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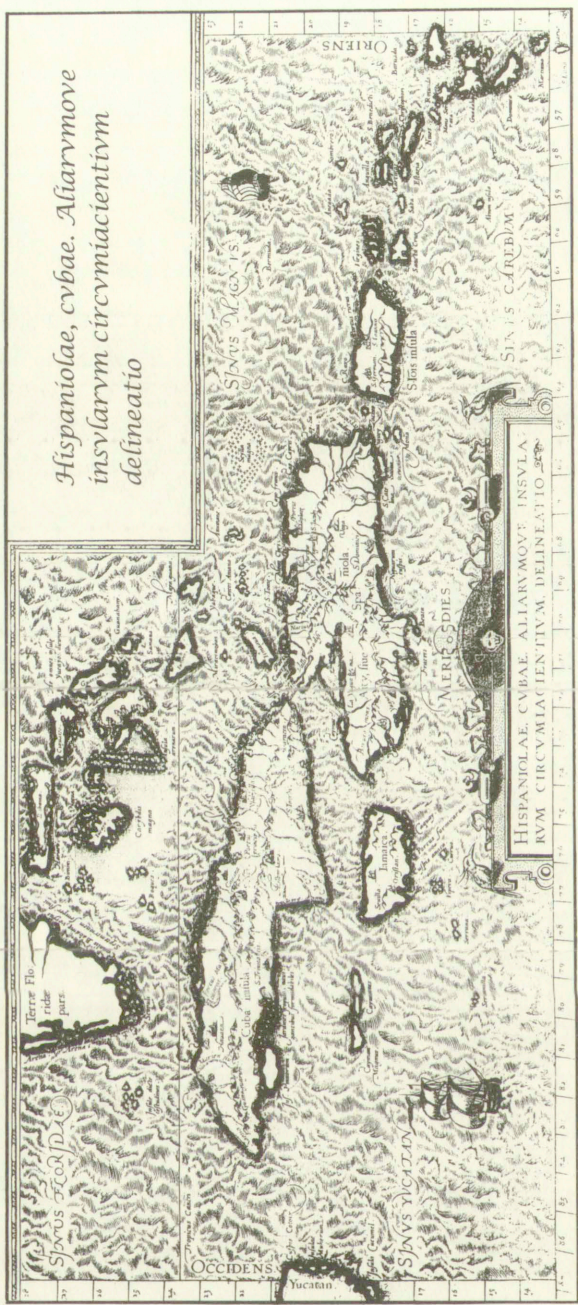
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# Willing It So: Intimate Glimpses of *Encomienda* Life in Early-Sixteenth-Century Hispaniola<sup>1</sup>

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LYNNE A. GUITAR

In December 1511, Dominican friars in Santo Domingo, on the Caribbean island of Hispaniola, began their public protest about the abuses committed by *encomenderos* against their commended Indians.<sup>2</sup> Bartolomé de las Casas, an *encomendero* himself at the time,

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<sup>2</sup> Theoretically, the Spanish *encomenderos* were to teach their commended Indians how to live as proper Christians. See Luis Arranz Márquez, *Repartimientos y encomiendas en la isla Española: el repartimiento de Albuquerque de 1514* (Madrid: Gráficas Loureiro, 1991); Carlos Esteban Deive, *La Española y la esclavitud del indio* (Santo Domingo: Fundación García Arévalo, 1995); Lewis Hanke, *The Spanish Struggle for Justice in the Conquest of America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1949); Lewis Hanke, *The First Social Experiments in America: A Study in the Development of Spanish Indian Policy in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1935); Esteban Mira Caballos, *El indio antillano: repartimiento, encomienda y esclavitud, 1492-1542* (Seville: Muñoz Moya Editor, 1997); Esteban Mira Caballos, "El sistema laboral indígena en las Antillas," in *Encomiendas, indios y españoles*, ed. Julián B. Ruis Rivera and Horst Pietschmann (Münster: Lit Verlag, 1996); Esteban Mira Caballos, "El pleito Diego Colón-Francisco de Solís: el primer proceso por malos tratos a los indios en La Española, 1509," *Anuario de Estudios Americanos* 50 (1993):309-43; Frank Moya Pons, *Después de Colón: trabajo, sociedad y política en la economía del oro* (Santo Domingo: Alianza Editorial, 1987); Juan Manuel Pérez, ed., *Estos, ¿No son hombres?: lectura actual del proyecto apostólico de la primera comunidad de dominicos en el Nuevo Mundo* (Santo Domingo: Ediciones Fundación García Arévalo, 1984); Justo L. del Río Moreno, *Los inicios de la agricultura europea en el Nuevo Mundo, 1492-1542* (Seville: Gráficas del Guadalquivir, 1991); Emilio Rodríguez Demorizi, *Los dominicos y las encomiendas de indios de la Isla Española* (Santo Domingo: Editora del Caribe, 1971); José Antonio Saco, *Historia de la esclavitud de los indios en el nuevo mundo: seguida de la historia de los repartimientos y encomiendas* (Havana: Cultural, S.A., 1932); Lesley Byrd Simpson, *The Encomienda in New Spain: The Beginning of Spanish Mexico* (Berkeley: University of California



heeded the message and gave up his commended Taínos. Shortly thereafter, Las Casas took holy vows and became the most vehement of those who campaigned to eliminate the New World *encomiendas*. Those campaigns fueled the anti-Spanish Black Legend, which continues to color most studies about the era.<sup>3</sup> Historians throughout the past five-hundred years have seldom looked beyond the physical abuses and other detrimental effects that the native populations of the Americas suffered under the *encomiendas*. It could easily be surmised that the relationships between *encomenderos* and their commended Indians were brutal and abusive; however, that was not always the case. Relationships between Spanish *encomenderos* and the Indians commended to their care were just as fluid as any other kind of human interrelationship.

Historically, intimate relationships existed among *encomenderos* and commended Taínos on Hispaniola, the island where, in 1503, the *encomienda* was first officially established in the Americas.<sup>4</sup> This study is based on nine wills and documents about related inheritance suits that have been filed in the Archivo General de Indias in Seville. Although few in number, these wills provide a special historical perspective through which interpersonal relationships can be viewed—a personal perspective that is usually missing in other formal documents. As with many kinds of

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Press, 1950/1966); and Silvio A. Zavala, *La encomienda indiana* (Mexico: Editorial Porrúa, 1935/1973). For the European beginnings of the *encomienda*, see Robert S. Chamberlain, *Castilian Backgrounds of the Repartimiento-Encomienda System* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1939).

<sup>3</sup> By 1492, the Taínos had formed a network of interrelated *cacicazgos*, or chiefdoms, centered on Hispaniola, Puerto Rico, and eastern Cuba, as well as on Jamaica and the Bahamas. Many died due to labor exploitation, new diseases to which they had no immunity, and related famines shortly after the initial Indo-Afro-European encounter, giving rise to the Black Legend. Their genealogy and culture, however, live on through their mixed-blood progeny. See Lynne Guitar, "Black Legend" and "The Taíno," in *The Historical Encyclopedia of World Slavery*, ed. Junius P. Rodríguez (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 1997), 1:84-85 and 2:625-26, respectively.

<sup>4</sup> *Encomiendas* were granted informally on the island by Christopher Columbus in 1499. A *cédula* from Queen Isabella to Governor Nicolás de Ovando gave *encomiendas* official royal recognition on 20 December 1503. See Archivo General de Indias, Seville (hereinafter AGI), Indiferente General 418, leg. 1, fols. 121v-122.



documents, there is frequently a built-in class bias in wills.<sup>5</sup> Nonetheless, important cultural patterns can be glimpsed, for each will "is a window into someone's life, an inventory of property, a list of loved ones remembered by bequests." In wills, "the voices of long dead men and women speak to us."<sup>6</sup>

There are four standard parts to Spanish wills of the colonial era. The first is the preamble, which normally contains an invocation to God, Jesus Christ and/or the Virgin Mary, and personal data such as date and place of birth, residential information, and the marital status of the testator. Next come the expositive clauses, which ascertain the testator's state of mental and physical health; if he or she were not legally fit, the will would be invalid.<sup>7</sup> Often, this section contains an explanation of why the will was being made and usually contains a profession of faith and a plea for the intercession of the saints, should the testator die. Many of those who sailed to or from the Indies made new wills just before sailing because it was so dangerous. The most diverse and third part of the wills, and the most revealing section for the purposes of this article, contains the clauses of disposition. Among other things, these clauses deal with how and where the testator wanted his or her mortal remains to be interred (for newly rich conquistadors, this often involved bequests for the building, dedication, and maintenance of a family chapel back in their home town in Spain); the number of ordinary and perpetual masses to be said for the testator's soul; debts to be paid by the estate and debts owed to the testator; the naming of one or more *albaceas*, or executors; bequests to individuals; and the designation of heirs. The last section normally contains details of the date and location where the will was made, names of witnesses, and the name and signature of

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<sup>5</sup> Susan Kellogg, "Aztec Inheritance in Sixteenth-Century Mexico City: Colonial Patterns, Prehispanic Influences," *Ethnohistory* 33:3 (1986):314.

<sup>6</sup> Sue Louise Cline and Miguel León-Portilla, eds., *The Testaments of Culhuacan* (Los Angeles: UCLA Latin American Center Publications, 1984), 1, 10.

<sup>7</sup> Just as today, heirs sometimes questioned the mental faculties of testators, despite witnesses who attested to their state of mental fitness at the time the will was made. For example, Eva Alfonso and Francisco Falero, wife and brother of Ruy Falero, who died in Santo Domingo, obtained legal statements from a long list of associates of the deceased, who testified that he had been "perturbed in his mental faculties." Royal *cédula* declaring the deceased Ruy Fallero legally unfit and granting license for his widow and brother to manage his estate, 1 June 1527, AGI, Indiferente General 421, leg. 12, fols. 110r-110v.



the scribe who prepared or validated the will.<sup>8</sup>

Old World Spanish wills emphasized spiritual matters, as did those in the overseas colonies. For example, Antonio García-Abásolo suggests that one of the responsibilities of an *encomendero* toward the evangelization and care of the Indians commended to him was to provide in his will for masses to be said for their souls.<sup>9</sup> Several of the nine wills of *encomenderos* examined herein contain passages bequeathing money for perpetual masses to be said for the souls of Taínos who had once been commended to them. The *encomenderos'* sentiments toward these Indians, however, may have been catalyzed

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<sup>8</sup> For detailed studies of Spanish wills of the era, see Carlos M.N. Eire, *From Madrid to Purgatory: The Art and Craft of Dying in Sixteenth-Century Spain* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Maureen M. Flynn, "Charitable Ritual in Late Medieval and Early Modern Spain," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 16:3 (1985):335-48; Antonio García-Abásolo, *La vida y la muerte en Indias: cordobeses en América, siglos XVI-XVIII* (Córdoba: Publicaciones del Monte de Piedad y Caja de Ahorros de Córdoba, 1992)—this work has provided the clearest explanation of the four parts of Spanish wills of the colonial era; Marion Reder Gadow, *Morir en Málaga: testamentos malagueños del siglo XVIII* (Málaga: Universidad de Málaga, 1986); Pere Saborit Badenes, "Morir en el Alto Palencia: religiosidad popular a través de los testamentos, 1500-1799," *Estudios de Historia Moderna* 15 (1989):291-304; and David E. Vassberg, "The Status of Widows in Sixteenth-Century Rural Castile," in *Poor Women and Children in the European Past*, ed. John Henderson and Richard Wall (London: Routledge, 1994). Studies of wills in the New World include Cline and León-Portilla, *Testaments of Culhuacan*; Silva Cogollo Amaya, Claudia and Vargoas Poo, and Martín Eduardo, "Sociedad, muerte y prácticas de enterramiento en el Santa Fe colonial: la concepción de la muerte en el español," *Universitas Humanística* 22:37 (1993):35-42; Robert M. Hill, *The Pirir Papers and Other Colonial Period Cakchiquel-Maya Testaments* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University, 1989); Susan Kellogg, *Law and the Transformation of Aztec Culture, 1500-1700* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995); Kellogg, "Aztec Inheritance in Sixteenth-Century Mexico City;" Eugene H. Korth and Della M. Flusche, "Dowry and Inheritance in Colonial Spanish America: Peninsular Law and Chilean Practice," *The Americas* 43:4 (1987):395-410; Marti Lamar, "'Choosing' Partible Inheritance: Chilean Merchant Families, 1795-1825," *Journal of Social History* 28:1 (1994):125-45; Asunción Lavrin and Edith Couthurier, "Dowries and Wills: A View of Women's Socioeconomic Role in Colonial Guadalajara and Puebla, 1640-1790," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 59:2 (1979):280-304; Miguel León-Portilla, "La imagen de sí mismos: testimonios indígenas del periodo colonial," *América Indígena* 45:2 (1985):277-307; Matthew Restall, *Life and Death in a Maya Community: The Ixil Testaments of the 1760s* (Lancaster, CA: Labyrinthos, 1995); and Frank Salomon, "Indian Women of Early Colonial Quito as Seen through Their Testaments," *Americas* 44:3 (1988):325-41.

<sup>9</sup> García-Abásolo, *La vida y la muerte en Indias*, 112-13.



by something stronger than simply prescribed responsibility. Indeed, many Spaniards may have felt grateful to their Indians.

All Spaniards in the early decades of Hispaniola's colonization relied on the Taínos for sustenance in a climate where foods to which they were accustomed in the Iberian Peninsula would not grow and also for medicines and medical treatments for the unfamiliar ailments to which they were now prey.<sup>10</sup> And while many Spaniards lived in the capital, with its European layout, European-style buildings, and concentrated European population, other Spaniards—*encomenderos* and overseers, in particular—lived at least part of the time in the island's rural regions, in more intensive contact with the Indians than their urban counterparts. In these outlying towns and villages, the Spaniards were the numerical minority. For example, census records reveal that, in 1514, the year of a famous *repartimiento*, or division, of the island's surviving Taínos, commended Indians outnumbered their Spanish *encomenderos* by a forty-six to one ratio in San Juan de la Maguana, one of the Spanish towns that concentrated Indians closer to the gold mines. (Since the native population had already declined precipitously, the ratio would have been much higher before 1514.) In San Juan, the Crown commended a total of 1,473 Taínos to the care of twenty-seven *encomenderos*, including the daughter of a deceased *conquistador*; 469 Indian *aborías* were commended to seventeen other Spanish residents of the town.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> See Gustavo A. Antonini, "Evolución de la agricultura tradicional en Santo Domingo," *Eme Eme: Estudios Dominicanos* 2:9 (1973):96-122; and Nicolás Monardes, *Joyfull newes out of the newe founde worlde*, trans. John Frampton Marchaunt (London: W. Norton, 1577; reprint, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1925). Monardes, a Spanish physician (1512-1588), collected samples of the herbs, barks, etc., used by the Indians for curing, as well as descriptions of their preparation and application.

<sup>11</sup> The census appears in 1514 Repartimiento Census compiled in Santo Domingo by Pedro de Ibáñez and Rodrigo de Albuquerque, AGI, Patronato 172, ramo 3. The section detailing the reapportionment of Indians in San Juan de la Maguana can also be found in Joaquín F. Pacheco, Francisco de Cárdenas, and Luis Torres de Mendoza, eds., *Colección de documentos inéditos relativos al descubrimiento, conquista y colonización de las posesiones españolas en América y Oceanía* (Madrid: M. Bernaldo de Quirós, 1864), 1:196-207. Two excellent studies of the 1514 repartimiento are Rodríguez Demorizi, *Los dominicos y las encomiendas de indios de la Isla Española*; and Arranz Márquez, *Repartimientos y encomiendas en la isla Española*. *Naboría* comes from the Taíno term for "commoner" or "laborer." It was



Spanish *encomenderos* and overseers relied on their commended Taínos as laborers to haul ore and pan for gold in their mines, to cultivate and harvest their agricultural fields, and to build roads, churches, storehouses, and homes. Spaniards also took them into their homes as domestics. The relationships between the *encomenderos* and domestics were frequently more "familial" than with miners, field hands, or construction workers. Many Spaniards took Indian women as mistresses or even as legal wives, for intermarriage was not only legal but encouraged in the early years of colonization. Spaniards quickly discovered that if they married cacicas (female chiefs) or the daughters of caciques (chiefs), they were accorded all of the traditional privileges of native nobility.<sup>12</sup> Queen Isabella encouraged such intermarriages from the earliest days of the encounter, and royal license for intermarriage was reinforced by King Ferdinand after her death in various letters to Governor Nicolás de Ovando, as well as in a royal *cédula* dated 27 September 1514 to Governor Diego Colón and the *oidores*, or judges, of the *audiencia* of Santo Domingo. It is interesting that the Crown assumed that only Spanish men would marry Indians. The *cédula* to Colón and the *oidores* "gives license to any person born in Castile and resident on the island [of Hispaniola], to marry '*indias naturales de aquella*'"—native female Indians of that island.<sup>13</sup>

It must have been convenient for an *encomendero* to have a cacique for a father-in-law or a cacica for a wife. The laborers would have been far more tractable because it was the traditional responsibility of the cacique to organize and send out work parties, hunting parties, and the like. In fact, one of the earliest terms used for

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also used by Spaniards on Hispaniola to designate Taínos brought from other islands. These imported *naborías* did not have the same rights as commended Indians. After 1512, the term came to be used synonymously with "slave," although *naborías* could not legally be sold. See Mira Caballos, "El sistema laboral indígena," 20-27; and Roberto Cassá, *Historia social y económica de la República Dominicana* (Santo Domingo: Editorial Alfa y Omega, 1992), 1:53.

<sup>12</sup> Spaniards' marriages to cacicas and to the daughters of caciques were sometimes consecrated by Catholic priests, but more often than not only native ceremonies would have been observed.

<sup>13</sup> Letter from King Ferdinand to Nicolás de Ovando, 6 October 1508, AGI, Indiferente General 1961, leg. 1, fols. 78v-81; and Royal *cédula* to Colón and the *oidores* of Hispaniola, 27 September 1514, AGI, Indiferente General 419, leg. 5, fols. 270v-271r.



what later came to be called an *encomienda* was *casycó*, which appears to be a variant of the Taíno word *cacicazgo*, a cacique's geographical region of authority.<sup>14</sup> In 1516, the Crown advised the trio of Jeronymite friars who were sent to govern the island that there was yet another good reason to encourage Spaniards to marry *indias*: "[I]n this way, very soon it could be that all the caciques will be Spaniards, which will save on [royal] expenses."<sup>15</sup>

Relationships between Spanish *encomenderos* and *indias* were not always just for convenience or profit. Sometimes genuine feelings of love and affection appear to have arisen, as evidenced by the bequests some *encomenderos* left in their wills. Pérez de Matasnau, for example, who died on Hispaniola around 1526, designated his Taíno wife as his primary heir. Unfortunately, he did not own much to leave to anyone, for his entire estate was worth only 10,000 *maravedíes*, and he had many creditors back in Spain.<sup>16</sup> Another testator, Esteban Pardo Cadena, died a bachelor in Hispaniola about

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<sup>14</sup> For example, two documents from early 1509 all use "casycó" synonymously with the word "repartimiento": Record of "a *casycó* with its Indians" granted to Antonio de Deça, Seville, 12 January 1509, Archivo de Protocolos, Seville (hereinafter APS), Oficio 1, leg. 1, fol. 45v; and Record of Deça requesting and obtaining copies of all royal letters concerning the aforementioned grant, Seville, 13 January 1509, APS, Oficio 1, leg. 1, fol. 48. Text of the documents appears in Santiago Montoto, *Colección de documentos inéditos para la historia de Ibero-América* (Madrid: Editorial Ibero-Africano-Americana, 1927), 11:9, 10, and 11.

<sup>15</sup> Long letter of instructions from the Crown to the Jeronymite friars, 1516 (indeterminate date), in *Colección de documentos inéditos relativos al descubrimiento, conquista y organización de las antiguas posesiones españolas en Ultramar*, comp. Real Academia de la Historia (Madrid: Establecimiento Tipográfico, 1885-1932), Vol. 5, Book 9:53-74.

<sup>16</sup> Royal *cédula* referring to the will and inventory of the heritable goods of the deceased Pérez de Matasnau, who died on the island of Hispaniola, 26 June 1526, AGI, Indiferente General 423, leg. 19, fols. 262r-262v. While it is difficult to establish the value of a gold peso in colonial Hispaniola, the following letter gives an idea of its purchasing power in 1503. In this letter from a disgruntled young Spaniard to the Crown, Juan de Ayala complained of the high prices colonists were forced to pay for Spanish products exported to Hispaniola. He attached a list that included the following prices: a pair of silk stockings, 1 1/2 gold pesos; a fancy linen shirt, 1 1/2; a shirt of fine embroidered linen, 3; a pair of kid shoes, 3 *tomines* (a silver coin worth one-third of a gold peso); a dagger, 2; a crossbow with frame, 4; 100 sewing needles, 1 1/2; and a single large nail, 1. Charles E. Nowell, trans. and ed., *A Letter to Ferdinand and Isabella, 1503* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1965), 49-50.



1532. He left the bulk of his estate to his niece, Isabel de la Cadena, back in Burgos, but it appears that he had an *india* mistress named Cobimere for whom he must have cared very much because he ordered that proceeds of the estate be used to send her to Spain, where she was to be taken in as Isabel's *moza* (handmaiden). It was perhaps the best way that he knew of guaranteeing that Cobimere would be cared for and protected after his death.<sup>17</sup>

Like Pardo Cadena, Pedro de Vadillo, an *encomendero* in the rural village of San Juan de la Maguana, died a bachelor—he drowned when his ship sank at the mouth of the Guadalquivir River sometime between drawing up his will in Santo Domingo on 29 January 1530 and the end of June that same year.<sup>18</sup> Vadillo, however, had at least two mestizo children, although he did not name them or their mother in the will. Several documents identify Francisco de Marmolejo and Diego Marmolejo as the sons of Pedro de Vadillo and "una india." Although they were not among the heirs named in the will that has been preserved, they claimed to be their father's legal heirs and successfully sued for one-third of the sugar *ingenio*, or plantation, that their father founded in San Juan de la Maguana with a partner, Pedro de Ledesma.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Will of Esteban Pardo Cadena, a native of Burgos, 1532, AGI, Contratación 97, no. 5.

<sup>18</sup> Vadillo's will appears in its entirety in Juan Friede, ed., *Documentos inéditos para la historia de Colombia* (Bogotá: Academia Colombiana, 1955), 2:118-26. John H. Parry and Robert G. Keith translated the will and commented upon it in *New Iberian World: A Documentary History of the Discovery and Settlement of Latin America to the Early-Seventeenth Century* (New York: Times Books, 1984), 2:349-53. A hearing on Vadillo's will was held in Santo Domingo on 26 June 1530, giving us an approximate date of his death since the exact date is unknown. Friede, *Documentos inéditos para la historia de Colombia*, 2:241.

<sup>19</sup> Royal *cédula* to the *audiencia* of Santo Domingo and other justices of Hispaniola requesting that the late Pedro de Vadillo's heritable goods be sent to his son (whom he had with "una india") and heir, Francisco de Marmolejo, Seville, 27 June 1538, AGI, Audiencia de Santo Domingo 868, leg. 1, fol. 132v. Interestingly, the *cédula* notes that Francisco was born in Seville, so he did not want to go to Hispaniola, as the justices had demanded, "because it could be very dangerous to his health." The *cédula* does not explain how Francisco came to be born in Seville, but it was common practice to take female Indians to Spain, particularly as "domestics," where some gave birth to mixed-blood children. See also Royal provision to the *audiencia* and other justices of Hispaniola demanding that one-third of Pedro de Ledesma's *ingenio* go to Vadillo's heirs, Francisco and Diego Marmolejo, 7 June 1539, AGI, Audiencia de Santo Domingo 868, leg. 1, fol. 179v. Francisco and Diego Marmolejo may have



It is quite possible that Francisco and Diego's mother was "the Indian woman Teresa," a Taíno noblewoman who appears prominently in Vadillo's will. She was the daughter of Gómez, one of the two caciques who was commended, along with his people, to Vadillo's care in 1514. At that time, Vadillo received the cacique Gómez, along with thirty-six Taíno workers, eleven children, and ten elderly people, as well as the cacique Berrío, with thirty-four workers, an undisclosed number of children, and twenty elderly people. He also received ten *naborías*.<sup>20</sup> Teresa predeceased Vadillo, who set aside a large portion of his estate to pay for requiem masses and indulgences for her soul and those of her father and mother. Vadillo also noted in his will that he brought up her son, Juanico Negrillo, after she died. Vadillo cared for the boy through his will as he had in life. He not only bequeathed Juanico fifty gold pesos, but appointed his high-ranking cousin, the *oidor* Juan de Vadillo, as the boy's guardian.

Vadillo's will also mentions that Teresa had bequeathed *him* 130 gold pesos in *her* will. The close relationship that the two must have had is clearly revealed in their mutual bequests. That same line in his will also illustrates the intriguing fact that Teresa, obviously, still controlled her own personal wealth long after the Taínos were supposed to have been conquered and subjugated to the control of the Spaniards.

As John H. Parry and Robert J. Keith point out in their comments about Vadillo's will in *New Iberian World*, Vadillo demonstrated paternalistic responsibilities to many of the Taínos commended to his care, as well as to their children, to his slaves, and even to the mestizo children of other Spaniards.<sup>21</sup> He left more than thirty individual bequests, many of which were to individuals who were designated as "indio" or "mestizo" in his will. For example, Vadillo manumitted two of his female Indian *naborías* and bequeathed them dowries of thirty gold pesos each, and he left one hundred gold

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been the "minor sons" noted in Isabel de Prado's petition for guardianship dated 30 March 1531. (Isabel was the widow of Martín Fernández Marmolejo, Pedro de Vadillo's brother). Friede, *Documentos inéditos para la historia de Colombia*, 2:241-42.

<sup>20</sup> See 1514 Repartimiento census concerning *encomenderos* in San Juan de la Maguana, *Colección de documentos inéditos*, 1:196-207.

<sup>21</sup> Parry and Keith, *New Iberian World*, 2:349-50.



pesos to Isabel de las Varas, whom he identified as "the bastard mestiza daughter" of a friend of the family. He even bequeathed fifty gold pesos to María, who was the daughter of a cacique commended to one of his Spanish neighbors, Luis Cabeza de Vaca.<sup>22</sup>

Diego Muriel was another Spaniard who, like Vadillo, maintained a relationship with an *india* who belonged to a neighboring Spaniard, an *encomendero* named Diego García. Muriel's relationship, however, was clearly intimate, and it created a tangle of legal problems on the island of San Juan, Puerto Rico, where he lived. On 5 June 1528, the Crown issued a *cédula* directing the island's governor "to see that justice was done" in the case of Muriel and his six-year-old son, whose mother was described as an "india naboría" in the village of San Germán. García wanted to sell the boy as a slave. Muriel objected and sued for custody.<sup>23</sup> Unfortunately, there do not appear to be any extant documents revealing the case's outcome, but Muriel may have obtained both his woman and his son, and he may have married her, for he supported the Crown's belief in marriage as a stabilizing factor on *encomenderos*. This is demonstrated by the fact that, in 1528, the Crown granted Muriel a large hacienda and cattle. A year later, he was also granted "the *encomienda* with Indians" that went with the Hacienda Real de Toa.<sup>24</sup> When Muriel first received the hacienda, he drew up a list of recommendations to improve the treatment of commended Taínos island-wide. Muriel's recommendations included

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<sup>22</sup> Although Vadillo generally appears to have maintained good relations with his commended Indians and others in the vicinity, he failed notoriously in his relationship with one of the caciques in San Juan de la Maguana—the cacique Enrique or Enriquillo. Enriquillo led the longest and the most famous of the Taíno rebellions against the Spaniards (1519-1533) following a dispute with his *encomendero*, Andrés de Valenzuela, and Vadillo, who was the town's *regidor*. Although fictionalized, the best account of Enriquillo and his rebellion is Manuel de Jesús Galván, *Enriquillo: leyenda histórica dominicana* (Santo Domingo: Ediciones de Taller, 1989); the best academic study is Fray Cipriano de Utrera, *Polémica de Enriquillo*, ed. Emilio Rodríguez Demorizi (Santo Domingo: Editora del Caribe, 1973).

<sup>23</sup> Royal *cédula* to the governor and judge of residency of the island of San Juan requesting that justice be done in the case of Diego Muriel and his six-year-old son, 5 June 1528, AGI, Indiferente General 421, leg. 13, fols. 136v-137r.

<sup>24</sup> Royal *cédula* granting Diego Muriel haciendas and cattle on the Río Toa, 5 June 1528, AGI, Indiferente General 421, leg. 13, fol. 136r; and Royal *cédula* ordering the administrators on San Juan to grant Muriel "the *encomienda* with Indians" on the Río Toa, 31 July 1529, AGI, Audiencia de Santo Domingo 2280, leg. 1, fols. 1r-3v.



the following provisions: 1) a cleric for each *encomienda*; 2) separate sets of clothes for work and home for each commended Indian so that they would not have to sleep in wet clothes; 3) a hammock for each Indian to sleep in; 4) baked goods and meat for each Indian every day; 5) and, "seeing as how many Indians had women," Muriel wrote, he and the cleric would see to it that they understood the concept of matrimony and that they did not "vary their women," for he believed "that had been the reason for much of the immorality" among the commended Indians.<sup>25</sup> Muriel served the Crown in other ways, too, ways that continued to demonstrate his concern for the colony as a whole as well as for the Indians. He made recommendations for the improvement of the plaza in San Juan Baptista and, through at least 1534, he was involved in a series of court cases in which he served as a witness for the Crown against *encomenderos* in Puerto Rico who were treating their Indians badly.<sup>26</sup>

The interactions between the Crown and Muriel illustrate that the Castilian monarchs were concerned about the welfare of the Indians. They cared enough to reward those conquistadors and other Spaniards who upheld the laws and helped to preserve good relationships with the Indians. Helen Nader notes that: "Fernando and Isabel...authorized [Christopher Columbus] to establish a government that would assure an orderly and productive replica of the Castilian homeland while integrating the native Indians as loyal subjects of the Crown."<sup>27</sup>

The establishment of law was an important factor in both the replication of the Castilian homeland and the integration of the

<sup>25</sup> Royal *capitulación* with Muriel concerning good treatment of commended Indians, 5 June 1528, AGI, Indiferente General 421, leg. 13, fols. 176r-176v.

<sup>26</sup> Royal *cédula* to the Bishop of San Juan ordering compliance to a previous order for the construction of the public plaza recommended by Muriel, 5 June 1528, AGI, Indiferente General 421, leg. 13, fols. 146v-147v; *Informaciones* (reports) put before the judge Antonio de la Gama in San Juan, number one of which is dated 1 December 1528 and concerns Muriel's testimony against Blas de Villasante for his bad treatment of the Indians commended to his care on the Hacienda Real de Toa, AGI, Patronato 175, ramo 18; and *Informaciones* by Muriel about other *encomenderos* on San Juan, AGI, Audiencia de Santo Domingo 10, no. 4.

<sup>27</sup> Helen Nader, ed. and trans., *The Book of Privileges Issued to Christopher Columbus by King Fernando and Queen Isabel, 1492-1502* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 2:4.



Indians.<sup>28</sup> Theoretically, all Spanish officials were obliged to enforce the laws to the best of their ability. For example, a royal *provisión*, or decree, dated 10 December 1512, specified that although Indians taken in just war were the *naborías* of the Spaniards who captured them, they were not to be considered as slaves "like before." The reason given for the new orders was "to prevent abuses."<sup>29</sup> A year and a half earlier, however, on 25 July 1511, a royal *provisión* ordered that *naborías* were "to be marked on the legs in the manner prescribed by the admiral [Diego Colón] and the officials, so that in this way they can be distinguished" from the island's natives.<sup>30</sup> The prescribed manner was branding with a hot iron. The branding order was rescinded on 19 September 1528, on which date royal *provisiones* went out to the governors and *oidores* of *audiencias* all over the Indies prohibiting the marking of any Indians with irons and ordering severe punishment for "anyone who burned them [branded them] against these orders."<sup>31</sup>

Noble Indians were treated by the Crown with much greater respect than *naborías*. The laws regarding their treatment were far more numerous and more strict, and there was significant effort to integrate these Indians into the Spanish community, where they were to serve as models for others. Monies from the royal treasury paid the

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<sup>28</sup> See Kellogg, *Law and the Transformation of the Aztecs*; Hanke, *Spanish Struggle for Justice in the Conquest of America*; and Hanke, *The First Social Experiments in America*. See also the work of Jane Landers, much of which focuses on the law and African slavery within the Spanish colonies, such as Jane Landers, "'In Consideration of Her Enormous Crime': Rape and Infanticide in Spanish St. Augustine," in *The Devil's Lane: Sex and Race in the Early South*, ed. Catherine Clinton and Michele Gillespie (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 205-17; and Jane Landers, "Africans and African American Women and Their Pursuit of Rights through Eighteenth-Century Spanish Texts," in *Haunted Bodies: Gender and Southern Texts*, ed. Anne Goodwyn-Jones and Susan Van D'Elden Donaldson (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1998), 56-76.

<sup>29</sup> Royal *provisión* ordering that Indians on the island of San Juan, even though taken in just war, not be considered as slaves, 10 December 1512, AGI, Indiferente General 419, leg. 4, fols. 68r-68v. The same *provisión* was later sent to the royal administrators of the other colonies of the Indies.

<sup>30</sup> Royal *provisión* directed to the administrators of Hispaniola, 25 July 1511, AGI, Indiferente General 418, leg. 3, fols. 132r-132v.

<sup>31</sup> Royal *provisión* directed to the administrators of Hispaniola and New Spain prohibiting the branding of Indians, 19 September 1528, AGI, Indiferente General 421, leg. 13, fols. 375v-376r.



salaries of men like *bachiller* Fernán Suárez, who was to receive 33,000 *maravedies* in 1513, because he had "consented to teach the sons of the caciques on Hispaniola."<sup>32</sup> A *cédula* to Diego Colón dated 5 June 1512 ordered him to give the Dominican friars on Hispaniola fifteen Indian boys, clothing for them, and enough money for their travel to Seville so that they could be indoctrinated, sent back to the *encomenderos* on the island, and then send another fifteen to Seville in what was to be established as an ongoing process.<sup>33</sup> Another *cédula* to Colón, a little more than one month later, ordered him to provide ships, Indian interpreters, and whatever else was needed "every time the provincial of the Order of San Francisco on Hispaniola deems it necessary" to send friars to Tierra Firme and the other islands to teach commended Indians there.<sup>34</sup>

From the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Crown not only sent clergy and paid Spaniards to instruct Indians in the colonies, but also paid the transportation and maintenance expenses to bring Indians—particularly caciques and their sons—to Spain to be educated so that they could return and serve as models for their people. One of the earliest *cédulas* to this effect is dated 5 March 1505. It was

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<sup>32</sup> Royal *cédula* directed to Dr. Sancho de Matienzo to pay 33,000 *maravedies* from the royal treasury to Suárez, 21 March 1513, AGI, Indiferente General 419, leg. 4, fols. 127r-127v. See also Royal *cédula* to Matienzo directing him to send educational supplies to the Indies for the Indians, 22 April 1513, leg. 4, fol. 124v; and Royal *cédula* directing Matienzo to take six female and three male Indians brought from Hispaniola by Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo to monasteries in Seville for their education, 3 December 1513, leg. 5, fols. 467v-468.

<sup>33</sup> Royal *cédula* to Colón concerning process of educating Indians in Seville, 5 June 1512, AGI, Indiferente General 418, leg. 3, fols. 306-307. As further examples, Alonso de Cáceres and Pedro Colón were two Taíno caciques who were "set at liberty to live like Spaniards" as models for their people in 1508. They were Christians, were married, and both could read and write. See Hanke, *First Social Experiments*, 26-27. And every one of the chroniclers who wrote about Enriquillo noted that he had been raised by the Franciscans, could read and write, and was expected to grow up and become the first ordained native priest in the Indies. In 1534, "Don Enrique" wrote a letter to Emperor Charles that ensured he would keep the peace that had been negotiated and would, henceforth, be a loyal vassal. It is the only extant writing of a Taíno. Don Enrique's *capitulación* with the Royal Crown, Santo Domingo, 6 June 1534, AGI, Audiencia de Santo Domingo 77. See full text and commentary by Emilio Rodríguez Demorizi in Cipriano, *Polémica de Enriquillo*, 487-88.

<sup>34</sup> Royal *cédula* to Colón ordering him to provide whatever is necessary for the education of Indians on Tierra Firme, 27 July 1512, AGI, Indiferente General 418, leg. 3, fol. 330r.



directed to the Count de Cifuentes in Seville, ordering that he treat well the son of a cacique sent to him by the governor of the island of Hispaniola, Nicolás de Ovando, and see to it that the boy was instructed "in the faith, virtue and good Christian [values]."<sup>35</sup> There were many similar *cédulas* issued throughout the first and second decades of the sixteenth century. The same royal policies continued in the 1520s and 1530s. For example, in a letter to the *oidores* of the *audiencia* of Santo Domingo dated 9 November 1526, the Crown directed them to look for the "principal Indians" and send them to Spain for instruction in the Catholic faith; the same directions were sent to officials of the other colonies.<sup>36</sup> A letter from the Consejo de Indias to officials of the Casa de Contratación, dated 22 October 1527, concerns twelve Indians from Hispaniola who were being sent to Seville for indoctrination, four of whom were to be "deposited" at the monastery "in Las Cuevas, four in San Jernónimo, two in San Francisco, and two in Santo Domingo."<sup>37</sup> As a final example, in a series of *cédulas* from September through December 1530, three Indians that Sebastián Cabot (recently deceased) brought back to Seville with him from his voyage up the Río Plata were sent to the monastery of San Jerónimo to receive an education so that Cabot's heirs could not turn them into slaves.<sup>38</sup> While some would argue that forced education and religious indoctrination were not the same as

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<sup>35</sup> The original wording is: "en la fe, virtud y buena crianza." Royal *cédula* directing the Count of Cifuentes to take charge of the education of the son of a cacique from Hispaniola, 5 March 1505, AGI, Indiferente General 418, leg. 1, fols. 150v-151.

<sup>36</sup> Royal letter to the *oidores* of Hispaniola directing them to seek out and educate the "principal Indians" of the island, 9 November 1526, AGI, Indiferente General 421, leg. 11, fols. 300-303.

<sup>37</sup> Letter from the Consejo de Indias to officials of the Casa de Contratación concerning twelve Indians from Hispaniola who were being sent to monasteries in Seville for indoctrination, 22 October 1527, AGI, Indiferente General 421, leg. 12, fols. 207r-208r.

<sup>38</sup> Royal *cédula* directed to the Casa de Contratación concerning Diego de Ordás, Antonio Sedeño, and three Indians brought back by the recently deceased Sebastián Cabot, 1 September 1530, AGI, Indiferente General 1952, leg. 1, fols. 132-133; *Cédula* to the monastery of San Jerónimo in Seville to educate the said three Indians, 26 September 1530, AGI, Indiferente General 1952, leg. 1, fols. 147-147v; and *Cédula* to the Convent of Santo Domingo in Seville requesting information on the health and well being of two of Cabot's Indians, who had been sent there for education, 22 December 1530, AGI, Indiferente General 1961, leg. 2, fols. 15v-16.



granting them freedom, the Crown does appear to have had the Indians' best interests in mind.

The official records indicate that the Crown did have the Indians' freedom in mind—as much liberty as any free peasant had—when it authorized establishing the *encomiendas* on Hispaniola.<sup>39</sup> The labor tribute system was formulated on the premise that the *encomenderos* would serve as Christian models and that, within a short period of time, the commended Indians would be fully integrated into "civilized" Christian society. In practice, of course, the *encomienda* system was neither as benign nor as reciprocal as it was on paper, and *encomenderos*, obviously, were not all good Christian role models. There was a constant stream of official orders for royal representatives, both secular and clerical, to follow up on charges that *encomenderos* were abusing their privileges. The Justicia section of the archives in Seville is full of documentation that illustrates just how serious the Crown was about seeing justice done for the empire's Indian subjects, as illustrated in the following example.

Juan Marqués claimed to have been one of the first conquistadors of Hispaniola and of the island of San Juan, Puerto Rico. On 17 February 1537, the Crown asked officials of the *audiencia* of Santo Domingo to look into his request for a *merced* for himself and his mestizo son, who was born and raised on the island of Hispaniola; the *merced* was requested as a reward for Marqués' services to the Crown.<sup>40</sup> Marqués was in Peru when he made his request, but he returned to Hispaniola, where he died. Documents affecting the case do not explain how he died but do indicate that, in addition to his son on Hispaniola, he had at least four younger children by an Indian woman named María in Mexico. Marqués also had a legitimate Spanish wife, Isabel de Herrera. Isabel sold the younger children as slaves when her husband died, sometime before

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<sup>39</sup> For a brief synopsis of peasant life in Spain during this era, see William D. Phillips, Jr., and Carla Rahn Phillips, "Spain in the Fifteenth Century," in *Transatlantic Encounters: Europeans and Andeans in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. Kenneth J. Andrien and Rolena Adorno (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 16-17.

<sup>40</sup> A *merced* is a reward or favor, which, as in this case, is frequently a land grant. Royal *cédula* requesting that the officials of the *audiencia* of Santo Domingo look into the facts of the Marqués case, 17 February 1537, AGI, Audiencia de Santo Domingo 868, leg. 1, fols. 48.



December 1537.<sup>41</sup> The Crown intervened, and there followed a seven-year-long court case at the end of which "Pedro Marqués, *indio*" was declared free. Pedro de Soto, to whom Isabel had sold the boy in 1537, successfully sued her for the money he lost.<sup>42</sup> Two of Marqués' daughters, Luisa and Catalina, and another son, Juan, were also declared free.<sup>43</sup> Several months after the children were freed, another *cédula* went out requiring Isabel to use proceeds from her deceased husband's estate to pay all of the attendant court costs as well as the expenses to transport three of the children to the Consejo de Indias in Spain.<sup>44</sup>

In several of the inheritance cases studied, the Indians that Spaniards cared for were their grandchildren. For example, in 1515, García de Ocampo received royal permission to take Inés, the daughter of his dead son Juan de Ocampo and "una india," back to Spain so that she could be educated.<sup>45</sup> In 1522, he received

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<sup>41</sup> Royal *cédula* directing Pedro de Montoya to find out who had the mestizo children in question, 7 April 1544, AGI, Indiferente General 423, leg. 20, fols. 747v-748. See also Royal note that sentences and petitions for copies of related documents had been dispatched concerning three legal cases, the third of which was the case of Isabel de Herrera vs. Pedro de Soto, 7 April 1544, AGI, Indiferente General 423, leg. 20, fol. 747r; Royal note of having dispatched a summons to Herrera, 18 July 1544, AGI, Indiferente General 423, leg. 20, fol. 770v; and *Cédula* to Montoya directing him to see that Herrera sent her late husband's will and his children to the Royal Court, 18 July 1544, AGI, Indiferente General 423, leg. 20, fols. 775v-776r; emphasis added.

<sup>42</sup> Royal *cédula* to Montoya directing him to oblige Herrera to reimburse Soto, 18 July 1544, AGI, Indiferente General 423, leg. 20, fol. 770r.

<sup>43</sup> Royal *cédula* "to the justices of these reigns and of the Indies" declaring that Luisa, daughter of Juan Marqués and María, an *india* of New Spain, was free, 29 August 1544, AGI, Indiferente General 423, leg. 20, fols. 787r-788r; *Cédula* declaring that their daughter Catalina was free, 29 August 1544, AGI, Indiferente General 423, leg. 20, fols. 788r-788v; and *Cédula* declaring that their son Juan was free, 29 August 1544, AGI, Indiferente General 423, leg. 20, fols. 789r-798v.

<sup>44</sup> Royal *cédula* to officials of Villa de Dueñas to take the children away from Herrera and demand that she pay court costs and their expenses, 13 October 1544, AGI, Indiferente General 423, leg. 20, fols. 802r-802v. See also Royal *cédula* directing Montoya to verify the amount of heritable goods Herrera inherited from her husband's estate, 26 October 1544, AGI, Indiferente General 423, leg. 20, fols. 811r-812r.

<sup>45</sup> Royal *cédula* to Colón and the other officials on Hispaniola notifying them that Herrera was to use proceeds from her deceased husband's estate to pay all court costs and the children's transportation expenses to Spain, 29 August 1515, AGI, Indiferente



permission to do the same for another of his granddaughters, Catalina, who was also fathered by Juan and "una india," although there is no indication as to whether the girls had the same mother.<sup>46</sup>

Just as Vadillo cared for Juanico Negrillo, who does not appear to have been biologically related to him, so many other *encomenderos* extended their "families" to include non-related Indian children. Alonso Iñiquez, for example, received permission from the Spanish Crown in 1525 to bring back to Spain "two Indian slaves whom he has raised as his own Christian children, and their mother," as well as permission to return them to the Indies at any time.<sup>47</sup> In contrast to Iñiquez's paternal affection for children who may not even have been his own is the negligence that Andrés de Tapia, an *encomendero* who was sued by the Crown for harsh treatment of his Indians in New Spain, exhibited toward his own mestizo son, Hernando. Hernando de Tapia went to Spain, presumably on business for his father. The Crown sued his father in 1537 because Andrés refused to pay for Hernando's maintenance there or for his return to New Spain, claiming that he had sent money in 1533 but that it was stolen by the Spaniard to whom he had entrusted it.<sup>48</sup>

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General 419, leg. 5, fols. 445r-455v.

<sup>46</sup> Royal *cédula* to the *oidores* of Hispaniola giving Ocampo permission to take his granddaughter Inés to Spain to be educated, 13 August 1522, AGI, Indiferente General 420, leg. 9, fol. 24v.

<sup>47</sup> Royal *cédula* to Iñiquez granting him permission to take with him to Spain (and to return to Hispaniola) two Indian slaves and their mother, 28 July 1525, AGI, Indiferente General 420, leg. 10, fols. 38v-39r.

<sup>48</sup> Four documents concerning the royal lawsuit against Andrés de Tapia for mistreatment of the Indians commended to his care in Tegucigalpa, New Spain, 1543, AGI, Justicia 198, Case no. 7. Documents concerning money for Hernando de Tapia's maintenance in Castile and return to New Spain include: Letter from the Consejo de Indias to the Casa de Contratación to look into Andrés de Tapia's claim against Martín Durantes, 11 November 1533, AGI, Indiferente General 1962, leg. 3, fol. 84v; Letter from the Consejo de Indias to the Casa de Contratación to look into Andrés' claim, this time looking to Durantes' wife for recompense, 5 February 1636, AGI, Indiferente General 1961, leg. 16, fols. 277-277v; Royal *cédula* directed to the court treasury official Diego de la Haya to release twenty *ducados* to Hernando (who was now accompanied by an Indian wife and a son of his own) to buy clothes for their return voyage to New Spain, 17 February 1537, AGI, Indiferente General 422, leg. 17, fols. 105v-106r; and *Cédula* issued ordering officials of the Casa de Contratación "to give to Hernando de Tapia, Indian, and to his wife and son, that which they need for their maintenance in Seville until they embark for New Spain," 2 March 1537, AGI, Indiferente General 1962, leg. 5, fol. 105.



Relationships between Spaniards and their slaves were just as varied as relationships between *encomenderos* and their commended Indians. This is clearly exhibited in the 1549 will of the royal official Diego Caballero, who owned forty Indian slaves at his death, most of whom he had brought back with him from the island of Cubagua in about 1535. They worked on his estate outside Santo Domingo (called Cipecipi, Cepi Cepin, and Capicipi in various documents). In his will, Caballero manumitted all forty slaves, making special note that the Indians living in the house—Juliamico, Pezico Camazzon, Antones, and Andrés—were not slaves but his own children, whom he had fathered with two "Indian women of the island." Whether he meant Hispaniola or Cubagua is unknown. Caballero's heir, his brother Alonso Caballero, contested the will in court; he wanted the Indian slaves for himself. The suit's outcome, according to the AGI's records, was lost in processing.<sup>49</sup>

There are innumerable examples of abusive relationships among Spaniards and commended or enslaved Indians in the chronicles and documents relating to the early years of the New World's colonization—both abuse by neglect and active physical abuse. This brief analysis of nine wills and related documents reveals that there were also far more fluid relationships. Unfortunately, wills are not plentiful among the early extant documents. Furthermore, many of the extant wills are barely legible or are missing the crucial section dealing with debts and bequests. Frequently the relationships between the testator, the heirs, and the legatees are not clear, even when legible, because of the sporadic nature of the surviving records and because of the mobility of many of the conquistadors—which also make it difficult to narrow a study down to only Hispaniola or only the wills of *encomenderos*. One good example is the case of Benito del Prado, who died about 1536 in León, Nicaragua. He definitely had an *encomienda* there; however, he left behind goods not only in León, but also in Panama or Venezuela, in Peru, on the island of Hispaniola, and "in other parts of the Indies," where he may also have had *encomiendas* at one time.<sup>50</sup> Finally, another of the problems

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<sup>49</sup> Documents related to the case of Diego Caballero and his heirs over the freedom of the Indians he had on his haciendas on Hispaniola, 1549-1551, AGI, Justicia 351, Autos fiscales, Panama, no. 1, ramo 2.

<sup>50</sup> Royal *cédula* to various governors in the Indies ordering that all of del Prado's goods be collected and sent to the Casa de Contratación in Seville so that it could be



inherent in this study is that, to date, no wills of native Taínos have been uncovered, although there are documents indicating that a number of caciques and their sons could read and write Spanish, and that at least one left a will.<sup>51</sup> Despite the inherent problems, information extracted from the extant wills of these earliest *encomenderos* helps to fill out what has been a lopsided picture of life in colonial Hispaniola. The wills demonstrate that relationships between Spanish *encomenderos* and their Indians were sometimes beneficial to both parties and even, at times, loving.

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properly inventoried and distributed, 1 August 1539, AGI, Indiferente General 423, leg. 19, fols. 275v-276.

<sup>51</sup> As previously noted, caciques such as Alonso de Cáceres, Pedro Colón, and Enriquillo were known to be able to read and write, and the Crown invested considerable time and energy in the education of Taíno nobles. Enriquillo left a will naming his wife doña Mencia and his cousin Martín de Alfaro as his heirs, although the will does not appear to have been preserved. See Letter to the emperor from the *oidores* Fuenmayor, Infante, and Vadillo, Santo Domingo, 17 October 1535, AGI, Audiencia de Santo Domingo 49, no. 30. Although there is only one extant document written by a Taíno, many documents provide evidence of Taíno literacy. For example, the royal court decided that the cacique Juan de Humacao could not be held in slavery *because* he could read and write. See Royal *cédula* concerning the legal case of the freedom of the cacique Juan de Humacao, Puerto Rico, 1526, AGI, Indiferente General 421, leg. 11, fol. 349v; text published in Richard Konezke, *Colección de documentos inéditos para la historia de la formación social de Hispanoamérica, 1493-1910* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1953-1962), 96-97. Further evidence that some Taínos were literate is contained in a friar's complaint that the Indians were choosing to read "books like *Amadis* and others of this caliber of profane history" instead of "books of health and good doctrine." Royal *cédula* banning romances and fables, 21 September 1543, AGI, Audiencia de Santo Domingo 868, leg. 2, fol. 201v. See also First complaint by friars about the Taínos' reading preferences, 4 April 1531, AGI, Indiferente General 1961, leg. 2, fol. 50; and Duplicate to the *cédula* banning romances and fables, 13 September 1543, AGI, Indiferente General 1963, leg. 8, fol. 255v. The multiple issuances of both the complaint and of the banning of romances and fables like *Amadis* indicate that the Taínos consistently exercised free will in their reading choices.