Colonial Latin America

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CONTENTS

MAPS ix
PREFACE x

Chapter 1 **America, Iberia, and Africa Before the Conquest** 01
Amerindian Civilizations on the Eve of European Conquest 01
The Iberian World in the Late Fifteenth Century 23
Atlantic Africa in the Fifteenth Century 32
First Encounters in the New World 40

Chapter 2 **The Age of Conquest** 50
The Conquest of Mexico 50
The Conquest of Peru 58
The Ebb Tide of Conquest 67
Black Participation in the Age of Conquest 76
Conundrums and the Columbian Exchange 78

Chapter 3 **Ruling New World Empires** 91
Imperial Organization and Administration 91
The Colonial Church 104

Chapter 4 **Population and Labor** 119
Changes in the Colonial Population 119
Indian Labor 130
Slavery and the Slave Trade 139

CHAPTER 10

The Era of Caroline Reforms

CHRONOLOGY

1763	Havana returned to Spain by Peace of Paris; viceregal capital of Brazil moved from Salvador, Bahia, to Rio de Janeiro
1764–90	Introduction of intendant system throughout Spanish colonies except for New Granada
1765–71	General *visita* of New Spain by José de Gálvez
1765–89	Initiation and expansion of "free trade within the empire"
1767	Expulsion of the Jesuits from Spanish America
1776	Creation of Viceroyalty of Río de la Plata; visitors-general sent to Peru and New Granada
1776–87	José de Gálvez secretary of state for the Indies
1777	Treaty of San Ildefonso settles (until 1801) Luso-Spanish boundary conflict; Caracas made capital of captaincy-general of Venezuela
1780–83	Tupac Amaru II rebellion in Peru and Upper Peru
1781	*Comunero* revolt in New Granada
1790	Elimination of separate secretaries of state for American affairs; suppression of House of Trade
1790s	Economic societies established in many cities of the Indies

The Bourbon Reforms introduced by Philip V and Ferdinand VI were piecemeal efforts rather than parts of a coherent, overarching plan. In contrast, the group of Bourbon Reforms promulgated during the reign of Charles III and continued under his successor Charles IV (and hence known as the Caroline Reforms) were both more comprehensive and more vigorously implemented. The stimulus for this call to action? National disgrace.

The British capture of Havana in 1762 humiliated Charles III and his advisers. Its implications—future military defeats and the loss of additional colonies—drove them to institute more ambitious and costly administrative and commercial changes than the reforms initiated during the reigns of the first Bourbon kings, Philip V and Ferdinand VI. Obviously the preservation of the empire required a stronger military, but military preparedness was expensive. To obtain the necessary revenue, Charles introduced reforms that would integrate the colonies more

effectively with Spain in a more uniform administrative system. These efforts included improved tax collection and new royal monopolies; steps to raise the colonies' production of exportable primary goods and the importation of Spanish goods; and changes to tighten control over colonial administration. As was true in Portugal under Pombal, a greater centralization of authority and regalism characterized the Caroline Reforms.

The Peace of Paris in 1763 ended the military hostilities between Spain and Britain in the Seven Years' War. Although Havana and Manila returned to Spanish rule after a brief British occupation, and France ceded Louisiana to Spain, the loss of Florida underlined the empire's continued vulnerability. As a result, Charles and his ministers initiated a period of colonial reforms by negotiating with the Cuban elite. Despite the success of this process, the Crown employed more high-handed tactics in subsequent reforms elsewhere in the Indies that produced rancor and revolt rather than accommodation. In Brazil as well as in the Spanish colonies, expanded and more intrusive administration combined with new taxes in a combustible mix. As a result, the late eighteenth century witnessed a series of violent uprisings and political conspiracies.

In 1765 the Crown moved to increase revenues in New Spain that subsidized the defense of Cuba, the Philippines, and Louisiana, by dispatching a visitor-general, José de Gálvez, to the empire's richest and most populous colony. When later named secretary of state for the Indies in 1776, Gálvez also sought greater fiscal benefits from South America. The reform effort succeeded in expanding revenue and improving defense. However, the pace of demographic growth during the half-century before the wars of independence was probably more important in determining the contours of daily life.

NEW SPAIN AND PERU

Military Threats and Military Reforms

Faced with the threat of renewed British attacks, the Spanish Crown expanded significantly the number of regular army units in the Indies. Despite differences in the timing and nature of the reform in each viceroyalty, in both New Spain and Peru the number of authorized regular forces more than tripled between 1760 and 1800, reaching 6,150 in New Spain, excluding the frontier outposts in the north, and about 2,000 in Peru. Colonial militias were also expanded substantially after 1760, but these troops were seldom adequately armed or trained. In 1800 militiamen numbered almost 24,000 in New Spain and around 18,000 in Peru.

The creation of standing armies in the colonies brought unprecedented numbers of peninsular officers and soldiers to the New World. Their predominance in the highest ranks aggravated the discrimination that creoles already felt in the civil and ecclesiastical hierarchies. Nonetheless, creole representation was heavy in the militia, as a result of purchased commissions. Suspicions about creole loyalty,

however, led the Crown routinely to assign each militia unit a regular army officer from the peninsula to supervise training.

To induce enlistment, the Crown extended a number of benefits, including the military *fuero*, the judicial right for officers, soldiers, and their dependents to be heard by a military rather than a civil court in a variety of civil and criminal cases. These perquisites, however, lured too few volunteers into colonial armies that featured low pay, harsh discipline, and poor prospects for advancement. Consequently, recruiting teams scoured taverns, gambling dens, and jails. The alcoholics, gamblers, and vagabonds they enlisted joined convicted criminals sentenced to serve their terms in the army. Army recruits in New Spain and other colonies often received defective weapons and were sometimes charged for repairs. Provincial militia units received scarcely usable weapons. Because they often were not paid, some soldiers pawned or sold their weapons, uniforms, and shoes in order to survive, drink, and gamble or, sometimes, to aid their desertion. Not surprisingly, contemporaries frequently considered soldiers more as scourges than defenders of the land, and the army, despite reform, failed to become an honored and prestigious institution in the colonies.

While the army and militia were underfunded, the defense of New Spain and Peru was still expensive. In late eighteenth-century New Spain, often over 60 percent of the central treasury's expenditures went for defense. Although the total outlay was large throughout the period, it more than doubled between the early 1760s and the early 1780s. In Peru, indigenous rebellions raised military costs even higher.

Armed resistance to Spanish rule increased in the eighteenth century among exploited indigneous Andeans. Five uprisings occurred in the 1740s, eleven in the 1750s, twenty in the 1760s, and twenty in the 1770s. In 1778 a mass phase of indigenous resistance began in Chayanta in Upper Peru when Tomás Katari's protests to Spanish courts and to the viceroy in Buenos Aires failed to end abuses of Aymara villages. The murder of Tomás Katari by Spaniards provoked new confrontations. The *kuraka* José Gabriel Condorcanqui, also known as Tupac Amaru II, led a much larger uprising of Quechua groups supported by some creole and *casta* allies near Cuzco. This protest against a harsh existence sought the redress of long-standing abuses and the implementation of specific reforms. Tupac Amaru wanted the *repartimiento* of goods ended, the *corregidores* removed, better working conditions instituted in the mines and *obrajes*, the *mita* terminated, and an *audiencia* created in Cuzco. The rebels executed a hated *corregidor* in November 1780 and gathered supporters, particularly near Cuzco. An army sent from Lima soon was victorious, and in May 1781 the captured leader, his wife, and many family members and allies were executed.

The death of Tupac Amaru did not end the rebellion, but the focus of armed struggle moved back to Upper Peru, where it was led by Tupac Katari and surviving kinsmen of Tupac Amaru. Julián Apasa took the name Tupac Katari to indicate the continuation of the struggles led earlier by Tomás Katari and Tupac Amaru. His massive army twice besieged La Paz before his defeat, capture, and brutal execution in late 1781. Before peace was restored after 1783, the rebellions had cost 100,000 lives, making them the most violent and costly uprisings since the period of Manco Inka in the sixteenth century. Even though these protests failed militarily, they forced the termination of the abusive forced sale of goods to native communities and led to the establishment of the Audiencia of Cuzco.

The Expansion of Bureaucracy

The need for greater revenues to support defensive expenditures in the New World and to provide resources for its policies at home prompted the Crown to tighten its control over administrators, to assume direct responsibility over previously contracted activities, and to increase the number of crown monopolies. Although the origins of bureaucratic expansion predated the fall of Havana, the most dramatic efforts to reassert and increase royal control came afterward. In both New Spain and Peru, the number of bureaucrats increased, and the cost of administration grew.

The Crown's loss of administrative power relative to that of the local elites had been apparent by 1750. By selling appointments and positions, the Crown had created the kind of corrupt, inefficient bureaucracy it deplored. Lacking the funds to buy out the purchasers, often young native sons, the Crown embarked on a policy of attrition accompanied by a conscious policy of favoring peninsulars to fill vacancies as they appeared. Continuing this policy when staffing the most important new offices in the colonies, the Crown further diluted, although never eliminated, local influence in government. In Lima, thirteen of eighteen audiencia ministers in 1750 had been born in the colony, but by 1780 only five native sons remained. Later appointments clearly revealed the heightened and continued discrimination against native sons.

Complementing its conscious efforts to reduce local representation in established administrative institutions, the Crown also sought to expand its authority through directly administering previously farmed or alienated activities. Doing so increased the number of bureaucrats. Overall, the number of government employees in Lima nearly doubled between the mid-1770s and 1790. In New Spain the number of well-paid posts probably quadrupled as a result of these reforms.

The best-known administrative innovation was the establishment of the intendant system, a direct response to the abuses of the *corregidores* and *alcaldes mayores*. As José de Gálvez, the most vigorous supporter of the system's introduction, noted on concluding his *visita* in New Spain, it would be

> more satisfactory and practicable for the chief executive of this kingdom to have under his immediate orders twelve *intendentes*, carefully chosen, whose character is above reproach, than to have to suffer and contend with two hundred wretches who, with their empty title of judges, have come to constitute an independent

judicial sphere, wherein, driven by their own greed, they work out their own fortunes at the expense of the royal treasury and the ruin of the people.[1]

Adopted from French and Spanish precedents, the intendants represented a new layer of colonial administration linking district administrators to central authorities. The seven intendants named for Peru in 1784 were directly in charge of 58 subdelegates who replaced the previous *corregidores*. In New Spain, the twelve intendants named in 1786 oversaw roughly 150 district administrators. By creating larger administrative units under officials with substantially greater authority than the previous *corregidores* and *alcaldes mayores* had, the Crown sought to make its power as effective in the countryside as in the cities and towns.

Intendants were responsible for public administration, finance, administration of justice, and military preparedness within their provinces. The improvement of the local governments, promotion of economic growth, encouragement of public works, and especially oversight of the collection of revenue were among their specific obligations. In contrast with the previous district administrators, intendants also exercised royal patronage over the ecclesiastical institutions within their provinces.

These powerful, prestigious, and well-paid new positions went almost exclusively to peninsulars. Many were professional soldiers, but some were lawyers and treasury officials. They secured their appointments by merit, not purchase, and—far more frequently than the *corregidores* whose authority they subsumed—intendants placed the royal interest above personal gain.

Despite Gálvez's great hopes, the intendant system did not yield the anticipated benefits. Although income rose substantially in Peru immediately after the system was introduced, it then fell. In New Spain, crown revenues rose during the 1770s, before the introduction of the intendants and then remained flat once they were in place. The intendant system also failed to provide good administration and justice in the countryside because it was flawed at the district level. The subdelegates who replaced the *corregidores* and *alcaldes mayores* were at first prohibited from using the *repartimiento* of merchandise; their legal compensation was limited to a small percentage of the tribute they collected. Protests against the prohibition of the merchandise *repartimiento* followed immediately in New Spain. When it became clear within a decade that stringent enforcement was impossible, many subdelegates, particularly those in parts of southern and southeastern Mexico and in the highlands of Peru, returned to the old system of profiting from the sale of goods on credit and advances of raw materials and even cash to native communities.

The intendant system fared better in the provincial capitals than in the countryside. Typically, the intendant sought to revitalize a city council by enlarging its membership, often by recruiting prominent, long-resident peninsulars of the city, raising its revenues, and making a variety of improvements in public services. Improved roads and bridges, street lights, and better sanitation and water supplies

Imperial reformers were concerned with improving public order and protecting property. In most large colonial cities, streets in the downtown areas were illuminated at night and patrolled by night watchmen.

increased civic pride. With the limitations placed on the employment of native sons in a number of other government institutions, the *cabildos* increasingly became the primary political arena for local grievances in many parts of the Spanish Empire.

Regalism and the Expulsion of the Jesuits

In the eighteenth century, the monarchs of Spain and Portugal followed a broad policy of expanding their authority at the expense of other institutions and interests. The expansion of monarchical power over the institutions of the Catholic Church is known as "regalism." The regular clergy who had grown powerful during the first hundred years of the colonial era became the primary target for those seeking to augment royal authority. In 1749 Ferdinand VI decreed that all parishes

still ministered by mendicant orders should be transferred to the secular clergy. Unlike a failed transfer in the sixteenth century, this new effort proved more successful. In Mexico, for example, nearly every parish was in the hands of secular priests by the mid-1760s.

Charles III built on his predecessor's actions and further moved to change the balance between the formerly interdependent and equal partners of Crown and Church. Believing the Church's jurisdiction should extend over lay persons only in matters of conscience, the Crown reduced ecclesiastical immunity, principally the privilege of asylum, and also the personal legal immunity that clerics enjoyed in many areas.

The Crown's willingness to challenge ecclesiastical institutions became evident in 1767 when Charles expelled the Society of Jesus from his realms. Although the immediate cause was a series of municipal riots in Spain in 1766—believed by some to have been instigated by the Jesuits— the roots of the expulsion lay elsewhere. The Jesuits' refusal to acknowledge monarchical authority as being above papal authority defied regalist doctrine. In addition, the Jesuits had obstructed in the past the implementation of royal policy. Their preeminence in education and close ties to wealthy and prominent lay persons also gave them extensive influence. Finally, the Society's wealth tempted a monarch whose resources were stretched.

The expulsion of 680 Jesuits from New Spain and over 500 from Peru, a majority of whom were native born, shocked colonial opinion. Rioting broke out in the mining region of New Spain and also in Valladolid and Pátzcuaro, where workers were already dismayed by the more stringent tax collection and the imposition of excise taxes on *pulque*. José de Gálvez himself led a ruthless expedition to restore peace. In Peru the expulsion provoked astonishment, but the Jesuits were deported without significant protest.

Following their expulsion, the Crown confiscated the Society's estates and other assets. In Peru the value of the 203 *haciendas* and over 5,200 slaves seized was approximately 6.5 million pesos. In less than a decade, over half of these had been sold. The Society's rural holdings in New Spain brought the Crown over 5 million pesos. This rapid transfer of property created a local vested interest opposed to the Society's return and thus acted to counter pressure from those families angered by the expulsion of sons, kinsmen, and teachers.

While the expulsion of the Jesuits revealed explicitly the Crown's willingness to employ naked power against the religious orders, Charles and his ministers also proved ready to attack the baroque display that characterized funerals, long a basis of ecclesiastical power and wealth. In 1787 the monarch ordered that the dead be buried in suburban cemeteries rather than, as was customary, in or around churches. The mandate reflected the growing importance, at least to some urban elites, of a personal, individual relationship with God rather one mediated by the clergy and encouraged by the hundreds of confraternities founded in part to provide for members' funerals.

Charles III and his advisors quickly discovered that, despite support from "enlightened" Catholics, the majority opposed extramural burial. The egalitarianism inherent in such burial also offended members of the elite committed to a hierarchical society. Religious orders that benefited from the traditional burial fees also opposed the reform. Despite the claimed benefits for public health, extramural burial required decades to become generally accepted, a clear case of the Crown's inability to force reform on a recalcitrant public.

The Enlightenment

The expulsion of the Jesuits deprived New Spain and Peru of their most prominent educators and created a shortage of qualified teachers. At the same time, the expulsion removed the foremost advocates of scholastic thought and thus facilitated the widespread introduction of a more modern approach to knowledge. By the close of the eighteenth century, skepticism of authority, observation of nature, experimentation, and analysis based on inductive reasoning had transformed the intellectual milieu of the colonies.

Even before 1767, in both viceroyalties, there were glimmers of an unmistakable swing toward modern approaches to knowledge and an emphasis on science and technology. The most noted supporters of these changes were active in the 1780s and 1790s. Their intellectual heirs sustained their reform agenda and, after 1810, added the political enthusiasms of the American and French revolutions.

The most widespread expression of enlightened ideas in Peru appeared in the *Mercurio Peruano*, a biweekly paper published in Lima in the early 1790s by a local variant of the many economic societies founded in the Spanish world since 1763. Through the *Mercurio*, the supporters of progress tried to provide Peruvians with useful knowledge of their region and information relevant to their daily lives. Thus the *Mercurio* published articles that advocated burial outside churches for reasons of health, supported more efficient mining techniques, and analyzed the viceroyalty's commerce. Although its publication demonstrated the presence of a number of self-proclaimed adherents of modern ideas, the *Mercurio*'s demise in 1795 reflected how small that number was. At no time did the number of subscribers reach four hundred.

As in Peru, periodicals attracted a broader audience in New Spain than did *colegio* and university courses. The foremost Mexican publicist, cleric José Antonio Alzate y Ramírez (1729–99), advocated scientific knowledge and its application to contemporary problems. His *Gaceta de Literatura* (1788–95) provided a stream of informative articles on medicine, applied science, agronomy, and a host of other scientific topics. As did the writers of the *Mercurio Peruano*, Alzate focused on the viceroyalty of his birth and wrote articles intended to improve it.

Accompanying and further accelerating the spread of modern ideas in the colonies were crown-sponsored scientific expeditions and the creation of new, specialized institutions designed to encourage specific activities. A mixed French and Spanish expedition led by Louis Godin arrived in Quito in 1735 to test Isaac Newton's thesis that the earth bulged at the equator, rather than being a perfect sphere. Members of the expedition traveled widely and undertook numerous scientific and cartographical tasks. The decadelong botanical expedition of Hipólito Ruiz and José Antonio Pavón reached Peru in 1778 to collect samples

and make drawings of plants that would enhance the Royal Botanical Garden in Madrid or be of medicinal value. A similar expedition was undertaken in New Spain in 1787. In related initiatives, a chair of botany was created at the University of Mexico, and a botanical garden was established. The Royal Academy of San Carlos, opened in the capital in 1784, taught painting, sculpture, and architecture. The Royal College of Mines followed in 1792, the first mining school in the Western Hemisphere.

Although efforts to establish a school of mines in Peru failed, in the late 1780s the viceroyalty hosted an expedition of European mining experts led by the Swedish baron Thaddeus von Nordenflicht. Part of a royal effort to introduce the latest European mining techniques into the viceroyalty, the experts labored without notable success until 1810. A similar expedition led by the Basque Fausto de Elhuyar, who was trained at Europe's finest mining centers, reached New Spain in the late 1780s. Both missions confirmed the Crown's willingness to encourage experimentation and the initiation of new methods for utilitarian ends.

Demographic Expansion

Populations grew throughout the Western World during the second half of the eighteenth century. New Spain and Peru shared in this general growth, although at substantially different rates and with significant regional variations. There was internal migration in both viceroyalties, but neither received large numbers of immigrants from Europe.

Between 1742 and 1810, the population of New Spain rose from about 3.3 million to 6.1 million inhabitants. This impressive upward trend occasionally suffered reverses, most notably in 1785–86 when an estimated 300,000 persons died as a result of a catastrophic harvest failure and attendant epidemics. Growth was particularly rapid in the regions north and west of Mexico City as a result of both migration and natural increase. Northern New Spain had 26 percent of the viceroyalty's population in 1742 and 38 percent by 1810. The city of Guadalajara more than tripled in population from 1750 to 1810, largely as a result of migration from the surrounding rural areas. Mexico City was also a magnet for migrants, growing from 113,000 in 1793 to 137,000 in 1803.

The population of Peru reached its low point in the early 1720s as a result of a series of devastating epidemics. Recovery was well under way by 1750, however, and except for a temporary loss after the Indian rebellion led by Tupac Amaru in 1780, the population grew for the remainder of the colonial era. The census of 1792 listed 1,076,122 inhabitants. By 1812, natural increase, particularly among the Indian population, and territorial reorganization brought the total to about 1.5 million.

Breaking down the population totals reveals the substantial increase in the mixed-race and white populations. In the mid-seventeenth century, *castas* comprised a little over 5 percent and Indians some 86 percent of the population of New Spain. Despite an actual increase in numbers, Indians had dropped to about 74 percent of the total population by the 1740s and to only about 60 percent by

the close of the eighteenth century. The population considered white grew to 18 percent, and the *castas*, with 22 percent, emerged as the second largest socioracial group in the viceroyalty. The 1792 census indicated that Peru had similar distributions of Spaniards (13 percent), Indians (56 percent), and *castas* (27 percent). Although the slave population in New Spain was negligible, Peru had over forty thousand black and mulatto slaves (4 percent), most of whom resided in the intendancy of Lima.

The population change in both New Spain and Peru in the second half of the eighteenth century was almost entirely dependent on natural increase. Unlike Brazil and Cuba, to cite extreme cases, neither viceroyalty was a major participant in the African slave trade. The immigration of Europeans was also numerically inconsequential. In the early 1790s, Mexico City had only 2,359 peninsulars, almost all males. The booming mining center of Guanajuato had only 314 adult male peninsulars, Querétaro just 190, and Antequera 274. The viceroyalty as a whole probably contained fewer than 15,000 peninsulars at the close of the century. Peninsular immigration to Peru was even smaller than to New Spain. With fewer opportunities in trade and in civil, military, and ecclesiastical positions, the attractions were limited. Although individual peninsulars sometimes secured wealth, power, and prestige, especially through commerce, they were not demographically important in these two viceroyalties.

The white population was concentrated in or near the cities and towns in both New Spain and Peru. According to contemporary accounts, there were 67,500 whites in Mexico City, roughly half of the city's total population, in 1803. Guanajuato and Antequera both had over a third of their population classified as Spaniards, the census term for whites. In Peru, the three provinces of Lima, Arequipa, and Cuzco together contained 42 percent of the viceroyalty's Spanish population in 1792, and the majority of these whites were urban.

Society

An expanded population and the growth of mining production, trade, and commercial agriculture in New Spain after 1750 led to a growing gulf between rich and poor. Those families that owned estates that sold wheat, corn, meat, *pulque*, and other products to expanding urban markets, and those that owned productive silver mines or invested in wholesale trade achieved unprecedented prosperity. In the late eighteenth century, about one hundred, primarily creole, families in Mexico City, and perhaps ten elsewhere in the viceroyalty had assets of approximately one million pesos or more. Their immense fortunes, rather than titles or other honors, separated them from the other members of a larger elite of lesser landowners, mine owners, merchants, and high-ranking bureaucrats and ecclesiastics. Unable to enter their ranks through marriage or to compete with them economically, this lower elite was tied to their superiors by shared business interests and a common aversion to the lower orders. The great families owned numerous estates in different regions of New Spain, both as protection against natural disasters and as collateral in a society based