Race and Classification

The Case of Mexican America

Edited by Ilona Katzew and Susan Deans-Smith

with a Preface by William B. Taylor

Stanford University Press
Stanford, California
body of individuals is also about marking the body politic. When the French naval officer Jean de Monségur traveled to Mexico in 1707 under orders of the Spanish monarch, he proffered his opinion about the racial makeup of the place:

In Mexico City, as in the rest of the Indies under Spanish rule one sees many races from various nations that form a mixture that is not pleasant nor sympathetic in the least, but rather very ugly and repugnant. When born, children are white, blond and of a beautiful complexion, but when they turn twelve, fifteen, and eighteen, they seldom if ever retain this color and instead most of them become brown and dark... With the exception of the race of Spaniards from Spain, the Creoles who descend directly from them, and the mestizos or children of Europeans and Indians, it can be said that all the other races are ugly, repulsive and even horrible to behold.⁶

Penned in the early eighteenth century, Monségur’s description nevertheless embodies what gradually become central tenets of racial discourses over time that privileged (and continue to privilege) whiteness and, to a lesser degree, the Indians who made up the majority of Mexico’s population. Colonial, liberal, and post-revolutionary rhetoric attempted to homogenize Amerindians and mestizos and cast them as paradigmatic proto-national and national symbols. Mexicans in the United States were equally color coded, leading Chicanos to redeploys this form of national rhetoric that extolled their Indian and mestizo past to proclaim their separateness within broader society and concurrently their right to be equal. The collection of essays in this volume show how the language of race and racial labeling and classification has operated in Greater Mexico over time, and how it continues to retain its power even when masked or clumsily pushed to the side. When the Spanish merchant and antiquarian Pedro Alonso O’Crouley (quoted at the beginning of this chapter) described racial mixing as a chemistry of purification, he was not entirely off the mark—the language and the living experience of race is always about unattainable distillations.

1 The Language, Genealogy, and Classification of “Race” in Colonial Mexico

María Elena Martínez

DURING THE PAST THREE DECADES, studies of race have tended to stress that the meanings and uses of the concept have varied across time, space, and cultures.⁷ Indeed, the notion seems to derive some of its power from its very epistemological and historical instability, from what the historian Thomas C. Holt calls its chameleon-like and parasitic nature: “chameleon-like” because of its ability to transmute, “parasitic” because of its tendency to attach itself to other social phenomena.⁸ Despite Holt’s emphasis on the cultural and historical specificity of racial ideologies, he and a number of other scholars anchor modern notions of race in the sixteenth century, if not before.⁹ During this period, the term began to appear with some frequency in the Romance languages and in English as European expansion to the Americas, the establishment of the transatlantic slave trade, and other “global” processes forged the Atlantic world—that metaphorical and physical space of cultural interactions and hybridity.⁴ But if the emergence of modern notions of race and the rise of the Atlantic world went hand in hand, the racial ideologies that surfaced in that “world” also differed in significant ways due to the particularities of European colonizing projects and the ways in which they confronted local conditions, peoples, and change in the Americas. In certain regions of Spanish America, for example, these particularities produced a system of classification based on African, European, and Native American descent, the sistema de castas, some of the underlying principles of which were depicted in the eighteenth-century Mexican pictorial genre now known as casta painting.⁵

This essay focuses on three sets of questions that the casta pictorial genre raises about the nature and history of classification in New Spain and more
generally about colonial Mexico's racial ideology. First, why is the language of social differentiation mainly one of casta (caste) and not raza (race)? What did these Castilian terms mean in the early modern period and how was their deployment linked to Spanish cultural-religious principles and notions of social order? Second, when and why did casta classifications emerge and in what institutional and social contexts were they used? Third, what implications did Hispanic definitions of "race" and "caste" have on central Mexican notions of mestizaje ("mixture")? Did these notions change in the eighteenth century and if so how? Addressing these three sets of questions will help provide an overview of Mexican colonial racial ideology and explain in part why the casta pictorial genre took the form that it did.

"Race" and "Caste" in the Early Modern Hispanic World, 1400–1700s

Although the origin of the Castilian word raza is uncertain, perhaps dating as far back as the thirteenth century, its use started to become prominent in the 1500s. As was the case with its equivalents in other European languages, it generally referred to lineage. The strong belief in nobility as an essence transmitted by blood meant that the word was sometimes used to distinguish between nobles and commoners. This deployment did not necessarily contradict monogenesis, the potentially egalitarian idea of humanity's common descent. As the historian Paul Freedman has argued, medieval Europeans often explained inequality and in particular serfdom through biblical myths about past ancestors who had sinned (such as Noah's son Ham) or through more secular ones, in which, for example, the servile condition of a particular "national" or local group was attributed to descent from cowardly or conquered forefathers. The division of humankind into different lineages was thus perfectly compatible with the doctrine of a common creation. That Spain's late medieval nobility was not a closed caste did not temper its belief in the superiority of its "blood" and its use of the concept of raza to distinguish itself from commoners. Indeed, some of Spain's military orders only granted habits to persons whose ancestors had been of noble blood and without the "race or mixture of commoners" ("hijosdalgo de sangre, sin raza ni mezcla de villano").

Incubated in the estate system, the Castilian concept of race took a different direction in the sixteenth century as it attached itself, like a parasite, to religion and came to refer not so much to ancestry from pecheros (tax-payers) and villanos (commoners) but to descent from Jews, Muslims, and eventually other religious categories. This linguistic shift was largely the result of the limpieza de sangre statutes, requirements of "pure" Christian ancestry that various Spanish religious and secular institutions began to adopt in the mid 1400s. Initially passed amid a climate of deep social and political tensions and rising anxieties over the "true" religious commitments of the Jews who had converted to Christianity, the conversos (also called New Christians), the statutes spread during the next one hundred years. Their spread therefore coincided with the establishment of the Inquisition in Spain, the rise of Protestantism, the expansion of the Ottoman Empire, and the Counter-Reformation, all of which, in different ways, heightened Spanish concerns with Catholic orthodoxy. By the end of the sixteenth century, the most important institutions with limpieza requirements—including the Inquisition, the three main military orders, and a number of university colleges and cathedral chapters—had extended the category of "impurity" to Muslim converts to Christianity, the moriscos, and developed genealogical procedures to distinguish "old" from "new" Christians. Furthermore, the term raza, whose meanings previously varied, had been displace onto those who were considered impure and defined in unequivocally negative terms. Hence, in the early seventeenth century the Castilian linguist Sebastián de Covarrubias Orozco wrote that when the term was used to refer to lineages, it had a pejorative connotation, "like having some Moorish or Jewish race." For this reason, cristianos viejos (Old Christians) seldom applied it to themselves. Jews, Muslims, and even Protestants were marked through the concept of "race," but not the people with putatively long and unsullied ties to Christianity.

As the categories of "new" and "old" Christian imply, temporality was central to the concept of limpieza de sangre. Just as time produced vintage wine, generations of devotion to the faith seasoned and aged Christian lineages. Some of the first statutes stipulated that the "stains" of Jewish and Muslim ancestry were to be traced only to the four grandparents (the cuatro costados, or four corners), hence implying that it took three, sometimes four, generations for a convert's descendants to be considered Old Christians. But by the 1550s most of the key institutions with purity requirements did not place a limit on the investigations. The condition or status of limpieza de sangre thereafter referred to lineages that claimed to be Christian since "time immemorial," that is, for which there could be no memory of a different religious past. The more obscure one's ancestors, the better. The witnesses in the purity information of Pedro de Vega expressed this sense of religious genealogical time (made especially significant by the Peninsula's long struggle with Islam) when in 1585
they declared before an inquisitorial tribunal that he was pure because he derived from "simple, plain people, aged Old Christians" ("gente boba, llana, cristianos viejos, rancios"). Thirteen That their Old Christian ancestry could imbue peasants and common tax-payers with a sense of superiority over some nobles seemed a "monstrous" situation to some of the proponents of reforming the statutes. Spain was the only country in history, observed Diego Serrano de Silva, an early seventeenth-century inquisitor and author of a memorial about the statutes, to have produced not just a division between nobles and plebeians, but one based on limpieza de sangre, which he claimed was undermining the prestige and privileges of the noble estate. The purity statutes, he claimed, were placing aristocrats with converso ancestors in a lower social place than peasants and people who practiced mechanical trades, and in general making Old Christian commoners believe that they were more important than patricians. Thirteen

However, the growing importance of the concept of limpieza de sangre did not destroy the more "feudal" or estate-based notion of purity of (noble) blood, nobleza de sangre. Fourteen During the second half of the sixteenth century, the traditional aristocracy, anxious to dispel the popular perception that intermarriages with converso families had made many noble lineages impure as well as to enhance its exclusivity, made purity of blood a requirement for noble status. Thirteen Helping to precipitate a "refeudalization" of Castilian society, the merging of the two discourses of purity—one referring to the absence (or remoteness) of commoner ancestry, the other to the lack of Jewish, Muslim, or heretic ancestors—heightened the Spanish obsession with lineage. Fourteen By the late seventeenth century, key Spanish institutions—including the Consejo de Órdenes (Council of Orders)—tended to verify not only purity of religious ancestry (limpieza de sangre) and of noble blood (nobleza de sangre), but of occupation (limpieza de oficios). The multiplicity of limpiezas and manchas (stains) enhanced the symbolic capital of genealogies, turning them into veritable fetishes.

Spanish society's obsession with genealogy was manifested not only in the rise of the linajudos, experts in genealogies who devoted themselves to policing lineages for signs of "impure" ancestry (and to trying to profit from their knowledge), but in the pervasiveness of a language of blood that in the seventeenth century became increasingly baroque. Terms such as sangre (blood), casta (breeding), generación (lineage), raíz (root), tronco (trunk), and rama (branch) figured prominently in Castile's social and legal vocabulary and continued to be important well into the eighteenth century. For example, when members of the Calleja family of Placencia submitted proof of their purity and nobility, they included genealogical information for brothers and uncles, because they were all of the same "stock and trunk" (cepa y tronco). Thirteen

The persistence of this vocabulary in the Iberian Peninsula was sustained by internal dynamics—by the refeeudalization of Castilian society and spread of the limpieza statutes—but it was also influenced by events in Spanish America, which generated a plethora of transatlantic genealogical investigations for the secular and religious administration and which also produced a language of blood. Twenty This language, however, was not fundamentally one of raza but of casta. How did the second term differ?

Both part of a lexicon of blood that had been influenced by common understandings of how reproduction functioned in the natural world (especially in the realm of horse breeding), Twenty the terms casta and raza could refer to breed, species, and lineage. At times they were used interchangeably to describe groupings of animals, plants, or humans. Twenty Casta, however, had a series of other connotations. If as a noun it was usually linked to lineage, as an adjective it could allude to chastity, nobility ("good breeding"), and legitimacy, and more generally to an uncorrupted sexual and genealogical history. Twenty Casta was thereby able to give way to the term castizo, which referred to a person of notable ancestry and legitimate birth. Twenty By implication the mother of a castizo would have been casta, virginal before marriage and faithful as a wife. When applied to humans, then, the sixteenth-century Spanish word casta and its various connotations were clearly alluding to a system of social order centered around procreation and biological parenthood, one in which reproducing the pure and noble group was mainly predicated on maintaining the chastity of its women. Whether in the "Old" or "New" World, notions of caste purity and their privileging of endogamous marriage and legitimate birth were never separate (because of women's role in reproduction) from discourses of gender and female sexuality, from a sexual economy constituted by gendered notions of familial honor.
who in endogamous India would be regarded as outside the system.”28 In New Spain, this deployment of the term began around the mid-sixteenth century, shortly after a nomenclature distinguishing people of mixed ancestry or lineages began to surface, its first and most enduring terms being mestizo and mulato. Hence, when in 1597 Diego de Simancas, the child of a Spanish-Indian union, was tried by the Mexican Inquisition for allegedly believing that Jesus was not the true son of God, he was asked to declare not his “race,” but his “caste.”29

Once the term casta was applied to people of mixed ancestry, it began to acquire negative connotations, but it remained distinct from, and more neutral than, the concept of raza, which as stressed earlier, became closely tied to religion, and in particular to Jewish and Muslim descent. Hence, mestizos, mulattoes, and in a general sense also Spaniards and Indians, were considered “castes,” lineages, but not necessarily races. Or rather, not all of these categories were thought to have “race.” As one scholar has argued, early modern Spain elaborated an exclusionary discourse of race within its peninsular borders, at the same time that it created a more inclusive system of caste in the Americas, one that allowed the different castes to claim to be connected through genealogical or symbolic kinship ties (which only contributed to the instability of categories).28 Such a rigid distinction between the two systems of differentiation cannot be drawn, however. Not only did caste in the colonies become racialized over time, an increasingly naturalizing discourse, but as many limpieza de sangre-related documents from colonial Mexico demonstrate, notions of raza and impurity started to be used against persons of African ancestry as early as the beginning of seventeenth century, in some cases even before. For example, in 1599 Cristóbal Ruiz de Quiroz submitted his genealogical information to the Franciscan Order in Puebla, Mexico, to prove that he descended from “a clean caste and generation, without the race or mixture of Moors, mulattoes, blacks, Jews and the newly converted to the Holy Catholic Faith or of persons punished by the Holy office.”29

The Spanish deployment of notions of impurity and race against Africans and their descendants can be attributed primarily to their association with slavery, an institution that in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had both economic and religious significance. For early modern Spaniards and other Europeans, the condition of enslavement was not just one of debasement, the antithesis or negation of nobleza de sangre or nobility of blood, but a function of religious infidelity or ancestral sin. When the transatlantic system of slave trade began in earnest and it became less and less feasible to contend that bondage was a tool to convert infidels, the enslavement of Africans as well as their darker skin color was increasingly attributed in Portugal, Spain, and other European countries to their being the cursed descendants of Ham. Previously harnessed to explain servitude and other oppressive conditions, the Hamitic myth was marshaled to explain both “blackness” and slavery during the seventeenth-century plantation revolution, manifesting the rise, in Robin Blackburn's words, of a “Christian, European, or ‘white’ racial consciousness.”30 The emergence of this consciousness is perhaps what compelled Spanish thinkers to equate the perpetuity of the stain of slavery with the intractability of the “blemishes” of Jewish and Muslim ancestry.31 In their mental universe, black blood emanated from slaves and therefore could not be completely absorbed into Old Christian lineages, purified, redeemed. This religious-cum-racial construction of blackness as ineffaceable strongly influenced the sistema de castas and its main classifications.

The Rise, Categories, and Development of the Sistema de Castas

New Spain’s sistema de castas, based on a dual-descent model of classification, started to surface in the second half of the sixteenth century, in the context of a rapidly expanding and largely illegitimate population of mixed ancestry, a rise in the number of imported African slaves, a dwindling of the spoils of conquest as more and more Spanish immigrants (including women) arrived, and increasing anxieties about the conversion project. Its first categories were thus intimately tied to the heightened colonial concern with restricting the political and economic claims of non-Spaniards—indeed, with delimiting who could claim to be a “Spaniard.” More generally, the classifications were part of the establishment of the institutional and ideological mechanisms intended to reproduce colonial hierarchies of rule, among which lineage would play a prominent role.32 The sistema de castas was influenced by political and economic factors, including the government’s interest in dividing the colonial population and in creating a free wage-labor force in order to meet the growing labor demands (aggravated by the decline of the native population) of urban economies and hacienda and mining complexes.33 But it was also strongly shaped by Castilian cultural-religious principles, their adaptation to colonial dynamics and in particular by the different ways in which they were applied to the native and black populations.
These differences are reflected in the *sistema*'s very nomenclature. For example, the term *mestizo*, which surfaced in the 1530s and by the next decade had become almost synonymous with illegitimacy, simply meant "mixed" and had been used in Spain mainly to refer to the offspring produced by the mating of animals of different species. The category of *mulato*, which in the Spanish colonies only appeared on a regular basis as of 1549, referred to the children of Spaniards and blacks and in general to anyone with partial African ancestry. In both Mexico and Peru it was initially applied to persons of either black-Spanish or black-native descent, but in the seventeenth century a separate, though sporadically used, category for the latter was created, that of *zambo* (*zambo* in Peru). According to the seventeenth-century jurist Juan de Solórzano y Pereira, the term *mulato* was used to describe the offspring of Spaniards and blacks because they were considered an "uglier" and more unique mixture than mestizos and because the word conveyed the idea that their nature was akin to that of mules. The rise of the category and its connotations of infertility—which simultaneously eased Spanish anxieties about the uncontrolled growth of populations descending from slaves and sanctioned the continued sexual exploitation of enslaved women by their masters—was inextricably linked to the institution of slavery’s gendered and racialized social and reproductive relations, as well as to incipient Western notions of beauty and race.

Since both *mestizo* and *mulato* derived from a zoological vocabulary and implied crossbreeding, neither appellation was exactly flattering. But as Solórzano y Pereira suggested, their use marked an important difference in Spanish attitudes towards reproduction with black and indigenous people. This difference becomes even more evident in the next two *casta* categories that surfaced in central Mexico: *castizo* and *morisco*. These terms for the most part did not appear in sixteenth-century parish registers but were used in some colonial administrative and Inquisition documents. The first, which emerged in the last third of the sixteenth century, referred to the child of a Spaniard and a mestizo or someone who was only one-quarter Indian. The second was at first more ambiguous for it was associated with blacks, Islam, or both. In New Spain it continued to be applied to people who were accused of practicing Islam, but by the beginning of the seventeenth century it started to be used in reference to the children of Spaniards and mulattos. Needless to say, the terms *castizo* and *morisco* carried significantly different cultural baggage. In Spain, the first alluded to a person of "good lineage and caste" while the second referred to Muslim converts to Christianity. It is true that when Mexican Holy Office officials first explained the meaning of *castizo* they did not associate the category with any redeeming qualities. In a 1576 letter to the Supreme Council of the Inquisition (which was based in Spain) they wrote that "the descendants of *indios mestizos*, or *castizos*, as they are called here, in general are regarded as vile and desppicable, restless and vicious, liars and unable to keep secrets." The inquisitors then added that the "white skin" of some *castizos* allowed them to deceive Spaniards regarding their "true descent" to enter religious orders, which not only suggests that phenotype was already playing an important role in colonial relations, but that exclusions based on ancestry were operating in certain institutions—some informally. These exclusions would become more formal precisely as appearance became an unreliable measure of descent.

Despite the Holy Office’s disparaging remarks about *castizos*, the displacement of a word that in Castile mainly had positive connotations onto the children of mestizos and Spaniards was no linguistic accident. It not only acknowledged the aristocratic bloodlines of some *castizos*, descendants of Spanish conquerors and noble native women, but also signaled the construction of a colonial ideology that recognized the purity, or potential purity, of native lineages (especially if they were noble) and hence allowed for their complete assimilation into Spanish Old Christian ones. Indeed, in the last decades of the sixteenth century royal policies began to privilege *castizos* over other *castas*—among other things, by making them eligible for the priesthood and (like mestizos) exempt from paying tribute—and the Holy Office considered them eligible for the status of purity of blood. Notwithstanding their approximation to "whiteness," *moriscos* were generally not allowed to claim a status that corresponded with their ancestry. The *moriscos*' real or imagined connection to slaves not only associated them with infidelity and sin, but also limited their ability to make genealogical claims, particularly about the longevity of their ties to Christianity. According to Castilian legal formulas, descendants of slaves could not establish the history and depth of their loyalty to the faith because slavery implied the severing of kinship ties (in ascending and descending generations) and because they could not prove that their ancestors had converted to Christianity voluntarily. In other words, the discourse of purity of blood and its emphasis on the construction of a certain familial and religious past—on the invention of a particular genealogical memory—made it virtually impossible for persons of African parentage to be considered "aged
Old Christians.” Spanish religious cosmologies, the early modern obsession with genealogy, and the transatlantic slave trade thus colluded to extend notions of “impurity” and “race” to black ancestry.\(^{33}\)

The growing importance of lineage for determining identities, rights, privileges, and obligations at the end of the sixteenth century made the establishment of parish records a crucial component of the Spanish colonial project. Indeed, at the same time that certain colonial institutions started to undertake limpieza investigations, the state and church began to create an archival infrastructure that would enable the production and reproduction of “caste.” Signaling the rise of the ethnographic state and archival “technologies of power” tied to the production of colonial knowledge, royal and ecclesiastical decrees ordered parishes to maintain separate birth, marriage, and death records for españoles, indios, and castas.\(^{34}\) Not all did and there were certainly variations in parish record-keeping practices, but by the mid-seventeenth century many central Mexican churches followed the crown’s orders, a trend that for some scholars represented the crystallization of the sistema de castas.\(^{35}\)

The process of recording caste classifications in parish archives was fraught with complications. For example, ancestral information provided at the time of a birth or marriage was not always trustworthy, and parish priests were sometimes less than rigorous in their use of categories. These and other factors lessened the reliability of parish records. Nonetheless, these records were extremely important within Mexican colonial society for they were sometimes used for fiscal purposes (among other things to determine tributary status), for the establishment of the jurisdiction of the Inquisition and other tribunals that were not allowed to try native people, and for “proving” purity of blood. By the second half of the seventeenth century few probanzas (certificates) of purity of blood in central New Spain did not include a notarized copy of an individual’s birth record, which was supplied and signed by the appropriate parish priest. Despite their unreliability, colonial archives were thus strongly implicated in the production and reproduction of casta categories and the discourse of caste. This discourse not only continued to operate throughout the colonial period, but gained prominence during the last century of Spanish rule.

**Raza, Casta, and Clase: The Sistema in the Late Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries**

Even though the number of lineage categories used in central New Spain gradually increased, only some of the classifications recorded in the casta paintings appeared in colonial records such as parish registers, tax lists, and censuses. These classifications mainly include “Spaniard,” “Indian,” “black,” “mestizo,” “mulato,” “castizo,” “morisco,” and “zambo,” and in the eighteenth century also “lobo,” “coyote,” “pardo,” “moreno,” and occasionally “chino.” That a relatively small number of terms figure in legal records does not mean, however, that others were not in everyday use. As documents containing petitions or witness testimonies indicate, categories such as mestiza coyote, mulato lobo, and coyote mestizo circulated among the population, and composite zoological names became increasingly common in the eighteenth century.\(^{36}\) But the appearance and relevance of certain terms varied by region and period. The system of classification was not as rigid in the northern Mexican frontier, for example, as it was in central Mexico.\(^{37}\) Even within the same region, their use was often inconsistent and influenced by a number of subjective and situational factors.\(^{38}\) In short, although the use of casta categories in official records tended to follow certain genealogical rules in that they were supposed to be determined according to proportions of Spanish, Native, and African ancestries, in practice the uses of the classifications tended to be anything but systematic.

In fact, central Mexico’s sistema de castas became more unstable as it “crystallized” in official records. This instability was largely the result of the greater complexity of colonial society, which witnessed a dramatic surge in the population of mixed ancestry, the beginnings of a working-class culture (especially in the northern mining towns and in Mexico City and Puebla), and greater social mobility due to the expansion of mercantile capitalism. Mobility went in both directions. Thanks in large part to its silver mines in Guanajuato, Taxco, Pachuca, and Zacatecas, eighteenth-century Mexico experienced modest but steady economic growth rates. This expansion, however, did not lead to noticeable structural and institutional changes or to a significant increase in wages. Economic growth in Bourbon Mexico was accompanied not just by an unparalleled rise in taxation that diverted an important percentage of the viceroyalty’s income to the Spanish crown, but also by an acutely uneven distribution of income; between the start and the end of the century various segments of the population, including Creoles, underwent some downward mobility.\(^{39}\) Eighteenth-century central New Spain also experienced important changes in marriage patterns, especially in the capital. At the start of the century, legitimacy rates among the casta population were rising and Spanish women were beginning to wed men from other groups in significant numbers.\(^{40}\) All of these socioeconomic and demographic shifts helped make the relationship between “race” and “class”—or rather descent
and economic standing—more complicated and gave credence to the notion that wealth and personal achievement were more important than blood and lineage.58

Colonial elites, particularly the Creole aristocracy that claimed to have ancient roots in the land, responded by attempting to make colonial institutions more exclusive. Some establishments, including the Inquisition and certain religious orders, town councils, colleges, and seminaries, implemented requirements of purity of blood, nobility, and/or occupation (oficio). The exclusionary trend is evident in the records of the Franciscan Order in central Mexico. Starting in the mid-seventeenth century, candidates for the novitiate normally had to provide proof not only that they did not descend from Jews, Muslims, and heretics but also that they did not have any "stains of vulgar infamies" (mancha de infamia vulgar) in their past; that no one in their family was or had been associated with "vile" occupations.59 Probanzas produced by the Inquisition also reflect an increasing emphasis on establishing that candidates for familias (titles for Holy Office's familias or lay informants) and posts did not have relatives who had exercised oficios viles (vile occupations).59

During the eighteenth century a wider array of institutions (including town councils, guilds, academies, colleges, and seminaries) were establishing, formalizing, or enforcing purity policies than in previous centuries.60 Combined with the identification of more "stains," the proliferation of limpiezas exacerbated central Mexican concerns with lineage and encouraged the production of memorials and reports containing genealogical and historical information.

Although the preoccupation with lineage was by no means exclusive to one group, some of the most elaborate genealogical histories were produced by members of the Creole aristocracy. For example, in 1730, don Antonio Joaquin de Rivadeneyra y Barrientos competed for a prebenda (a stipend or income from a position, usually ecclesiastical) in Mexico City's Colegio de Todos Santos, for which he submitted proof of his purity of blood, nobility, and "respectable behavior" (buenas costumbres). In his relación (report) he stressed that all of his ancestors from both bloodlines had been "Old Christians, clean of all bad race, and notable gentlemen and hidalgos" ("cristianos viejos, limpios de toda mala raza, caballeros hijosdalgo notorios") and that his parents and grandparents had held honorific posts in Mexico City and Puebla. Don Rivadeneyra y Barrientos, who would later serve as a lawyer in Mexico City's audiencia (high court) and for the Inquisition's prisoners and eventu-

ally as a judge in Guadalajara's audiencia, also provided extensive information regarding his ancestors from his mother's side. He claimed that his maternal ancestors had belonged to some of the most illustrious Spanish families, dating back at least to King Alfonso VI (1066), and had participated in the wars against the "Moors" as well as in the conquest of New Spain.61 Like other genealogical histories produced in eighteenth-century Mexico, Rivadeneyra y Barrientos's report demonstrates not only the survival of a historical conscience that linked the Reconquista or Christian "reconquest" of the Iberian Peninsula to the conquest of Mexico, but also the continued importance of providential or religious conceptions of time in Creole discourses of blood. Pure lineages were those that had for many generations rendered services on behalf of the faith.

As had occurred in seventeenth-century Spain, the proliferation of limpiezas and concomitant obsession with lineage led to the fetishization of genealogies and made the language of blood increasingly baroque. Thus, when Francisco Antonio de Medina y Torres applied to be the Holy Office's alguacil mayor (constable) in 1767, he claimed to descend from "Old Christians, entirely clean of the bad race of Jews and Moors, and from noble people, notable gentlemen and hidalgos" ("cristianos viejos, limpios de toda mala raza de Judios y Moros, y personas nobles, caballeros hijos dalgo notorios"). Just a decade earlier one of his relatives, a secretary in Mexico's audiencia who tried to have his purity and nobility certified, claimed to be able to produce genealogical proof for thirty-eight of his ancestors.62 At least among the traditional aristocracy, the hidalgocristiano viejo cultural paradigm—promoted centuries earlier by the state and church—was alive and well in late colonial New Spain.

Despite the endurance of this paradigm, the period's socioeconomic realignments—namely, the acceleration of mercantile capitalism and greater possibilities of social mobility that it generated—together with the growing acceptance of individual achievement and other principles of enlightened rationalism (especially popular among the Jesuits) increasingly peppered the language of purity of blood with concepts related to "class" or social status (such as calidad, condición, and clase).63 The ancient regime's lexicon of blood essentially merged with "bourgeois" concepts of diligence, work, integrity, education, and utility to the public good. An example of this merging is provided in a 1752 opinion that don José Tembra (also spelled Tenebra), a cleric from the diocese of Tlaxcala, sent to the crown regarding the role of
the church in cases of parental opposition to marriages between “unequals”—a subject of much debate among Spanish secular and religious authorities in the mid-eighteenth century and subsequent decades. He wrote that although the common practice in New Spain had been for priests or ecclesiastical judges deciding on prenuptial disputes to be most concerned with safeguarding or restoring a woman’s honor, it was time to consider the negative implications that such thinking could have on the social order. Dr. Tembra argued that protecting female honor, even in cases of rape, should be less important than upholding the differences in condición between the bride and groom and the damage that would be inflicted on the male’s family if, for example, he was of noble or notable ancestry and she was a mulata, china, or coyota, or the daughter of an executioner (verdugo), butcher, tanner, and so forth. His main point was that marriages between honorable men and women who lacked the three limpiezas (of nobility, caste, and occupation) were to be avoided in order to ensure the public good. Citing the Roman emperor Justinian, Dr. Tembra added that traditional practices—here referring to the Spanish church’s propensity to support the principle of free marriage choice even if it meant undermining parental wishes—should be changed when they were no longer useful for the republic.35

Anticipating some of the arguments behind the issuance of the Real Pragmática or Royal Pragmatic of 1776 and the new vision of state and society held by advisors to Charles III (1759–1788) and enlightened Creoles, Dr. Tembra implied that the crown, not the church, was to assume the main role in controlling the population, reproduction, and the social body in general.36 The transition which in Foucauldian terms would be called a shift from a “symbolics of blood” to an “analytics of sexuality”—from a regime of power centered on kinship ties, marriage, and the transmission of property and names to one in which social life was regulated through normalization and a “technology of sex” aiming to discipline the body as well as to control and expand populations—retained the family as a crucial site for engineering the social order.37 It also did not destroy traditional notions of lineage and blood but rather recast them in a partly new secular idiom.

Indeed, in addition to incorporating concepts that gained currency with the expansion of mercantile capitalism, the Spanish concept of limpieza de sangre began to be secularized. If the declarations of people who testified in genealogical investigations are a good indication, the notion started to become more distanced from the issue of religious practices and antecedents

and more related to a visual discourse about the body, and particularly about skin color. The change was already perceptible at the beginning of the eighteenth century. For example, when the authorities of a Franciscan convent in Querétaro, Mexico, interrogated community elders regarding the ancestry of two brothers who were suspected of having “the bad race of mulattoes,” many reported that they knew or suspected that they were not pure of blood because of the skin color and hair texture of their mother and some of their grandparents.38 Several witnesses also referred to the brothers’ skin color and physiognomy, a concept that derived from Greek and Roman texts and referred to a “technique that diagnosed a person’s interior disposition or character through a visual examination of the body’s external appearances.”39 The body was thus read as a system of signs, external appearances taken to reflect moral and ethical inclinations.

As the century unfolded and natural explanations (especially environmental ones) for human variation became more prominent than theological ones, the colonial body became the main text through which the issue of purity of blood was framed. The casta paintings, many of which depict people with plants and animals and other elements of the “natural” environment of the Americas, are a sense of a testament to the increasingly dominant place of natural history and other “scientific” approaches to human difference and hence also the gradual secularization of notions about race in New Spain. However, the paintings also betray the weight that medieval notions of inheritance and traditional Spanish concepts of mixture derived from the religiously based discourse of purity of blood continued to have in New Spain. As just about every known series of casta painting suggests, the idea that it took three or four generations for new Christians to become Old Christians and for the descendants of a Spanish-Indian union to claim limpieza, had by the eighteenth century given way to similar formulas for “whitening.” But again, the possibility of complete “redemption” through progressive infusions of Spanish blood was not allowed for the descendants of blacks, at least not in New Spain.39 As Mexican Inquisition officials affirmed in 1773, African-descended people could not be recognized as pure because “as is popularly believed, blackened blood (sangre denegrida) never disappears, because experience shows that by the third, fourth, or fifth generation it palliates, so that two whites produce a black, called tornatrás (return backwards) or saltatrás (jump backwards) (fig. 4.1).40 Categories such as tornatrás as well as the obsessive attention to skin color might have been new, but eighteenth-century discourses
of difference were grafted onto older ones. As the chameleonic and parasitic notion of race transmuted yet again in the context of capitalist expansion and Enlightenment thought, its older meanings strongly informed its new ones.

Conclusion

The system of classification represented in the casta paintings was not simply a product of the Enlightenment’s taxonomic impulse or the late colonial Creole imagination. Although it might only have been in the eighteenth century that the caste categorizations were conceived of as a system, made visual, and explicitly linked to natural history—and in that regard the scientific spirit of the times did have an influence—Spaniards began to deploy some of the classifications and to place them in hierarchies as early as the late 1500s. It was also then that they started to articulate some of the sistema’s main ordering principles—including the notions that reproduction between different castas produced new castas, that black blood was more damaging to Spanish lineages than native blood, and that the descendants of Spanish-Indian unions could, if they continued to reproduce with Spaniards, claim limpieza de sangre. From that moment on, Spaniards deployed the concept of raza—more essentializing than that of casta because of its presumption of immutability—much more frequently against people of African ancestry than against other castes.

When the Castilian concept of purity of blood extended to colonial categories, it happened during a time of heightened anxieties over conversion and was initially framed, as in Spain, in religious and temporal terms. According to some of the first discussions of the limpieza status of different American populations, the native people were unsullied but were new to the faith and therefore had to wait several generations, usually three or four, before they could be considered Old Christians. Because blood was thought to be a vehicle for the transmission of not only physical but moral and spiritual qualities, “mixture” with “pure” Spaniards could accelerate the process. These temporal and genealogical ideas could have been applied to blacks as well because they too were relatively recent converts. However, their association (direct or indirect) with slavery and infidelity, not only marked them as impure, but undermined their ability to make genealogical claims. Castilian religious cosmologies, popular conceptions of reproduction, and the different legal-theological status of native people and blacks within the Spanish colonial order strongly shaped New Spain’s discourse of limpieza de sangre and the sistema de castas, both of which “raced” and gendered the two groups differently.
Emanating from the early modern Spanish obsession with genealogy, Mexico's lexicon of blood—of linaje, casta, and raza—was reinforced and altered in the latter half of the colonial period. As mercantile capitalism expanded and colonial hierarchies became unstable, some colonial institutions adopted requirements of purity, nobility, and occupation, thus both reflecting and exacerbating the elite preoccupation with lineage. The period's socioeconomic realignments, however, made the ancient regime's language of blood merge with an incipient idiom of class that featured the concepts of calidad, condición, and clase. Furthermore, notions of purity and race became increasingly secularized, gradually detached from religion, kinship, and lineage and inserted more into pseudoscientific and visual discourses of the body. By the mid-eighteenth century, the notion that three generations had to pass before new converts became Old Christians had been replaced by the idea that it took three generations for the descendants of an Indian-Spanish union (provided they continued to reproduce with Spaniards), to become “Spaniards.” Nonetheless, central Mexico's sistema de castas continued to be supported by some of the main principles that had given it life in the late sixteenth century—principles that allowed native blood to be “redeemed” but which deemed that of blacks to be a corruptive force on “pure” lineages and the social body as a whole. The Spanish concept of race itself had both new and old connotations. Transmuting in the context of the Enlightenment and rapid social change, it did not entirely shed its old skin.

2

“Dishonor in the Hands of Indians, Spaniards, and Blacks”

The (Racial) Politics of Painting in Early Modern Mexico

Susan Deans-Smith

In 1789, thirteen painters, “professors of painting and sculpture” resident in Mexico City protested the city council’s order that they contribute to the costs of the jura (swearing of the oath of loyalty) to the new monarch Charles IV (1788–1808), a demand made of all guild members. In their appeal to the president of the newly founded Royal Academy of San Carlos they claimed that “it is well known that these two noble arts have never been organized as guilds.” After a lengthy discussion defending their claim, the artists requested that the president of the academy declare them to be exempt from the required contribution now and in the future on the grounds that they were not members of a guild but subject only to the Royal Academy. Ten years later, in 1799, the painters complained again to the president of the Royal Academy about the “intruders and offenders” (“intrusos y ofensores”) who painted and sold paintings and sculptures to the public but who had neither formal training nor had been examined by the academy. The painters expressed the negative consequences of such practices: “We see nothing less than our own dishonor in the hands of Indians, Spaniards, and blacks who attempt, without rules or fundamentals, to imitate the most holy of objects.” They concluded that if efforts were not made to eradicate such practices, the damage to the Academy would be irreparable.

The painters’ complaints about untrained and unexamined artists and peddlers who, they argued, reflected poorly on their own status and on their profession were not new. In many ways such objections constituted a continuation of and connection with those of several generations of ambitious painters, who, beginning in the mid-seventeenth century, attempted to


63. On the obsolescence of the national narrative of mestizaje for Mexico, see De la Peña, “A New Mexican Nationalism?” pp. 293–94.


Chapter 1

This essay is partly based on an analysis of probanzas de limpieza de sangre (proofs of purity of blood) and other research on early modern Spain and New Spain that I conducted for my book, Genealogical Fictions: Limpieza de Sangre, Religion, and Gender in Colonial Mexico (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2008).


7. Paul Freedman, Images of the Medieval Peasant (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1999), pp. 59–130. Also refer to Freedman’s illuminating discussion
of medieval representations of the peasantry as a lower order of humanity, associated
with animals, dirt, and excrement, pp. 133–56. David B. Davis has suggested that this
beastification of the peasantry provided an important antecedent to the early modern
racialization of Jews and blacks. David Brion Davis, "Constructing Race: A Reflection"

8. See Roberto López Vela, "Estructuras administrativas del Santo Oficio," Historia de
Villamavea y Bartolomé Escandell Bonet (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Centro de
Estudios Inquisitoriales, 1993), p. 228; and Elena Postigo Castellanos, Honor y privilegio en
la corona de Castilla: el Consejo de las Órdenes y los Caballeros de Hábito en el s. XVII
(Almazán, Soria: Junta de Castilla y León, 1988), p. 139.

9. The literature on the limpieza statutes is too vast to cite here, but for a good
introduction to the topic, see Albert A. Scroff, Los estatutos de limpieza de sangre:
controversias entre los siglos XV y XVII, trans. Mauro Armiño (Madrid: Tueros Ediciones,
S.A., 1983); Jaime Contreras, "Limpieza de sangre, cambio social y manipulación de
la memoria," in Inquisición y conversos (Toledo: Caja de Castilla–La Mancha, 1994),
pp. 81–101; Juan Hernández Franco, Cultura y limpieza de sangre en la España moderna:
puitate sanguinis (Murcia: Universidad de Murcia, 1996); Antonio Doménech Ortiz,
Los judeoconversos en la España moderna (Madrid: Editorial MAPFRE, S.A.,
1992); Henry Cohn, The Spanish Inquisition: A Historical Revision (New Haven: Yale
University Press, 1998); David L. Graizbord, Souls in Dispute: Convivencia in
Iberia and the Jewish Diaspora, 1350–1700 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania
Press, 2004); and Benzion Netanyahu, The Origins of the Inquisition in the Fifteenth

10. According to Joan Corominas, when the word raza was being linked to Jewish
and Muslim descent, it incorporated the meanings of an older Castilian term (raza)
that connoted defectiveness (as in "defect in the fabric") and guilt. Joan Corominas,
Dicionário crítico etimológico de la lengua castellana, vol. III (Bern, Switzerland:

11. Sebastián de Covarrubias Orozco, Tesoro de la lengua castellana o espaňola

12. Huntington Library (hereafter HLI), MS, 35150.


14. Early modern Spain was not technically a feudal society. Serfdom, which in
medieval Castile had been limited, partly due to the nature of colonization and land
distribution that accompanied the Reconquista, had dwindled by the late 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), p. 17. Also see Helen Nader, Liberty in Absolutist Spain: the Habsburg Sale of

15. See, for example, Juan Antonio Maravall, Poder, honor y élites en el siglo XVII
(Madrid: Siglo Veintiuno, 1984), pp. 175–250; Hernández Franco, Cultura y limpieza de
sangre, pp. 12–17, 25–26, and 62–65; and Henry Cohn, The Spanish Inquisition: A
Historical Revision, pp. 28–36; and Jaime Contreras, Sotos contra Riquelmes: regidores,

16. Recent studies of the Castilian economy have argued that the traditional social
structure was in fact reinforced, especially after 1600. The extension of seignori-
alization (which occurred in varying degrees throughout Western Europe) strengthened
the bond between the Castilian state and landed aristocracy as well as the idea
that nobility was a condition inherited through the blood. The feudalization of Casti-
lian society did not prevent, however, a certain "bastardization" of the noble estate
through the crown's sale of offices (avocados to noble status) and titles to meritorious or
wealthy individuals. The phenomenon led Spanish genealogists to make a strong
distinction between "nobility of blood" and "nobility of privilege." See Ignacio Atienza
Hernández, "Referralisation" in Castile during the Seventeenth Century: A Cliché?" in
The Castilian Crisis of the Seventeenth Century: New Perspectives on the Economic
and Social History of Seventeenth-Century Spain, ed. I. A. A. Thompson and Bartolomé
pp. 249–76, esp. 254–56; in the same volume, Bartolomé Yun Casaliña, "The Castil-
ian Aristocracy in the Seventeenth Century: Crisis, Referralisation, or Political Of-
fensive?" pp. 277–300; and I. A. A. Thompson, "The Purchase of Nobility in Castile,

17. Ruth Pike, Lineages and Conversos in Seville: Creed and Prejudice in Sixteenth-
and Seventeenth-Century Spain (New York and Washington, D.C.: Peter Lang Publish-
ing, 2000).

18. I. A. A. Thompson, "Hidalgo and pechero: the language of 'estates' and 'classes'
in early-modern Castile," in Language, History and Class, ed. Penelope J. Corfield
(Cambridge, U.K.: Basil Blackwell, 1991), pp. 70–74. During the Middle Ages and
early modern period, images of the trees were often used to represent social estates,
seignolies, and even degrees of consanguinity prohibiting marriage. See Friedman,
Images of the Medieval Peasant, pp. 69–70.

19. BNM, MS, 11576: copy of the patent of nobility and purity of blood of the
Calleja family, 1625.

20. On the transatlantic nature of limpieza de sangre investigations initiated in
New Spain and their implications for both Mexican and Spanish notions of blood, see
Martinez, "The Spanish Concept of Limpieza de Sangre," chapter 5. Ann Laura Stoler has
correctly stressed that notions of blood-purity and race operated in imperial contexts,


22. Corominas, *Diccionario crítico etimológico de la lengua castellana*, vol. 1, 722–24. Corominas disagreed with Covarrubias’s claim that the word *casta* derived from the Latin *castus*, which alluded to chastity.

23. Though the word could refer to the sexual virtue of both women and men, marital fidelity was more central to the definition of the former. “Women who remain loyal to their husbands are called *castas*,” wrote Covarrubias, whereas purity, honesty, and sexual restraint ("vale puro, continente, opuesto al deshonesto y dado al vicio de la luxuria") were the qualities that characterized men who were *castos*. Covarrubias, *Tesor de la lengua castellana*, p. 283.

24. Ibid., p. 282.


26. Julian Pitt-Rivers, "On the Word 'Caste!'" in The Translation of Culture: Essays to E. E. Evans-Pritchard, ed. T. O. Beidelman (London: Tavistock Publications, 1971), pp. 234–35. Perhaps because it was used to refer to the place of origin of slaves who had been born in Africa (as in "casta angola"), the term *casta* was also applied to "pure" blacks.

27. Archivo General de la Nación (Mexico City) (hereafter AGN), Inquisición, caja 165, fols. 1–77v.

28. Laura A. Lewis, *Hail of Mirrors: Power, Witchcraft, and Caste in Colonial Mexico* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), pp. 22–25. Lewis’s distinction between Spain’s metropolitan and colonial discourses of differentiation brings to mind Étienne Balibar’s discussion of an “exclusive racism” (of extermination or elimination, as in Nazism) versus an “inclusive” one (of oppression or exploitation resting on the construction and maintenance of hierarchies, as in colonial and slave societies). But as Balibar stresses, the conceptual distinction has limited use, for not only have these two forms of racism (colonial discourses and anti-Semitism) historically exhibited characteristics of the other, but roughly coinciding with the emergence of European proponential identities, they have a “joint descent.” Étienne Balibar, “Racism and Nationalism,” pp. 39–45.


31. See, for example, the early seventeenth-century memorial of the inquisitor don Diego Serrano de Silva. BNM, MS. 10431, fols. 131–50v.


34. Covarrubias, *Tesoro de la lengua castellana*, p. 751. For Corominas, the origin of the word was uncertain, but he speculated that it might have come from the Latin “mixture.” Corominas, *Diccionario crítico etimológico de la lengua castellana*, vol. 3, P. 359.

35. Forbes writes that in Mexico, the term *mulato* continued to be used for the descendants of blacks and Indians into the 1650s and that within the Spanish empire the term generally meant a person who was half African and half something else. As such it could be applied to various combinations. Jack D. Forbes, *Black Africans and Native Americans: Color, Race and Caste in the Evolution of Red-Black Peoples* (New York: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1988), pp. 162–65.
36. Juan de Solórzano y Pereira, Política Indiana (1648) (Madrid: Compañía Ibero-Americana de Publicaciones, 1930), vol. 1, p. 445. Covarrubias also linked the word mulatto to "mule" and wrote that mules were bastard animals, a "third species" produced by the cross of a horse with a donkey that could only reproduce under extraordinary circumstances. Covarrubias, Tesoro de la lengua castellana, p. 768.

37. For a good discussion of this topic in the French colonial context, see Doris Garraway, "Race, Reproduction and Family Romance in Moreau de Saint-Méry's Description... de la partie française de l'île Saint-Domingue," Eighteenth-Century Studies 38, no. 2 (2005): 237-46.

38. Archivo Histórico Nacional (hereafter AHN), Inquisición de México, Libro 1047, fols. 430-434; AHN, Inquisición, Libro 1064; and AHN, Inquisición, Libro 1065.

39. For a few examples from Biblioteca Nacional de Antropología e Historia (Mexico City), Microfilm Collection, Serie Puebla, Roll 81, fol. 121v; Condunem (Mexico City), Fondo CMLXI-36, manuscript belonging to the Archivo del Ayuntamiento de Puebla, fol. 46; and Archivo del Ayuntamiento de Puebla, Actas de Cabildo, vol. 1, doc. 234.


41. AHN, Inquisición de México, Libro 1047, fols. 430-34; Correspondence from the Mexican Inquisition to the Supreme Council of the Inquisition, November 5, 1576.

42. See AGN, Inquisición, vol. 82, exp. 4, fol. 118; and AHN, Inquisición de México, Libro 1057.


46. AGN, Bienes Nacionales, vol. 578, exp. 21; and AHN, Inquisición, Libro 1067, fols. 316-18, and 500-500v.


50. Seed, To Love, Honor, and Obey, pp. 25, 96-98, and 146-47. Also see Dennis Nodin Valdés, "The Decline of the Sociedad de Castas in Mexico City" (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1978), pp. 40-42. For examples of late seventeenth-century petitions by mulatto slaves and mestizos to marry Spanish and castiza women in Mexico City, see AGN, Inquisición, Caja 163, Folder 16, exps. 4-6.

51. The issue of whether the expansion of mercantile capitalism in New Spain made "class" more important than "caste" at the end of the colonial period was extensively debated in the 1970s and 1980s. Despite disagreement about which one became more salient, most scholars agreed that the former had become more significant than it had been in previous centuries. See, for example, John K. Chance and William B. Taylor "Estate and Class in a Colonial City: Oaxaca in 1792," Comparative Studies in Society and History 19 (1977): 454-87; Robert McCaa, Stuart B. Schwartz, and Arturo Grubessich, "Race and Class in Colonial Latin America: A Critique," Comparative Studies of Society and History 21, no. 3 (July 1979): 421-43, esp. 433; with reply from John K. Chance and William B. Taylor, "Estate and Class: A Reply," Comparative Studies of Society and History 21, no. 3 (July 1979): 434-41; Patricia Seed and Philip F. Rust, "Estate and Class in Colonial Oaxaca Revisited," Comparative Studies of Society and History 25, no. 4 (October 1983): 703-10; and Robert McCaa and Stuart B. Schwartz,


53. Oficios viles essentially referred to trade and money lending. In Spanish sources, the phrase was usually accompanied by allusions to oficios mecánicos (“mechanical trades”), which included silversmiths, painters, embroiderers, stonemasons, innkeepers, tavern owners, and scribes (except royal ones).

54. Attesting to the growing application of limpieza policies are Inquisition records, which contain purity of blood documents for aldermen, alcaldes (judges), and university professors that were not produced by the Holy Office itself but by town councils, royal officials, colleges, seminaries, and so forth. See AHN, Inquisición, Leg. 2284. For examples of town councils with purity requirements, see AGN, Ayuntamientos, vol. 197, fols. 1–32v, 49 and 65. And for examples of educational stipends for which the applicant submitted proof of purity, see AGN, Archivo Histórico de Hacienda, vol. 1909, exp. 5; and AGN, Archivo Histórico de Hacienda, vol. 1909, exp. 9.

55. This information became part of a report of his professional and academic merits he compiled in 1752, when he was serving as a judge (oidor) in Guadalajara’s audiencia or high court. AHN, Inquisición, Leg. 2282.

56. AHN, Inquisición, Leg. 2284.

57. Although the concept of calidad was already used in the sixteenth century, it became much more common in the eighteenth century. As Robert McCaa has observed, in the late colonial period it referred to a number of factors, including economic status, occupation, purity of blood, and birthplace, to “reputation as a whole.” Robert McCaa, “Calidad, Class, and Marriage in Colonial Mexico: The Case of Parral, 1788–90,” Hispanic American Historical Review 64, no. 3 (1984): 477–501. In probanzas de limpieza de sangre the term calidad began to compete with that of casta. Phrases such as calidad de mulato and calidad de español started to appear almost as often as casta de mulato and casta de español, and Inquisition officials and witnesses tended to use “calidad” and “casta” interchangeably. For a few examples, see AHN, Inquisición, Leg. 2282; AHN, Inquisición, Leg. 2286 (1); and AGN, Bienes Nacionales, vol. 578, exp. 21.

58. See BNM, MS. 18701.

59. A key moment in the history of the Spanish crown’s curtailment of the church’s independence on matters of marriage, the passage of the Real Pragmática of 1776 (extended to the colonies in 1778) made parental consent necessary for marriage for people under twenty-five, stressed the importance of marriages between “equals,” and shifted the power to mediate disputes between parents and children from ecclesiastical to royal courts. On its implications in Mexico, see Seed, To Love, Honor, and Obey, esp. pp. 200–04.

60. Michel Foucault first discussed the shift (which he also referred to as the transition from a “deployment of alliance” to a “deployment of sexuality”) in The History of Sexuality, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), esp. vol. 1, pp. 106–10, and 147–49.

61. AGN, Bienes Nacionales, vol. 578, exp. 21.


63. See, for example, AGI, México 684; AGN, Ayuntamientos, vol. 197; and AGN, Indígenas de Guerra, vol. 10. David Cahill has reproduced a list of Andean casta categories that was included in an eighteenth-century colonial description of the Peruvian population. Titled “genealogía de la Plebeya gente” (“Genealogy of the Plebeian People”), it begins with a Spanish male and black female and also allows for the descendants of the Spanish-African union to return to the Spanish pole. Why the possibility that black blood could be completely whitened was contemplated in the Andean colonial context and not in Mexico’s visual or written records is difficult to answer, but perhaps the large number of the African-descended population in the viceroyalty of Peru (especially in Lima) prior to independence offers a clue. See David Cahill, “Colour by Numbers: Racial and Ethnic Categories in the Viceroyalty of Peru, 1552–1824.” Journal of Latin American Studies 26 (1994): 339.

64. AHN, Inquisición, Leg. 2288.

Chapter 2

An earlier version of this essay appeared in Susan Deans-Smith and Eric Van Young, eds., Mexican Soundings: Essays in Honour of David A. Brading (London: Institute for the Study of the Americas, 2007), and is reprinted with kind permission of the Institute for the Study of the Americas, University of London. My thanks to Ilona Katzew for her patient and insightful critique of this essay.

1. Archivo Antiguo de la Academia de San Carlos (hereafter AAASC) 10038, Instancia de los Profesores de Pintura y Escultura de esta N.C. sobre que se les relieve de la contribucion que se les exige para la Jura de Nuestro Augusto Soberano, 1789, fol. 6. The Royal Academy of San Carlos was the first and only royal academy of fine arts (painting, sculpture, architecture, and engraving) established in Spain’s American colonies. For a brief introduction to the Academy’s history, see Jean Charlot, Mexican Art and the Academy of San Carlos, 1785–1915 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1962). Four of the painters had worked as “correctors” or tutors in drawing in the provisional school of engraving that eventually became the Royal Academy of San Carlos: Andrés López, Mariano Vázquez, Rafael Gutiérrez, and Juan Sáenz.

2. AAASC 10038, Instancia de los Profesores de Pintura y Escultura de esta N.C., 1789, fol. 6.

3. AAASC Gav 9/doc. 1030, Memorial de los profesores de la Noble Arte de Pintura a Ex Sr. 1799. One of the petitioners, Francisco Clapera, had been employed as