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Edited by Ivan Roksandic

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Indians in Cuba

From Pre-Columbian Villages to the Colonial World

ROBERTO VALCÁRCEL ROJAS

Cuban historiography has developed a model of the island's past that tends to minimize the impact of indigenous societies. For the most part, historians either ignore indigenous people or present them in a way that reduces archaeological data from at least five millennia of pre-Columbian existence to descriptions of migrations, inventories of objects, and general observations made by Europeans in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. The assumption is that indigenous people disappeared during the sixteenth century and could not have had any important influence on the colonial period. Furthermore, it is considered that their legacy did not have a real impact on Cuba's recent past or present. As a result, their heritage and history is often presented as a kind of "secondary topic" that can be adjusted and managed for different purposes. The colonial mindset is still with us today, limiting our understanding of the process of the formation of the Cuban nation.

Numerous specialists recognize the fact that although indigenous *societies* disappeared, indigenous *populations* did not. They continued to exist throughout the colonial period and have persisted into the present time in a process of genetic and cultural continuity that, for the most part, we do not recognize. The pre-Columbian world became a part of the colonial world by virtue of the knowledge and resources indigenous people imparted to the Spaniards. At the same time, the descendants of indigenous people were transformed into what the Spaniards called "*indios*" as they adopted a new language and a new lifestyle in order to survive in an environment in which rules were imposed by others and they were no longer the majority (Tamames 2009; Valcárcel Rojas 2012). Indians were different

people from those who lived during the contact and conquest times, even though Spanish texts and documents used the same designation when referring to both. The term is a colonial category, and the humans it identifies constituted a new ethnic entity. It is difficult to assign a unique definition to this population because the interpretation of the concept of "Indian" has changed over the years and the way it has been used—both by those who used it to describe others and those who recognized themselves as Indians—has also varied considerably.

The way to recover the connection between the precolonial and colonial worlds is to focus on the evidence of the magnitude and continuity of the existence of Indians both as individuals and as a social and ethnic entity. In this chapter, I will try to formulate a perspective that, despite the fragmentation of our knowledge and gaps in information, will enable us to follow the presence of Indians as active agents who have persisted through several centuries because of their ability to adjust to diverse conditions and life circumstances. In this case, the idea of continuity does not exclude the possibility of interruptions but sees them as episodes or situations that do not break the line of existence and persistence. I rely on a perspective that comes close to the concept of *histoire de longue durée* (although because of the scope of this study, it cannot be classified as such) (see Vovelle 2002 regarding this approach). My analysis begins with the end of the encomienda system and moves forward in time to the present. It also provides a view of the indigenous world at the moment Europeans arrived and of important elements of the processes of conquest and colonization.

This research is primarily based on historical and archaeological sources, but it also includes references from ethnographic and anthropological studies. It follows the temporal and spatial trajectory of the Indians (that is, culturally and genetically indigenous people living in colonial society), examining the quantitative data and the sociocultural record regarding their presence.

It is clear that people from pre-Columbian villages reached, through their descendants, the towns and cities of past and present Cuba. This is a journey that involves the entire geographic and human history of the island and is still ongoing. There is no doubt that they have added significantly to the configuration of the Cuban world. I have drawn upon the available references to the presence of Indians and their descendants while understanding that because of the complexity of the concept of "Indian" and the general limitations of the data, what follows can only be an approximation of a reality that, at the moment, I cannot describe in a more precise way.

Indigenous Communities and the Arrival of Europeans

Even though Europeans who witnessed the Spanish conquest of Cuba, such as Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas (1972, 74), mention that at least three different indigenous groups were living on the island at the time, the archaeological data suggest that most of the territory was controlled by Island Arawak speakers. Cuban researchers classify this group as *agroalfareros*, or *agricultores* (agricultural ceramists) (Guarch Delmonte 1990; Tabío 1984). Irving Rouse includes them in the so-called Western and Classic Taíno groups; the latter term refers to the communities that had established themselves in the extreme east of the island and on Hispaniola and Puerto Rico (Rouse 1992). Based on the data Las Casas provided, archaeologists have assumed that the communities that inhabited the west of Cuba were Archaic groups (Tabío 1984; Rouse 1992) whose economy was based on fishing and gathering. The existence of these communities, known as the Guanahatabey, is questioned by some researches since there is no reliable chronological data about their presence in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It is possible that the reports about those groups are only confusing references to the agricultural communities the conquest displaced (Gonzáles 2008; Keegan 1992). At any rate, the predominance of agricultural ceramists is evident. Their presence on the island goes back to the ninth century AD, although Cooper's (2007) report of the calibration of the earliest ^{14}C dates indicates that they could have been present as early as seventh century AD (Damajayabo, Y-1994, charcoal, 1120 ± 60 BP, calibration to 2 sigma AD 618–1253, Cal 1332–697 BP; El Paraiso, unknown lab, charcoal, 1130 ± 150 BP, calibration to 2 sigma AD 638–1218, Cal 1312–732 BP). Apparently they migrated to Cuba from Hispaniola (Valcárcel Rojas 2008).

The available chronology, which is based on archaeological evidence and radiocarbon dating (Cooper 2007; Romero Estébanez 1995; Rouse 1942; Valcárcel Rojas 1997, 2012), establishes that agricultural settlements were present in the east of Cuba at the end of the fifteenth century and the beginning of the sixteenth century, in El Porvenir (BETA-148960, charcoal, 500 ± 50 BP, calibration to 2 sigma AD 1320–1455, Cal 630–495 BP) and El Chorro de Maíta (BETA-252836, charcoal, 390 ± 40 BP, calibration to 2 sigma AD 1435–1635) but also (in smaller numbers) in the central zone of the island, in Los Buchillones (TO-8067, wood, 240 ± 60 BP, calibration to 2 sigma AD 1488–1949, Cal 462–1 BP). Early Spanish chronicles recorded a similar distribution, with indications of higher population density toward the east and a minor presence in the central and western parts of the island (Las Casas 1875–1876, vol.

3; Velázquez 1973a, 1973b). The best-known demographic analysis to date was conducted by Juan Pérez de la Riva (1972). He estimates that around 101,000 agricultural ceramists and 11,000 individuals from Archaic groups lived on the island. Some archaeologists propose higher numbers, closer to 200,000, that also include Archaic groups (Domínguez et al. 1994).

Agricultural ceramists lived in villages of different sizes. Settlements could have one, two, or five houses or more. Large villages of 50 houses are also mentioned (Colón 1961). Archaeological excavations have unearthed settlements with different sizes and functions, located on the coast or in the interior, at high points or close to rivers. In the area of Caonao, in the Indian province of Camagüey, Bartolome de Las Casas observed two small plazas in village centers where parts of the population would gather (Las Casas 1875–1876, vol. 5). Formal plazas have been found archaeologically only in the extreme east of Cuba (Torres Etayo 2006).

Some of the ceremonies that are described as taking place in Hispaniola were also performed in Cuba. Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo (1992) mentions ceremonial dances known as *areitos*, and Las Casas (1875–1876, vol. 3) wrote about the extensive ritual fasting the *behíques* (shamans or healers) underwent to prepare for trances for the purpose of communication with spirits. Occasionally, agricultural ceramists buried their dead in zones located inside villages; in such cases, one to seven individuals were buried. There is no evidence of cemeteries similar to those linked to Saladoid and Ostionoid ceramic series in Puerto Rico (Rouse 1992) or to Chican Ostionoid and Ostionan Ostionoid subseries in Hispaniola (Rouse 1992). Most often, burials were done in caves and in other contexts linked with Meillacan Ostionoid ceramics from the Greater Antilles (Allsworth-Jones 2008; Keegan 1982). Bodies were often thrown into vertical caves, apparently with food offerings inside ceramic vessels. Cadavers were also deposited and buried in the ground.

Pottery studies indicate the predominance of styles that Rouse (1992) denominates as the Meillacan Ostionoid subseries, although in Cuba they were developed from local forms (Valcárcel Rojas 2008). Pottery linked to the Chican Ostionoid subseries has also been found, but only in the extreme east of Cuba. Various types of tools and different objects associated with ceremonial activities and bodily adornment made of stone, shell, and bone have also been found. Archaeological excavations have confirmed that these people made sheets of alluvial gold for ornamental use as earrings, nose rings, or pendants (Martinón-Torres et al. 2012).

As early as his first trip, Columbus commented on the existence of large

agricultural fields in Cuba; he mentioned plantations of yucca, beans, and corn (Las Casas 1875–1876, vol. 1). The archaeological record refers to the cultivation of species such as corn (*Zea mays*), bean (Fabaceae, *Phaseolus vulgaris*), sweet potato (*Ipomoea batatas*), arrowroot (*Maranta arundinacea*), and *malanga* (*Xanthosoma* sp.) and the consumption of wild plants such as *zamia* (*Zamia pumila*) (Rodríguez Suárez and Pagán Jiménez 2008). According to the European chronicles, indigenous people also cultivated cotton (*Gossypium barbadense*) and tobacco (*Nicotiana tabacum*). Cultivating yucca and making cassava bread from it seem to have been important economic activities.

Ethnohistoric and archaeological data about fishing and gathering activities, both maritime and fluvial, are abundant. Hunting in the savannah or in forests has also been mentioned, as has the domestication of dogs and birds and the use of fish corrals (Fernández de Oviedo 1992; Las Casas 1875–1876, vol. 3). Even with the widespread availability of such food sources, the production scheme was aimed at satisfying the immediate needs of the communities. According to Las Casas (1875–1876, vol. 4), accumulation of these resources was limited.

Villages were governed by chiefs known as caciques (Fernández de Oviedo 1992), who were usually men. *Ninitainos* were also elite individuals who were close collaborators of caciques and sometimes members of their extended family. We lack specific information about the laws that determined access to leadership in pre-Columbian Cuba. Information about the prerogatives of the chiefs is also scarce. Unlike the information we have about Hispaniola, the European chronicles do not refer to sumptuous trousseaus, tribute, domination over large spaces and populations, the use of wide resources, or rights to special treatment among the caciques of Cuba. The picture that emerges from Spanish chronicles is of a society without important social differences. The chronicles indicate that the chiefs were elderly men, suggesting that they were recognized for their wisdom and experience (Las Casas 1875–1876, vol. 2:61; 1875–1876, vol. 4:33). This points to the possibility that personal qualities and prestige were essential aspects of access to power.

It seems that there were different levels of leadership. In one cacique group from the province of Havana, there was one individual who exercised authority over others. In Camagüey, the sources mention "the lord of the province" (Las Casas 1875–1876, vol. 4: 25, 33). We can thus assume the existence of a certain level of centralization of power and of subordination among chiefs. The concept of the province is important in this understanding. The chroniclers mention several provinces on the island; in the cases of

Camagüey and Havana, they refer to them as geographic areas where there was a certain number of villages and where a principal cacique and local caciques coexisted (Las Casas 1875–1876, vol. 4: 21, 32). Velázquez (1973a, 67–68) mentions that some provinces had been "subdued" by the province of Camagüey and states that one of them was the province of Zabaneque.

A province seems to have been a type of sociopolitical unit in which minor groups accepted certain centralized political power. We do not know if all provinces functioned in the same way. We should also not exclude the possibility that European chronicles could have been interpreting what they saw in Cuba as another example of the highly hierarchic and confederative structures (chiefdoms) that existed in Hispaniola. Nevertheless, the notion that subordination and hierarchy existed, both between and within provinces, should not be discarded. Some areas, especially in the northeast and the extreme east of the island, have a significant archaeological record of ritual artifacts, ceremonial spaces, and objects for decorating the body; these things suggest the presence of religious and possibly political centers. In the Banes region, archaeologists have identified sites that were larger than the local average where sumptuary and ceremonial materials were concentrated. These settlements were probably sites of centralized leadership (Valcárcel Rojas 2002). It appears that the village of 50 houses that Columbus mentioned was located in this area.

The proximity of Hispaniola, which Cuban indigenes were in daily contact with, according to Las Casas (1875–1876, vol. 1), suggests that links with territories where chiefdom was highly hierarchical were well established. The indigenous people of Cuba were thus likely aware of such structures, and this likely led to the development of entities with a similar system in Cuba, at least in the most eastern Cuban territories. We should not exclude the possibility that certain zones in the east of Cuba were part of interisland networks that would have included areas from Hispaniola or that units on these two islands formed political alliances. This could explain why Cuban indigenes accepted a cacique from that island (Hatuey) as the leader of the anti-Spanish resistance in Cuba.

With the arrival of Diego Velázquez and his army in 1510, the conquest and colonization of Cuba began, as did permanent interaction between the indigenous people and the Europeans. Given their experience with the domination process in Hispaniola and its human and economic cost, the Spaniards promoted a plan that allowed them to gain rapid control of the local population and that preserved, as far as possible, the demographic integrity of those people as a basic labor resource for the colonial establishment. In

order to control the territory, the Spaniards resorted to a combination of negotiations that sought to obtain the submission of the communities and warlike actions that destroyed resistance whenever it occurred. This resistance was limited and mainly originated in the east. The Spaniards' show of strength seems to have had the intended impact on settlements that did not participate in resistance.

The initial conquest effort was concentrated in the east of the island; this is where the Spaniards founded the first European settlement, the village of Nuestra Señora de la Asuncion de Baracoa, in 1511. In this region, the resistance was directed by the cacique Hatuey, who was burned alive as an example to intimidate others. In the face of pressure from Spaniards, certain indigenous groups escaped to other places on the island and to nearby cays; some even fled toward Florida (Worth 2004). Despite the Spaniards' show of strength in Cuba, it seems that they made an effort to avoid the excessive violence against the local population that had taken place during their colonization of Hispaniola. Regardless of which strategy the Spaniards chose, many indigenous people died or were enslaved. The Spaniards proceeded to found new settlements, establishing six of them in the period 1513–1515. These were located according to various criteria: facilitation of control of territory, proximity to areas where gold was present, proximity to communication routes with other colonial areas, and the presence of a large indigenous population.

The Encomienda System

Although the Spaniards began efforts to control the indigenous people of Cuba almost as soon as they arrived on the island, the encomienda system was not established until 1513 (Marrero 1993a). In this system, a certain number of indigenous people were assigned to a Spanish person to work for him during most of the year (a period known as *demora*). The Spaniards considered that this work would be repaid by education in Christian religion and "civilization." After this period of time, the native workers would have the right to go back to their communities of origin to rest for some months. In Cuba, the Spaniards tended to preserve the unity of local villages and settlements (Venegas 1977). Frequently, important *encomenderos* assigned entire villages and their caciques to the same work detail. They would send these communities to the mines to extract gold or to agricultural or agricultural/livestock farms.

The encomienda became a mechanism of extermination because of food shortages, terrible work conditions, interruptions to community life and

human reproductive cycles, and the inability of the members of the village who did not go to work to replace the labor of those who had been taken away. In addition to the damage caused by excessive work, maltreatment, and existential and spiritual crises, outbreaks of various epidemics in 1519 accelerated the loss of indigenous population. Escape and rebellion, suicide, and a decline in the birth rate were some of the responses of indigenous people to the oppression of the Spaniards. Rebellions were reported in most parts of the island and tended to intensify in moments when the European populations were weak because beginning in 1517, some Spanish colonists based in Cuba left for expeditions to the American continent. The rebellions never managed to cohere into a unified and stable movement, but they were frequent, especially during the second decade of the sixteenth century, and they lasted until the end of the encomienda system (Pichardo Moya 1945a; Yaremko 2006). The fact that indigenous groups never stopped rebelling, either as isolated communities or in larger groups, indicates the intensity of their rejection of colonial power and the difficulty the Spaniards had in gaining total control of the territory. In some cases, the rebellions involved coalitions of indigenous people and black slaves (Lago Vieito 1994; Pereira 2007).

The indigenous population decreased rapidly after European contact. According to the analysis by Pérez de la Riva (1972), by 1520 only 18,700 indigenous individuals were left. By 1532, based on a local census, Licenciado Vadillo estimated that only about 4,500 to 5,000 indigenous individuals were left (Marrero 1993a). In the face of a humanist outcry from clerics, the Crown created *experiencias* towns and one village, settlements where the natives' capacity for independent life could be tested. This experiment, which began in 1530, relocated approximately 120 indigenous people to a town near Bayamo (Mira Caballos 1997). The town did not prosper. Both the Spaniards and the indigenous people were to blame: the former because they blocked economic activities, the latter because they were not interested in that way of life. The indigenous people who had been relocated continued with their traditional rites and with elements of their own culture.

During this time, the growing number of children of mixed blood (mestizos) became a part of colonial life. They increased the population of the lower social strata, in many cases adopting an indigenous identity or an identity with some indigenous features. Although indigenous blood was not likely to lead to upward social mobility, some mestizos whose parents were relatives of the local aristocracy managed to obtain economic and social privileges, such as positions in the colonial administration, and maintain control over

the property of their white parents (Wright 1916). Various mestizos occupied high-ranking positions of Cuban colonial society as early as 1539. They are also mentioned in ecclesiastical positions. Some of them were involved in the conquest of territories on the continent (Lago Vieito 1994).

The interactions of Europeans with members of the indigenous population were based on individuals' status. The Spaniards, recognizing the importance of the caciques and their families, used them to control the work force. In fact, the encomiendas were assigned by naming the indigenous villages after their caciques; Gonzalo de Guzmán mentioned at least 11 such towns associated with these allocations that took place in the period 1526–1530 (Mira Caballos 1997, Appendix XV). Indigenous leaders and their families were a focal point during the process of "civilization" (Domínguez 2001). The interest of the Spaniards in this stratum is also evident in other contexts. For example, in 1529 they required some cacique families to send their children to Spain so they could be educated in the Christian faith and prepared to promote the Christian religion when they returned to Cuba (Olaechea 1969).

In 1542, the New Laws (Leyes Nuevas) declared the end of the encomienda system in the Antilles. In Cuba, the Spaniards managed to postpone the enforcement of this measure until 1553 (Rey 2003). By that time, gold mining had stopped being the principal economic activity and had been replaced by stock breeding and trade in hides and cassava bread. As the number of livestock increased, the white population became more economically stable. The decrease in the indigenous population, the promotion of new economic activities, and growing importance of stock breeding caused an increase in the importation of slave labor of African origin.

The Post-Encomienda World: Population Continuity

The end of the encomienda system signaled the beginning of a new chapter for indigenous people and their Indian descendants. Now they had to deal with a colonial oligarchy that was determined to continue using them for its own best interest and, at the same time, find ways to survive in an environment in which their social inferiority was well established.

Spanish colonial authorities in Cuba, who had to comply with laws and royal orders designed to protect the Indians, forced survivors to relocate to the so-called Indian towns. Some Indians tried to remain independent. Some tried to move into Spanish villages or into rural areas, taking advantage of their previous experience in those places and their agricultural abili-

ties. Finally, some of them, either individually or as part of independent or runaway towns, remained separate from Spanish society.

Although several Indian towns are mentioned in the sources, the best-known ones are Guanabacoa, which was founded in 1554 near Havana (Rodríguez Villamil 2002), and El Caney, which was also established in the mid-sixteenth century, near Santiago de Cuba (Badura 2013). The Crown assigned land to these communities and gave them specific rights (such as the right to be part of town councils, the right to a government official whose duty was to protect their rights, the right to have property to live on in Indian towns, and the right to rent out communal land). Relocations of indigenous population in the vicinity of the city of Bayamo took place soon after that city was established by the Spanish. The community was moved to the city of Las Ovejas (close to Bayamo) and later populated two neighborhoods: San Juan and Santa Ana (Morales Patiño 1951; Pichardo 2006). By 1684, at least six Indian neighborhoods were recognized in this area (Marrero 1975). As a result, the Indian town of Jiguaní was established at the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth centuries, through a regrouping plan organized by the Indian Miguel Rodríguez (Licea 2012).

Although disease and the encomienda system decimated the original indigenous communities; some managed to survive and adjust to the economic needs of the colonizers. Archaeological sites with a clear and in some cases extensive pre-Columbian occupation show evidence that some of them were still inhabited in the sixteenth century and that in the seventeenth century were associated with ranches and corrals. It is likely that indigenous inhabitants of those sites were at that point incorporated into the new context of work and life. This occurred in Alcala and Barajagua, in the province of Holguín in northeastern Cuba (Valcárcel Rojas 1997).

Indians are found in all Spanish towns in the second half of the sixteenth century (see Table 11.1). In Havana in the period 1576–1588, they are mentioned in a variety of documents as small landowners, farmers, rancher, hirelings, and so forth (Marrero 1993b). Indians who tried to remain independent are recorded in different parts of the island. López de Velazco (1894) mentions eight *cimarrones* (maroon) towns around 1574. In 1576, when Cristóbal de Soto found an isolated village in the area of Macuriges near Matanzas, he forced its residents to resettle in Guanabacoa (Marrero 1993b).

These diverse forms of Indian presence must have shaped their status as free individuals and the identities they displayed, the degree to which they integrated into colonial society, and the survival methods they chose. More importantly, all of these forms of survival offered opportunities for continu-

ity of the Indian presence. It is difficult to obtain a precise picture of how the Indian presence evolved, since data is scarce and incomplete; the only information we have is limited to locations where information was recorded by colonial authorities. Nevertheless, the available information reveals details of interest, although these do not necessarily have to be understood as principal aspects of the new Indian world. In 1556, according to Governor Diego de Mazariegos, 2,000 Indians were still reported, of whom 200 were former slaves who had been brought to Cuba from other places (Marrero 1993b). A decade later, the number was lower. However, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, an important demographic recovery took place in and near the city of Bayamo, at Santa María de Puerto Principe, and in the town of Guanabacoa.

Indians were living at that period in various villages or towns. The reported demography from Baracoa is especially notable (see Table 11.1). Their presence in administrative and economic centers, where a large proportion of the Spanish population lived, seems to indicate strong control over the Indian population because of its important role as a labor resource. Before the end of the encomienda system in 1544, Bayamo appears to have been the area with the greatest number of reported Indians; this trend continued in the following centuries. This seems to be related to the fact that it is located in the east of Cuba, the region with the greatest pre-Columbian population density. It is also likely related to processes that facilitated survival, such as the protectionist policies of certain holders of the encomienda that made it possible for indigenous populations to continue to follow their cults and (in some cases) made it possible for some original indigenous villages to continue.

During the seventeenth century, as Indian towns were consolidated, the population of Guanabacoa reached 300. The most powerful and long-lasting Indian town, Jiguaní, was established later in this period. By the second half of the eighteenth century its population had reached 779 Indians and their descendants (Table 11.1). The eighteenth century marks the glory days of Indian towns; during this period the population of these towns increased, despite continued reports by various colonial authorities about the decrease or disappearance of the Indian population. In 1775, El Caney reported 528 residents; and in 1782, 1,000 Indians (or individuals who identified as such) were reported in Jiguaní. In 1788, at least 116 Indians in Guanabacoa owned plots of land (Table 11.1); the total population there must have been larger than that, although it is evident that it did not have the same strength as before. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, agricultural and artisanal

activities (pottery and basket making) were reported in Indian settlements that were important for providing food supplies for the surrounding towns.

Indians were also very important in rural areas in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In the latter period, they worked as salaried employees in the sugar mills of Bayamo (Morales Patiño 1951). In 1612, they were present on ranches in Barajagua, where an image of the Virgin was venerated. Two Indian *monteros* who had come from the town of El Cobre found the Virgin floating in the bay of Nipe. (She was later recognized as Our Lady of Charity of El Cobre, the patroness of Cuba.) Near this bay, there was an attempt in the eighteenth century to build a composite population of Spaniards, Canary Islanders, creoles, Indians, and black people (Peña et al. 2012).

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Indians reorganized existing native settlements and created new settlements. Unlike the early, post-encomienda formation of Indian towns, which was organized and controlled by colonial authorities, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it was Indians who acted according to their own interests. Some Indians from Jiguaní and Bayamo moved to the city of Camagüey in the eighteenth century (Agüero 1993); and some from Bayamo, Jiguaní, El Caney, and Baracoa moved to Holguín in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Vega 2014). Some from El Caney moved to Tiguabos and Yateras in the eighteenth century[1] (Alonso 2009) and some from Bayamo moved to Jiguaní (Tamames 2009). Those who left El Caney and Jiguaní seem to have been influenced by pressure from Spanish and creole oligarchs to give up their land. However, there are indications that in other cases Indians were looking for ways to improve their situations. This often occurred in the context of regional ties that included family, friends, and perhaps ethnic solidarity. Similar ties were reflected in marriages between individuals from different places and in support Indian communities gave individuals who settled in new regions (Badura 2013). Such movements show the desire and ability of Indians to take advantage of their freedom and to find ways to control their own lives.

Jiguaní is the most relevant example of how Indians founded and populated a town, although it is certainly not the only one. At the end of the seventeenth century and during the eighteenth century, Indians formed towns and small villages in the areas of Yateras and Tiguabos. The latter settlement reached the status of an Indian town. To some degree, the creations of Jiguaní and (apparently) of Tiguabos provide evidence of the reorganization of native settlements. Because many inhabitants of these new Indian settlements did not come from Indian villages that were created by Spaniards, and because those inhabitants apparently had lived in the countryside or in the

vicinity of Spanish towns, we can conclude that the reorganization process during the beginning of the second half of the sixteenth century did not affect all the dispersed populations and that the Indian presence on the island varied notably from region to region (Pichardo 2006; Pichardo Moya 1945a).

According to Oswaldo Morales Patiño (1951), Indians also participated in the founding of Holguín and Mayarí at the beginning of the eighteenth century. During the second half of the century (1775), the rural census from the jurisdiction of Holguín included 137 Indians, and Indians remained a recognized demographic component of that jurisdiction well into the nineteenth century (Table 11.1). From 1800 to 1860, 245 Indians were baptized in Holguín (Vega 2014, Tables 2 and 3). At the end of the eighteenth century, intermarriage between Indians and between Indian men and women from other ethnic groups occurred regularly in Camagüey (Agüero 1993) (Table 11.1). These couples baptized their children, and both pure Indian people and mestizos with Indian fathers stayed in the city and in the vicinity throughout the nineteenth century (Agüero 1993).

Archaeological studies carried out by Valcárcel Rojas (2015) in Managuacos, Holguín, and by Hernandez et al. (2013) in Pueblo Viejo, Camagüey, have discovered new data on the presence of Indians in these regions from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries. They suggest that Indians settled close to urban areas, that they had an important role in the economy of certain areas, and that—in some cases—they took advantage of marginal spaces in order to survive. In the jurisdiction of Holguín, according to a census, Indians constituted 7.49 percent of the rural population; a large proportion of the male population was recorded as farm workers (Novoa 2014).

In the west of the island, Spanish authorities created Fernandina de Jagua (Cienfuegos) at the beginning of the nineteenth century. It is located in an area where the presence of Indians was maintained, so some of them moved to the new town (Rodríguez Matamoros 2013). Data about Indian people in that part of the island during seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries are less frequent and they generally refer to individuals or small groups located in rural areas, in the mountains, and along coastal areas. Pichardo Moya (1945a) mentions Indian baptisms in Guane (prior to 1600) and San Rosendo (in 1773) in Pinar del Rio Province and in Quivican (1724–1725). Morales Patiño (1951) mentions descendants of Indians in Bejucal in 1713, and Arrate (1876, 586) mentions them in Batabano in 1724–1725. Some archaeological data about Indians in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is available in the area near Cienfuegos (Rodríguez Matamoros 2013) and in parts of Santi Spiritus Province (Febles and Domínguez 1987).

Fewer indigenous and Indian people lived in western Cuba both in precolonial and in colonial times. This can be corroborated by looking at the number of indigenous villages Spanish conquerors or the holders of the encomiendas visited (Mira Caballos 2000) or by reading bishops' reports of their visits, beginning with the information Diego Sarmiento provided in 1544 (Table 11.1). This situation was also caused by the fact that interethnic unions between Indians and Europeans were more common in the western part of Cuba than in other parts of the island and by the fact that Spaniards occupied land there earlier and more extensively than in other parts of Cuba. This limited the possibility of independent or isolated settlements, even in more remote areas. Despite these factors, Indians in the region conserved numerous aspects of their cultural traditions, mainly in rural areas.

Archaeological data has opened new possibilities for understanding the presence of the Indian population in colonial times in this and other regions of Cuba. Colono ware, which is known to be of indigenous tradition on the island (Roura et al. 2006), refers to pieces that were made with indigenous manufacturing techniques and were characterized by basic undecorated shapes that were modified to suit food requirements and the colonial way of cooking. These vessels, which were likely manufactured by Indians or their descendants, are found in great number in Havana in different contexts from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries (Roura et al. 2006). In certain places, their archaeological record was not taken into account for a long time since it was considered that these wares could have been produced by Africans or creole potters. However, this type of pottery has recently been recorded on sites where it is associated with other typically indigenous artifacts, in locations where historical documentation indicates a strong presence of Indians, such as Holguín and its surroundings, according to ongoing work by Valcárcel Rojas and studies other researchers have developed (Jardines et al. 2014). This suggests the possibility that other findings of this material in cities such as Matanzas, Camagüey, and Santiago de Cuba could prove that Indians were present in periods or in places for which there is no documented evidence. A similar perspective should be taken into account when analyzing places with rock art or archaeological sites where Indian features are considered to be intrusive because they appear at a late date.

In 1846, the Spanish queen declared that "the Indian race was finished" ("*desaparecida la raza india*") and that the Spanish Crown would no longer protect the Indian people on the island. This decision was focused on the communities of El Caney, Jiguaní, and Tiguabos and confirmed local prejudice toward Indians (Badura 2013). However, the continuous presence

of Indian people in the nineteenth century contradicts the official position, which was promoted primarily by members of the local oligarchy who were interested in divesting the Indians of their privileges and acquiring the lands that had been reserved for their use.

In El Caney, around 1849, the *sindico* (mayor) confirmed the existence of Indian families and their descendants, mentioning that 300 to 400 individuals were living in the surrounding area (Badura 2013). His declaration was an attempt to defend the privileges of this population and the land that had been given to them. It is clear, however, that despite the mayor's evident exaggeration regarding the number of individuals, the Indian presence in this place was still important, in spite of a strong trend toward mestizaje (miscegenation) and the *españolización* (Spanification) processes that authorities from Santiago de Cuba mention.

An interesting chapter in the nineteenth-century history of Cuba was written by the Indians of Yateras, located in the present province of Guantanamo in eastern Cuba. During the War of Independence they were a decisive factor in the control of areas in the southeast part of Cuba, so both the Spanish army and the Cuban insurgent army tried to attract them to their camps. After supporting Spain, they switched to the independence side in 1895. The decision was taken during a ceremony that local leaders, recognized as caciques, participated in. After the caciques consulted with the spirits of past chiefs, the Indians of Yateras formed a regiment in the Cuban liberation army, under the symbolic name of Hatuey (Barreiro 2004). Individuals of indigenous origin from different parts of the island took part in the War of Independence. One of the best known of them was General Jesú Rabí from Jiguaní (Vega 2014).

The examples of Camagüey, Holguín, El Caney and Yateras, confirm that the queen's formal proclamation in 1846 that the Indian people had disappeared was not based on a realistic assessment of their presence on the island. Instead, it was the result of diverse factors, principally the attempts by the colonial oligarchy to satisfy their own interests and those of the Spanish government. However, some Indians or their descendants—at least in certain regions and periods of time—contributed to this process. The municipalities of El Caney and Jiguaní maintained policies that misrepresented the degree of Indian presence and the degree of *mestizaje* and "Spanification" in order to gain or maintain privileges and territorial rights. This is evidence of the loss of cultural identity and of an intense integration process that was apparently supported by the more socially and economically successful members of the Indian community. However, such attitudes can also be understood as

a strategy of adopting methods of the colonial government and using them for defense and survival.

The presence of individuals who identify as Indians, some of whom carry the associated physiognomic traits, is confirmed in the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries. According to Steward Culin (1902), in 1901, between 600 and 700 Indians and their descendants were living in Yara, in the present province of Guantanamo, and in 1964, Rivero de la Calle (1978) affirmed that there were around 1,000 such individuals in the municipality of Yateras. It is evident that the decision of these populations to separate themselves from Spanish society was critical in maintaining their Indian identity and ethnic traits. However, the presence of individuals, families, and small family groups in at least 27 locations in the east of Cuba in the present provinces of Holguín, Granma, Santiago de Cuba, Guantanamo, and Camagüey forces us to consider the persistence of this population as something that goes beyond simple survival (Barreiro 2007; Culin 1902; Harrington 1935; Martínez Fuentes and Leigh 2013; García Molina 2007; García Molina et al. 2007; Peña et al. 2012; Rivero de la Calle 1973, 1978; Gates 1954; Torres Etayo 2006; Valdés and Moynier 2012; Yaremko 2009).

Many of those places were created by the movements of individuals and families in the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, while others seem to have existed earlier. Yara could have originated from an Indian settlement mentioned in 1546 as one of the towns whose residents had served in the encomienda of their neighbors in Bayamo (Burgos 1891). The parochial archives from this place preserved Indian register books (Tamames 2009), and Rivero de la Calle identified descendants of indigenous people there in 1981 (Martínez Fuentes and Leigh 2013). The presence of Indian descendants in the town of Barajagua, Holguín, until the mid-twentieth century has been confirmed (Peña et al. 2012). Although there is little information about the evolution of the Indian component in Jiguaní during the nineteenth century, in 1989 they organized a local association that included 40 families that are considered to have Indian origins. An Indian heritage has become the most important identity symbol of this town (Barreiro 2007). Data such as this that confirms the continuous presence of Indians up to the present suggests that Cuban historians have not been able to properly perceive the persistence of Indian communities and their impact on Cuban society. Their contribution in terms of both population and culture has obviously been more important than we generally believe.

We do not have enough quantitative data about the Indian presence in recent periods, so we cannot assume that we can build an accurate picture of

this population with regard to the degree to which communities recognized their identity and preserved cultural traditions. Nevertheless, it is clear that the phenomenon of survival has larger and more diverse demographic and spatial dimensions than we generally attribute to it. There probably were historical processes of survival that we still do not understand and strategies for preserving identity and Indian cultural traditions that could have occurred in a variety of circumstances and followed very heterogeneous channels.

Discussion and Conclusions

The data presented and examined in this chapter prove the population continuity of Indian people in Cuba for more than 400 years after the breakup of the encomienda system. Indians contributed linguistically and culturally and made an impact on the formation of the Cuban nation and its world (García Molina et al. 2007; Lago Vieito 1994; Martínez Fuentes and Leigh 2013), even on a biological level. In the last few years, genetics has demonstrated that underneath the dark or light skin of Cuban individuals, the Indian is still present. The available studies indicate that Europeans account for 69 percent of the genetic composition of the Cuban population, Africans account for 19 percent, and Amerindians account for 12 percent (Álvarez Durán 2014). Thus, it is evident that Indians were successful in constructing paths and resources that made their future existence viable, even when they tended to be invisible in large areas of the island because of a permanent process of *mestizaje* and cultural integration.

Although cultural integration and *mestizaje* were common in post-encomienda times, many Indians preferred to maintain their identity and create their own spaces. Apparently, the location of these sites and the number of Indian people inhabiting them were important. Individuals or families who lived in areas where there was a large presence of other ethnic groups tended to become integrated or disappear. In contrast, those who remained in Indian towns or in areas with low levels of interaction with creoles, whites, and blacks had a better chance of preserving their identity. In western and central Cuba, Indian communities were gradually broken up in the period between the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries, culminating in the process of integration. In the east, Indian towns remained for much longer. The population of Indian Towns and the groups that lived in independent spaces tended to increase, making possible a certain stability, especially in cases where economic independence was also established. However, El Caney succumbed

Table 11.1. Data on the presence of Indian people in Cuba from the mid-sixteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries

	1544[a]	1576[b]	1569–1570[c]	1582[d]	1608[e]	1619[f]	1684[g]	1720[h]	1778[i]	1775	1782[j]	1788[k]	1782–1799[l]	1901[m]	1964[n]
Village/City															
Baracoa			17		100										
Bayamo	400		80		250		279								
Puerto Principe/ Camagüey	235		40		150	D							44		
Sabana/ El Cayo/ Remedios	80		10												
Santi Spíritus	58		20			7									
La Habana	120			39											
Trinidad			50		50	D									
Santiago de Cuba					77	D									
Indian towns															
Guanabacoa			60	45	300	50						116			
El Caney			20				50			528°					
Jiguaní								50	779		1000				
Isolated village															
Macurige		*60*													

Settlement			
El Cobre	3[p]		
Yara			*600–700*
Jurisdiction			
Holguín		137[q]	
Municipality			
Yateras			*1000*

Notes: Italics indicate approximate numbers; "D" indicates individuals considered to be descendants.

a. Indian people in Cuba known as *naborias* or *encomendados* (Sarmiento 1973, 99–100).

b. Marrero (1993b, 354).

c. Married Indians in the category of *vecinos* (neighbors). The number of members in each family was not counted. Those from Bayamo were located in a nearby village. Data from Bishop Juan del Castillo, cited in Hernández González (1992).

d. Marrero (1993b, 333).

e. According to Badura (2013, 38), those from Santiago de Cuba lived in El Caney. Both Badura and Marrero (1975, 20) mention 72 individuals. Data from Bishop Juan de las Cabezas Altamirano, cited in Hernández González (1992).

f. Data from Bishop Almendarez (1847, 183), who also mentions the presence of individuals considered to be descendants (D).

g. Data from the military census of 1684, cited in Marrero (1975, 19, 21, 23, 57). In the case of Bayamo, he referred to both the city and neighboring settlements.

h. Data from Hortensia Pichardo (2006, 75). Because she referred to the number of families, the total number of individuals is greater.

i. Padrón Reyes (2011). According to Padrón Reyes, this represents 92.74 percent of the total number of the residents of this town.

j. Number of Indians involved in land disputes, according to Pichardo (2006, 80).

k. Number of Indians who received portions of land during that time, indicating that the total number of Indians must have been greater (Rodríguez Villamil 2002, 65–66).

l. J. C. Agüero, "Presencia aborigen en la villa de Puerto Principe durante los siglo XVII y XVIII," 1993, unpublished manuscript, Archivo provincial de historia de Camagüey.

m. Descendants of pure natives, according to Culin (1902, 206).

n. Rivero de la Calle (1978, 158).

o. This represents 92.63 percent of the total population, according to Badura (2013, 47).

p. At least three Indians (Marrero 1975, 20).

q. Rural census from 1775, cited in Novoa (2014, 98).

to the process of *mestizaje* because of the lack of economic options, but not before generating a migratory flow that made possible the formation of new settlements in Guantanamo and the relocation and incorporation of individuals to areas where an Indian presence was preserved, such as Holguín. After Indians from El Caney relocated, they tended to live in areas where Indian traditions and populations were strong and to remain independent.

In Indian towns and isolated community spaces, some aspects of indigenous social organization from precolonial times survived, such as family structure and the leadership of caciques. These survivals undoubtedly strengthened the continuity of Indian identity and even the growth, or at least the preservation, of the Indian population. These survivals reinforced the internal unity of Indian communities, created ties of solidarity and protection, and helped Indians define their relationships with other ethnic groups.

Information from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in El Caney, Bayamo, Holguín, and Camagüey gives us insight into the characteristics of Indian families. They were multigenerational, they usually were quite large, and members exhibited a clear tendency to marry individuals from the same ethnic affiliation (Agüero 1993; Marrero 1975; Vega 2014). Frequently, women were the primary caretakers of children and the transmitters of Indian identity to the next generation (Badura 2013). These characteristics were common in the communities of Guantanamo such as Yara, Dos Brazos, and Yateras and in Frey Benito, Holguín, at different times during the twentieth century (Culin 1902; García Molina 2007; Rivero de la Calle 1978).

In these environments, the continuity of local leaders was an important unifying factor. Pre-Columbian leadership groups had to regroup in early colonial times because many of the families in these groups disappeared and because it was necessary for new leaders to adjust to the needs and requirements of the colonial environment. However, the cacique role survived the disintegration of indigenous society and the dismemberment of their communities. This role persisted as a recognizable face of the Indian community and, in many cases, as the leader colonial authorities accepted. The importance of the caciques was recognized in diverse Spanish legal documents throughout the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Marrero 1975; Muro Orejon 1945, 1956; Tamames 2009). There are still caciques in Cuba who serve as carriers of Indian identity and traditions (Barreiro 2006).

The caciques of El Caney and Jiguaní were involved in the process of organizing the Indian population according to Spanish laws. These caciques and their relatives organized the militia in Indian towns and in areas where

numerous Indian settlements were brought together. The effectiveness of Indian militias in encounters with pirates, black rebels, and even military incursions such as the one by the English in 1741 in Guantanamo Bay led the Spaniards to regard the Indians positively. Indian militias reinforced and enhanced the prestige of caciques and Indian leaders and increased the capacity of the latter to negotiate with Spanish colonizers and maintain individual and community interests.

Researchers such as García Molina et al. (2007) argue that the Indian is the embryo of the Cuban peasantry. This claim appears to be true as different elements of indigenous culture are present in rural Cuba and its work-related and spiritual life (García Molina et al. 2007), even though data on the Indian presence show that parts of the Indian population were also present in urban spaces or in areas on the outskirts of major population centers. Most commonly, however, Indians inhabited rural areas establishing their settlements not only in agricultural areas, but also in isolated regions in mountains and along the coast because they considered agriculture and field work to be their principal labor environment. In such surroundings they were better able to maintain their knowledge about the natural environment as an ancestral legacy and to preserve their identity and their search for independence. The latter, which is the key characteristic of Cuban farmers, could have originated from the trauma caused by the encomienda system and could be a legacy of the destruction of their original world.

Cuban Indians have evolved throughout the centuries, incorporating the particularities of each historical period into their culture from the perspective of personal and group interests. Indians are not a homogeneous group and they are not passive victims. Even though Indians are praised as martyrs, some Indians formed alliances with the Spaniards and engaged in activities such as gathering workers to be sent to the encomienda and becoming *rancheadores* (slave hunters). This diversity demonstrates the capacity to adjust when necessary in order to move forward as an individual and, in some cases, as a community and it helps explain why the Indian presence remains with us today. *Mestizaje*, which many have seen as a reason for the disappearance of the Indian people—see Juan Pérez de la Riva (1972) and his defense of this idea—was also a survival mechanism, particularly when mestizos lived with their mothers in an indigenous or Indian environment. These mestizos carried an identity and sense of self-identification as Indian that goes further than simple genetic inheritance.

By way of conclusion we can say that the Indians have accompanied us from century to century and in diverse geographical locations, building a

presence that clings to their ancestral environment. Beyond their cultural and linguistic contributions, their presence has not yet been truly recognized. We cannot understand or discover their presence if we keep looking only for pre-Columbian indigenous individuals, if we ignore the fact that they repeatedly adjusted to their times, and if we do not acknowledge the fact that their ability to change does not contradict their ability to persist.

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Note

1. According to Alonso (2009), the migration of Tiguabos from El Caney took place at the end of the seventeenth century, but Rivero de la Calle argues that it actually happened at the beginning of the nineteenth century. For Rivero, Tiguabos existed around 1606 as an independent Indian town and was also a refuge for African slaves. In 1874, Miguel Rodríguez Ferrer mentioned a little town in the valley of San Andres, in the province of Guantanamo, that was created by Indians from Tiguabos (Rodríguez Ferrer quoted in Rivero de la Calle 1978, 154). From San Andres, some individuals moved to adjacent areas. Some people living in La Escondida, La Rancheria, and Caridad de los Indios, in Yateras, in the late twentieth century had the last name Rojas, a name associated with El Caney and Tiguabos (Rivero de la Calle 1978).