

Marriage, Family, and Ethnicity in the Early Spanish Caribbean

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SPANISH settlement of the early Caribbean is usually seen as transitional and experimental rather than foundational; indeed, relatively little scholarly work has focused on the formation of civil society in the islands during the first decades following Christopher Columbus's earliest voyages, a period of rapid demographic and economic change throughout the region.¹ Yet nearly all the elements that later would characterize the complex societies of the Spanish American mainland—including diverse populations of Europeans, Indians, Africans, and their mixed offspring; Spanish institutions, both civil and ecclesiastical; reliance on the coerced labor of Indians and Africans; and substantial migration, both transatlantic and within the region—existed in the islands within fifteen to twenty years of Columbus's arrival in 1492. In the Caribbean much of this movement of people was forced; coupled with the high mortality of the native population, it would help to make the islands' indigenous inhabitants an ever-shrinking minority. Although the near disappearance of indigenous populations did not occur everywhere in Spanish America, radical demographic transformation was by no means confined to the islands. The early Caribbean can teach us a great deal about the formation of society in the rest of Spanish America.

Examining marriage, family, and other intimate relations within and among the three major ethnic groups—Europeans, Indians, and Africans—in the large islands of Hispaniola, Puerto Rico, and Cuba to around 1540

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¹ Some exceptions are Leví Marrero, *Cuba: Economía y sociedad*, vol. 1, *Antecedentes. Siglo XVI: La presencia europea* (Rio Piedras, P.R., 1972); Marrero, *Cuba: Economía y sociedad*, vol. 2, *Siglo XVI: La economía* (Madrid, 1974); Enrique Otte, *Las perlas del caribe: Nueva Cadiz de Cubagua* (Caracas, 1977); Troy S. Floyd, *The Columbus Dynasty in the Caribbean, 1492–1526* (Albuquerque, N.Mex., 1973). For broader works that highlight the foundational role of the Caribbean, see George M. Foster, *Culture and Conquest: America's Spanish Heritage* (New York, 1960); James Lockhart and Stuart B. Schwartz, *Early Latin America: A History of Colonial Spanish America and Brazil* (New York, 1983), chap. 3.

William and Mary Quarterly, 3d ser., 70, no. 2, April 2013

DOI: 10.5309/willmaryquar.70.2.0041

can shed light on the formation of new societies in the Spanish Caribbean.² Royal and ecclesiastical policies regarding marriage and family demonstrate that officials of the monarchy and church viewed marriage and family as crucial to colonization and the achievement of social stability and economic prosperity. These policies, however, were variable, sometimes contradictory, and often undercut by the realities of circumstances in the islands, especially the labor demands of Spanish settlers.

Spanish women began to arrive in Hispaniola as early as the time of Columbus's second voyage, although in scant numbers. Almost from the beginning of Spanish activity in the islands, however, a variety of domestic arrangements emerged. Ethnic complexity quickly came to characterize intimate relations, households, and families in the Caribbean and, subsequently, the adjacent mainland territories, becoming a hallmark of emerging Spanish American societies. The material culture of early Caribbean households; the presence of indigenous and then African women who resided in Spanish-headed households as servants, slaves, wives or mistresses, and mothers of ethnically and culturally mixed children; the role of Spanish women in conveying European social and cultural norms and styles; and the formation of family and kinship ties among people of differing ethnic or racial origin all played a key role in shaping the new societies that came into existence after Europeans arrived in the Caribbean, as did official policies that sought to regulate marriage, property rights, and conversion. Close connections between society in the islands and in Spain to some degree integrated patterns of family and household in the islands with the family and kin structures and traditions of Spain and the Mediterranean. In Castile, the part of Spain that played the predominant role in settling the islands, the marriage of a couple emphasized the establishment of an independent household, and the nuclear family was the most important unit. Households could become extended and complex, however, by expanding to include servants, retainers, slaves, and poor and illegitimate relatives, as was often the case among the *hidalgo* (privileged) group that could afford to maintain larger domestic establishments.³ Families and

² The island of Borinquen was first known to Spaniards as San Juan, and the first permanent town and port was named Puerto Rico. Usage shifted over time. To avoid confusing modern readers, in this paper I refer to the island as Puerto Rico and the town as San Juan, although the contemporary usage was the opposite.

³ Effective settlement of Hispaniola began in 1493. Spanish occupation of Puerto Rico and Cuba took place during the years from 1508 to 1510. Iberian society certainly offered precedents for these varied domestic arrangements. For a discussion of nonmarital relations and the position of children born outside of wedlock in one region of early modern Spain, see Ida Altman, *Emigrants and Society: Extremadura and America in the Sixteenth Century* (Berkeley, Calif., 1989), 150–55. See also Heath Dillard, *Daughters of the Reconquest: Women in Castilian Town Society, 1100–1300* (Cambridge, 1984), especially chap. 5, in which she discusses the legal rights of mistresses and their children in the Middle Ages. See also Grace E. Coolidge, "'A Vile and Abject Woman': Noble

households in the Spanish Caribbean reflected these traditions that in some ways were congruent with indigenous practices as well.

The implications of these topics for the extension of Spanish society into the Atlantic world—and the modification of that society—are considerable. Rather than being viewed as skewed and divergent, island societies may be seen as reflecting the adaptability of Iberian traditions and practices relating to family and kinship as well as the incorporation of other ethnic groups into the colonizing project, albeit on an unequal basis. Since the Spanish Crown viewed family and household as the basis for successful settlement, it promoted policies intended to assure their formation. Ironically, however, even as official policies encouraged Spanish-indigenous marriages and the importation of gender-balanced groups of African slaves—or, even better, already-married couples—other priorities, such as the need for labor (mainly that of men) in mines, and other enterprises (not to mention massive slave raiding in areas outside the main islands to supply additional labor) seriously undermined indigenous families and kinship structures and led to rapidly falling birth rates. Nor was the oft-repeated stipulation that equal numbers of African men and women be imported successfully implemented or enforced, meaning that gender balance seldom characterized enslaved workforces. Thus the promotion of marriage and family in Spanish society in the broadest sense—which could be considered to include indigenous women who were the domestic partners of European men, their mestizo children, and *ladinoized* and Christianized free and enslaved Africans—was matched by the fracturing of indigenous family life and unbalanced gender ratios in African slave communities.⁴

Mistresses, Legal Power, and the Family in Early Modern Spain,” *Journal of Family History* 32, no. 3 (July 2007): 195–214. The adoption of orphaned children, both informally and formally and often but not exclusively by relatives, was another way that Castilian households could expand. It was a common practice, not limited to the better-off classes of society. See David E. Vassberg, “Orphans and Adoption in Early Modern Castilian Villages,” *History of the Family* 3, no. 4 (1998): 441–58. For discussion of early material culture and interaction among Europeans, Africans, and the native inhabitants of the islands, see Kathleen Deagan, “Colonial Transformation: Euro-American Cultural Genesis in the Early Spanish-American Colonies,” *Journal of Anthropological Research* 52, no. 2 (Summer 1996): 135–60; Lynne A. Guitar, “Cultural Genesis: Relationships among Indians, Africans and Spaniards in Rural Hispaniola, First Half of the Sixteenth Century” (Ph.D. diss., Vanderbilt University, 1998).

⁴ David Wheat notes that later in the sixteenth century policy emphasized that women should constitute one-third, rather than one-half, of slave imports from Africa; see Wheat, “*Nharas* and *Morenas Horras*: A Luso-African Model for the Social History of the Spanish Caribbean, c. 1570–1640,” *Journal of Early Modern History* 14, no. 1–2 (2010): 119–50, esp. 129–30. The term *ladino* referred to a person of non-Spanish origin who could speak Spanish (or sometimes Portuguese). It also was used and understood as implying a broader kind of assimilation to European culture, including Christianization, and in Spanish America commonly could refer to either Africans or native Americans. For a good discussion of the origins and use of the term, see Rolena Adorno, “The

The circumstances of life in the islands, where local economies underwent cycles of boom-and-bust and other destinations in the Indies soon began to offer alternative opportunities to those who were free to move on, affected marriage and family life among all groups, including Spaniards. In these years of shifting opportunities, Spanish men not uncommonly left behind their wives and children to participate in slave raids, conquests, and other enterprises.⁵ Such separations could become permanent, with women and their children left to fend for themselves, turn to other family members, or perhaps return to Spain. The disruption of family life was not confined to non-European groups.

ALTHOUGH FAMILIES AND HOUSEHOLDS in the Spanish Caribbean were diverse and complex from the earliest years of European settlement, many Spanish men who decided to remain in the islands aspired to marry and establish households in keeping with Iberian norms. Women from the Iberian Peninsula did travel to the islands with their husbands and families or as servants or employees. Not only were their numbers far smaller than those of men, however, but European women also constituted a tiny minority within the female population as a whole, which was, of course, mainly indigenous, although increasing numbers of African women arrived over time. Surrounded by Indian and African servants and slaves and their material and culinary culture, Spanish women lived and raised families in a milieu that became increasingly multicultural even as the number of women and Spanish-headed households grew.⁶ Life for Spanish women in the early Caribbean would have presented many contrasts to the world they left behind.

Indigenous Ethnographer: The ‘indio ladino’ as Historian and Cultural Mediation,” in *Implicit Understandings: Observing, Reporting, and Reflecting on the Encounters between Europeans and Other Peoples in the Early Modern Era*, ed. Stuart B. Schwartz (New York, 1994), 378–402, esp. 379–81.

⁵ There are significant parallels to the process of Christian occupation of Spanish territory regained from the Muslims during the long Reconquest of the Middle Ages. Incentives to settle in towns in frontier or contested regions often favored men who married and established households, assuming that single men would be more likely to move on to the next opportunity than to settle in one place. On this subject and the importance of women’s presence in towns, see Dillard, *Daughters of the Reconquest*.

⁶ On the insights into this process afforded by historical archaeology, see Deagan, *Journal of Anthropological Research* 52: 135–60. Records also include scattered references to the presence of *esclavas blancas*—Morisca slaves—among early immigrants to the islands. In February 1529, for example, Diego de Nogales received a license to go from Hispaniola to New Spain taking with him horses and cattle and two Spaniards to care for them, as well as a black man and woman and two Morisca slaves he owned; see Santo Domingo 77, *ramo* 3, no. 52, Archivo General de Indias (AGI), Seville. The Morisco presence in the early islands, while always small numerically, was not limited to women. For the later sixteenth century, see David Wheat, “Mediterranean Slavery, New World Transformations: Galley Slaves in the Spanish Caribbean, 1578–1635,” *Slavery and Abolition* 31, no. 3 (September 2010): 327–44.

The momentum of early migration to the islands, largely fueled by the lure of gold and then pearls, together with the Spanish Crown's commitment to overseeing and benefiting from the settlement of the new territories, meant that Europeans quickly and irrevocably established themselves despite native resistance and flight. Although the move to the islands was hardly free of risk for women—the same can be said for men—after the first generation or so Spanish women could find themselves living in circumstances that afforded some prosperity. The Spanish Crown promoted emigration of married couples, at times offering assistance and incentives to those who were willing to cross the Atlantic to the new lands; however, probably the majority of women who emigrated did so outside any formal mechanism for recruitment. In 1514 there were at least forty Spanish women living in Santo Domingo, most of them married to Spanish men, although a few apparently were widows or single. As individuals who presided over households, they could exert a good deal of influence. It is difficult to follow the lives and fortunes of most women, but evidence from later years suggests that women who accompanied or later joined their husbands or met and married them in the islands had children, raised them to adulthood, and participated in local social life.⁷

Nonetheless the volatility of life in the islands presented challenges and risks that undermined the stability that Spaniards sought and the crown hoped to promote. This can be seen in the unexpected consequences of

⁷ For a discussion of the role of women's decision making in the emigration of married couples and families from Castile, based on research from later in the sixteenth century, see Ida Altman, "Spanish Women and the Indies: Transatlantic Migration in the Early Modern Period," in *New Perspectives on Women and Migration in Colonial Latin America*, ed. M. Anore Horton (Princeton, N.J., 2001), 21–45. Jalil Sued Badillo, *El Dorado borincano: La economía de la Conquista, 1510–1550* (San Juan, P.R., 2001), 53 (table 1), summarizes population figures for the early islands. His table offers a figure of 68 *vecinos* for Santo Domingo in 1514, which seems low, especially given the figure of 250 for 1517. (The term *vecino* meant a citizen or resident head of household; it also could mean neighbor, as it does in today's usage.) The low figure for 1514 does suggest, however, that many—perhaps the majority of—European men living in Santo Domingo at that time were married to Europeans who actually were residing there rather than to indigenous women. The numbers (and proportions of married women overall) of Spanish women who presided over households in other towns in Hispaniola in 1514 were much smaller. This evidence is addressed in more detail in Ida Altman, "Women in the Early Spanish Caribbean," in *Women of the Iberian Atlantic*, ed. Sarah E. Owens and Jane E. Mangan (Baton Rouge, La., 2012). The lack of notarial documents, which often include wills and dowry agreements, makes it difficult to follow the lives of specific women. Much of the surviving documentation in the Archivo General de Indias (AGI) in Seville consists of the records of early institutions (letters and reports from town councils, the audiencia in Santo Domingo, and ecclesiastical councils) and reports from officials as well as directives from the crown and royal officials. Because of the crown's interest in revenue from the islands, much of the extant documentation is fiscal in nature.

the marriage of a man named Gonzalo de Guzmán.⁸ Guzmán was an early arrival in Hispaniola, part of the large group of some twenty-five hundred that accompanied royal governor frey Nicolás de Ovando in 1502, according to the testimony of his old friend Luis Hernández, who arrived with him. In 1527 Guzmán petitioned officials for relief from a debt of 660 pesos, arguing that he was poverty-stricken, ill, and unable to pay; he claimed that he and his large household mainly lived off the charity of others. His story reflects the rapid transformations that Spanish society in Hispaniola had undergone during the years he lived there.

In 1515 Guzmán, previously a confirmed bachelor, married doña Isabel de Maraver (or Malaver), who had recently traveled to the islands from Spain with her parents, Juan Guillén and doña María de Maraver, and several siblings. Although little is known about Guillén, he apparently enjoyed connections at court, as the king made what proved to be an untenable promise that each of Guillén's daughters would receive in dowry an assignment of 120 Indians in *encomienda* (a grant entitling the recipient to the labor service of a specified group of Indians). Unfortunately, Guillén and his family arrived in Hispaniola just after the completion of the disputed *repartimiento* of 1514, which attempted to redistribute the greatly diminished indigenous population to the island's Spanish residents.⁹ Since there

⁸ This Gonzalo de Guzmán should not be confused with the man of the same name who served in various official positions, including that of governor, in Cuba in the 1520s and 1530s. He is discussed below in connection with the visit of inspection to the *estancias* (estates) near Santiago de Cuba. The Guzmán discussed here appears in Santo Domingo 77, AGI; his lengthier deposition is in Justicia 1003, no. 2, ramo 1, *ibid*.

⁹ The entry in the passenger list is in Contratación 5536, libro 1, fol. 398 (October 1514), AGI, and reads: "Este día se registraron Juan Guillen, vecino desta ciudad de Sevilla, y Maria de Malaver, su mujer, y a Isabel Malaver, Marina Nuñez Giron, Beatriz Giron, Maria Malaver, Catalina Guillen Giron, Lucia Giron, Eufrasia Malaver y Juan Guillen Giron, sus hijas e hijo. Leonor Rodriguez Toledana y Juana, hija de Pedro Sanchez de Alcala, vecino de Coria que es tierra de Sevilla, Garcia Alonso, marido de Teresa Alonso, vecino de Utrera, Antonio Catalan." Presumably these last are *criados* (servants or retainers) who were included in Guillén's license, a common practice. Note that neither Guillén's wife nor his daughters appear with the honorific title *doña*, which, if somewhat more commonly used than the corresponding male title *don*, nonetheless still was relatively rare in this period. In Guzmán's petitions and deposition in both Santo Domingo 77, AGI, and Justicia 1003, AGI, however, they were called *doña*, suggesting that a certain slippage in the strict peninsular limits on the title's usage already was under way in the Indies. None of these documents mentions Guillén's son. A royal *cédula* (ordinance) of 1518 promised Guillén the next *regimiento* (position of town councilman) that became vacant in the Santo Domingo city council; Indiferente General 419, libro 7, fol. 774v, AGI. The term *repartimiento* had varied meanings in early Spanish America; in these years it often was used synonymously with *encomienda*. In this case it referred to the effort to distribute and in many cases reassign the Indians still under Spanish control to Spaniards who had some claims to Indian labor. Though the more substantial assignments were made in terms of a cacique and his people, many European residents received only very small numbers of *naborias* (servants), who very likely were not natives of Hispaniola but rather were brought to the island as a result of Spanish

were no more Indians to be assigned, the crown's pledge to Guillén and his daughters came to naught. A longtime friend of Guzmán, Alvaro Bravo, testified that Guzmán married doña Isabel "with the prospect of having the said Indians, because he knew him to be a man who would not have married" were it not for that incentive.¹⁰ Although Guzmán once held an *encomienda* and was considered to be a rich man, apparently most of the Indians died or ran off and an African slave he owned never reappeared after he was sent to retrieve some of them.¹¹

After marrying, Guzmán found himself with a houseful of in-laws and virtually no means of support. In addition to himself and his wife, his household in 1527 included his father-in-law, Guillén; two unmarried sisters-in-law; a third sister-in-law whose fiancé or husband had abandoned her eight years previously when he found out that the promised dowry of 120 Indians would not materialize; and two of Guillén's grandsons, the children of yet another of his daughters who had died and whose husband had left the island permanently for New Spain.¹²

Guzmán's story reflects the changing fortunes of an early settler in the islands and the frustrated expectations of later arrivals. It reminds us how closely tied the experiences of early settlers were to the fate of Hispaniola's indigenous population, which was fast diminishing, and the growing population of African slaves, who proved anything but passive in the face

slave raiding elsewhere. On the ambiguities of the term *naboría* in the early Spanish Caribbean, see Luis Arranz Márquez, *Emigración española a Indias: Poblamiento y despooblación antillanos* (Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, 1979), 29–33.

¹⁰ All testimony quoted regarding Guzmán is in Justicia 1003, no. 2, ramo 1, AGI. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine.

¹¹ Perhaps the slave joined, rather than capturing, the fugitives or was killed for his efforts; the records from early Hispaniola suggest that both conflict and cooperation among Africans and indigenous islanders were common responses to the close contact that resulted from European labor arrangements. The comment that Guzmán had been rich came from Cristóbal de Santa Clara, who also arrived with Nicolás de Ovando in 1502. In 1514 Santa Clara, onetime treasurer of Hispaniola and a longtime *alcalde* (magistrate) of Santo Domingo, was listed as married to a woman from Castile; he was assigned the cacique Pedro Gorjon with twenty-eight Indians as well as a total of twenty-two indigenous house servants (*naborías de casa*). Alvaro Bravo, who also arrived with Ovando and married a Spanish woman, was assigned the cacique Mexias with thirty-eight Indians and fourteen *naborías de casa*. See Emilio Rodríguez Demorizi, *Los dominicos y las encomiendas de indios de la Isla Española* (Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, 1971), 139–40. A Gonzalo de Guzmán was assigned the cacique Martín de la Coaba and thirty-two Indians, along with nine *naborías de casa* (*ibid.*, 153). Rodríguez Demorizi (*ibid.*, 153 n. 143) assumes this to have been the Gonzalo de Guzmán who became governor of Cuba, but there is no way to know for certain.

¹² According to Luis Hernández, it was well known in Santo Domingo that "Diego de Valdenegro ordeno el casamiento con doña Maria cuñada del dicho Gonzalo de Guzman y dejo a su esposa y se fue a Yucatan" (Diego de Valdenegro arranged to marry doña María, sister-in-law of the said Gonzalo de Guzmán and then left his wife and went to Yucatan). Justicia 1003, no. 2, ramo 1, AGI.

of Spanish demands. Guillén and his wife surely thought that Hispaniola offered opportunities for them and their daughters that Spain could not. Only in retrospect does their choice to move as a family to the island seem ill conceived.

For longtime residents of the islands such as Guzmán, marriage to a woman who would establish a household could signal a commitment to life in the Indies. Like many other early settlers, Miguel Díaz de Aux, a prominent associate of Christopher Columbus, delayed marriage. Together with Francisco de Garay (future *adelantado*, or military governor, of Jamaica), he discovered gold along the Haina River in Hispaniola. He was thought to have had a liaison with an Indian woman from the *cacicazgo* (chiefdom) of Cotubanamá near the future site of Santo Domingo.¹³ In 1510, when he was around forty years old, Díaz moved to Puerto Rico, having secured appointment as the island's *alguacil mayor* (chief constable) and permission to take with him slaves, livestock, and everything needed to set up a new household. That same year he was forced to return temporarily to Castile but went back to the island with his wife, Isabel de Cáceres, whom he probably married while in Spain.

Díaz founded the second principal town in Puerto Rico, San Germán, where he held positions on the town council and served as the king's factor. Other relatives from Spain joined him there. His daughter doña Luisa de Aux was only three weeks old in April 1517 when Díaz died. His widow continued to live in Puerto Rico as a *vecina* of San Germán. Doña Luisa de Aux eventually married Francisco de Alvarado, a leading *vecino* of the island, whose property at his death in slaves, gold, and other possessions was worth more than twenty thousand *ducados*.¹⁴

¹³ Esteban Mira Caballos, *Las Antillas Mayores, 1492–1550* (Madrid, 2000), 286, writes that the first mestizo born in Hispaniola known to have survived to adulthood was the son of Miguel Díaz de Aux and a *cacica* (female ruler) known as Catalina.

¹⁴ Miguel Díaz de Aux led a group that founded a fort on the Ozama River in Hispaniola in 1496 that subsequently became the town of Santo Domingo. While in Puerto Rico, Díaz, as an associate of the Columbus brothers, ran afoul of Juan Ponce de León, who as governor in 1510 arrested him along with Juan Cerón, who had been appointed *alcalde mayor*: see Floyd, *Columbus Dynasty*, 32, 34, 39, 99, 101, 105. Vasco de Tiedra, Díaz's brother or half brother who joined him in Puerto Rico, was doña Luisa de Aux's guardian in 1525. According to Sued Badillo, *El Dorado borincano*, 240–41, Isabel de Cáceres was married for a second time to Licenciado Antonio de la Gama, but his source for this information is not clear. During his first sojourn in Puerto Rico, Gama married a daughter of Ponce de León, also named Isabel, possibly the source of confusion. The marriage apparently took place without royal permission. A letter complaining about it was signed by Antonio Sedeño, Hernando Mogollón, Pedro Moreno, and Baltasar de Castro, who wrote that "it has seemed an impetuous thing and the island is somewhat scandalized." See Patronato 176, ramo 5, AGI. Gama subsequently left Puerto Rico to hold offices in Panama and Peru and an encomienda in Cuzco, where he died in the 1540s; see James Lockhart, *Spanish Peru, 1532–1560: A Social History* (Madison, Wis., 1994), 70. See also Sued Badillo, *El Dorado borincano*, 210. Doña Luisa de Aux was born

The careers and marriages of men such as Guzmán and Díaz suggest patterns that became standard for many immigrants and early settlers in the Caribbean. Although they formed relationships with indigenous women and fathered mestizo children, they usually sought advantageous marriage alliances that solidified and expanded their interests in trade, gold mining, pearl fishing, and commercial agriculture. Marriageable daughters—including mestizas born in the islands—played an important role in creating alliances among merchants, officials, and other prominent participants in the society and economy of the early Caribbean. Mestizo sons also could be important. Some became heirs and prominent local citizens, and others participated in Spanish forays to other territories.¹⁵

Thus while many Europeans' marital alliances emphasized the establishment of a household through marriage to a European woman, other relationships reflected the new circumstances and opportunities afforded by the distinctive milieu of the islands. Francisco de Barrionuevo, who became the wealthy *encomendero* (holder of an *encomienda*) of the island of Mona near Puerto Rico, was a long-term resident and influential figure in the islands. In 1518 he married doña Elvira Manzorro, the mestiza daughter of another prominent and wealthy early settler, Rodrigo Manzorro. The marriage took place in Spain, where Manzorro had taken his daughter four years previously. Doña Elvira lived fewer than ten years following her marriage, returning to Hispaniola with her husband but then accompanying him back to Spain, where she died in 1527. Barrionuevo continued to be very active in the region, returning to Hispaniola in 1533 to help suppress the lengthy rebellion of Enriquillo and his mostly indigenous followers before moving on to begin his service as governor of Tierra Firme (Panama).¹⁶

in early April 1517, and her father, Miguel Díaz de Aux, apparently died shortly thereafter. She and her mother were living in San Germán in 1525; see Santo Domingo 77, ramo 2, no. 36, AGI. Twenty thousand ducados was a good-sized fortune in this period. In the Indies the peso, worth somewhat less than the ducado, came to be the favored unit of currency. The value of the peso itself was variable depending on the base metal.

¹⁵ On the treatment and experience of mestizo children in mainland Spanish America, see Lockhart, *Spanish Peru*, 186–92; Kathryn Burns, *Colonial Habits: Convents and the Spiritual Economy of Cuzco, Peru* (Durham, N.C., 1999), esp. chap. 1; and recent work on the Andean region by Jane Mangan, “Moving Mestizo in Sixteenth-Century Peru: Spanish Fathers, Indigenous Mothers, and the Children In Between,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 70, no. 2 (April 2013): XXXX–XXXX.

¹⁶ Note here, in the case of doña Elvira Manzorro, an even more surprising early use of the title *doña* in the islands, in this case for a young woman who almost certainly was illegitimate and a mestiza. In 1514 Rodrigo Manzorro was a vecino and regidor of the town of Santiago and received one hundred Indians in *encomienda*. Eventually, Francisco de Barrionuevo's varied career took him to Peru. On Barrionuevo and Manzorro, see Floyd, *Columbus Dynasty*, 79–80, 223; Sued Badillo, *El Dorado borincano*, 177–78, 201–2. For Enriquillo's revolt, see Ida Altman, “The Revolt of Enriquillo and the Historiography of Early Spanish America,” *Americas* 63, no. 4 (April 2007): 587–614.

Almost from the outset, some men began to move beyond the parameters of the nascent European society of the islands. Perhaps the most famous instance was the early settlement of the interior of Hispaniola under the leadership of Francisco Roldán. Roldán broke with the Columbus brothers and, along with his followers, established close relations with indigenous communities in the Vega and later in Jaraguá through marriage, polygamy, and kinship ties. After a long absence, Columbus returned to Hispaniola and tried to reconcile with Roldán. He offered to transport him and his people—including their mixed island families—to Castile and agreed to pay the men their back salaries. As negotiations continued during the fall of 1498, Roldán demanded, unsuccessfully, that five hundred Indians captured by Bartolomé Colón, **who were to be exported to Spain, be released.** Possibly these captives were people Roldán considered to be his allies or under his authority. Negotiations with Columbus stalled and then failed. Governor Ovando eventually sent Roldán back to Spain, but he died in the great shipwreck that destroyed almost an entire fleet of thirty ships in 1503.¹⁷

There certainly was nothing extraordinary about Roldán and his followers living and having children with indigenous women; such liaisons were common, and not only in the earliest years.¹⁸ Officials and ecclesiastics frequently complained about the prevalence of such domestic arrangements and urged settlers to send for their wives, and the crown fluctuated in its attitude toward marriages between Europeans and Indians. What is striking about Roldán is his insistence on maintaining his island family and his assumption that their indigenous partners and children would find a place alongside him and his men within Castilian society.

¹⁷ On Francisco Roldán, see Floyd, *Columbus Dynasty*, 36–37, 39–41, 55; Consuelo Varela, *La caída de Cristóbal Colón: El juicio de Bobadilla*, ed. and transcr. Isabel Aguirre (Madrid, 2006), 105. Varela cites Hernando Colón and Bartolomé de Las Casas as sources for Roldán's demand that he and his men be allowed to take to Castile the women who were "pregnant or had given birth" and that their children be considered free. The Taino elite apparently could have multiple wives but the practice seems to have been limited to that group; see Jalil Sued-Badillo, *La mujer indígena y su sociedad* (Río Piedras, P.R., 1975), 15 (Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo, a historian who spent years living and serving in official capacities in the Indies, is his source). Article 16 of the 1512 Laws of Burgos stipulated that the Indians should have only one wife. Also relevant to the establishment of early relations between individual Spaniards and Tainos was the practice of *guaytiao*, which created alliances and a form of fictive kinship through exchanging names or taking new names. See Jalil Sued Badillo, *Agüeybaná el bravo: La recuperación de un símbolo* (San Juan, P.R., 2008), 29–31, on such ties formed by Juan Ponce de León in early Puerto Rico.

¹⁸ According to Varela, *La caída*, 106, Bartolomé Colón himself was said to have lived with the high-ranking Anacaona, once the wife of the ill-fated cacique Caonabo and the sister and successor of another important cacique, Behechchio, although this seems unlikely. On Anacaona, executed by Ovando in 1503, see Floyd, *Columbus Dynasty*, 60–63. Caonabo was blamed for the attack on the Spaniards left behind at La Navidad when Christopher Columbus first returned to Spain. For these three caciques, see also Samuel M. Wilson, *Hispaniola: Caribbean Chiefdoms in the Age of Columbus* (Tuscaloosa, Ala., 1990), 129–34.

Apparently, few other Spaniards had such aspirations, although certainly the mestizo offspring of Spaniards traveled or were sent to Spain. Some men in the islands, however, became the founders of substantial mixed-race clans, as was true for the powerful and brutal Vasco Porcallo de Figueroa, “whose mestizo descendants were incredibly numerous,” according to historian Levi Marrero.¹⁹ Porcallo arrived in Cuba with Diego Velásquez in 1510 and founded the town of Trinidad in 1514. His long and active career took him to Mexico and Florida, but he remained principally based in Cuba, where he carved out a virtually independent domain surrounded by his Castilian relatives, retainers, and mestizo children as well as Indian and African slaves and workers. As *justicia mayor* (chief magistrate) of the towns of Trinidad, Santo Espíritu, and San Cristóbal de la Havana, he executed a deposition in late 1522 stating that he had taken some forty-five men to suppress an indigenous uprising, among them around “fifteen of his first cousins” who apparently lodged with him.²⁰ He provided substantial dowries for his mestiza daughters, at least one of whom married an indigenous man. Porcallo’s mestizo son Gómez Suárez de Figueroa accompanied him on Hernando de Soto’s expedition to Florida and the Southeast; another mestizo son, Vasco Porcallo, became regidor and *alcalde* (ordinary magistrate) in Puerto Príncipe. Cuban bishop Diego Sarmiento’s description of his 1544 visit to Sabana stated that “it is the pueblo of Vasco Porcallo, where he has his estates and settlement. . . . There are twenty houses and huts, lodging for Indians and Spaniards. There is a church and an educated man [*letrado*] who for twenty years has been his chaplain and teaches the Indians and slaves with zeal and diligence. . . . [T]here are 80 and 120 black slaves. He has ten Spaniards apart from another ten who personally serve Porcallo.”²¹

Porcallo achieved a Caribbean version of the seigneurial ideal, with a *casa poblada*, lands, workers, retainers, and numerous progeny to carry on his lineage.²² Although he might have remained in Mexico as an *encomendero* and perhaps achieved a similar lifestyle, he seems to have been unwilling or unable to succeed in the intricate politics of early New Spain. His repeated returns to Cuba suggest that he preferred the independence and

¹⁹ Marrero, *Cuba*, 1: 210. I have not seen any indication that Porcallo married in Cuba (he might have done so in Mexico), so presumably all his children were born outside wedlock and most likely their mothers were indigenous. On sending mestizo children to Spain, see Juan Gil, “Los primeros mestizos indios en España: Una voz ausente,” in *Entre dos mundos: Fronteras culturales y agentes mediadores*, comp. Berta Ares Queija and Serge Gruzinski (Seville, 1997), 15–36.

²⁰ Santo Domingo 77, ramo 4, no. 35, AGI.

²¹ *Colección de documentos inéditos relativos al descubrimiento, conquista y organización de las antiguas posesiones españolas en ultramar*, 2d ser. (Madrid), 6: 230, quoted in Marrero, *Cuba*, 1: 210. Though it seems odd, the report does seem to say that there are 80 and then another 120 black slaves (as opposed to 200 black slaves). See also Marrero, *Cuba*, 1: 203–10.

²² *Casa poblada* means a settled household; the broader connotation is of a full-scale establishment with family, servants, retainers, and lands.

status that he enjoyed there.

Porcallo was not alone in appreciating the satisfactions to be gained through the Caribbean variant of lordship. In 1538 the longtime secretary of the *audiencia* of Santo Domingo, Diego Caballero, presented a deposition in which he stated that he had established a sugar mill (*ingenio*) together with vineyards and other agricultural lands and a settlement of sixty houses “of stone and straw.”²³ Witnesses verified that for three years he had been cultivating several thousand grapevines that were producing tasty fruit. He imported goats and planned to introduce wheat as well as fruit trees from Castile and mulberry trees for raising silk. He spent some fifteen thousand ducados on the construction of the *ingenio*. Witnesses mentioned that a number of African slaves and perhaps a Spaniard or two died performing the dangerous work to bring water to the *ingenio*.²⁴

The deposition stated that Caballero had lived in Hispaniola for thirty years. In it he expressed the hope that the example set by his estate would encourage others to make similar investments in the island’s development. He also pointed to the useful services his establishment provided since it “happened to be on the route by which all the Spaniards who escape from other territories come, finding there much succor.” Caballero asked that a league of land, either a “large square or circular block,” including all the land he had been granted and purchased for the *ingenio*, be recognized as his “*solar conocido*,” a term with noble connotations referring to an ancestral home. He also asked for patronage of the church he had established seven or eight years previously and the right to appoint the cleric who would reside there. The priest he employed administered the sacraments and baptized the children of the workers and others who lived in the vicinity. Witnesses described a settlement that included 15 or 20 Spaniards, “some of them married,” and approximately 150 Indians and Africans. The *audiencia* granted Caballero and his descendants “ordinary jurisdiction” and patronage of the church and its benefice, although the phrase “*solar conocido*”—with its implications of *hidalguía* (privileged status)—was omitted.²⁵

²³ Santo Domingo 77, no. 118, AGI.

²⁴ On early *ingenios* in the Caribbean, see Genaro Rodríguez Morel, “The Sugar Economy of Española in the Sixteenth Century,” in *Tropical Babels: Sugar and the Making of the Atlantic World, 1450–1680*, ed. Stuart B. Schwartz (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2004), 85–114; Alejandro de la Fuente, “Sugar and Slavery in Early Colonial Cuba,” *ibid.*, 115–57.

²⁵ Santo Domingo 77, no. 118, AGI (quotations). This Diego Caballero, sometimes called “de la Rosa,” is easily confused with another man of the same name (known as Diego Caballero *el mozo* or “de la Cazalla”), who was an active merchant and became *contador* (accountant) and later *mariscal* (marshall) in Hispaniola. They shared many of the same associates and participated in some of the same investments, although the *mariscal* Diego Caballero was far more illustrious and returned to live permanently in Seville; see for example Otte, *Las perlas del Caribe*, 147. There are extensive references to both these men in Enrique Otte’s book. On the background and families of these

The description of Caballero's estate in 1538 is reminiscent of a colonization scheme that two *oidores* (judges) of the audiencia, Licenciados Alonso de Zuazo and Gaspar de Espinosa, tried to promote a decade earlier with royal approval. In 1528 the judges wrote to the king that they had discussed their plan with "certain men" on the island who would sponsor new settlements, each to consist of "at least fifty married *vecinos* with their wives, provided that half be Spaniards and the other half Blacks and that all should be brought from Spain" (or Portugal).²⁶ Each pueblo would have a church and priest; settlers would receive land and livestock and other forms of assistance. In addition, each settler could bring up to one hundred African slaves to the island free of any duty, suggesting that the audiencia officials might have envisioned these new settlements as a means to expand sugar production. The founders of the pueblos would be prominent hidalgos who would receive in perpetuity a portion of the royal revenues generated.²⁷ Notwithstanding the similarities between Caballero's ingenio and settlement and the oidores' colonization plan, however, there is no indication in Caballero's petition or in the audiencia's approval that either party saw any connection between them, although as notary and later secretary of the audiencia Caballero surely would have been aware of the earlier proposal. Yet the appeal of planned colonization to the crown seems to have endured for some time, even if such schemes seldom met expectations.

THE ROLES THAT OFFICIALS and other Spaniards expected Africans to play in the islands' society and economy were contradictory at times. The stipulation in the 1528 colonization plan to bring equal numbers of married Spaniards and Africans, together with the use of the term *vecinos* in reference to both groups, suggests that just as the circumstances of life in the islands affected the structure and composition of Spanish families, they also modified ideas about who properly could be considered settlers. All parties involved in the establishment of Spanish dominion in the Indies understood the need to fill the new territories with people who recognized and upheld Spanish rule. *Poblar* meant to settle and to found towns as much as

men, who apparently were compadres, see Manuel Giménez Fernández, *Bartolomé de las Casas*, vol. 2, *Capellán de S. M. Carlos I Poblador de Cumana (1517-1523)* (Madrid, 1984), 1120-24. Diego Caballero de la Rosa was a native of Sanlúcar de Barrameda and apparently the son of *conversos*. I have found no indication that he married. Although he asked for recognition of his rights in the estate and patronage of the church for himself and his descendants, neither he nor any of his witnesses mentioned a wife or children or named his heirs. Caballero's deposition and the cabildo's and audiencia's positive response are found in Santo Domingo 77, no. 118, AGI.

²⁶ Roberto Marte, transcr., *Santo Domingo en los manuscritos de Juan Bautista Muñoz* (Santo Domingo, 1981), 284 (quotations); see also *ibid.*, 285-90.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 284-86, 290. See also José Luis Saez, S.J., *La iglesia y el negro esclavo en Santo Domingo: Una historia de tres siglos* (Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, 1994), 251, doc. 37.

it did to populate, implying the establishment of communities of married couples and their families. The crown was willing, for example, to welcome Portuguese emigrants who would participate in this kind of settlement. In September 1535 the audiencia reported the arrival at Puerto de Plata of a merchant ship from the Cape Verde Islands bringing eighty black slaves with a royal license. Also on the ship was a “married Portuguese” who apparently had been exiled to the Cape Verdes and who brought with him ten slaves “in order to become a vecino and settle in this island,” something that the officials of the audiencia agreed that, on payment of the proper duties for the slaves, he should be allowed to do.²⁸ Since the newcomer fulfilled the requirements for a new vecino—he was married, brought capital in the form of slaves, and planned to remain permanently—his Portuguese origins presented no obstacle. Under the right circumstances, Portuguese settlers were readily accepted in the islands, much as they had been in the Canary Islands, where they constituted a substantial presence.

Treating African slaves as potential settlers was more problematic. Was their enslaved status temporary and, if so, how was their transition from slaves to free citizens to be managed? A 1526 *cédula* (ordinance) from the king directed to officials in Cuba suggested a possible approach. “As I am informed that in order that blacks who go to those parts are secure and do not rebel nor run away and are willing to work and serve their owners more willingly, besides marrying them it would be good that after serving a certain time and each giving his owner up to 20 marks of gold at the minimum, or higher depending on what you think, according to the quality, condition and age of each . . . that the women and children of those who are married should become free.”²⁹

Whether such policies had much effect—and it should be noted that this *cédula* applied only to Cuba, not generally to the Indies—is questionable. Manumissions took place but on an individual rather than a collective basis. There was a good deal of confusion about the implications of slave marriages. Bachiller Alvaro de Castro, dean of the church of Concepción,

²⁸ Santo Domingo 77, no. 82, AGI.

²⁹ Quoted in Marrero, *Cuba*, 1: 217. If Africans’ legal status was problematic, their contributions to the settlement of Spanish territories in the islands and circum-Caribbean were of fundamental importance. See in particular David Wheat’s excellent discussion of slaves as settlers in Wheat, “The Afro-Portuguese Maritime World and the Foundations of Spanish Caribbean Society, 1570–1640” (Ph.D. diss., Vanderbilt University, 2009), chap. 3. Although his focus is on a somewhat later period than the one examined here, he discusses the precedents for practices associated with the cultivation of crops other than sugar and in other enterprises using African slave labor, both in Africa and Europe, as well as their implications for the settlement of the Spanish Caribbean. He comments, for example, that “rural black populations force us to rethink not only the primacy of ‘white settlers’ in historical narratives describing European colonization of the Americas, but also, in the case of the early colonial Spanish Caribbean, the very notion of ‘European’ colonization of the Americas” (ibid., 131).

received license to bring two hundred slaves. "He had the intention of marrying said slaves according to the law and God's blessing, in order to instruct them and have them live as Christians, and . . . he feared that in marrying them, the said slaves and their children would claim to be free, not being so according to the laws of our kingdoms, from which much damage would result."³⁰

If the crown did not intend to open the way to large numbers of manumissions, nonetheless maintaining gender balance within slave communities and encouraging the importation of equal numbers of male and female slaves were ideals constantly reiterated in royal ordinances. King Ferdinand mentioned the importance of bringing more slave women to the islands in a 1514 letter to the bishop of Concepción, and a 1527 cédula from Charles V reiterated that "it would be an excellent solution to order that the blacks who from this time on go to that island [Hispaniola] and those who are already there be ordered to marry, and that each would have his wife, because with this and with the love that they would have for their wives and children and within the bounds of matrimony, it would be reason for much happiness for them."³¹ Of course slaves could not be forced to marry, as that would be contrary to church precepts, but they could be encouraged to do so. The king insisted, however, that even if they married, they would remain slaves.³²

To what extent did these directives affect reality? Unfortunately, the African slave groups that have been recorded in the islands are not always broken down by sex, and marital status is seldom mentioned in the various censuses, inspections, and inventories of estates that exist from the period. In the 1530 census taken in Puerto Rico, African slaves were predominantly male; according to lieutenant governor Francisco Manuel de Lando's count, there were 1,486 men and 360 women in the area of San Juan and 170 men and 61 women in San Germán. These imbalances held true for almost all individual slaveholders. Isabel de Cáceres, widow of Miguel Díaz de Aux and vecina of San Germán, was a rare exception, with nine male and nine female slaves. Thus even at a time when royal orders encouraged the importation of equal numbers of African men and women, the proportion of women more closely approximated the one-third that later policies would affirm.³³

³⁰ "Provisión del emperador Carlos I sobre los efectos del matrimonio de los esclavos de La Española," in *Cedulario Indiano*, ed. Diego de Encinas (1946), 4: 385–86, quoted in Saez, *La iglesia*, 230.

³¹ Saez, *La iglesia*, 232 (quotation), 230, 233. Charles V was also Charles I of Spain but is better known by his Habsburg title.

³² Saez, *La iglesia*, 230, 232–33.

³³ For three of these censuses, see Guitar, "Cultural Genesis," app. A, esp. 437–41, and the discussion of them and other inventories of estates in chap. 5. See Justicia 106, no. 3, AGI, for the 1530 Puerto Rico census. Francisco Manuel de Lando wrote that as he was compiling the account epidemics were ravaging the island; he estimated that seven hundred people died as he was doing it. Though it is often assumed that settlers

The 1547 inventory of the ingenio Santiago de Paz near Azua in Hispaniola affords an unusual amount of detail about slaves, including names, ages, and occupations. There were forty-seven adult men but only twenty-six adult women as well as ten boys and six girls. Only one of the women was listed as being married to one of the men. Other than that one marriage, there is no indication of any kind of familial relations, although presumably they existed. Of some interest are the slaves' ages. Sixteen of the men—one-third of the group—were fifty or older, and well over half the women (sixteen) were in that age group. All the remaining adult men were listed as being between thirty and forty-five. These ages suggest that the majority of both men and women probably had been in the islands for twenty years or more. The names of many of the men suggest African origins.³⁴ Proportionally fewer of the women, and none of the children, had African names.

Although the ages may be some indication, there is no way to judge the stability of this slave community. Even if it were possible to conclude that this slave group was fairly stable over the years and most likely included a number of couples, whether married or no, the gender ratios were skewed and the numbers of children—barely one child per woman—were very low.³⁵ From this inventory at least, it seems clear that official policies promoting slave marriages were far from successful. Certainly the frequent slave revolts and escapes of the period suggest that they accomplished little in terms of maintaining order.

ALTHOUGH INDIGENOUS INHABITANTS constituted by far the largest part of the population of the islands in the early years of European settlement, their numbers declined with stunning rapidity during the three or four decades following Europeans' arrival. The dismal story of the seeming near extinction of the native inhabitants of the Greater Antilles has inspired denunciations of Spanish behavior since fray Alonso de Montesinos's famous 1511 sermon and the championing of the Indians by the Dominicans and fray Bartolomé de

in the Indies who were investing in African slaves mainly wanted male labor, historians have also argued that African societies preferred to retain women and therefore provided larger numbers of men for the trade. The consistent failure of early Spanish policies favoring the importation of gender-balanced slave groups could suggest that obtaining substantial numbers of women through the trade was difficult, that buyers actually did prefer to acquire male slaves, or that both considerations shaped the nature of the trade.

³⁴ The 1547 inventory of Santiago de Paz is in Santo Domingo 173, no. 1, ramo 8, AGI. Guitar, "Cultural Genesis," includes a breakdown in app. B, esp. 442–45. The inventory also is partly transcribed and reproduced in Saez, *La iglesia*, 278–82. African names listed in the inventory include Çape (5), Bran (5), Mandinga (2), Lucume (2), Carabi, Calabar, Maga, Canguy, Ganbu, and others that are less certain.

³⁵ This very rough estimate is based on the number of women aged sixty and under, a far from ideal method of calculation, as only three of the boys and one girl were aged fifteen or older. Children who had been born to some of the older women could have been sold to other estates or might have been counted among the younger adults.

Las Casas. Modern scholars have debated both the causes and the magnitude of the decline of the islands' native populations, pointing to the high mortality occasioned by warfare, famine, disruption of family life, and diseases introduced by Europeans and Africans. In addition, native flight from Spanish control, to inaccessible areas of the islands or from one island to another, and indigenous participation in Spanish-led expeditions to other parts of the region reduced the numbers of people available for Spanish labor demands.³⁶ The incorporation into Spanish households of indigenous women whose mixed children might be considered part of Spanish rather than indigenous society also played a role in the diminishing size of what was considered to be the native population, but the demographic impact of this generational shift in ethnic identity is impossible to quantify.

Indigenous family and kinship structures appear to have eroded quickly in the face of Spanish demands for labor and as a result of Spanish military campaigns and Spaniards' appropriation of indigenous women.³⁷ The repartimiento of 1514 includes a strikingly large number of female rulers (*caciccas*). Although it seems clear that women achieved high rank in Taino society and that almost certainly there were female rulers in the islands before Europeans arrived, the number of female chiefs in Hispaniola in 1514 suggests that many of the men who once exercised authority were dead or absent.

The repartimiento points to other anomalies in family life as well. In many cases there were no or very few children among the groups of Indians assigned to Spaniards, although possibly children were underreported. Spaniards almost never mentioned that women aborted their unborn children or killed newborns, although they cited instances of suicide among indigenous adults, even collective ones. Questioned about the desirability

³⁶ There is an extensive literature on contact population and subsequent decline; see Sherburne F. Cook and Woodrow Borah, "The Aboriginal Population of Hispaniola," in *Essays in Population History: Mexico and the Caribbean* (Berkeley, Calif., 1971), 1: 376–410; Ángel Rosenblat, "The Population of Hispaniola at the Time of Columbus," in *The Native Population of the Americas in 1492*, ed. William M. Denevan (Madison, Wis., 1976), 43–66; David Henige, "On the Contact Population of Hispaniola: History as Higher Mathematics," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 58, no. 2 (May 1978): 219–37; Massimo Livi-Bacci, "Return to Hispaniola: Reassessing a Demographic Catastrophe," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 83, no. 1 (February 2003): 3–51. See also the discussion of early population change in the islands in Márquez, *Emigración española*.

³⁷ There is relatively little evidence regarding Taino family structure prior to European contact. Most scholars agree that succession among the cacique group was mainly matrilineal, optimally passing from a man to his sister's son, although apparently it also could pass from father to son or to a sister or brother. See Guitart, "Cultural Genesis," 21 (esp. n. 46). There is evidence, however, that succession to chiefly rank was not always confined to close relatives; see Sued-Badillo, *La mujer indígena*, 7, where he notes (following Las Casas) that Caonabo, cacique of Maguana, had been a native of the "Islas de los Lucayos" (Bahamas) and was chosen as cacique for his prowess as a warrior. Sued-Badillo, *Agüeybaná*, 29, notes that families were matrilineal as well as matrilineal. He argues that while the maternal side "establishes the lineage and determines the roles and privileges of the members," within the family itself authority was patriarchal, although the influence of women, perhaps especially older women, still was strong.

of moving Indians from their lands, Lucas Vázquez de Ayllón, a prominent figure in the Caribbean, responded that some people committed suicide rather than relocate. He cited an instance in which two hundred people had killed themselves, while other caciques had “burned their fields and houses and gone to the mountains.” He later mentioned that “many of [the] women being pregnant are able to abort and to take herbs for that purpose and in some cases it’s been found that after having given birth they kill their children.” His explanation for these practices suggests his profound lack of understanding of their situation; they did these things “so as not to become old raising them or for some other frivolous reason.”³⁸

The Laws of Burgos of 1512 attempted to regulate labor demands on the Indians and to protect them from extremes of abuse at the hands of encomenderos, yet despite provisions that offered some protection to women, there seems to have been little official or ecclesiastical acknowledgment of the unbearable strains on indigenous families caused by Spanish occupation of the islands, military campaigns, and work in mines that often took men away from their families for long periods of time. Officials showed greater concern about Christianization and ensuring that Indians who had converted not return to their old ways than they did about maintaining the integrity of families, in contrast to the emphasis placed on encouraging marriage and family life among African slaves. There are a number of references in the repartimiento of 1514 to placing certain indigenous women (who were, other than caciques and cacicas, among the few Indians mentioned by name) under the guardianship of Spaniards who would see to their religious instruction. Presumably, these were women who had been baptized already and perhaps were widows of Spaniards or had lived with Spaniards and been abandoned. An Indian woman named Luisa Ramírez, once the wife of Bernardino de Talavera, vecino of Vera Paz, was “deposited” with Miguel de Vergara “so that his wife would instruct her in the things of the faith and treat her well.” Enrique Yáñez, a vecino of Yaquimo, was to receive “a widow woman from this island named

³⁸ Lucas Vázquez de Ayllón’s response forms part of the inquiry conducted by the Jeronymite friars in Hispaniola in 1517. See the transcription of the *Interrogatorio Jeronimiano* in Rodríguez Demorizi, *Los Dominicanos*, 273–354 (“burned their fields,” 313, “many of [the] women,” 323). On women self-aborting and collective suicides in Cuba, see Marrero, *Cuba*, 1: 196–97, who quotes a Dominican, fray Pedro de Cordoba, who certainly had a better grasp than did Vázquez de Ayllón of the circumstances that would cause women to resort to such extreme measures: “Las mujeres, fatigadas de los trabajos, han huido el concebir y el parir; porque . . . no tuviesen trabajo sobre trabajo, en tanto que muchas . . . han tomado cosas para mover e han movido las criaturas, e otras después de paridas con sus manos han muerto sus propios hijos, por no los poner ni dejar bajo de tan dura servidumbre” (The women, weary of their toils, have fled from conceiving and bearing [children], so they won’t endure toil on top of toil, so that many . . . have taken things to miscarry and have miscarried their babies, and others after giving birth have killed their own children with their own hands, so as not to put or leave them under such harsh servitude).

Magdalena Gómez, along with an Indian woman that she has named Anica, so that this Indian woman would serve her, and so that his wife will instruct her in matters of the faith.”³⁹

The emphasis on safeguarding Christian conversion, as opposed to upholding marriage and family life, is evident in actions taken with regard to Indians assigned to “experimental” communities in Cuba. A 1535 report by Cuban governor Manuel de Rojas on the evangelization of Indians who were seeking their liberty reflects the privileging of conversion over family life. In one case an Indian who was deemed to be only partly converted was separated from his wife “because for certain reasons it did not seem suitable” that he should be with her. In another instance, “another apparently very skilled and able Indian came and said that he wanted to be freed with his wife, because I found out that she was old and unteachable I said that we would grant it [his liberty] to him without his wife because in this regard an older woman among these Indians can do more harm and damage than many men, however bad they are, and since the Indian understood what he was told, he didn’t return again to ask for his said freedom.”⁴⁰

Officials were aware of the consequences of such decisions but seemed little inclined toward flexibility. In an especially poignant case from Rojas’s report, “there was among them a cacique named Anaya, with his wife, who secretly managed to take one of their daughters out of the *experiencia* [experimental community], and being unable to keep her, they took her to the forest and hanged her and themselves alongside her.”⁴¹ In the effort to exert social control over the island’s indigenous population, Christianity, rather than buttressing the sanctity of marriage and the family, seems to have been in conflict with it.⁴²

DID THE INDIANS OF THE LARGE ISLANDS become extinct, as is often assumed? In some respects this question is as controversial as that of their

³⁹ Rodríguez Demorizi, *Los Dominicos*, 230 (“deposited”), 242–43 (“widow woman”). The Laws of Burgos represented the first systematic attempt to regulate Europeans’ treatment of Indians. A number of articles dealt with Christianization and conversion, but others addressed the use of indigenous labor. Article 18 stipulated that a woman could not be forced to perform heavy labor from her fourth month of pregnancy until she had nursed her child for three years, reflecting an awareness of the devastating effects of Spanish labor demands on family life and reproduction.

⁴⁰ *Colección de documentos inéditos*, 2d ser., (Madrid), 4: 366–68, quoted in Marrero, *Cuba*, 1: 180. This quotation suggests the continuing influence of older women especially in indigenous society.

⁴¹ *Colección de documentos inéditos*, 2d ser. (Madrid), 4: 385, quoted in Marrero, *Cuba*, 1: 181.

⁴² In this light it is interesting to compare Sarah Cline’s analysis of baptism and conversion based on censuses from the same period (the 1530s and 1540s) in communities near Cuernavaca; see Cline, “The Spiritual Conquest Reexamined: Baptism and Christian Marriage in Early Sixteenth-Century Mexico,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 73, no. 3 (August 1993): 453–80. She found cases in which one marriage partner had been baptized while the other had not, or children were baptized and their parents

numbers at contact. In all likelihood many of the native inhabitants of the islands who survived to the middle of the sixteenth century did not so much disappear as disappear *into*: they became less distinguishable from the increasingly mixed population that came to predominate in the islands. As late as 1570, for example, Cuban bishop Juan del Castillo recorded population figures for a number of communities that included significant numbers of people called Indians. How many of the vecinos listed were actually mestizos or mulattoes is unknown; it seems likely that many were. In all the islands, the early development of mixed labor forces, together with the prevalence of Spanish-indigenous marital and extramarital unions, fostered extensive interethnic mixing, not only between Spaniards and Indians but most likely including Africans as well. When Spanish officials bemoaned the “depopulation” of the islands, they were referring to the departure of Spaniards for other destinations and the loss of the indigenous laboring group. If Spanish towns were losing their vecinos, the countryside, in contrast, was filling up with people whom Spanish officials apparently did not bother to take into account.⁴³

Only a generation or two after Europeans’ arrival in the islands, many laboring communities included Spaniards, free and enslaved Indians, Africans, and people of mixed origins. Often the numbers, status, and origins of indigenous workers are not specified in the records, possibly an indication not only of their dwindling numbers but also of decreased Spanish ability or willingness to enforce the terms of the eroding *encomiendas*. The 1537 visit of inspection of twenty-two *estancias* (farms or ranches) in the

not, or vice versa, with no indication that clergy (in this case, probably Dominicans) brought any pressure to bear on the unconverted to be baptized or tried to separate family members. Although the periodization of Cline’s study nearly coincides with these reports from Cuba, the more restrained approach to conversion that she found very likely reflected a more general trend toward moderation in the treatment of indigenous groups that characterized Spanish settlement of Mexico, in large part in reaction to the extensive destruction of indigenous populations that had resulted from Spanish exploitation of the islands.

⁴³ In the last decade or so, historians and biologists have argued that there is strong evidence both of the survival of remnants of indigenous populations in the islands (often people who evaded Spanish authorities and the *encomienda*) and of a substantial indigenous genetic component in contemporary Caribbean populations. For the population figures in Bishop Juan del Castillo’s report, see Marrero, *Cuba*, 2: 329. Baracoa had eight “very poor” Spaniards and seventeen married Indians; Santiago had thirty-two vecinos; Los Canayes was a pueblo of twenty-nine Indians a league and a half from Santiago; Bayamo had more than seventy Spaniards and eighty married Indians; Puerto Príncipe, twenty-five “poor Spaniards” and forty married Indians; Trinidad, fifty married Indians—“it was depopulated of Spaniards because the vecinos went with Cortés to conquer New Spain”; Sabana de Vasco Porcallo, twenty vecinos, half Spanish and half married Indians; Sancti Spiritus, twenty Spaniards and twenty married Indians; Havana, more than sixty vecinos; and Guanabacoa, a pueblo a league from Havana, sixty married Indians. *Ibid.* On rural populations and the consequences of ethnic mixing in Hispaniola, see Guitart, “Cultural Genesis,” especially chap. 7.

area around Santiago conducted by Gonzalo de Guzmán, then lieutenant governor of Cuba, is a rare surviving case in which a fairly precise composition of the labor force for each estate was noted. Guzmán traveled with a priest, Sancho Seco. Although the stated purpose of the visit was to find out whether Indian workers had been baptized and were being instructed in the basics of Christianity, Guzmán and Seco also put the same questions to African slaves.⁴⁴

The labor forces of the *estancias* varied considerably in size and composition. All had at least a couple of African slaves; two men owned only an African man and woman and had no Indians working for them. With only one other exception, however, all the other *estancias* had at least some Indian workers. Their status varied, as some were *encomienda* workers and others were slaves. Most of the free Indians were “from the island,” whereas Indian slaves usually were from “outside the island,” but this was not invariable. Of three enslaved indigenous women on the *estancia* of Juan del Castillo, for example, one was from Cuba. “Guanajos,” presumably originating in the Guanajas Islands near Honduras and brought to Cuba by Spanish slave raiders, were distinguished from the other slaves.⁴⁵

Guzmán and Seco questioned workers separately from their masters regarding their treatment, the conditions in which they lived and worked, and whether they had been baptized and received Christian instruction. The descriptions of these interviews suggest that African and Indian workers were viewed and to some degree still functioned as distinct groups. The “free” Indian workers who were part of the fast-disappearing *encomiendas* returned periodically to their own communities, an option not available to enslaved Africans or Indians. Although the amount of detail varies, overall it seems clear that, despite distinctions, officials increasingly viewed Africans and Indians similarly, asking them the same questions about the food they were given and whether they were mistreated. This similarity in treatment is especially clear in regard to Christianization, as Africans and Indians were about equally likely (or unlikely) to have been baptized or to have received regular Christian instruction. Indians and Africans also apparently were about equally likely to be *ladino* (Spanish-speaking). Since this visit

⁴⁴ On the development of mixed laboring forces, see for example the 1530 census of ingenios in Esteban Mira Caballos, *El indio antillano: Repartimiento, encomienda y esclavitud (1492–1542)* (Seville, 1997), 155. The negotiated conclusion of Enriquillo’s nearly decade-and-a-half-long rebellion on Hispaniola might have signaled a move toward official rapprochement with the island’s remaining indigenous inhabitants and acknowledgment of the rapid disintegration of the *encomienda* system; see Altman, *Americas* 63: 587–614. The record of the 1537 *visita de estancias* near the city of Santiago, Cuba, appears in Santo Domingo 77, no. 98, AGI.

⁴⁵ Santo Domingo 77, no. 98, AGI (quotations). On the *estancia* of Bartolomé Sánchez Borrego there were “five black men and two black women and seven black children and two Indian women from the island and one Indian man and ten Indian male and female slaves and another four Guanajo Indian slaves and three children.” *Ibid.*

took place more than twenty-five years—a full generation—after the initial Spanish occupation of Cuba, the inspectors might have expected most Indian and African slaves and workers to have been evangelized, but clearly that was not the case.

It is impossible to generalize about gender ratios, which varied considerably. On most *estancias* there were more African men than women, sometimes significantly more; on the *estancia* of royal factor Hernando de Castro, there were a dozen African men and only two African women, along with two children. In only one instance were there no African women. The Indian workers were somewhat more balanced by gender, but it is difficult to be certain in some cases. The Cuban Indians who were still part of *encomiendas* continued to spend some time in their communities. The labor routines and rotational duties to which they were subject might have meant that during some periods of time, perhaps lasting weeks, married couples lived apart. Family groupings cannot be identified with certainty. On one *estancia* there were two Indian men, four women who had given birth, two others who were assigned to work in a mine, and another four Indian men and four women who worked in the fields. In addition there were six “*niños y niñas*” belonging to the group at the mines and four “*muchachos*” on the *estancia* itself. In all likelihood, then, both agricultural and mine workers included couples with children. For this *estancia* there is some intriguing information about housing. When asked about it, the group that worked in the mines said they had no *bohíos* (indigenous-style houses), but on the *estancia* there was one “*bohío grande*,” suggesting a continuation of the indigenous tradition of constructing large houses in which related families resided.⁴⁶ The Indians who worked in the mines complained about mistreatment by their overseer, an Indian. Such mistreatment suggests that the overseer very likely was not connected, by kinship or origin, to the Indians whom he supervised—yet another indication of the extensive mixing and relocation that had affected the surviving indigenous residents of the island.

On another *estancia* a man named Tamayo was called “*principal*” and apparently exercised authority over the Indians there. On this *estancia* there were also indications of family life. Among the African slaves there were three men, three women, and two small children. Among the Indians, in addition to Tamayo himself, there were two men, two women, and two children from the island, along with “three others,” two of whom were absent and another one ill.⁴⁷ There also were five female and two male slaves from elsewhere. Tamayo’s presence and position of authority suggest that, despite their small numbers, the Indians on this *estancia* might have maintained elements of their old social structure.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* Tamayo was not called a *cacique*. Spaniards used the term *principal* to refer to Indians of high rank.

Did the workers on these *estancias* maintain endogamy according to their ethnicity and origins? Other than the one case with the *bohío grande*, there is no information about housing for any of the *estancias*. The logic of relatively small groups of people working and living in proximity would suggest the likelihood of mixing, but only in one case is there a sure indication. Felipe Barbosa, the *estanciero* of an estate owned by the widow of Andrés Ruano, was living with an Indian slave woman, Elvira, by whom he had two sons; the inspectors ordered Barbosa to end the relationship. The description of the visit to that *estancia*, the first recorded in the *visita* (visit of inspection), is the lengthiest of any and suggests that circumstances for the workers there had deteriorated following Ruano's death. Only one of the two black slaves—whose names were actually given (Hernando and Gonzalo)—had been baptized, so the priest baptized the other as well as two Indians. Also present on the *estancia* were four Indian women and four children from the island, with another Indian woman and two men being absent. There were also four Indian slaves and Elvira, the slave woman who lived with Barbosa. The Indians claimed that they did not receive religious instruction and were given very little food, nor did they have fields to work for themselves, a practice they claimed had lapsed since Ruano's death. Guzmán instructed Barbosa that for the next two months the Indians were to have no other assigned tasks than to work on the *conucos* (fields) that would be assigned to them and that in the future Saturdays would be reserved for that purpose. Barbosa also was warned that he would be fined ten pesos if he did not instruct both the Indians and the Africans in Christianity and was told not to abuse them verbally.

The description of the *estancia* workers near Santiago de Cuba points to the development of a milieu in which Africans and Indians worked and lived in close contact and to a large degree under the same conditions. The 1530 census of Puerto Rico similarly indicates the existence of mixed laboring groups. There too the account of who resided in the towns and who lived in the countryside suggests the growth of a relatively poor rural population that probably was becoming increasingly multiethnic. One witness testified that there were "fifty or sixty married men in the city [San Juan] who live in the city in their houses and another twenty or thirty married men, some of whom live in the city and others in the country who because of their poverty cannot maintain households."⁴⁸ He estimated that living in the countryside were another fifteen or twenty men (presumably married) and thirty single men who were *vecinos* but did not have houses in the city.⁴⁹ Although the census usually recorded whether men were married to Spanish or indigenous women, some of the men themselves might well have been *mestizos* who were accepted as Spaniards, since there was a substantial

⁴⁸ Justicia 106, no. 3, AGI.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

shift of population from Hispaniola to Puerto Rico after 1509.

The 1533 “Relación de ingenios y haciendas de La Española hecha por el regidor Alonso de Avila” demonstrates the growth of this rural population in Hispaniola as well.⁵⁰ In the ingenio de Sanate, for example, there were one hundred Africans and twenty Spaniards, “some of them married” (although there is no way to know if that phrase refers to Africans, Spaniards, or both). There were other farms belonging to Spaniards but relatively few blacks or Indians in the area. In contrast the area “along the shores of the Cocoimagua and Cacay [rivers], a district of about four leagues [located] fifteen leagues from this city [Santo Domingo], [is] very settled with farms and herds of cattle. . . . Living along these shores are more than seven hundred people: Spaniards, Blacks, and Indians.” Another entry lists the “ingenio del señor Almirante” with 20 Spaniards and 80 blacks and another owned by Benito de Astorga with 15 Spaniards and 70 blacks and another or so people living in the district. There were 20 Spaniards and 120 blacks on the ingenio belonging to Licenciado Pedro Vásquez along the Haina River, only three leagues from Santo Domingo, but in addition along the shores there were estates and farms with “more than four hundred people.” On the five ingenios and “muchas haciendas de labradores” (many farms) in the area of the confluence of the Nigua and Yamán Rivers there were “at least seven hundred Blacks and two hundred Indians and one hundred fifty Spaniards, because it is the most populated river that at present there is in this island.”⁵¹

The purpose of Alonso de Avila’s inspection was to determine how many churches and clergymen were needed to serve the people living on the ingenios and surrounding farms and ranches. Though far from being a complete census, it conveys a clear picture of a growing, and increasingly mixed, population in the countryside. Although there are few mentions of Indian workers in that report, another one made by Alonso de Fuentemayor in Hispaniola in 1545 indicates fairly substantial numbers of Indians on many estates. Diego Caballero de la Rosa, the secretary of the audiencia who seven years earlier petitioned for jurisdiction over his estate and its surrounding district, had 310 African slaves and 50 Indians; the ingenio San Cristóbal, owned at one time by two successive treasurers, Miguel de Pasamonte and Esteban de Pasamonte (uncle and nephew), had 70 Africans and 130 Indians. Another ingenio owned by Avila’s heirs had 200 Africans and 352 Indians.⁵²

⁵⁰ See transcription in Saez, *La iglesia*, 267–72. The original is “Relación de ingenios y haciendas de La Española hecha por el regidor Alonso de Avila, para la dotación de capillas y asignación de curas,” in Justicia 12, AGI.

⁵¹ Saez, *La iglesia*, 267 (“some of them married”), 268 (“along the shores”), 269 (“more than four hundred”), 270 (“muchas haciendas”).

⁵² Guitart, “Cultural Genesis,” app. A, esp. 439–40. There is no way to know how many of the “Indians” were actually mestizos or mulattoes or whether they were descendants of Hispaniola’s original residents or people who were brought to the island from

FROM THEIR EARLIEST YEARS in the Caribbean, Spanish settlers crossed ethnic lines in their personal lives and domestic arrangements, blurring the very legal and social categories that they devised. The 1530 will of Pedro de Vadillo suggests some of the social ramifications of these personal choices. Vadillo was a cousin of audiencia judge Licenciado Juan de Vadillo and a vecino of San Juan de la Maguana. In his will he mentioned a number of people with whom he had close connections in Hispaniola, including Teresa, an Indian woman married to a Juan de Paredes (presumably a Spaniard), from whom he inherited 130 pesos of gold. He ordered payment of masses for her soul and that of her father, Gómez, a cacique, as well as the purchase of indulgences for Teresa and her parents. Juan de la Lanza, Pedro de Vadillo's ward and the mestizo son of don Alonso de la Lanza and the Indian woman Leonor, was to receive 125 pesos that Vadillo owed his father and an additional 25 pesos. He left fifty gold pesos to Juanico negrillo, "son of the Indian Teresa, whom I brought up," and made his cousin Juan de Vadillo Juanico's guardian. An Indian slave named Juanica, who belonged to a resident of San Juan de la Maguana, was to be purchased and then freed and given thirty gold pesos for her marriage. He made other such bequests, including one hundred pesos to "the daughter of my *naboria* Teresa and Diego de Jaen" for her dowry if she remained in the same town and twenty-five pesos if she left. Vadillo mentioned but did not name his own "natural" children.⁵³

Vadillo's will reveals the personal connections that he forged with a number of Indians and mestizos as well as the interethnic mixing that had taken place at an early time. The relationships that his will indicates, however, were unlikely to have altered his basic view of the relative roles of Spaniards, Indians, Africans and people of mixed origins in Spanish Caribbean society. Vadillo was lieutenant governor of San Juan de la Maguana at the start of Enriquillo's revolt, and Bartolomé de Las Casas thought that Vadillo's arbitrary and vindictive behavior was at least partly to blame for Enriquillo's decision to rebel. Vadillo also participated in the military campaigns mounted against this famous rebel of early Hispaniola.⁵⁴ He could hardly be said to have empathized with the situation of Hispaniola's indigenous people, notwithstanding the connections he formed with some of them.

elsewhere. Nonetheless their presence on rural estates in the mid-sixteenth century, when it is generally assumed the indigenous population was virtually extinct, is significant.

⁵³ John H. Parry and Robert G. Keith, eds., *New Iberian World: A Documentary History of the Discovery and Settlement of Latin America to the Early Seventeenth Century* (New York, 1984), 2: 351 ("son"), 352 ("daughter"). The will mentions bequests made to Pedro de Vadillo's criados and to relatives in Spain as well. An *hijo natural* was a child conceived out of wedlock by parents who were free to marry. Since such children were not the result of adulterous relations, they could be recognized by their fathers and thereby be entitled to a share of the estate. They also could be legitimized if their parents subsequently did marry.

⁵⁴ On Pedro de Vadillo's role, see Altman, *Americas* 63: 595, 599.

Consideration of how the three major groups in the early Spanish Caribbean—Indians, Spaniards, and Africans—lived and worked suggests that different circumstances and policies governed the possibilities for marriage and family life for each. Official and ecclesiastical policies probably had far less effect on the nature and growth of the islands' population than did the realities of Spanish demands for labor; rapid cycles of economic boom, bust, and change; and the consequences of high levels of mobility (often forced, in the case of Indians and Africans, but also including voluntary flight) and close contact among members of all groups. The coercive nature of the Spanish enterprise, which reduced most native inhabitants of the large islands to subordinated workers and introduced thousands of enslaved Africans, ensured that in these early years wealth and power accrued almost exclusively to Europeans.⁵⁵ They enjoyed the freedom and latitude to transfer and elaborate their familiar institutions, maintain long-distance family ties and business interests while exploiting local resources to achieve success and family stability, and pursue marital alliances that could benefit their families and kin both in the islands and back in Spain. Some Spaniards did expand their sense of who properly belonged to Spanish society to include at least some of their mestizo offspring, who participated in that society and its benefits through upbringing, marriage, and inheritance.

Notwithstanding that kind of inclusion, perhaps beginning as early as the second generation more or even most mixed-race individuals remained outside the circumscribed ranks of Spanish civil society. Instead they participated in the formation of a mostly poor, rural, and probably mixed population of workers and small-scale landholders that would come to dominate the landscape of the large islands outside the few substantial urban centers. Unlike Spaniards, members of this rural group remained in the islands rather than moving on to other destinations in the Indies. Largely overlooked by officials, the very mixed populace likely included substantial remnants of the islands' indigenous inhabitants. Although they might no longer have belonged to distinct communities, nonetheless they continued to live and function within a largely rural society and possibly in the same locales to which they had traditional ties. Almost unnoticeably and in circumstances and forms much changed from the late fifteenth century when Europeans first arrived, descendants of the islands' original inhabitants survived in their forebears' homelands.

⁵⁵ Early in the sixteenth century, Spanish officials experimented with the possibility of making certain caciques *encomenderos* but quickly abandoned the attempt; see Rodríguez Demorizi, *Los Dominicos*, 283. In contrast to places such as Mexico and Peru, where some members of indigenous ruling groups retained lands and traditional prerogatives and took advantage of their position to become successful entrepreneurs, the early destruction of the cacique group in the large islands of the Spanish Caribbean meant that no such class of wealthy and influential Indians survived for long.