceyes and was not available to the common Guanche.

The colonization of the Canaries elevated the distinction between the ordinary Guanche and the chiefs or menceyes (*guanartames* in Gran Canaria) to the level of feudal law. For instance, after his baptism, in which he took the name of the king, Fernando, the chief *guanartame* of Gran Canaria was taken to the Spanish court in 1481. Treated as a Spanish feudal lord, he was awarded Canarian land and a *repartimiento*. Natives who did not convert, when not enslaved, were forced to render service as common laborers.

The benefits of the conversion were not lost on other local chiefs, and a pattern was established in which these menceyes and *guanartames* were converted. Their male children were subsequently educated by Franciscan monks in the Spanish language and religion. European settlers frequently sought to link their claims to lands with such native prerogatives, and intermarriage with these noble families was not unusual (Pérez Ortega 1988:167–8 *et passim*; Concepción 1989:54–55). The effectiveness of these pastoral measures is confirmed by a pattern in which Hispanization was strongest where Christianity was also most successful (Aznar Vallejo 1983:199). In many situations, the Canarians proved especially adaptive to life among Europeans (Aznar Vallejo 1990:15–17), and Columbus had two of them aboard his ship on the second voyage in 1493 when he arrived at Puerto Rico (Borges 1972:210).

These policies affected the Indies because the Spanish monarchy came to view the establishment of a hierarchical society among the Guanches and Canarians as a successful policy (Rumeau de Armas 1969:116–25, 144–7). Perhaps this explains why the monarchs insisted that Ovando regularize the marriage between Spaniards and the Taínos. However, although the Caribbean offers parallels with the Canaries in the attempt to feudalize the colony and cement relations among Spaniard, native, and mestizo, the effort can be considered a failure.

The three elements of colonization essential in the archipelagos were economic participation, religious legitimation of the natives' aptitude for conversion, and feudalization of the stateless society by intermarriage with indigenous ruling families. The first and last elements were derived from the Spanish policies of contact with Islam and medieval Spanish Jewry. These same strategies, however, provided different results in the Caribbean and the uneven course of events produced significant changes in Spanish attitudes.

There were fewer Taíno caciques who converted to Christianity than their counterparts in the Canaries. This may be explained by the relative rapidity of the Spanish subjugation and calamitous demographic decline rather than by a diminished aptitude to adopt Christianity. The Spaniards also tried harder in the Canaries than in the Caribbean. Bernardo Boyl, the chaplain of King

Ferdinand, was put in charge of native evangelization in Columbus' expedition of 1493. Boyl clashed with the Admiral over administrative issues and quickly returned to Spain, expressing serious doubts about the prospects of converting Taínos (Floyd 1973:16, 27; Stevens-Arroyo 1990). Only the catechist, Ramón Pané, and two Franciscans from Picardy undertook any missionary activity among the natives under Columbus' direct rule (Stevens-Arroyo 1988:74–81). These earliest years produced a few converts, such as Mateo Guaticabanú, who were martyred by their fellow Indians in 1495. But the criteria for conversion required little more than a simple repetition of the piety expected from medieval peasants. That is, once Taínos could recite basic prayers and show acceptance to biblical and clerical authority, they were considered to have been converted. Las Casas tells us:

Only this Friar Ramón, who first came to the island with the Admiral, seems to have had some zeal and good will, and went to work imparting a knowledge of God to these Indians. Since he was an ordinary fellow who didn't know what to do, he could only teach the Indians the Hail Mary and the Our Father. As much as he could, he led them to understand in a few words, with much confusion and serious gaps, that there was a God in heaven who was the creator of all things (cited in Stevens-Arroyo 1988:74–75).

When the crown replaced the Admiral with Ovando, however, the Franciscans were able to launch a more serious and coordinated effort targeting the Taínos, not as individuals only but as vassals of local lords. This lack of support from the local cacique, or chief, had led to the earlier martyrdoms. The Franciscans' work of preaching and baptizing on Española began in earnest in 1500. One historian supposes that the penchant for the Taínos to repeat the sounds of the preacher speaking in Spanish were erroneously taken for evangelical conviction (Floyd 1973:84ff; see Stevens-Arroyo 1991). Whatever its limitations, there was a real and substantial mission to the natives. Its failure was not due to lack of effort.⁹

As in the Canaries, the Franciscans added to their preaching the work of Hispanization. They established colonial schools for caciques' children and monasteries in zones between native villages and Spanish settlements in Española (see Tejera Gaspar and González Antón 1987:160 for a similar process on Tenerife). In terms of evangelizing the Taínos, no miraculous Madonna appears to match the phenomenon of the Canarian La Candelaria. In fact, the

⁹ There are frequent criticisms of the Spanish role in conquering Native Americans as a more critical evaluation of the Quincentennial is offered. The Puerto Rican scholar, Luis N. Rivera Pagán, has scrutinized Catholic evangelization methods in his *Evangelización y violencia: La conquista de América* (San Juan: Editorial Cemí, 1990). While the overall judgments rendered in this excellently documented analysis are cogent, it makes the fundamental critical error of lumping together the years of Spanish presence in the Caribbean with subsequent evangelization on the peninsula. In religious as in political terms, Rivera Pagán suggests October 12, 1492, is the beginning of a modern era (28). Following Pedro Borges Morán, I have addressed the transitional nature of evangelization in the Caribbean in rebuttal of this premise (Stevens-Arroyo 1991), just as in this article I have considered some of the misconceptions related to legal and economic policies in America before the invasion of Mexico.

only substantial reference to divine intervention during the earliest years of colonization was the reported appearance of Our Lady on the battlefield of La Vega in 1495. Instead of religious symbolism integrating the natives into Catholicism, as it had occurred on Tenerife, Española instead witnessed the opposite—a Madonna who took the side of the Spaniards (Floyd 1973:28–29).

The Dominicans, who came to the Indies with Ovando to insure the orthodoxy of the colonists, were restricted from dealings with the natives in this initial period. In 1511, Fray Antón Mesinos denounced the *encomienda* in his sermon; and the Order of Preachers acquired the role of defending native rights when Bartolomé Las Casas eventually joined the cause. Although Las Casas' writings had a lasting pastoral effect, it was in Mexico and the continent, rather than on the islands.

Spanish evangelization of the Taínos was undermined by the same violence against the natives that had upset the conversion process among the Guanches. Expectations for a smooth transition into an extension of peninsular society evaporated early in the Indies. Faced with the impracticality of waiting for the Taínos to assimilate Spanish ways, Ovando reverted to the military solution of the Granada campaign in which he had participated. In 1503, the Spaniards marched on the village near Xaraguá, led by a former Roldanista, Diego de Escobar. Ovando orchestrated the slaughter of some rebels and eighty Taíno caciques gathered in the village of Anacaona, widow of a cacique and a woman with whom Roldán had lived, apparently on the Eurocentric premise that she inherited rule from her cacique husband. The Spaniards roasted the caciques alive and impaled babies on their swords, intending the show of force to instill terror. Ovando, the Brother of the Order of Alcántara, started the carnage by touching the cross he wore on a chain around his neck (Floyd 1973:61–63).

The enmity created by this brutality spelled failure for Spanish evangelization of the Taínos on Española. The extension of colonization in the Caribbean went in two different directions with two different approaches. The conquest in 1511 of Cuba, which lies to the west of Española, was a systematic attack on the Taíno population that must be compared with the Spanish campaign in Granada under Rodrigo Ponce de León for its ruthless intensity. On the other hand, in Puerto Rico to the east, Juan Ponce de León attempted in 1508 a pacification based on medieval repopulation rather than confrontation. This *hidalgo* formed feudal alliances with the native rulers and shared an economy based on agriculture (Ballesteros 1960:176–82). Cristobal Sotomayor, member of a noble Galician family, reportedly took the daughter of a Puerto Rican cacique to his bed, apparently expecting that his offspring would inherit legitimacy as ruler (Floyd 1973:99–103). However, the Puerto Rican, Ponce de León, imitated his relative's Granada campaign when it came to dealings with Caribs (Murga Sanz 1971:143–8). Moreover, after the Taínos in Puerto

Rico were exploited by new governors appointed by the Columbus family (1509), Sotomayor was among the first Spaniards tortured and killed in January 1511 during the Taíno uprising (Silvestrini and Luque de Sánchez 1987:79–83).

Although the Crown successfully subjugated the Taínos everywhere in the Caribbean, this only hastened the elimination of the Taínos as a reliable work force. The demographic decline set in motion by disease, warfare, and ecological displacement in the first decade of the Spanish presence gained impetus and proved irreversible. Concern over the possible disappearance of Taínos first affects Spanish policy in 1505, more than a decade after the colonization began (Moya Pons 1987:49). The temporary remedy was to import Taínos to Española from outlying islands, much as had been done in the Canaries, where the natives were moved from island to island as a captive work force (Tejera Gaspar and González Antón 1987:161, 164 *et passim*). This solution provided labor for the gold mines in the Caribbean, but the same diseases afflicting the Taínos native to Española also killed those imported from the Lucayos.

Sensing that contact between Europeans and Taínos was somehow the cause of the natives' sickness and death, a new policy of segregating the Taínos from the colonist society was decreed by the Crown in 1503 (Moya Pons 1987:36–47; Borges Moran 1987:82–88 *et passim*). Almost as an anticipation of South African apartheid, the monarchy sought to hold together one economy by separating the two populations, one as ruler, the other as cheap labor. But when it was finally enforced, this segregation proved impractical because it presumed the Taínos could be moved from ancestral lands and resettled on farms and artificially constituted villages near the Spaniards. The monarchy never recognized that hunting and fishing were inescapably linked to Taíno subsistence. The Taíno search for fish and game was regulated by religious observances tied to seasonal changes, and the division of labor was likewise woven into the fabric of Taíno religion. When the religious rituals of the Taínos were abolished, their entire society and its ability to generate an economy fell apart (Stevens-Arroyo 1988:249–52). Moreover, although the Taínos were expected to plant European foods and volunteer portions to the Spaniards as tribute, much in the style of medieval serfs, they never did. Although the Spaniards stubbornly attempted to resurrect these segregation rules in the Laws of Burgos in 1512 and numerous *ordenanzas* as well, these did not work then, either (Moya Pons 1987:87–89).

Another source of labor was obtained by capturing Caribs, considered to be cannibals,¹⁰ and enslaving them. Ponce de León, who had treated the Taínos with the trappings of feudal law, sought to recoup his investment by raiding

¹⁰ Whether or not the Caribs were cannibals is a much-explored question that runs beyond the scope of this analysis. See Hulme (1986:13–87) for a valuable discussion and analysis of the reliability of Spanish accounts.

the Lesser Antilles and capturing what Indians he could. It seems virtually certain that this process also included Taínos, undermining the excuse for enslavement that the Caribs were cannibals (*cf.* Ballesteros 1960:203–16). But temporary solutions such as these could not halt the onrushing ecological disaster. As a work force, the Taínos were totally eclipsed by African slaves in the Caribbean.

On the other hand, although they were also greatly affected by disease, warfare and displacement by the colonists, the total impact was not nearly so devastating upon the Guanches as upon their Caribbean counterparts. The immigration of Portuguese peasants and the importation of captured Moors and slaves from Africa lightened the burden on the Guanches as a labor force. Finally, the traditional economy of the Guanches, which depended in large measure upon herding and the cultivation of grain, was compatible with Spanish needs for food. Because the production of familiar grains and the supply of meat were necessary to sustain the Spaniards' development of cash crops, such as sugar, for profit, the Guanches were able to exercise an important role for the nascent colonial society. This important new role provided continuity with their traditional economy. Hence, although much was new for the Guanches to accept, they could begin the transculturation from a secure and traditional economic function that helped shield their culture from immediate destruction.

Moreover, as explained above, after more than a century of slow Spanish penetration of the Guanches' habitat, they had learned how to adapt to the Spanish system, often turning it to their own advantage. For example, when the crown suggested separate treatment for the Guanches as it had intended in the Caribbean, the natives protested on the grounds that segregation would militate against their equal rights with the Spaniards (Aznar Vallejo 1983:203). Guanches and Canarians baptized with native names applied to assume Christian surnames instead (Fernández Armesto 1982:39 n. 27, citing Marrero Rodríguez; Tejera Gaspar and González Antón 1987:187; Concepción 1989:55–56; see Burns 1990:24). Accession to these requests for accommodation was made against the background of sporadic rebellion in remote areas, where the natives could escape Spanish rule. Thus a process of cultural accommodation took place, in which the Guanches surrendered some of their traditions, language and culture but also managed to alter the dominant Spanish culture, creating a synthesis identifiable as Canarian culture. This process is masterfully analyzed as transculturation by Tejera Gaspar and González Antón (1987:156–91), but this goes beyond the parameters of the study here.

In the Caribbean, on the other hand, the Taínos disappeared as a culturally distinct social group. Although various census reports list Christianized Indians as inhabitants of the islands until the 1970s, they never achieved any status within the colonial society that compared with the way in which the Guanche chieftains were able to integrate themselves into the Canarian social structure. This does not mean, however, that the Taínos disappeared biolog-

ically in the Caribbean. As in the Canaries, (Concepción, 1989: 56–60), the indigenous population was combined with European stock and an African population (Stevens-Arroyo 1981: 104–110). But despite the presence of individuals who carried Taíno genetic traits, the Taíno society had collapsed early in the Caribbean because of the demographic implosion during the first years of colonization. After 1517, there simply were not enough Taíno communities to merge with the colonial society or to provide a power base for native caciques (Stevens-Arroyo, 1981: 80–83; Moya Pons, 1987: 106–116). In contrast to the Canary Islands, the Caribbean colonies did not have an indigenous elite. Accordingly, there was no need for an integrative religious symbol like the Canarian Our Lady of Candelaria.¹¹

Overall, three key elements of Canarian colonialization of the native Guanches proved unsuccessful in the Caribbean. The natives were not integrated into an efficient economy; in fact, exactly the reverse happened: The Spaniards moved into the Taíno way of life. Second, there was little or no success in converting the Taínos en mass. Third, the attempt to incorporate native rulers into a nascent colonial feudal hierarchy was largely ineffective. Although the Taínos had a stateless society similar to the Guanches, the invasion dislocated the cacical authority so much that it could not insure subjugation with the frequency that occurred in the Canaries. Thus, the Spaniards abandoned the tolerant modes of encounter and embarked on a campaign against Taíno society that became the destruction of the Indies. In a sense, the conquest of Cortés in Mexico began where the colonization of the Indies had ended—in confrontation. Only after Cortés had established his rule in Mexico and Pizarro had installed Spanish power in Peru did the restraining forces of church and crown successfully mediate a more tolerant encounter with the natives. This more favorable policy was adopted on the continent, however, at a time when there were enough existing Indian societies to insure their survival in parts of Latin America until our own times.

The Guanche and Taíno presence in the Atlantic archipelagos, therefore, essentially differs from what is found in most of Latin America, where some indigenous societies still exist. At both ends of the Atlantic, transculturation provided colonial societies with a link to Guanches and Taínos. In the Canaries, the Guanches and their descendants held onto their ecological niche

¹¹ The criteria for listing certain inhabitants as *indios* during the seventeenth century are not clear, so that the abrupt administrative decision to group them together with *pardos*, *i.e.* people who were not *vecinos*, after 1700 is likewise unexplained. However, during this same century, the Cuban devotion to Our Lady of Charity of the Cove begins (José Juan Arrom, *Certidumbre de América* (Madrid: Editorial Gredos, 1971), 184–8 *et passim*), as does the Puerto Rican cult of Our Lady of Monserrate in Hormigueros (Pablo Garrido, *Esotería y fervor populares de Puerto Rico* (Madrid: Ediciones Cultura Hispánica, 1952) and Diego Torres Vargas (1647), reproduced in Eugenia Fernández Méndez, ed. *Cronicas de Puerto Rico* (Río Piedras: Editorial UPR, 1976), 185–6. Both devotions clearly serve the function of integration of native people of color into Catholic society and reduce the social distance between the common people and the institutional church.

and assimilated upwards into Spanish colonial society through gradual intermarriage. In the Caribbean, European settlers drifted downward in social status. The direction of transculturation meant that the Spaniards became natives, like the ill-starred Francisco Roldán. Subsistence farmers in the mountainous countryside of the West Indies, often intermarried with descendants of the Taínos, adapted to the environment by planting Taíno crops, imitating indigenous farming techniques, and adopting a host of other Taíno practices. Although this indigenization of the settlers was assembled from bits and pieces of a religious and cultural system shattered in ways different from the Guanche experience, rural life in the Caribbean provided continuity with the Taíno past. In the nineteenth century, a nascent nationalism in the Hispanic Caribbean romanticized this continuity as a specific difference from Spanish culture (Stevens-Arroyo, 1981: 109–11). Thus, remnants of Taíno culture became a key aspect of criollo identity in the Caribbean, just as vestiges of Guanche culture became a factor in Canarian identity (Concepción 1989: 61–66).

In conclusion, the similarities in the fate of indigenous reality in the Canaries and in the Caribbean can be traced to a shared policy. As I have discussed above, this policy failed, although Spanish awareness of the failure dawned slowly. Like an old soldier, Spanish medieval colonization did not die on the spot. It simply faded away. This process of transition, which I have called the inter-Atlantic paradigm, characterizes Spanish colonization in both the Canaries and the Caribbean. The need for quick profits replaced feudal emphasis upon hereditary titles to land. Institutions, such as the repartimiento and the encomienda, were substantially transformed from their medieval trappings into a mode of coercing native labor. Perhaps most tragically, attitudes toward the natives assumed fault lines based on race. Most acute in the Caribbean, this helped crystallize what became the caste system in Mexico (MacLachlan and Rodríguez 1980:199–201). These changes took place in a new ecological niche, in which the Spaniards had to search for sustenance, profits, a work force, religious legitimation, and legal justification. And the natives were not passive witnesses to this process.

The Guanches in the Canaries were able to find room in this new ecological niche because they could raise and herd cattle. They had more time than the Taínos to adapt to Spanish penetration of their homelands, and their demographic decline was not as disastrous. Lastly, the integrative religious symbolism of Our Lady of Candelaria enabled the Guanches to achieve status within the colonial society that was never the case in the Caribbean. The Taínos not only did not find a role in the early colonial economy, but they were eclipsed both numerically and culturally by Africans. In both archipelagos, however, the meager results and the unsatisfactory compromises of simultaneously conquering and evangelizing viscerated the medieval mode of colonization.

The reasons that the Inter-Atlantic paradigm failed on these three fronts are several. The stateless societies of the Guanches and Taínos forced Spanish

medieval society into a new ecological niche outside the peninsula. Repopulation and economic integration similar to that for the Moors and Jews in Spain were not feasible. The existing native economies were relatively inadequate to Spain's need for profits to finance settlement, so the Spanish forced the natives into European modes of production. But at the same time, conversion of the natives, sought as a means of demonstrating the superiority of Christianity, required the Spanish to develop new skills in evangelization because the natives lacked the literate tradition and notion of revelation that had characterized previous religious interaction between Spanish Christians and unbelievers. Thus the medieval premises of the Spaniards forced them into simultaneously subjugating and evangelizing the natives. But conversion and exploitation were contradictory goals. Despite the emergence of new legal and religious forms adapted from medieval models, it proved impossible to follow faithfully the pattern of Reconquista utilized on the peninsula.

By the time they reached Mexico, the Spaniards had abandoned the pretense of colonization based on repopulation. The dark, militaristic forces that had always dwelt within the Reconquista were unleashed. It took a half-century to chain the beast again, and the formal proclamations after the Valladolid debate by Las Casas (1550) may be interpreted as the formulation of fixed imperial policy that fitted the modern era in which it occurred (Hanke 1974:67 *et passim*). Even the utopian aspirations of Las Casas for a "Republic of the Indies" was more suited for imperial rule than for a medieval expansion of the Spanish kingdom (Borges Morán 1987:88–89*ff*). Although real history is never so neat, the Middle Ages had ended, and the establishment of an empire was underway (Delgado 1955; McKay 1977:211–2). It may be that the native Filipinos reaped the harvest of the Inter-Atlantic paradigm, as these islands in the Pacific were successfully inserted into the empire as colonies while Christianization was accomplished in the native language (Phelan 1959; see Stevens-Arroyo 1989:98).

Thus the transition from Reconquista on the peninsula to the ruthless conquest of Mexico and Peru does not follow a straight line. Those who would see the end of the middle ages and the beginning of the modern era in 1492 err against history (Hanke 1974:5). Moreover, the transitional nature of Spanish colonization in the Canaries and the Caribbean has had its effects on island cultures on both sides of the Atlantic which have much in common down to the present day. The unrelenting resistance of a stateless society to domination was transferred to a cultural battlefield in which the Guanches and Taínos have forged an undeniable presence.

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