3

The cultures of colonialism

Luis Fernando Restrepo

Despite its geographical, cultural and social diversity, one significant unifying factor of the region we know today as Latin America has been a shared history of European colonialism. Roughly three centuries of mainly Iberian (Spanish and Portuguese) colonization have reshaped and left a marked imprint on the cultures of the region and defined, to a great extent, its relation to the rest of the world, violently and unevenly incorporating it into the European modern world system. This process, however, was far from unidirectional, since the colonial exchange had multiple repercussions on both sides of the Atlantic, contributing significantly to the Western world.

This chapter will provide a general overview of Iberian colonization from 1492 until independence: 1810 in Spanish America and 1822 in Brazil.[1] Special emphasis will be given to some of the intellectual and cultural debates that emerged in the context of colonialism, including the 'invention' of America, discussions on the legitimacy of the conquest, Amerindian responses to the colonization, and *criollo* (Americans of European descent) cultural politics.

ANTECEDENTS

The Iberian colonization of the Americas was built on hundreds of years of Mediterranean experiences in trade and intercultural exchanges. It also erected a system of dominance that strategically adopted and modified many structures of Native American cultures, including socio-political units, tribute systems, exchange networks and agricultural production. For this reason it is necessary to look back to the histories of both hemispheres to understand Iberian America better.

The earliest inhabitants of the Americas migrated from Asia across the Bering Strait between 40,000 and 25,000 BC. Small groups of hunters and food-gatherers extended throughout the continent. Several millennia later, agricultural societies emerged. By the time of the Spanish invasion, numerous complex societies had formed. In Mesoamerica, there were the Olmecs, Maya, Teotihuacans, Zapotecs, and more recently the Mexica (Aztecs). In the Andes, the Tawantinsuyo (Inca) empire was only the most recent of a long line of civilizations including the Horizon, Nazca, Moche and Tiwanaku. In other areas, middle-range societies emerged at different time periods, like the Muisca in the northern Andes (present-day Colombia), the Tupi-speaking groups of eastern Brazil, the Guaraní in South America and the Taino in the Caribbean. At the turn of the fifteenth century, the indigenous population of the area now known as Latin America may have been about 30 to 40 million.[2]

On the other side of the Atlantic, three main historical precedents would significantly determine the course of events that unravelled after Christopher Columbus's 1492 voyage:

the trade with the Orient, the Portuguese colonization of Western Africa and the Atlantic Islands, and the *Reconquista*.

At the dawn of the early modern period, Florence, Venice and Genoa became powerful merchant city-states trading spices, textiles and other goods with the Orient. With the rise of the Ottoman empire, the route to the East, known as the 'silk road', was cut off. Consequently, by the mid-1400s the Mediterranean economy began shifting towards Iberia and the Atlantic.

During the fifteenth century, the Portuguese became a maritime empire, controlling the western coast of Africa, the Azores, Madeira and other islands in the Atlantic, and a trade route to India opened in 1498 by sailing around the southern tip of Africa. Several factors made possible Portugal's rise to a world power. Under the auspices of King Henry the Navigator (1395–1450), the Portuguese incorporated numerous Mediterranean (including northern African) technological and scientific developments related to navigation, such as the caravel (a light, long-range ship), cartographic charts, and instruments such as the astrolabe and the quadrant. Their maritime capabilities allowed them to establish a system of fortified slave and ivory trading-posts (*feitorias*) along the western coast of Africa, without major inland colonization – a system that was implemented later in Brazil.

In the Atlantic, the Portuguese established colonies and sugar mills (*engenhos*) in Madeira, the Azores and the Cape Verde islands. Initially developed in the Mediterranean, the sugar export agriculture was adopted by the Portuguese and turned into a large-scale enterprise with African slave labour. To a

lesser extent, Spain also participated in this developing Atlantic economy with the Canary Islands.

Another historical event that greatly determined the dynamics of the Iberian colonization of the Americas was the *Reconquista*, the Christian war against the Muslims who had controlled the southern part of the Iberian peninsula since 711. The *Reconquista* provided Christian Iberians with military expertise, religious unification, and key juridical precedents for the American conquest.[3] Santiago Apostol, also known as *matamoros* (killer of moors), the patron saint of the *Reconquista*, for example, was often invoked in the military campaigns in the Americas. His image can be found in numerous churches
throughout Latin America. It is also a common icon in Latin America's rich popular culture.

THE PATHS OF CONQUEST

Shortly after defeating Granada in 1492, ending Muslim rule in the peninsula, the Spanish monarchs agreed to finance the voyage of a Genoese sailor experienced in the Portuguese ventures in the Atlantic. A small exploration fleet of three ships and ninety men departed the Spanish port of Palos de Moguer on 3 August 1492. After a short stop in the Canary Islands, the fleet sailed west, reaching the Bahamas on 12 October 1492. In his log book, Christopher Columbus discussed his intention to find a trade route to the Orient. His detailed description of the natural resources of the Caribbean, on the other hand, invoked an enterprise similar to the Portuguese factories on the African coast. To a lesser extent, the preoccupation of converting the natives into Christianity

is also expressed in his log book. Evidently, the project was, from the beginning, ambiguous if not contradictory. The following year (1493), a second voyage to the Indies was organized. It was clearly a fully-fledged colonial enterprise: seventeen ships and 1,200 men, including soldiers, six priests, and, according to Columbus, 'people of all sorts of trades with their instruments to build a city'. They also brought horses, cattle, seeds and plants. However, no women were included, adding other dimensions to the invasion: rape, sexual slavery, and also interracial marriages. Even though later voyages did include European women, race mixture or *mestizaje* occurred frequently and became from early on a defining element of the new colonial society.

The Caribbean was a crucial stepping stone for the Spanish colonization of the continent. It laid down the basic patterns of settlement, defining the new colonial society and the interactions between Spaniards and Amerindians. On a logistical level, La Española, where settlement began in 1492, and Cuba, conquered in 1510, provided ships, soldiers, horses, and all the necessary provisions for several expeditions into the continent. With the depletion of natives and minerals, and the conquest of densely populated areas like central Mexico and the Andes, the Caribbean colonies would lose their initial importance. The Caribbean would regain some importance later in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries with a sugar export economy dependent on African slaves.

In a few years, Spaniards founded towns in the Caribbean and organized placer gold mines, agricultural and livestock farms, and sugar plantations, all based on Amerindian labour. The Arawak or Taino population of the Antilles may have been

well over a million at the turn of the fifteenth century.[4] Enslavement, European diseases, and starvation reduced them to a few thousand in the first decades of Spanish colonization. With the rapid collapse
of the native population, the Spaniards started conducting slave raids in the nearby islands and the Caribbean coasts of Central and South America.

The early stages of the colonization of Brazil were somewhat different from the Spanish experience in the Caribbean. In 1500, on his trip to South Africa, Pedro Alvares Cabral drifted westward and landed somewhere along the Brazilian coast, calling it Vera Cruz. The region, however, soon became known by the name of a local dye tree, *Pau Brasil*. In the first years, the Portuguese showed little interest in Brazil. Their main overseas interests were Africa and India. The initial settlements in Brazil were much like the African factories. But soon the presence of French and Spanish traders prompted the Portuguese crown to take more decisive steps in claiming Brazilian territory. Between 1533 and 1535 the land was divided into fifteen captaincies. The grantees (*donatarios*), mostly members of the middle nobility or second sons of the high nobility, were given ample administrative and fiscal powers over the assigned territories. Following peninsular traditions, the *donatarios* awarded tracts of land (*sesmarias*) to individuals. In Brazil, the *sesmarias'* extension was significantly much larger, creating large landholders.

The donatory system did not result in the investments and settlements that the crown expected. Some *donatarios* even refused to go to Brazil. Only later, with more direct royal involvement and the reorientation of the colonies towards the

sugar export economy, would Brazil become an important Portuguese possession.

In the Spanish colonies, numerous expeditions and settlements inland were made during the course of the sixteenth century. The military expansion of the Spanish empire is a topic that has received considerable attention by traditional historiography. A common image of the colonization of the Americas is the figure of a bearded Spanish *conquistador*. However, the story of the colonization is a complex enterprise that cannot be reduced to a few biographies of certain individuals nor to the military defeat of Amerindians. Great attention has been given to the military power of Europeans and the ritual orientation of Amerindian warfare. The eventual implementation of social structures of dominance and exploitation such as the *encomienda* or the sugar mill complex were less dramatic but nonetheless more significant in the long term.

Spanish expeditions were generally large, costly enterprises. Each needed much planning and organization. First, it had to be approved by the crown. Financial support came from investors and the participants themselves. Even soldiers had to pay for their own fleet and provide their own horses and arms. Internally, the expedition was organized by military rank and social status, although in the Indies social hierarchies were less rigid than in the peninsula. Royal concessions, investment made and rank were determining factors in the distribution of loot and assignment of *encomiendas* and colonial posts such as governor.

Since the crown had to sanction the awards, the *relaciones* or expedition reports tended to emphasize the conquistadors' efforts to 'serve' the crown.

This explains in part the heroic narratives of the period. Cortés's letters to Charles V are an illustrative example. A skilful writer, Cortés accentuated his role in every aspect of the expedition, minimizing the participation of other Spaniards. Nineteenth-century Romantic historiography also contributed to the image of the *conquistador*. Individual action and the hero figure are two themes that attracted Romantic writers and historians. William Prescott's *Conquest of Mexico* (1843) is a good example.

Several determining events in Mesoamerica and the Andes preceded the Spanish military conquest of Mexico and Peru. The Mexica empire had risen to power only a couple of centuries before the Spanish arrival. Through a mixture of alliances and conquests, the Mexica had gained control over most of Mexico's central valleys. It was, however, an unstable network of power. The Mexica also had strong adversaries like the Tlaxcalans. The Spaniards cleverly used the local rivalries to build a coalition army against the capital city of the Mexica empire, Mexico-Tenochtitlán. After an unsuccessful resistance against Cortés's forces, the Tlaxcalans joined the Spanish army. In Peru, Gonzalo Pizzarro and a small group of Spaniards entered Tawantinsuyo (Inca) territory in 1532 at a critical point in the empire's history. A few years before, Inca ruler Huayna Capac had died probably of a European disease that had reached the northern Andes from Panama via trade routes. His two sons, Huascar from Cuzco and Atahualpa from Quito, violently disputed the empire's control. These events considerably favoured the Spanish, who captured Atahualpa by surprise in Cajarmarca. Pizarro executed Atahualpa on charges that he had ordered the death of his half-brother Huascar. Soon after, Manco Inca emerged as the new Andean

leader. He organized a large army and unsuccessfully sought to expel the invaders from the region. After a failed siege of Cuzco, Manco Inca retreated with his troops to Vilcabamba, resisting Spanish rule for several decades.

Throughout the colonial period, Amerindian resistance took numerous forms, including armed rebellion, passive resistance, and native religious movements like the Takiy Onkoy (dancing sickness) in the 1560s in Peru.[5] Despite some rebellions, the Spanish were able to establish relative control of most central areas. However, vast frontier territories remained outside colonial rule both in Spanish America and Brazil.

From the first contacts, European colonialism brought world-wide biological and ecological changes. Numerous plants and animals crossed the Atlantic in both directions: tomatoes, potatoes and maize from America and wheat, grapes, coffee and sugar cane from Europe, Africa and Asia. Diseases too were part of the colonial exchange.[6] N. D. Cook (1998) has traced the fragmentary documentary evidence of the impact of European epidemics in the Indies. Smallpox, influenza, measles, typhus and other European illnesses spread and recurred several times during the colonial period, reducing the Amerindian population to nearly 12 per cent of the estimated 30 to 40 million in 1500 (Cook 2000: 317). Unfortunately, European diseases were an
unexpected but implacable ally in the colonization of the Americas. Indigenous diseases also took their toll, according to recent research. Two major epidemics in New Spain (Mexico) in 1545 and 1576, referred to as ‘cocolitzli’ in Nahuatl, may have been indigenous haemorrhagic fevers (Acuña Soto 2002).

INVENTING AMERICA

'All these islands are extremely fertile … full of rivers … and trees of a thousand different kinds.' Columbus's writings about rich, exotic islands and humble natives were rapidly disseminated throughout Europe. His early 1493 letter to the Catholic monarchs announcing the 'discovery' of the 'New World' was soon translated into Latin (nine editions), Italian (three editions) and German. Like Columbus's letter, many other texts about America circulated amply in Europe. Hernán Cortés's 1520 letter to Charles V described the conquest of a rich and vast empire in central Mexico. Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo's *Historia general y natural de las Indias* (1535–55) carefully detailed American flora, fauna and native cultures drawing from his personal experience in the Indies as well as several first-hand reports. Epic poems such as Alonso de Ercilla y Zúñiga's *La araucana* (1567–89) and Juan de Castellanos's *Elegías de varones ilustres de Indias* (1589) portrayed Amerindians as idealized, heroic warriors. Early Portuguese writings about Brazil also presented the Americas as a fertile, exotic landscape, including Pero vaz Caminhas's 1500 letter, Pero de Magalhaes Gandavo's *Tratado da terra do Brasil* (*c.*1570) and Gabriel Soares de Sousa's *Tratado descritivo do Brasil em 1587* (1587).

Texts by authors who never set foot in the Americas also proliferated. Two examples were Peter Martir's *Décadas del nuevo mundo* (1493–1525) and López de Gómara's *Historia de las Indias y la conquista de México* (1552). The engraver Theodore de Bry also produced numerous, freely composed images of America (Bucher 1981). Stories and rumours of treasures and cities of gold found fertile ground in a public avid for information about American wonders. At the same

time, dreadful tales of cannibalism and savage women emerged. A vivid story of cannibalism is *The True History of his Captivity* (1557), an early account about Brazil by Hans Staden. Cannibalism is also a recurring theme in many chroniclers including André Thévet, Jean Léry and Fray Pedro Simón.

Images and discussions about America proliferated well beyond Iberia. In literature, for example, the New World generated profound reflections on humanity and European civilization in a variety of texts, including Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516), Michel de Montaigne's essay 'On cannibals' (1580), and Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (*c.*1608).

This ample corpus of writing is referred to as colonial discourse by contemporary critics.[7] Presupposing language as the producer of social reality, these texts are considered an integral part of the colonial enterprise, justifying for example the need to civilize Amerindians. This is illustrated by two figures
that appear in many New World chronicles: the cannibal and the Amazon. These figures were read as signs that marked Amerindians as savages. Ritual cannibalism was practised by several indigenous cultures. Europeans interpreted these practices as sheer gluttony: an unrestrained appetite for human flesh. One engraving by Theodore de Bry, for example, portrays indigenous men, women and children feasting on human body parts and licking their fingers. The classic myth of female warriors is another colonial characterization that appears in several colonial representations, from Columbus's first-voyage letter to eighteenth-century narratives like *L'Amerique méridionale* (1745) by the French scientist Charles Marie de la

Condamine. The erotic and dangerous figure of the Amazon expressed little about American realities. In contrast, it revealed a deep European fear of an inverted social order, including colonial subversion.

Europeans produced an ambivalent image of the Americas as an erotic paradise and a dangerous landscape. Amerindians, in turn, were also ambivalently portrayed either as idealized, uncorrupted beings or as savage beasts. Colonialism tested the limits of language itself. Reading these contradictory and ambivalent documents, it appears that colonialism tends to underscore language's unstable and ambivalent nature. Missionaries, for example, had great difficulties explaining the differences between ritual cannibalism and the consumption of the flesh and blood of Christ in Catholic communion.

The cultural colonization of the Americas cannot be reduced to 'negative' or 'positive' portrayals of its peoples and lands. It runs much deeper. European structures of knowledge were systematically imposed, whereas Amerindian forms of knowledge were either marginalized or suppressed in a process that extended well beyond the colonial period. Oviedo's *Historia general y natural*, for example, offered a comprehensive view of the New World based on the ordering scheme of a classical text, Pliny's *Natural History* (first century AD). At the same time, Amerindian pictograms and other non-alphabetic systems of 'writing' were being ignored, marginalized or destroyed. Numerous Maya codices were burnt by missionaries and only four have survived to the present day (Tedlock 1996: 25).

The 'invention of America' is a far-reaching process by which Western paradigms and disciplines become the

hegemonic codes for understanding the history of the hemisphere. This is more than an epistemological quarrel since controlling knowledge is an essential element of colonialism (Mignolo 2000). Colonial discourse, however, did not go unchallenged, as we will see below when we discuss Amerindian and creole intellectual production.

THE COLONIAL COMPLEX

To administer the American colonies, the Spanish created a much more centralized political structure than the Portuguese. Nonetheless, there were
common elements between both colonial powers, especially taking into consideration that during several time periods the two countries were politically united (1383–85, 1474–79, 1497–1500 and 1580–1640) (Oliveira Marques 2000: 35). Nonetheless, even during unification, both colonies were run separately and distinctly. From Spain, the Council of Indies oversaw the American colonies. Two main viceroyalties were created, New Spain (Mexico) and Peru, which controlled smaller administrative units, called *audiencias* (i.e. Santo Domingo, Quito, Santa Fe de Bogotá).[8] *Audiencias'* jurisdictions often included several regions divided into *gobernaciones* and Spanish towns. Although the towns or cities were at the lower level of this hierarchical structure, their impact in the colonization of the Americas was substantial. Spanish towns were strategically located adjacent to native populations, mines, trade routes, rivers or ports, composing an intricate network of colonial exploitation that integrated the hinterlands into the Atlantic economy. Town officials were in charge of land distribution. They could also

relocate Amerindian populations to secure a labour pool near the town or to expropriate their lands.

Rural colonial Latin America was interconnected to the urban centres and the world economy through several institutions, including the *encomienda*, the *hacienda*, sugar mills, mines, and textile mills (*obrajes*). The *encomienda* was central in the colonial complex. Amerindian communities paid tribute in goods to their Spanish *encomendero* (trustee of tribute), who would sell the products in the local market. They would also work in his agricultural fields (*hacienda*), which supplied local cities and nearby mines. The *encomienda* communities had to work in the mines, sending work crews in a rotating system called *mita* in the Andes. As a result, the *encomienda* granted a small group of people great prestige and power.

Mining was one of the most important sectors of colonial economy. Gold was central in the Caribbean phase of the colonization and later in areas like New Granada. Silver, above all, was the main export of colonial Spanish America. The mines of Potosí and Mexico were large-scale operations that attracted a substantial number of people and created ample circuits of trade. The Potosí mines, for example, drew wheat from Cochabamba, hundreds of mules from Tucumán and Córdoba, and other services and goods from as far away as Lima, leaving at least 60 per cent of the silver in the colony (Bauer 1996: 36).

The Church was a key component of the colonial complex. Besides the evangelizing role, the Church established schools, universities, lay brotherhoods, hospitals, and other social service institutions. Its police role, exercising religious conformity through the Inquisition, cannot be ignored, although there tends to be a general misconception of this

institution.[9] The different divisions of the Church were also major players in the colonial economy. They had large *haciendas*, sugar and textile mills, urban properties for rent, and money to lend. The Jesuits in particular were by far the most
successful in these worldly enterprises in Spanish America as well as in Brazil.

Portugal's administration of its American colonies was based on its previous experience in Africa and the Atlantic islands. The factory system and the donatory captaincies established early in the sixteenth century only yielded a handful of loosely connected coastal towns supported mainly by the dyewood trade and some sugar mills. Unsatisfied with this situation, the crown appointed Tomé de Sousa as governor-general of Brazil in 1549. Sousa made Salvador the main administrative centre of the colony. Along with Sousa came the Jesuits, an order that shaped Brazil's colonial society more than any other division of the Catholic Church. After their arrival, the Jesuits enjoyed strong royal support, and they became an important bastion of the colonization, assisting the crown in the incorporation of Amerindian populations into the colonial circuit of production and exchange and also founding schools in the colonial cities. As in Spanish America, their intellectual and cultural contributions were substantial, writing histories, studying Amerindian cultures, and composing grammars and vocabularies of indigenous languages. These activities were accompanied by more mundane ones as in Spanish America. They owned large properties, sugar mills, and hundreds of slaves.

The early stages of colonial Brazil depended mainly on the exploitation of dyewood and a growing export agriculture. The dyewood trade was more easily established in part because, for the Tupi-speaking peoples, tree cutting was a male activity. Agriculture, in contrast, was a female activity. As a result, sugar mills, which required intensive labour, had difficulties inducting native populations except through slavery. The Jesuits opposed the planters' efforts to enslave native populations, so the planters sought a labour force elsewhere. The Portuguese African slave trade provided Brazil with the labour pool necessary to increase the sugar export industry to unprecedented dimensions. By 1600 Brazil produced some 10,000 tons of sugar a year (Lockhart and Schwartz 1991: 249). In the late seventeenth century, the French, Dutch and English set up sugar plantations in the Caribbean, significantly affecting Brazil's profits. The staggering colonial economy was alleviated by the discovery of gold in Minas Gerais early in the eighteenth century. Gold production peaked by mid-century. Its impact, however, was significant. It created new settlements inland and reoriented the colony towards Rio de Janeiro, the closest coastal city. The new mining towns had a heterogeneous population, of which well over half the population were blacks and mulattos.

So far we have discussed the colonial complex mainly in terms of its social structures and institutions. This, however, provides a limited vision of the social dynamics, excluding, for instance, the actions and viewpoints of the individuals and groups that formed colonial society. In the following passages we will explore, even if briefly, the colonial society.

Iberian preoccupation with 'racial' purity (*pureza de sangre*), which also included religious conformity (discriminating against Muslims, Jews and new
Christians), would continue in the Americas. For this reason, colonial society was divided into mainly four groups, 'whites', *castas* (*mestizos, mamelucos*, mulattos, *zambos*), Amerindians and Africans. Their interaction and racial consciousness are a complex story. In *Race Mixture in the History of Latin America*, Magnus Morner shows, for example, that although Amerindians had high legal status, their social status was at the bottom of the scale, except *caciques* and native elites (1967: 60). The Spanish administration tried to maintain separate Amerindian communities from Spanish towns, although in practice their intricate relationship brought them together in many ways. On the whole, even though they were a growing sector of colonial society, mixed-blood people were considered troublemakers, immoral and inferior. They were generally barred from public offices, religious orders, guilds, and other associations. Another important sector of the colonial population was the Africans. Throughout the colonial period about 1.5 million African slaves were imported to Spanish America and 2.5 million to Brazil, most of them during the eighteenth century (Burkholder and Johnson 1990: 119). (For more on race, see Chapter 10.)

For Iberian society urban life was synonymous with civilization. The apex of colonial society – bureaucrats, miners, *encomenderos*, planters or merchants – would establish their residences in the cities. The layout of the colonial city reflected the social hierarchy. Around the main square were usually the church, the municipal and administrative buildings, and the houses of the elite. Further

out lived mid-income Spaniards, including local merchants, small farmers, and artisans. Amerindians, free blacks and mulattos lived in the outskirts of the city. Education was provided by the Church, which founded schools in most cities and twenty-five universities. In Brazil, the Jesuits founded schools in several places including Rio, Bahia, Olinda, Recife, São Paulo and São Luiz. The Portuguese, however, did not allow the founding of a university in Brazil, despite several petitions from New World residents.

A prominent feature of Spanish American cities was their convents. These were large enclosures where women would retreat in search of physical protection and spiritual development. One of the largest convents was La Concepción in Lima. It had 1,041 inhabitants, but only 318 were nuns, novices or lay sisters. Most convents, however, housed about 50–100 nuns (Lavrin 1986). Convents reflected their social milieu, and only white women with a dowry or other form of patronage to cover living expenses could enter the convent. Although subordinated to the ecclesiastical hierarchy, these convents were spaces where women enjoyed a certain degree of autonomy within the colonial patriarchal society. From the convents, women produced a great corpus of writing as well as considerable artistic creation. Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz from Mexico and Francisca Josefa del Castillo from New Granada (present-day Colombia) are two well-known writers, but they are not alone, as recent scholarship and editions have shown (Myers 2000; Arenal and Schlau 1989). In Brazil, no female convents were founded until 1677.

In the cities there were also large groups of artisans, silkweavers, blacksmiths, sculptors, masons, carpenters, gold and silver smiths, and others amounting altogether to about

20–40 per cent of the urban population (Socolow 1986). Through guilds and lay brotherhoods an intricate, multi-layered social fabric developed. Their prestige and organization were evident in processions, festivals and other public events. Indians were permitted in several guilds, but not *mestizos* (Socolow 1986: 237). Blacks were for the most part excluded from the guilds. Many slaves and free blacks did work under white artisans, although without ever achieving the same status as other craftsmen. Blacks and mulattos, nonetheless, formed important social groups such as the Nossa Senhora do Rosario dos Pretos and Misericordia, two of the largest black brotherhoods in Brazil.

Not far from the cities were the Amerindian towns. Natives were often resettled to European-style towns to facilitate evangelization and to teach Amerindians to live 'properly' (*en policía*). Despite royal ordinances barring non-natives from Amerindian towns, poor Spaniards, *mestizos* and *mulatos* settled there. The further away from Spanish towns, the greater was the autonomy of Amerindian towns. Some were run by the native elite throughout the colonial period. A parish was established or a rotating priest would visit a few times each year. They still had to pay tribute to their *encomendero* or *corregidor* (Amerindian tax collector). They also had to work for a period of time at the mines, *hacienda* or nearby town. These remote communities were thus integrated into the colonial system, but many aspects of their lives continued according to native customs, including the widespread use of indigenous languages. In Brazil, the areas oriented towards the export economy were more European, including Minas Gerais, despite its large slave population. In the interior and the Amazon basin, where there were less Europeans and slaves, contacts with Amerindians were more

constant and *mamelucos* were more accepted. In São Paulo and other areas of the interior colonists adopted many Amerindian crafts, foods, materials and customs. Tupi was also widely spoken in these places (Schwartz 1987: 30).

DEBATING THE CONQUEST

Was the colonization of the Americas just? Could the Spaniards wage war against Amerindians? What rights were Amerindians entitled to? Although the colonization of the 'New World' was built on previous Iberian experiences with non-Christians at home and abroad, the American experience forced Europeans to pose such questions in modern terms. From the Iberian colonial experience emerged the legal tenets that defined humanity in universal terms and the juridical framework that conceived the world as a community of separate nations. This fact allows critics like Walter Mignolo and Enrique Dussel to argue that modernity was not simply handed down from Europe to
America, but rather produced in America or, at least, co-produced by it. This point of view provides a less Eurocentric perspective of world history. Let us look closer at that debate.

The colonial enterprise created a growing, intricate legal corpus which built on previous Iberian experiences. In moral terms, the monarchs of both Spain and Portugal were responsible for the well-being of the indigenous populations. This was expressly stated by the papal sanction of the Treaty of Tordesilles (1494) which divided the Atlantic between Spain and Portugal. Also in 1537, Pope Paul III issued the bull *Sublimis Deus*, which stated that 'the Indians are truly

men … capable of understanding the Catholic faith… [They] are by no means to be deprived of their liberty or possession of their property, even though they be outside of the faith of Jesus Christ' (cited in Hanke 1979: 39). In this context, monarchs were compelled to give attention to Amerindian matters.

The rapid demographic collapse of the native Caribbean population, and the oppressive work in the mines and plantations, soon generated sharp criticism in the Indies and in the peninsula. Dominican missionaries, in particular, opposed the unjust social order that was unravelling. Other orders, like the Franciscans and the Jesuits, sought to protect Amerindian communities and compensate for the souls 'lost' in Europe with the emergence of Protestantism.[10]

One strong critic of the Spanish colonization and the *encomienda* system was the Dominican priest Fray Bartolomé de las Casas (1474–1566), a former *encomendero* himself. Among his writings are the *Historia de Indias* (*c.*1540), a general history of the early stages of the colonization, *De unico vocationis modo* (1537), a treaty rejecting military colonization and advocating a peaceful incorporation of Amerindians, the *Apologética historia sumaria* (1550), a defence of the rationality of Amerindians based on Aristotelian thought, and the *Brevíssima relación de la destrucción de las Indias* (1555), a vivid and somewhat inflated description of the atrocities committed by the Spaniards. Las Casas's efforts were influential in the drafting of the New Laws (1542), which regulated new conquests, outlawed slave raids, and limited the *encomienda* to only two lives, the grantee and his or her heir. These laws were widely opposed in the Indies, especially in Peru, where the

encomenderos violently refused to accept them. Despite regulations, some families were able to hold *encomiendas* for over a century.

One strong opponent of Las Casas was Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, a Spanish theologian, whose treatise *Democrates segundo* (*c.*1547) justified the war against Amerindians. Based on Aristotelian thought, Sepúlveda saw four reasons that justified war against Amerindians: (1) natural inferiority; (2) acts against 'nature' (cannibalism, sodomy); (3) protection of the innocent; and (4) holy war. Las Casas's texts had many ripple effects. On the one hand, his sharp criticism of *encomenderos* and local officials allowed the crown to exert greater control over the Indies. On the other hand, his text helped Spanish
enemies. The *Brevíssima*, which portrayed Amerindians as innocent and defenceless sheep being devoured and massacred by power-hungry *encomenderos*, soon started circulating in several European countries with vivid illustrations by Theodore de Bry. Protestants found in the *Brevíssima* a good arsenal to defame their Catholic enemies, creating what has been called the 'Black Legend'.

Another noteworthy participant in the debate on the legitimacy of the colonization of the Americas was Fray Francisco de Victoria, a Dominican priest and chair of theology in Salamanca, the most prestigious Spanish university at the time. Victoria, who was consulted on several occasions by Charles V, wrote two lectures on the topic, *De indis* and *De jure belli*. In the first lecture he defended the rights and autonomy of Amerindians and questioned the Pope's jurisdiction over them, a cornerstone of Spanish conquest legislation. If Amerindians do not obey the

Spaniards, there is no just case of war against them. The second lecture addressed the legality of war, seen only as a valid recourse in self-defence and to remedy a considerable injustice. Extension of the empire was not a just cause of war. In both cases Victoria's recourse to natural law, *jus gentium*, set important precedents for the modern, universal conception of humanity and international order (Brown Scott 1934). In Brazil, Jesuit writers also addressed these issues. Manuel da Nobrega (1517–74) wrote the *Diálogo sobra a conversão do gentio* arround 1556. In this work, Nobrega saw Amerindians as equal to Jews, Greeks, Romans and Portuguese (Haberly 1996: 54).

AMERINDIAN VISIONS

Amerindian thought and intellectual practices were a specific target of colonial officials and missionaries. For policing and evangelizing purposes, Amerindian languages and cultures were persistently studied by missionaries. At the same time, in an effort to 'civilize' Amerindian societies, natives were introduced to Western forms of expression, writing, art, music and drama. As a result, the colonial context brought together native and European cultural practices, yielding a broad range of results including syncretism, hybridism and juxtaposition.[11]

Europeans saw Amerindians' lack of alphabetic writing as a clear sign of cultural inferiority. Amerindians had in fact other forms or writing and transmitting knowledge: pictographic texts and other symbolic systems like the Andean *quipus* as well as a dynamic oral culture (Lienhard 1991). Colonial native intellectuals learned alphabetic writing

and combined it with local forms of expression. As a result we have numerous texts in native languages written in alphabetic forms and others with drawings that combine Western perspective with native painting styles (Gruzinski 1992). For a long time Hispanic literary studies neglected this plurilingual and multiform
cultural repertoire, focusing more on European-style literature.[12] Recent attention to native forms of expression has pointed out the limits of traditional literary analysis, and the challenges of cultural and linguistic competence to begin understanding the rich archive of post-conquest intellectual production (Boone and Mignolo 1994). As a result, recent approaches to these texts tend to be quite interdisciplinary, drawing on semiotics, anthropology and ethnohistory.

Three important post-conquest native intellectual 'traditions' are the Maya, Nahuatl and Andean. The Maya book *Popol Vuh* is an illustrative example of the problematics we have just discussed. The ancient (*c.*AD 250–750) pictographic book was lost. Around 1550, however, it was transcribed into alphabetic writing by three indigenous nobles from the town of Quiché, in the Guatemala highlands. Written in Quiché-Maya, the *Popol Vuh* (Council Book) tells the story of the Maya from creation to the arrival of the Spaniards in the sixteenth century. On the first page, the Maya writers express their desire to tell their own history, and they state that they have to hide their identity. Why? They now live under Christianity. Other Maya texts are the books called *Chilam Balaam* (Secrets of the Soothsayers) found in the Yucatec towns of Chumayel, Tizimín and Maní. In the *Chilam Balaam* of Chumayel the Spaniards are condemned for destroying everything in their path. *Rabinal Achí*, a Maya drama that

circulated orally, was transcribed by the French ethnologist Charles Brasseur in the nineteenth century.

The Nahuatl cultures of central Mexico produced an ample corpus of works during the colonial period, including codices, murals, histories and poems. A significant body of works developed under the auspices of the Franciscan order, which founded a school for the local elite in Tlatelolco, producing intellectual works in Nahuatl, Spanish and Latin. The *Florentine Codex* (1579), for example, is a comprehensive encyclopedia of Mexica (Aztec) history and culture composed of pictograms and Nahuatl text in alphabetic form, continuing the *tlacuilos* practice, which combined painting and writing. Among the works of Tlatelolco alumni are the *Crónica mexicana* (1598) and the Nahuatl text *Crónica mexicayotl* (1609) by Hernando Alvarado Tezozomoc (*c.*1600), grandson of Emperor Moctezuma II; the *Relación de Texcoco* written in the last decades of the sixteenth century by Juan Bautista del Pomar, a *mestizo* descendant from Texcoco rulers; and the *Historia chichimeca* by Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxóchitl (*c.*1578–1648). In addition, there is a rich collection of pre-Hispanic Nahuatl texts known as *cuicatl* – songs, hymns and poems – gathered as the *Cantares mexicanos*, including the works by Netzahualcóyotl, Axayácatl, Moctezuma, Izcoátl and others (Garibay 1954; Bierhorst 1985).

In the Andes native intellectuals also produced a variety of texts in Quechua and Spanish paralleled by a strong oral culture. An Inca vision of the conquest can be found in the *Ynstrucción del Ynga don Diego de Castro Titu Cussi Yupanqui* (1570). Joan de Santacruz Pachacuti Yamqui Salcamaygua, a *curaca*

or native lord of Collahuas in the Peruvian highlands, wrote *Relación de antiguedades deste reyno del Piru* (c.1600). Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala's *El primer nueva corónica y buen gobierno* (1615) is a richly illustrated chronicle of Andean culture and a strong critique of Spanish abuses. Born and raised in Cuzco from an Inca *colla* (princess) and a Spanish *conquistador*, El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega wrote *Comentarios reales de los Incas* (1609, 1617), a history of the Tawantinsuyo empire that stressed the achievements of Quechua culture in arts, philosophy, architecture and government. An important Quechua manuscript from the Huarochirí province in Peru written in the seventeenth century traces the genealogy of Andean deities. There is also a rich tradition of Quechua plays, including two dramas from the eighteenth century, *Ollantay* and the *Tragedia del fin de Atahualpa*.[13]

Spanish chroniclers including missionaries left a considerable record of Andean cultures and languages. Among these works are the *Descripción del Perú* (1553) by Pedro de la Gazca, *Historia natural y moral de las Indias* (1590) by the Jesuit priest José de Acosta, and *La extirpación de la idolatría en el Pirú* (1621) by Pablo Joseph de Arriaga, also a Jesuit. Several Andean grammar books were composed, including the *Grammatica o Arte de la lengua general de los indios de los Reynos* (1560) by Fray Domingo de Santo Tomás. Although we have focused on Quechua texts, there are Aymara, Chibcha and other important cultural productions in the Andean region. Additionally, there is a vast corpus of texts or *memoriales* produced by Amerindian individuals and communities in Spanish for legal, religious and other purposes which needs to be taken into consideration as an integral part of the documentation expressing the native

experience of colonialism. Their competence in and use of the legal and other colonial discourses do not preclude their native perspective.

CRIOLLOS, THE ENLIGHTENMENT, AND EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY REFORMS

Early in the sixteenth century, European writers living in the Americas expressed a strong admiration for the land, the cities the *conquistadors* and their descendants had founded, and their 'heroic' deeds in the military campaigns. Far from the metropolis, colonial societies soon developed a regional sense of a shared history, a vernacular language, and local customs. Here we will discuss the consciousness developed by the white elite (*criollos*), expressing a proto-national identity, key in the nineteenth-century independence movements and national projects, although very problematic in terms of its selective process of appropriation and suppression of metropolitan, indigenous and African cultural elements.[14] It is perhaps the suppression of these other visions that has made the early histories of the Latin American nations so conflictive.

From the beginning, Europeans expressed that American realities needed a new language. For Fernández de Oviedo, no European fruit could be compared to the pineapple. Indigenous words filled daily experience, while a distant metropolitan speech changed at a different pace, leaving the Americas with a language new and archaic at the same time. Ironically, Amerindian cultures, subjugated and violently

exploited, would be at the same time idealized and exalted by white intellectuals. For example, Alonso de Ercilla y Zúñiga's epic poem *La araucana* (1569–89) describes with great pride the heroic plight of the Mapuches in Chile. In the seventeenth century, in his *Teatro de virtudes políticas*, Carlos Sigüenza y Góngora (1645–1700) portrayed pre-Hispanic Mexica leaders as exemplary rulers for the incoming viceroy. His sympathy for the ancient rulers, however, did not extend to the contemporary natives, as can be seen in his 'Alboroto y motín de los indios en México', a description of the urban riot of 1692 in Mexico City.

Spanish society invested enormous wealth and energy in the new-founded cities, seeking to emulate the metropolis: cathedrals, convents, palaces, schools, universities and mansions. Artistic and literary creations were also part of this symbolic economy that validated creole society (Mazzotti 2000). Colonial cities were praised in Bernardo de Balbuena's poem *Grandeza Mexicana* (1604) and in numerous paintings including Gregorio Vázquez de Arce y Ceballos's depiction of Santa Fe de Bogotá (*c.*1680) or Cristóbal de Villalpando's panoramic description of Mexico City in the eighteenth century. Iconography and narratives related to local saints and patrons, such as Santa Rosa de Lima, the Virgin of Guadalupe in Mexico, or the Virgin of Copacabana in the Andes, can also be seen in the context of the symbolic inscription of the colonies in the early modern Catholic world order. This self-fashioning of creole society, however, cannot be seen isolated from the constant interpellations by imperial policies, such as religious conformity enforced through the Inquisition, legislative acts, fiscal and economic regulations, and the like.

During the second half of the eighteenth century, a series of reforms instituted by the new Bourbon dynasty in Spain and by the Prime Minister Marquis of Pombal in Portugal would have a long-lasting impact on both colonies, although in slightly different ways. The Bourbon and Pombaline programmes sought to make the colonies more efficient and productive. For this purpose a series of fiscal, economic and political reforms were designed and implemented. Among the measures taken was the expulsion of the Jesuits from Brazil (1759) and Spanish America (1767) whose power and independence rivalled regalist policies. From the creoles' point of view, one significant difference between these reforms was that whereas the Spanish crown gave preference to European-born Spaniards in newly established offices and city councils, the Portuguese did not exclude creoles in their new measures. The Spanish measures were greatly resented by creole intellectuals. In contrast, the unity of the Portuguese metropolis and colony was strengthened.

The administrative reorientation of the colonies was a product of the new social and political thoughts of the Enlightenment. The Spanish crown's support of Alexander von Humboldt's scientific expedition illustrates the modernizing, albeit colonial, spirit of the reforms (Pratt 1992). The ideas of the French philosophers, however, were adopted and put to use in many other ways by creole intellectuals (Higgins 2000). Scientific and literary groups formed in both Spanish America and Brazil (Soto Arango *et al.* 1995). The creole intellectuals discussed literature, botany, history and politics. In Spanish America, they produced numerous periodical publications, and they brought news from the American and French Revolutions. In Brazil similar groups also emerged in Rio, Bahia and Minas Gerais (Carvalho 1984). Although an

intellectual group from Minas Gerais was charged for conspiring against the government in 1789, these groups' contributions to either the independence or modernization of Brazil were not as significant as in Spanish America. Instead it was the short exile of João VI of Portugal in Brazil (1808–21) which brought dramatic changes including the founding of schools, libraries and the first printing press (Haberly 1996: 66).

Although many enlightened ideas were appropriated by creole intellectuals to articulate an anti-colonial discourse, they also resented and disputed many prejudiced claims by European writers and scientists. Reynal, La Condamine, Buffon, de Pauw, Hegel and others wrote about the Americas as an inferior or degenerate land where fruits, animals and people lacked the vigour of the Old World. Exiled in Bologna, Jesuit Fray Francisco Clavijero, among other creoles, responded to these outrageous claims. His *Storia antica del Messico* (1770) strongly disputed the European allegations (Gerbi 1973). Unlike his creole antecedents, Clavijero's writing about the classical Mexican past did not discriminate against contemporary indigenous peoples (Pagden 1987: 76).

Altogether, colonial Latin American intellectual activity generated a considerable and varied collection of works: histories, literary and artistic works, philosophical and scientific treatises. This large creation, however varied, came mainly from the literate, dominant society, an elite from or strongly tied to the colonial civil and religious bureaucracy. Colonial society was, in a sense, a city ruled by the men of letters, as Uruguayan critic Angel Rama suggested in his seminal work *La ciudad letrada* (1984). This close relation to the bureaucratic apparatus produced a corpus of writing

greatly influenced by legal discourses and rhetoric (González Echeverría 1990). Notwithstanding the historical contexts and institutions that circumscribed intellectual production in colonial Ibero-America, many works were highly critical of colonial society. It was most often expressed in veiled forms, since the political climate of Counter-Reformation Spain was hardly tolerant of open criticism. Censure was a reality (Friede 1959), and the Church kept an index of forbidden books. Open criticism could be dangerous, as in the case of Father Antônio Vieira (1608–97), an outspoken Jesuit who was pursued by the Inquisition. In Mexico, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz was reprimanded for writing
about theology, a domain restricted to men. Despite censorship, books circulated clandestinely, as Irving Leonard has documented in *Books of the Brave* (1949). Censure could also be bypassed by clever language games and ambivalences. Through satire authors like the poet Juan de Valle y Caviedes were able to denounce the hypocrisy of colonial society. There was also recourse to popular and accepted genres to camouflage forbidden matters. Juan Rodriguez Freile's seventeenth-century chronicle *El carnero* intertwines stories of witchcraft, adultery and debauchery with a historical narrative of the conquest and colonization of New Granada. A fictive indigenous narrator allows Alonso Carrió de la Bandera's *Lazarillo de ciegos caminantes* (1775) to express openly and humorously his opinions of colonial society as he travels from Montevideo to Lima.

On the whole, from the colonial context emerged an intellectual production that cannot be well understood using the conceptual frameworks of European literature (i.e. Renaissance, Baroque). There are resemblances, but they cannot be reduced to copies. Through satire, irony, parody

and other means, creole intellectuals appropriated and transformed metropolitan aesthetic forms, creating what has been described as an American Baroque (Moraña 1994). It is nonetheless a cultural tradition that cannot break away completely from metropolitan aesthetics, since colonialism runs through it. There is, however, always room for contestation. In this sense, Cuban critic Roberto Fernández Retamar argues that Latin American intellectual production is like Caliban, Shakespeare's enslaved character in *The Tempest*. Caliban uses against his master the language he was forced to learn. By this virtue, Iberian tongues, languages of colonialism, became creole, Amerindian, African and *mestizos*.

NOTES

1 However, Cuba and Puerto Rico were to remain under Iberian control until 1898. In a sense, the end of Iberian rule did not eliminate colonialism, given the internal colonization campaigns after independence and the neo-colonial relations that emerged from industrial capitalism. Although not discussed in this chapter, the French, Dutch and English also took part in the colonization of the Americas in places such as Haiti, Dominique, Surinam, Guyana, Belize and other areas. I thank Bryan McCann for his useful comments with regard to this chapter.

2 Pre-Hispanic population estimates are still being debated. Estimates have ranged from 12 to 57 million inhabitants, although the lower figure is presently considered too low. See Lockhart and Schwartz (1991), Bethell (1984), and Burkholder and Johnson (1990).

3 The legal justification for the colonization was based, in part, in the legislation for Muslim communities (*aljamas*) under Spanish rule (Seed 1995: 85).

4 Estimates vary because of scant and contradictory documentation (Cook 1998: 23).

5 In the eighteenth century, for example, two major indigenous revolts took place. In 1712 in Chiapas, organized around a native cult to the Virgin, twenty-one Maya towns took control of the highland region for several months and sought to re-establish the region's autonomy. At the end of the century, another rebellion took place around Cuzco, Peru. Protesting against Spanish abuses and seeking to restore the Inca empire, the rebels gained control of a vast region in the highland Andes of Peru and Bolivia. The rebel leader, José Gabriel Condorcanqui, changed his name to Tupac Amaru, invoking the sixteenth-century Inca ruler executed by the Spaniards in 1572. Two other examples are the Comunero (1780) revolt in New Granada and the rebellion in Haiti (1791).

6 See Cosby (1972).

7 For a discussion of European visions of the Americas, see Todorov (1984), Hulme (1986), Greenblatt (1993) and Rabasa (1993).

8 In the eighteenth century two new viceroyalties were created: New Granada and Rio de la Plata.

9 Without doubt, the number of people burned and tortured by the Inquisition was exaggerated as part of the 'Black Legend' propagated by Spain's rival nations. Still, the Inquisition itself helped towards this image. Terror was a policing tactic,

instilling fear as a deterrent. See Splendiani *et al.* (1997) and Kamen (1998).

10 See Baudot (1995) for the Franciscan project in the Americas.

11 Cultural mixture is a much-debated topic in Latin American studies. See for instance García Canclini (1989) and Gruzinski (2000).

12 For a recent discussion of the omissions of Hispanic literary studies see Bolaños and Verdesio (2002).

13 García Bedoya (2000) provides a comprehensive survey of Andean colonial texts.

14 We use the word *criollo* to designate the 'whites' born in the Americas. This word, however, was only used in this sense towards the end of the colonial period in Spanish America.

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