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BORN *in* BLOOD *and* FIRE

A Concise History of Latin America

SECOND EDITION

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Time Line

	Mexico	Brazil	Argentina
Encounter 1492–1600	The fully sedentary Mexicas, who built the Aztec Empire, were conquered and their empire taken over by the Spaniards, but Mexican blood still runs in Mexican veins.	The semisedentary Tupi people of the Brazilian forests were destroyed and their labor replaced by African slaves whom the Portuguese brought to grow sugarcane.	The nonsedentary, plains-dwelling Pampas people were eventually wiped out. Much later, European immigrants took their place on the land.
Colonial Crucible 1600–1810	Because of its dense indigenous population and its rich silver mines, Mexico (or much of it) became a core area of Spanish colonization.	Profitable sugar plantations made the northeastern coast a core area of Portuguese colonization, but much of Brazil remained a poorer fringe.	Most of Argentina remained on the fringe of Spanish colonization until 1776, when Buenos Aires became the capital of a new Spanish viceroyalty.
Independence 1810–1825	The large peasant uprisings led by Hidalgo and Morelos frightened Mexican Creoles into a conservative stance on independence, which they embraced only in 1821.	The Portuguese royal family's presence kept Brazil relatively quiet as war raged elsewhere. Prince Pedro declared Brazilian independence himself in 1822.	Without massive populations of oppressed indigenous people or slaves to fear, Buenos Aires Creoles quickly embraced the May Revolution (1810).
Postcolonial Blues 1825–1850	The national government was frequently overthrown as liberals and conservatives struggled for control. The career of the caudillo Santa Anna represents the turmoil.	The stormy reign of Pedro I (1822–1831) was followed by the even stormier Regency (1831–1840). But the Brazilian Empire gained stability in the 1840s as coffee exports rose.	The conservative dictator Rosas dominated Buenos Aires (and therefore, much of Argentina) for most of these years, exiling the liberal opposition.
Progress 1850–1880	The great liberal Reform of the 1850s provoked the conservatives to support a foreign prince, Maximilian. The liberals, led by Juárez, emerged triumphant by the late 1860s.	Pedro II (1840–1889) cautiously promoted liberal-style progress while maintaining a strongly hierarchical system. Brazil ended slavery only in 1888.	Liberals took over after the fall of Rosas (1852), but not until the 1860s did they manage to unite all Argentina under one national government.
Neocolonialism 1880–1930	The dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz, called the Porfiriato (1876–1911), embodied neocolonialism in Mexico. Díaz invited international investment and used it to consolidate the Mexican state.	Brazil's First Republic (1889–1930) was a highly decentralized oligarchy built, above all, on coffee exports. The leading coffee-growing state, São Paulo, became dominant.	Buenos Aires and the surrounding areas underwent an agricultural and immigration boom of vast proportions. Various regional oligarchies ruled until the election of 1916.
Nationalism 1910–1945	The Mexican Revolution led Latin America's nationalist trend in 1910. The presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas (1934–1940) marked the high point of its accomplishments.	Getúlio Vargas, president 1930–1935, defined Brazilian nationalism in this period. In 1937, Vargas dissolved Congress and formed the authoritarian Estado Novo.	Argentina's Radical Party was driven by the ballot box. It displaced the landowning oligarchy but remained mired in traditional patronage politics.
Revolution 1945–1960	Mexico's revolution became more conservative and institutionalized (in the PRI) even as radical change accelerated elsewhere.	Populism and the electoral clout of organized labor (led first by Vargas, then by his heirs) energized Brazilian politics after World War II.	Juan and Evita Perón made the working class (1946–1955) a leading force in Argentine politics. Perón's followers remained loyal long after his exile.
Reaction 1960–1990	Overall, the PRI used its revolutionary imagery to absorb challenges from the left—except when it used bullets, as in the 1968 Tlatelolco massacre.	The Brazilian military overthrew the populist president Goulart in 1964 and ruled for twenty years in the name of efficiency and anticommunism.	Taking control in 1966, the Argentine military won its "dirty war" against Peronist guerrillas but bowed out in 1983 after losing to Britain in the Falklands war.

Pablo. Pablo was a little boy who lived at a Colombian boardinghouse in 1978, when I lived there, too. On hot afternoons, Pablo sometimes took a bath in the back patio of the house, the *patio de ropas*, where several women washed the boarders' clothes by hand. He was having a wonderful time on this particular afternoon, as happy as any little boy anywhere, despite the modest character of our dollar-a-day accommodations. Snapshot taken by the author at the age of twenty-two.

INTRODUCTION

Latin America was born in blood and fire, in conquest and slavery. So that is where to begin a brief introduction to Latin American history, cutting straight to the heart of the matter, identifying central conflicts, and not mincing words. It is precisely conquest and its sequel, colonization, that created the central conflict of Latin American history. Conquest and colonization form the unified starting place of a single story, told here with illustrative examples from many countries. We need a single story. Rapid panoramas of twenty national histories would merely produce dizziness. But, before beginning the story, we must ask whether so many countries can really share a single history. At first blush, one might doubt it. Consider everything that story would have to encompass. Consider the contrasts and paradoxes of contemporary Latin America.

Latin America is young—the average age is in the teens in many countries—with all the innovative dynamism that youth implies. And it is old—a land of ancient ruins, of whitewashed walls and red-tile-roofed hamlets continuously inhabited for a thousand years. Some Latin Americans still grow corn or manioc on small plots hidden among banana trees, carrying on fairly traditional rural ways of life. These days, however, most Latin Americans live in noisy, restless cities that make their so-

cieties far more urbanized than those of developing countries in Asia or Africa. Megacities like Buenos Aires, São Paulo, and Mexico City have far outstripped the ten-million mark, and many other capitals of the region are not far behind. Latin America is the developing world and also the West, a place where more than nine out of ten people speak a European language and practice a European religion. Most of the world's Roman Catholics are Latin Americans. And Latin America has deep roots in indigenous cultures, too. Most of the world's native Americans, by far, live south of the Rio Grande.

Today many Latin Americans live and work in circumstances not so different from those of middle-class people in the United States. The resemblance seems to have grown in recent years, as government after government throughout the region has liberalized its trade policies, facilitating the importation of cars, videocassette recorders, and fax machines. But the vast majority of Latin Americans are far from being able to afford such things. A family that owns any sort of car is much better off than most, but the great majority do have some access to a TV, if only at the house of a neighbor. So Brazilians and Chileans and Colombians who cannot have a car nevertheless live thoroughly immersed in Western consumer culture and, night after night, watch bright television commercials tailored to those able to emulate the lifestyle of the US middle class. It is for this reason, and not just because of proximity and poverty, that so many Latin Americans come to the United States.

Consider next the contrasts among countries. Brazil occupies half the South American continent, its population surging toward two hundred million. Most countries in Latin America are quite small, however. The populations of Panama, Puerto Rico, Paraguay, Nicaragua, Honduras, and El Salvador *added together* could fit in Mexico City or, for that matter, in Brazil's urban giant, São Paulo. Contrasts in other social indicators are

also vast. Argentina and Uruguay have adult literacy rates comparable to those in the United States and Canada, whereas 30 percent of the adult population in Guatemala cannot read. Costa Ricans live to a ripe old average age of seventy-seven, Bolivians to only sixty-three.

Now ponder the incredible ethnic complexity of Latin America. Most Mexicans are descended from indigenous people and from the Spanish who colonized Mexico. The Mexican celebration of the Day of the Dead—with its candy skulls, inviting people to "eat their own death"—embodies a mood so unfamiliar to people from the United States precisely because its intimate inspirations are largely non-Western. The capital of Argentina, on the other hand, is ethnically more European than is Washington DC. Not only does a larger percentage of the population descend exclusively from European immigrants, but they also maintain more European contacts, such as dual Argentine-Spanish citizenship and relatives born or still living in Italy or England. The modern cityscape of Buenos Aires is very self-consciously modeled on Paris, and French movies enjoy a popularity there unheard of in the United States.

The experience of racial diversity has been central to Latin American history. Latin America was the main destination of the millions of people enslaved and taken out of Africa between 1500 and 1850. Whereas the United States received about 523,000 enslaved immigrants, Cuba alone got more. All Spanish America absorbed around 1.5 million slaves, and Brazil by itself at least 3.5 million. From the Caribbean, down both coasts of South America, African slaves performed a thousand tasks, but most especially they cultivated sugarcane. Today their descendants form large parts of the population—about half, overall—in the two greatest historical centers of sugar production, Brazil and the Caribbean region.

Latin American countries are highly multiethnic, and all

sorts of racial combinations occur. Costa Rica, Uruguay, and Southern Brazil, like Argentina, have populations of mostly European extraction. Some countries, such as Mexico, Paraguay, El Salvador, and Chile, have very mixed, or *mestizo* populations of blended indigenous and European heritage. Other countries, such as Peru, Guatemala, Ecuador, and Bolivia, have large populations of indigenous people who remain separate from the mestizos, speak indigenous languages such as Quechua or Aymara, and follow distinctive customs in clothing and food. In many countries, black and white populations live in the coastal lowlands, with a more indigenous and white mix in the mountainous interior regions. Cuba, Puerto Rico, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Honduras, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela all follow this pattern. Brazil, the fifth largest country in the world, shows regional demographic variations on a grand scale—whiter in the south, blacker on the north coast, with indigenous influence still visible only in the large but sparsely populated Amazon basin.

To repeat the question, then, do these twenty countries, in all their startling variety, really have a single history? No, in the sense that a single story cannot encompass their diversity. Yes, in the sense that all have much in common. They experienced a similar process of European conquest and colonization. They became independent more or less at the same time. They have struggled with similar problems in a series of similar ways. Since independence, other clearly defined political trends have washed over Latin America, giving its history a unified ebb and flow.

In 1980, most governments of the region were dictatorships of various descriptions. In 2005, elected governments rule almost everywhere. And the globalizing energies of the 1990s have helped Latin America leave behind its 1980s "Lost Decade" of debt, inflation, and stagnation. Economic recovery has given prestige to the "neoliberal" (basically free-market) policies pursued by practically all governments in the region. But, as in much of the world, current free-market growth seems to make the rich richer, the middle class more middle-class, and the poor comparatively poorer. In Latin America, with a poor majority, that kind of growth can produce more losers than winners.

Winners and losers. Rich and poor. Conquerors and conquered. Masters and slaves. That is the old, old conflict at the heart of Latin American history. The conflict remained alive and well in the 1990s. To protest the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) between the United States and Mexico in the 1990s, Mayan rebels began an uprising that lasted years. These Mayan rebels took the name Zapatistas in memory of earlier rebels, many of them indigenous, who fought for land reform in the early 1900s. Meanwhile, middle-class Mexicans found that NAFTA reduced prices and increased the availability of urban consumer goods. The Zapatistas continued to protest, but the Mexican government kept NAFTA in place.

Aspects of this confrontation can be traced straight back to 1492, which is the purpose of this book. Here, in a nutshell, is the story: In the 1500s, Spanish and Portuguese colonizers imposed their language, their religion, and their social institutions on the indigenous Americans and enslaved Africans, people who labored for them in mines and fields and who served them, too, at table and in bed. After three centuries of this, however, things began to change (at least partly) with the introduction of two new political forces.

The first force was *liberalism*. Students should carefully separate this international meaning of liberalism from narrow US uses of the word. Liberalism, in this larger sense, comprises the core principles of the US constitution, principles shared by Republicans and Democrats alike. Historically, liberalism is a complex of values and practices that developed in the 1600s and 1700s, largely in France and England. Both 1776 and 1789

(marking the American and French Revolutions) are landmark dates in world liberalism. Liberalism favors progress over tradition, reason over faith, universal over local values, and the free market over government control. Liberalism also advocates equal citizenship over entrenched privilege and representative democracy over all other forms of government. Unfortunately, these last elements have sometimes been treated as icing on the cake, a finishing touch too often put off. Overall, the US experience with liberalism has produced prosperity. The Latin American experience with liberalism, on the other hand, has been more mixed.

Nationalism, the second new political force, eventually became liberalism's rough opposite. Liberalism and nationalism emerged together in the struggle for Latin American independence. Latin American nationalism—different in different countries but always built on similar themes—is deeply embedded in the region's historical experience. A portrait of nationalism will emerge gradually over the course of this book. One initial observation: People in the United States often regard nationalism (nationalism *elsewhere*, anyway) as negative. But Latin American nationalism has often provided an ideological self-defense against imperialism, a positive force for social equality, and an antidote to white supremacy.

At the turn of the twenty-first century, Europeans no longer ride on the backs of indigenous porters or in sedan chairs carried by African slaves. But everywhere, wealthier people still have lighter skin and poorer people still have darker skin—a sweeping but sadly accurate generalization that does have exceptions, and lots of them, but only of the kind that prove the rule. The conclusion is inescapable: The descendants of the Spanish, the Portuguese, and later European immigrants to Latin America still hold power, and the people who descend from slaves and subjugated indigenous people still work for them. Half a millennium later, this is clearly the enduring

legacy, rippling across the centuries, of the fact that African, European, and indigenous American people did not come together on neutral terms, like various pedestrians arriving simultaneously at a bus stop. Just how they did come together will be our concern in the next chapter. (Get ready for the blood and fire.)

This quick introduction is for US readers who are encountering Latin American history for the first time. Such readers need to know something about past US thinking on Latin America, because examples of it float freely in our popular culture and still influence our ideas.

Until roughly the 1930s, the interpreters of Latin America focused largely on race and culture, considering the Latin American varieties defective goods. "Hot-blooded Latins" with too much "nonwhite blood," according to this outmoded idea, simply lacked the self-discipline and the brains to make stable, democratic, prosperous societies. As Catholics, they lacked a "Protestant work ethic" (to make work not just a necessity, but a virtue), and their tropical climates further discouraged economic activity with debilitating heat and too many sensuous satisfactions—mangoes, papayas, and passion fruit—literally, as well as figuratively, growing on trees. In this version, Latin American history was racially, culturally, or environmentally "determined," and more or less inescapably so.

Between 1940 and 1970, racial and environmental determinism went out of style intellectually. US historians of Latin America replaced the former villains of the region's history (those pesky indigenous or African genes) with new bad guys: backward mentalities and traditional social structures that had to be "modernized" so that Latin America could advance along the developmental trail blazed by other countries. While "modernization theory" was an advance over racial and environmental determinism, it maintained existing stereotypes. Greedy

landowners and backward rulers took over from congenital laziness and tropical heat as explanations for Latin American problems. One thing remained the same: US explanations for the region's problems always began and ended with Latin America itself.

During the 1960s, however, most historians of Latin America inside and outside the region became convinced that earlier interpretations of its problems were a convenient way to blame the victim. Instead, they argued that Latin American economies stood in a permanently dependent position relative to the world's industrial powers, which were always at least one step ahead of them developmentally. "Dependency theory" thus located the origin of Latin American problems outside the region, partly in the action of colonizing powers, partly in the forces of economic globalization—although "globalization" was not yet the common term.

Dependency theory still provides useful insights, but it has lost its central place in Latin American studies. In the United States, interest in Latin America now focuses on matters that also preoccupy us at home. For example, as US citizens explore new ways of thinking about race, they are interested to learn that Latin Americans long ago embraced multiracial identities. People concerned with multiculturalism and "identity politics" in the United States find a valuable comparative perspective in Latin America. By the 1990s, both the humanities and the social sciences gave new prominence to the study of culture and, more specifically, to the way race, gender, class, and national identities are "constructed" in people's minds. To be male or female is a matter of genes, of biology, but the definition of a "real man" or a "real woman," for example, differs greatly from culture to culture. In matters of cultural and racial complexity, the world has much to learn from the Latin American experience.

Let us begin our story.

Columbus and the Arawaks. Until recently, we spoke of the "Discovery" of America, which means telling the story from the European point of view. Today, in memory of the people already here in 1492, we use a more neutral term—the "Encounter." This 1594 engraving by Theodore de Bry helped Europeans imagine Columbus (with a jaunty hat) encountering the Arawaks of the Caribbean for the first time. (Yes, those are the gift-bearing Arawaks looking more like figures from European art history than like indigenous Americans.) Courtesy of Bettmann/Corbis.

1400s	1492–1500	1500–1520	1520s–1530s	1548
Aztec and Inca Empires rise	Columbus and Cabral voyages	Slave trade under way	Defeat of the Aztecs and Incas	Royal government established in Brazil

I.

ENCOUNTER

Indigenous peoples inhabited almost every inch of the Americas when the Europeans and Africans arrived. Deserts and forests were less densely populated than fertile valleys, but no part of the continent lacked people who lived off the land and considered themselves part of it. The Encounter between native Americans and Europeans constitutes a defining moment in world history. Neither the Europeans' "Old World" nor the "New World," as they called the Americas, would ever be the same afterward. For Latin America, conquest and colonization by the Spanish and Portuguese created patterns of social domination that became eternal givens, like the deep and lasting marks of an original sin.*

The Iberian invaders of America were personally no more sinful than most. They came to America seeking success in the terms dictated by their society: riches, the privilege of being served by others, and a claim to religious righteousness. It makes little sense for us to judge their moral quality as human beings because they merely lived the logic of the world as they understood it, just as we do. The original sin lay in the logic, justified in religious terms,

*In Christian belief, Adam and Eve committed the original sin in the Garden of Eden, and all their descendants later inherited that sin.

that assumed a right to conquer and colonize. One way or another, the European logic of conquest and colonization soured the Encounter everywhere from Mexico to Argentina. The basic scenario varied according to the natural environment and the indigenous peoples' way of life when the European invaders arrived.

PATTERNS OF INDIGENOUS LIFE

The indigenous peoples of the Americas had adapted themselves to the land in many ways. Some were *nonsedentary*, an adaptation to difficult environments such as the northern deserts of Mexico, territory of the Chichimecas. Nonsedentary people led a mobile existence as hunters and gatherers, and movement kept their groups small and their social organization relatively simple. Often they roamed open plains. Arid plains occupy a wide swath of the interior of South America, then inhabited by tribes of hunters and gatherers. Not forests, neither were these exactly grasslands at the time of the Encounter. Instead, they bristled with various kinds of scrub that, as in the northeastern Brazilian area called the *sertão*, might be thorny and drop its leaves in the dry season. The Pampas peoples who gave their name to the Argentine grasslands were also non-sedentary.

Other indigenous Americans were forest dwellers. Hunting was important to them, too, but the abundant rainfall characterizing most forest environments allowed them to depend on agriculture in a way that the nonsedentary people could not, and so forest peoples were often *semisedentary*. Their agricultural practices were adapted to thin tropical soils. Thin soils? Yes: The exuberant vegetation of tropical forests produces a misleading impression. Outsiders think of these forests as "jungles," a word that suggests overpowering, unstoppable fertility. Thus, a 1949 geography text* speaks of "the relentless fecundity and savagery of the jungle." In fact, the breathtaking vitality of tropical forests resides not in the soil, but in living things, such as insects, trees, and the various tree-dwelling epiphytes that have no roots in the ground. Particularly in the great rain forest of the Amazon basin, the soils are of marginal fertility. Once cleared for agriculture, tropical forest soils produce disappointing yields after only a few years. Therefore, forest-dwelling indigenous peoples practiced "shifting cultivation," sometimes called "slash and burn" because of the way they cleared their garden plots. Semisedentary people built villages but moved them frequently, allowing old garden plots to be reabsorbed into the forest and opening new ones elsewhere. Shifting cultivation was thus a successful adaptation to one of the world's most challenging natural environments. Semisedentary societies, like the forest-dwelling Tupi, the best-known indigenous people of Brazilian history, organized themselves by tribes and by gender roles, but not by social class. Nor did they build empires.

*William Lytle Schurz, *Latin America: A Descriptive Survey* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1949), 28.

Finally, some indigenous people were *fully sedentary*. Permanent settlement, usually on high plateaus rather than in forests, made their societies more complex, and some constructed great empires, especially the fabled Aztec, Inca, and Maya empires. Not all sedentaries had empires, however. What all had in common were stationary, permanently sustainable forms of agriculture. For example, the capital of the Aztec Empire—more populous than Madrid or Lisbon—was fed by quite an ingenious method. Tenochtitlan was surrounded by lake waters on all sides, and in these waters the inhabitants of the city constructed garden platforms called *chinampas*. Alluvial deposits periodically renewed their fertility. The builders of the Inca Empire had their own elaborate form of sustainable agriculture involving terraced slopes, irrigation, and the use of nitrate-rich bird droppings, called *guano*, for fertilizer. A permanent agricultural base allowed the growth of larger, denser conglomerations

of people, the construction of cities, greater labor specialization—all sorts of things. Not all were good things. Whereas the non- or semisedentary people tended toward fairly egalitarian societies, in which outstanding individuals became leaders thanks to their personal qualities, fully sedentary groups were strongly stratified by class. Aztecs, Incas, and Mayas all had hereditary nobilities that specialized in war.

Note that the names Aztec and Inca refer to *empires* and not, strictly speaking, to their inhabitants at all. The rulers of the Aztec Empire were a people called the Mexicas, who gave their name to Mexico. The warlike Mexicas were relative newcomers to the fertile valley where they built their amazing city, Tenochtitlan, on a lake in the shadow of great volcanoes, but they inherited a civilization that had developed in Mexico's central highlands over thousands of years. For example, the gargantuan Pyramid of the Sun, the largest pyramid on earth, was built long before the Mexicas arrived. In the early 1400s, the Mexicas were only one among many groups who spoke Nahuatl, the common language of city-states in the region. But they conquered much of central Mexico during the next one hundred years. Tenochtitlan, the imperial capital, was a vast and teeming complex of towers, palaces, and pyramids that, according to the flabbergasted Spanish adventurer Bernal Díaz, rose like a mirage from the waters of the surrounding lake, linked to the shore by a series of perfectly straight and level causeways. "We were astonished and said these things appeared enchantments from a book of chivalry," wrote Díaz, describing the Spaniards' first sight of Tenochtitlan.

From an imposing capital city in a high Andean valley far to the south, the even larger Inca Empire had grown just as rapidly and recently as had the Aztec Empire. The Inca capital was called Cuzco, meaning "the navel of the universe." Today one speaks of "the Incas," but the name Inca actually referred only to the emperor and his empire. Ethnically, the people of

Cuzco were Quechua speakers, and they, too, drew on a long history of previous cultural evolution in the Andes. Cuzco's architectural marvels—earthquake-resistant masonry walls with interlocking stones—were an old trick among Andean builders. Heirs to ancient civilizations, the Aztec and Inca Empires were newer and more fragile than they appeared. The Mayas were less imperially inclined. Beginning much earlier than Tenochtitlan and Cuzco, various Maya city-states with imposing ceremonial centers held sway in Central America: Tikal, Copán, Tulum, Uxmal. In cultural attainments, such as art, architecture, and astronomy, the Mayas were second to none in America. But the Mayas did not create an empire to rival the Inca or Aztec empires. And since the high point of the Maya Empire, if such a term really applies, was many centuries before the Europeans arrived, it plays little part in our story.

At the moment of the Encounter, then, most of Latin America was inhabited by nonsedentary or semisedentary people, such as the Pampas of Argentina or the Tupis of Brazil. Today, few of their descendants remain. Instead, the large indigenous populations of Latin America descend from the sedentary farmers, many of whom lived under Aztec, Maya, or Inca rule until the Europeans arrived. Why did they survive when the others perished? The answer is complex, but it explains much about Latin America. It requires, first, some background about Spain and Portugal, joined under the geographical name *Iberia*.

ORIGINS OF A CRUSADING MENTALITY

In the 1490s, when Europeans clambered out of their cramped sailing vessels to face indigenous Americans for the first time, the greatest question was how each would react to the other. This was truly a cultural encounter, a clash of values and attitudes. The Spanish and Portuguese outlook, along

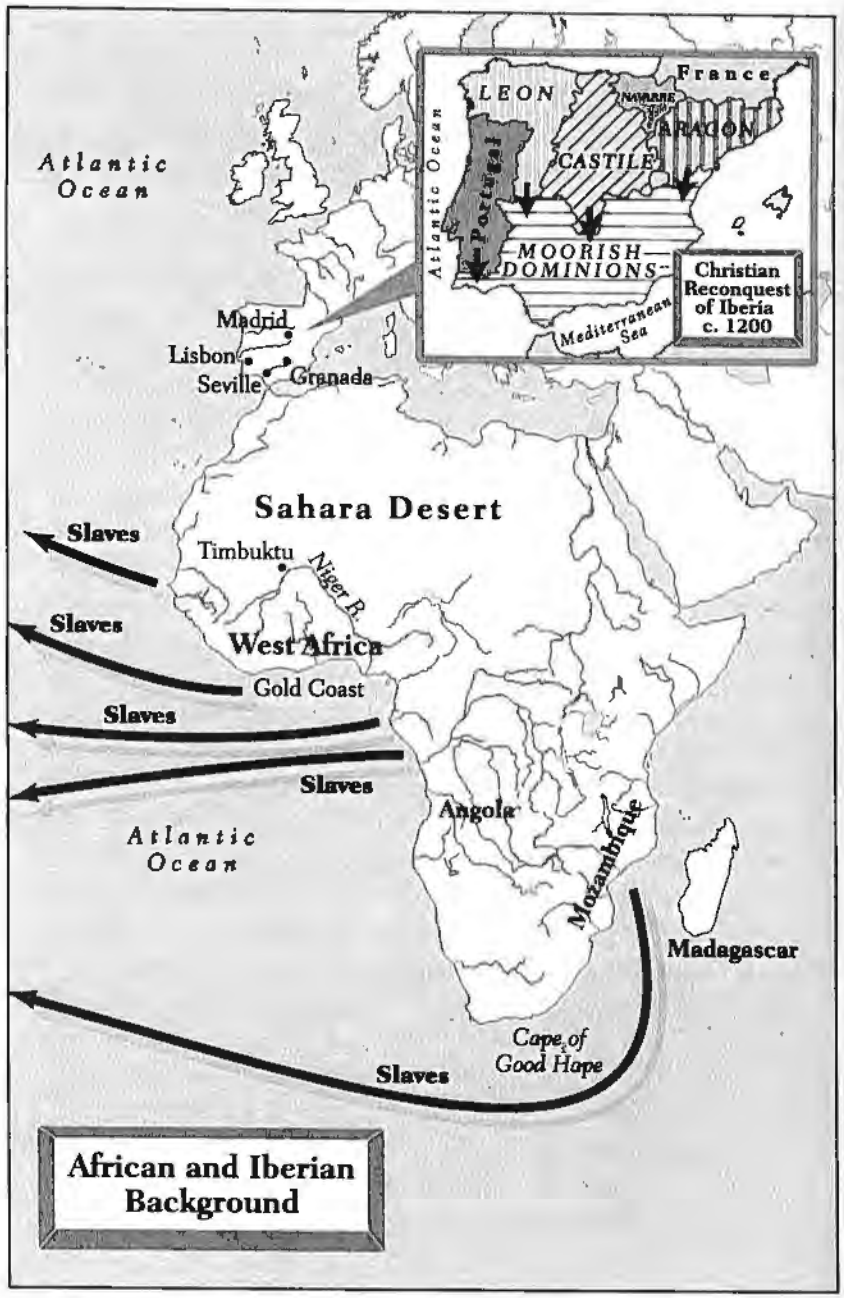
with their crusader rhetoric, had been shaped by the history of the Iberian Peninsula.

Iberia is a rugged, mountainous land. Parts of it are as green as Ireland (very green, indeed), but most of it is dry. On pictures taken from space, southern Spain appears the same color as nearby northern Africa. Historically, Iberia had been a bridge between Europe and Africa, and the narrow straits of Gibraltar separating the two continents had often been crossed, in both directions, by migrants and invaders. In the year 711, Muslims from northern Africa, called Moors, began to cross heading north and seized most of the peninsula from its Christian kings (whose predecessors generations earlier had taken it from the Romans, who, in turn, had seized it from the Carthaginians, and so on). For most of the next eight hundred years, Iberia contained multiethnic societies that intermingled but also fought one another. Both activities left their mark.

Along with the practical skills of the Islamic world, the Moors brought with them the learning of the Greeks and Romans, better preserved in the Middle East during Europe's Dark Ages. Christians who lived under Moorish rule or who traded with Moorish neighbors from the remaining Christian kingdoms learned a healthy respect for the cultural achievements of Islam. The Moors were better physicians, better engineers, and better farmers than the Iberian Christians, whose languages gradually filled with Arabic words for new crops (such as basil, artichokes, and almonds), new processes and substances (such as distillation and alcohol), new furnishings (such as carpeting), and new sciences (such as algebra and chemistry)—eventually totaling about a quarter of all modern Spanish and Portuguese words. Although speakers of Arabic, the Moors were darker than Arabs. Shakespeare's "black" character Othello, for example, is a Moor. So the Christians of Iberia had long exposure to a sophisticated and powerful people who did not look European. In addition, on the eve of

the Encounter, Iberia had one of the largest Jewish minorities in Europe, and Lisbon and Seville were already home to thousands of enslaved Africans. Not sympathetic to cultural and racial difference, the Iberians were nevertheless well acquainted with it. Spanish and Portuguese attitudes toward other people ranged from scorn to grudging admiration to sexual curiosity—dusky Moorish maidens figure erotically in Iberian folktales. The reign of Alfonso the Wise (1252–1284), a noted lawgiver, represents a high point in this tense, multicultural Iberian world. In the end, however, the peninsula's eight hundred years of multicultural experience dissolved in an intolerant drive for religious purity.

The Christian reconquest of Iberia powerfully shaped the institutions and mentality of the Spanish and Portuguese. Iberian Christians believed that they had found the tomb of Santiago, Saint James the Apostle, in the remote northwestern corner of the peninsula never conquered by the Moors. The Moor-slaying Santiago, pictured as a sword-swinging knight, became the patron saint of reconquest, and his tomb in Santiago de Compostela became Europe's greatest shrine. Reconquest brought the repeated challenges of annexing new territory and subjugating infidel populations. As they pushed the Moors south toward Africa over thirty generations, the reconquering Christians founded new urban centers as bastions of their advancing territorial claims, and individual warlords took responsibility for Christianizing groups of defeated Moors, receiving tribute and service from them in return. The same challenges and the same procedures would be repeated in America. Another effect of the reconquest was to perpetuate the knightly renown and influence of the Christian nobility. For this reason, the values of the nobles (fighting prowess, leisure, display of wealth) lost ground only slowly to the values of the commercial middle class (moneymaking, industry, thrift). In addition, the requirements of warfare led to a



concentration of political power to facilitate decisive, unified command. Two of the peninsula's many small Christian kingdoms gradually emerged as leaders of the reconquest. The most important by far was centrally located Castile, whose dominions eventually engulfed much of Iberia and, when united with the kingdoms of Aragon, León, and Navarre, laid the political basis for modern Spain. On the Atlantic coast, the king of Portugal led a parallel advance south and managed to maintain independence from Spain. Portugal was the first to complete its reconquest, reaching the southern coast of Iberia in the mid-1200s. On the Spanish side, the Moorish kingdom of Granada held out for two more centuries before finally succumbing to Castilian military power in 1492.

When Queen Isabel of Castile decided to bankroll the explorations of Christopher Columbus in the 1490s, she did so in hopes of enriching her kingdom, true enough. By sailing west, Columbus proposed to outflank a profitable Venetian-Arab monopoly on trade routes to Asia. But we should not underestimate the religious mystique that also surrounded the Spanish and Portuguese monarchs. Isabel was above all a Catholic monarch. Centuries of reconquest had created a true crusading mentality in Iberia, and the monarchies used this fervor to justify their increasingly absolute power. Moors who had accepted Christian rule, Jews whose families had lived in Iberia for close to a thousand years, anyone suspected of religious infidelity found themselves objects of a purge. Moors and Jews were forced to convert or emigrate. In fact, in the very year of the surrender of Granada, Isabel expelled tens of thousands of people from Spain because they refused to renounce the Jewish faith. And Moors and Jews who did convert remained subject to discrimination as "New Christians." The famous Spanish Inquisition was established to impose religious purity.

During the 1500s, Catholics and Protestants began fighting bitterly in western Europe, and the monarchs of a unified

Spain led the Catholic side, pouring prodigious resources into the war effort. Recall that in 1588 the Spanish Armada attempted to invade Protestant England. Overseas exploration also took on religious significance. The earlier Christian reconquest in Portugal allowed the Portuguese to extend their crusading activities into Africa ahead of Spain. As Portuguese ships edged down the coast of Africa during the 1400s, bringing back gold and slaves, they found religious justification in tales of a lost Christian kingdom that supposedly lay beyond the Sahara, waiting to be reunited with the rest of Christendom. Isabel's decision to fund the voyages of Columbus was Spain's bid to catch up with Portugal. Thus, the two Iberian monarchies, strengthened politically by the reconquest, became the first in Europe to sponsor major overseas exploration, and they arrived in the Western Hemisphere neck and neck.

Although the Spanish-sponsored expedition of Columbus arrived in America first, the difference was less than a decade. Let us start with the Portuguese, who had pioneered the navigational skills and naval technology needed to get there. The Portuguese colonization of Brazil exemplifies what happened when the Europeans encountered indigenous people who were not fully sedentary. An initial look at Brazil will help us appreciate the unique qualities of the very different, and far more famous, encounter of the Spanish with the fully sedentary peoples of indigenous Mexico and Peru.

THE BRAZILIAN COUNTEREXAMPLE

The first Portuguese fleet arrived in Brazil in 1500. Like Columbus a few years earlier, the Portuguese commander Pedro Alvares Cabral was bound for India, but in contrast to Columbus, he actually did get there. Cabral had no intention of sailing around the world. Instead, he was sailing from Portugal down the west coast of Africa and around its southern

tip into the Indian Ocean. To catch the best winds, he had swung far out into the South Atlantic on his southward voyage—so far out, in fact, that before turning back east he bumped into Brazil. Like Columbus, Cabral did not know exactly what he had found, but he knew that it was not India. After naming Brazil the "Island of the True Cross," Cabral hurried on to his original destination.

Brazil seemed unimportant to the Portuguese at the time. Just a few years earlier, they had succeeded in establishing a practical route to the fabled riches of South Asia—which Columbus had failed to do. For the rest of the 1500s, the Portuguese concentrated on exploiting their early advantage in the Far Eastern trade. Portuguese outposts elsewhere reached from Africa to Arabia, India, Indonesia, China, and Japan. Portuguese ships returned to Europe perilously overloaded with silks and porcelain, precious spices (pepper, nutmeg, cloves, and cinnamon), and Persian horses, not to mention gold and silver. Monopoly access to these riches made Portugal, for a time, a major player in world history. Brazil offered nothing comparable to India in the eyes of Cabral or his chronicler, Pero Vaz de Caminha. Caminha's curious description of what he saw on Brazilian shores presented a vision of a new Garden of Eden, paying particular attention to the fact that the indigenous people there wore no clothes: "They go around naked, without any covering at all. They worry no more about showing their private parts than their faces." The Portuguese sailors plainly found indigenous women attractive and inviting, but the only thing that seemed to have potential for sale in Europe was a red dye made from the "brazilwood" tree.

The name of this export product quickly replaced the original name of "Island of the True Cross," just as economics upstaged religion, overall, in the colonization of Brazil and Spanish America. Still, religious ideas must not be discounted. "Fathers, pray that God make me chaste and zeal-

invaders' horses—elsewhere something like a secret weapon for the Europeans, because they did not exist in America before the Encounter—could hardly move amid hanging vines, fallen trunks, and tangled roots. To those who know it, the forest provides countless opportunities to hide, to escape, and to ambush pursuers. Even after they were defeated, native Brazilians would melt into the limitless woodland beyond the plantations if not supervised constantly. In other words, extracting land and labor from semisedentary forest dwellers meant totally destroying their society and enslaving them. Most were likely to die in the process.

This is exactly what happened all along the coast of Brazil once the Portuguese began to establish sugar plantations. The king of Portugal, who viewed the indigenous people as potentially loyal subjects, did not approve of this wholesale annihilation, but his power in Brazil was surprisingly limited. In an attempt to settle two thousand miles of coastline on the cheap, the king had parceled out enormous slices to wealthy individuals, called captains, who promised to colonize and rule in his name. Significantly, the most successful were those who minimized conflict with the indigenous people. Pernambuco, on the very northeastern tip of Brazil, became the model sugar captaincy, partly because the family of its captain established an alliance by marriage with a local chief. Most of the captaincies failed, however. By the mid-1540s, indigenous rebellions threatened to erupt up and down the coast. On the splendid Bay of All Saints, the Tupinambá, a subgroup of the Tupi, had demolished one of the most promising settlements. So, in 1548, the Portuguese king stepped up the colonization of Brazil by appointing a royal governor and building a capital city, Salvador (also called Bahia), on that site.

Over the next half century, between the planters' efforts to enslave the Tupinambá people and certain disastrous efforts to protect them, the Tupinambá vanished from the area of the

sugar plantations. Particularly lethal were European diseases, against which indigenous people had no natural resistance; contagion ran rampant among Tupinambá slaves in the close quarters of plantations. Any gathering of native populations facilitated this "demographic catastrophe." The same ship that brought the first royal governor also brought the first black-robed Jesuit missionaries to Brazil. Famous for their intelligence and zeal, the Jesuits moved quickly to establish special villages where they gathered their indigenous flock to teach them Christianity and defend them from enslavement. Despite all good intentions, however, epidemic European diseases decimated the indigenous inhabitants of the Jesuit villages. On the plantations, too, indigenous slaves were fast disappearing because of disease and despair. To replace them, the Portuguese bought slaves in Africa and crowded them into the holds of Brazilian-bound ships. By 1600, Africans were rapidly replacing indigenous people as the enslaved workforce of Brazilian sugar plantations. The surviving Tupinambá either fled into the interior or intermarried and gradually disappeared as a distinct group. This pattern was to be repeated throughout Brazil as sugar cultivation spread.

AFRICA AND THE SLAVE TRADE

In several parts of Latin America, Africans totally replaced indigenous laborers in the 1600s. How were so many people enslaved and taken out of Africa? Why did they survive to populate Brazil and the Caribbean while people like the Tupi died? Now that Africans have entered our story—never to leave it—we should consider the part they played in the Encounter.

The Encounter brought together people from three continents to create new societies, but as we have seen, the Africans and the Iberians were not total strangers. In fact, the first slaves to arrive in America were Africans who had already spent time

as slaves in Iberia itself. Europeans and Africans had more in common with each other than with indigenous Americans. Along with Europe and Asia, Africa formed a part of what Europeans called the Old World. For tens of thousands of years, the indigenous people of the New World had been isolated, and thus protected, from the diseases circulating in the Old World. Hence their utter vulnerability to European diseases. Africans, on the other hand, were not so susceptible. Old World trade routes and migrations had already exposed them to these microbes. Similarly, indigenous Americans had never seen the horses, cattle, sheep, pigs, chickens, and other domestic animals brought by the Iberians, but Africans already raised the same animals, and some Africans were skilled horsemen. Although indigenous people fashioned intricate jewelry out of gold and silver, they did nothing with iron. Africans, on the other hand, were experienced ironworkers and even produced high-quality steel. Then too, most Africans were fully sedentary agriculturists and therefore closer than the semi-sedentary Tupi to the pattern of Iberian rural life. Finally, indigenous people like the Tupi had every reason to expect the worst when captured and enslaved, because among the Tupi, slaves were frequently sacrificed and sometimes eaten. Africans brought a different set of expectations to the experience of slavery.

Slavery was everywhere in African societies, a social institution basic to economic life. In Africa, as in Iberia and indigenous America, slaves were most often war captives, but with an important difference. In Africa, captives did not necessarily remain eternally degraded servants, and often their children were not born slaves. Eventually, African forms of slavery allowed full social integration of the slaves' descendants. In some African societies, slaves might even attain high status and elite privileges as administrators. Buying and selling slaves at markets, on the other hand, was a European tradition. The

African slave *trade* per se began to take on massive proportions only after the Portuguese arrived in the 1400s.

Along the African coast, the Portuguese established trading centers stocked with silks, linens, brass kettles, and eventually rum, tobacco, guns, and gunpowder, but most especially with bars of iron for metalworking. African traders brought long lines of slaves, chained together at the neck, to these embarkation centers. Most had been captured in wars between African states, and eventually the profits of the trade of war captives provided a new stimulus to warfare. Slaving vessels might also stop anywhere along the coast to buy captives from local traders. Meanwhile, the Portuguese sought ideological justification in the notion that buying such captives to Christianize them was actually doing them a favor. The Board of Conscience in Lisbon cleared the procedure as long as the Portuguese slavers were supposedly "rescuing" the captives of cannibals, or enslaving certified practitioners of human sacrifice, or engaging in some form of certified "just war." In practice, however, such legal distinctions mattered little to slave traders. They bought whoever was for sale, willy-nilly, with a special preference for healthy young men, and then packed them into the holds of slave ships where 15 to 20 percent on average would die on the voyage. Probably more than a million people died in the passage across the Atlantic alone. Early exploration of the African coast led to about a century of Portuguese dominance in the slave trade. Portuguese slavers supplied human cargo to Spanish American, as well as Brazilian, buyers.

We have few firsthand accounts of what being human cargo was like, although around twelve million people over four centuries had the experience. One exception is the account of Olaudah Equiano, written in the 1700s, after the trade had been underway for more than two centuries. Equiano describes his confusion and despair when arriving aboard ship to encounter the claustrophobic horror of the dark, foul, and

narrow cargo spaces. Not until he found a few other people who spoke his language did Equiano learn that he was being taken to work in the white man's land. Enslaved Africans came to Latin America in diverse groups, speaking many different languages, originating in three widely separated areas of Africa.

The first area to be affected by the slave trade was West Africa, from Senegal to Nigeria. Here a coastal belt of tropical forest gives way, farther inland, to savanna (the Sudanic belt) and eventually to the beginnings of the Sahara desert. This is a special part of Africa, traversed in a great arc by the Niger River, the cradle of many cultural developments. Beginning about five thousand years ago, Bantu-speaking people set out from the area around the mouth of the Niger River in great migrations, spreading their culture east and south over much of the continent. Along the course of the Niger, a thousand years ago, arose kingdoms famous in Europe for their wealth in gold. Enough of that gold had trickled north across the Sahara in camel caravans to excite the interest of medieval Europeans, and the Portuguese undertook their exploration of the African coast partly to find the source of the precious flow. Communication across the Sahara also brought Islam to West Africa. Before the slave trade, the most powerful kingdoms arose inland on the upper Niger, where stood the fabulous walled city of Timbuktu, with its bustling markets and university. In 1324, when Mansa Musa, king of Mali, made a pilgrimage to Mecca (as devout Muslims try to do at least once in their lives), his caravan carried enough gold to cause oscillations in currency values in the areas it crossed. The fatal attraction of precious metals first brought the Portuguese to "the Gold Coast" (modern Ghana), but the value of human cargoes from this region eventually far outstripped the golden ones. The British, the French, and the Dutch eventually established their own trading stations, finally breaking the Portuguese monopoly on the West African coast.

Two other areas of Africa remained more or less monopolized by the Portuguese: Angola and Mozambique, where coastal stretches of grassy, open land allowed the Portuguese to penetrate far inland and actively colonize, in contrast to their more limited West African trading strategy. As a result, Portuguese remains the language of government in Angola and Mozambique today. These regions became chief sources for the slave trade only after the Portuguese were edged out of West Africa by competition from other European countries. But that gets ahead of our story.

For now, having observed how Portugal's exploration of the African coast and its clash with the semisedentary Tupi laid the ethnic and demographic foundations for a black-and-white Brazil, let us return to the sedentary societies of Mexico and Peru, where Aztec and Inca rulers boasted astonishing golden treasures.

THE FALL OF THE AZTEC AND INCA EMPIRES

While Brazil remained a backwater in the 1500s, Mexico and Peru drew the Spaniards like powerful magnets, becoming the two great poles of Spanish colonization. For three centuries, Mexico and Peru would remain the richest and most populous places in the Americas, but first their indigenous rulers had to be defeated. The Aztec and Inca emperors commanded tens of thousands of warriors and vast material resources. Their precipitous defeat at the hands of a few hundred Spanish adventurers is unparalleled in world history. Several circumstances conspired to make it possible.

In 1519, when they first set foot in Mexico, the Spaniards already knew a lot about America. After all, a full generation had passed since they began settling the Caribbean islands where Columbus made landfall: Hispaniola (today divided between Haiti and the Dominican Republic) and Cuba. The initial

Spanish experience there with the semisedentary Arawak people, who were not so different from the Tupi, had begun with trading but rapidly degenerated into slaving. The outcome was similar to what had transpired on the Brazilian coast. Disease and abuse decimated the Caribbean's indigenous people within a generation. Soon they would cease to exist altogether, to be replaced by African slaves.

The Spanish invaders were not soldiers but undisciplined adventurers seeking private fortunes. The first to arrive laid claim to the indigenous inhabitants and, eventually, the land, leaving little for the next wave of adventurers. These had to conquer somewhere else. Operating from the Caribbean bases, Spanish newcomers began to explore the coast of Central and South America, crossed Panama, and found the Pacific Ocean, making contact with many different indigenous groups and beginning to hear rumors of glittering, mysterious empires in the mountains beyond the Caribbean. So it was that, by the time he found the Aztec Empire, the Spanish leader Hernán Cortés had already been dealing with indigenous Americans for fifteen years.

In the conquest of Mexico, no other single Spanish advantage outweighed the simple fact that Cortés more or less knew what was happening, whereas Mexica leaders, including Moctezuma, the Aztec emperor, had no earthly idea who, or what, the Spaniards might be. For centuries the story has circulated that Moctezuma suspected the Spaniards were gods from Aztec mythology, that Cortés himself could be Quetzalcoatl, a white-skinned deity whose coming had been foretold in prophecy. That story now appears to be incorrect, however, because it originated several decades after the arrival of the Spaniards. Although repeated a thousand times, it should now be corrected. On the other hand, the list of never-before-seen things that the Spanish brought was long and intimidating: tall-masted sailing ships, ferocious attack dogs, horses of monstrous size, cannon belching fire and thunder, steel blades,

and body armor. The Mexica had never seen Europeans or Africans (who were always present among the conquistadors), and had no prior clue that such strange-looking people even existed. Logically, they regarded these outlandish invaders as beings from outside the world they knew. Searching for a name to call the Spaniards, the Mexica used the Nahuatl word *teul*, which at the time was routinely translated into Spanish as *dios*, or "god." Since the word *teul* could be used for a spirit or demon, it did not imply adoration, but it clearly implied supernatural power. The Spaniards' humanity, vulnerability, and hostile intentions did not become clear until Cortés and his expedition had been welcomed into Tenochtitlan, where they took Moctezuma hostage. By the middle of 1521, smallpox and indigenous allies had helped Cortés annihilate Tenochtitlan, and the Aztec Empire as a whole quickly collapsed.

It took more fighting to overthrow the Inca Empire. Still, the stunningly rapid and complete Spanish triumph in both cases calls for explanation. Once again, experience was on the Spanish side. The leader of the Peruvian expedition, Francisco Pizarro, was another seasoned conquistador who, like Cortés (his distant relative), employed a tried-and-true maneuver, something the Spanish had been practicing since their first Caribbean encounters with indigenous people, when he treacherously took the Inca ruler Atahualpa hostage in 1532. Then, too, the Spanish advantage in military technology must be recalled. Horses, steel, and (less importantly) gunpowder gave the invaders a devastating superiority of force, man for man, against warriors armed only with bravery and stone-edged weapons. Spanish weaponry produced staggering death tolls. At one point, the Spanish under Cortés massacred ten times their number in a few hours at the Aztec tributary city of Cholula. Spanish military advantages came from their Old World heritage, which included gunpowder from China and horses from Asia. Old World microbes were Spanish allies, too.

Imagine the horror of the Incas when Pizarro captured the Inca emperor, Atahualpa. Atahualpa had arrived with an army numbering in the tens of thousands; Pizarro had only 168 Spaniards. Atahualpa had reason to be overconfident, and he walked into an ambush. Pizarro's only hope was a smashing psychological victory, so he drew on another tried-and-true Spanish tactic, one repeatedly used in Mexico: the surprise slaughter of indigenous nobles within an enclosed space. At Pizarro's invitation, Atahualpa's multitude of followers entered a square where the Spaniards had hidden cannons. Without warning, the cannons fired into the crowd at close range, creating gruesome carnage. Then Spaniards on horses charged into the mass of bodies, swinging their long steel blades in bloody arcs, sending heads and arms flying, as no indigenous American weapon could do. Meanwhile, surprise and armor protected Pizarro's men. Not one of them died that day, yet they succeeded in taking Atahualpa prisoner, killing and maiming thousands of his men in the process. Atahualpa's people brought mountains of gold to ransom him, but Pizarro had him executed anyway. Depriving the indigenous defenders of leadership was part of the "divide-and-conquer" strategy.

Neither the Incas nor the Aztecs could have been defeated without the aid of the Spaniards' indigenous allies. In Mexico, Aztec taxes and tributes had weighed heavily on the shoulders of other Nahuatl-speaking city-states. Tributary city-states had furnished sacrificial victims for the Aztec state religion, the ideology that glorified Aztec imperial expansion and bathed the pyramids of Tenochtitlan in the blood of hundreds of thousands. As a result, Cortés found ready alliances, most notably with the nearby indigenous city of Tlaxcala, an old rival of Tenochtitlan. Eager to end Aztec rule, rival cities sent thousands of warriors to help Cortés.

Pizarro, too, used indigenous allies to topple the Inca Empire. Unlike the Aztecs, the Incas had imposed a centralized

power that broke up rival city-states and resettled their populations. While the Aztecs had merely imposed tributes, the Incas administered, building roads and storage facilities and garrisons. Like the Aztecs, and like the Spanish and Portuguese, too, the Incas had a state religion that provided an ideological justification for empire. Unfortunately for the Incas, however, both the reigning emperor and his successor had died suddenly in the epidemic that, advancing along trade routes ahead of Pizarro, ravaged the Inca ruling family, creating a succession crisis just before the Spanish arrival. Disastrously, an Inca civil war had begun. Atahualpa led one side and his brother Huascar the other. The wily Pizarro was able to play the two sides against each other, achieving the ultimate victory for himself. Each side in the Inca civil war saw the other as the greatest threat. How could they know that Pizarro's tiny expedition was only the entering wedge of vast colonizing forces beyond the Atlantic?

Aztec and Inca treasures soon attracted Spaniards by the thousands. The defeat of Aztec and Inca power was only the first step in establishing Spanish dominion over the mainland. Now the Spanish had to colonize, to assert effective control over large populations and sprawling territories, over the civilizations that underlay the Aztec and Inca empires and that remained in place after their destruction. This was a gradual process, requiring several generations and contrasting markedly with the pattern of colonization on the Brazilian coast.

THE BIRTH OF SPANISH AMERICA

Even before the dust of imperial collapse had settled in Mexico and Peru, the Spanish began to parcel out the plunder of conquest. Some was treasure captured from indigenous royalty, but most took a form called *encomienda*, whereby the conquerors were rewarded with people. In this system, indigenous people were "entrusted" (the meaning of the word *encomienda*)

to each conqueror, who had the responsibility of Christianizing them and the privilege of making them work for him. Encomiendas of conquered Moors had been awarded aplenty during the Christian reconquest of Iberia, so it was a familiar system to the Spaniards. Conquerors who received encomiendas became much like European nobles, able to live from the labor of serflike farmers who delivered part of their crops as regular tribute. For indigenous farmers accustomed to paying tribute to imperial masters, the situation was familiar, too. Most often, the same city-states, villages, and clans that had once paid tribute to the Aztecs or Incas now paid tribute to the new Spanish overlords instead. Calamitous, repeated epidemics during the 1500s, comparable in severity to the Black Death of medieval Europe, reduced native populations to a fraction of their former size. But, unlike what occurred in the Caribbean or along the Brazilian coast, indigenous villages did not disappear from Mexico and Peru.

Whereas Tupi society was swept away by disease and replaced by Brazilian sugar plantations, the sedentary farming societies of central Mexico and the Andes survived, shaken but intact, for the Spanish to take over. The Spanish normally created encomiendas out of already existing communities with their own indigenous nobles, whom the Spanish called *caciques*.* The Spanish conquerors cultivated relations with these nobles, sometimes marrying into their families. Gradually, however, Spanish conquest undercut the defeated warrior nobility of Aztec and Inca days, and indigenous people adopted Spanish-style village governments. In Mexico, village officials with Spanish titles conducted their business and kept written records in Nahuatl. Hundreds of Spanish words came into Nahuatl, of course, indicating the powerful impact of con-

*_Cacique_ is actually an Arawak word that the Spanish adopted in the Caribbean and later applied elsewhere.

quest, but the basic structure of the language survived, preserving a distinctly indigenous worldview.

Mexico officially became "New Spain," but it was really two societies being grafted together, mostly by Spanish men and indigenous women. Spanish women, like Portuguese women in Brazil, were few. In the early years of the Encounter, Spanish men in America outnumbered Spanish women roughly nine to one. So, within a few years, indigenous women and Spanish men became the parents of a legion of mestizo children, exactly as anticipated by Pero Vaz de Caminha's letter from Brazil. Malinche had Cortés's baby soon after the fall of Tenochtitlan.

What an intriguing figure is Malinche, a Spanish deformation of her indigenous name, Malintzin. She was one of twenty female slaves given to Cortés as he sailed up the Mexican coast seeking the Aztec Empire in 1519. She already spoke Maya and Nahuatl, and she learned Spanish in months. This astoundingly quick-witted and self-possessed sixteen-year-old girl became inseparable from Cortés and was instrumental in the capture of Moctezuma. Understandably, her life has been read as a romantic novel, but also as a betrayal of Mexico. It was neither. As for romance, Cortés summoned his Spanish wife, who was waiting in Cuba, then gave Malinche a bit of property and turned her away. As for betraying Mexico, that country did not yet exist, unless one refers to the Aztec Empire, and Malinche had good reason to hate the Aztecs. Although Nahuatl was her first language, her own family had sold her into slavery to Mayas, which is how she learned that language. Malinche was more betrayed than betrayer. Cortés married her to one of his men, with whom she had a second child. She died, not yet twenty-five, only a few years later.

The Aztec princess Techichpotzín, baptized Isabel, was the daughter of Moctezuma. She became "Isabel Moctezuma," exemplifying the woman of indigenous nobility who could attract a Spanish husband because of her wealth. As the

legitimate heiress of Moctezuma's personal fortune and the recipient of a desirable encomienda, Isabel attracted more than her share of husbands. Before her three Spanish husbands, she was married to two different leaders of the Aztec resistance in the last days of Tenochtitlan. She outlived four of her spouses, bore seven mestizo children, adapted to her new life, and became a model of Catholic devotion and a benefactor of religious charities. She lived to the respectable age of forty.

As the Aztec and Inca nobility declined and the number of Spanish women increased, fewer and fewer Spanish men married indigenous women. Although Spanish men continued fathering unnumbered mestizo children, most were illegitimate and inherited little or nothing from their Spanish fathers. These children were "people-in-between": not Europeans or Africans or indigenous Americans. Mestizo children were second-class people in the Spanish world, poor relations, if recognized at all. Malinche's son by Cortés, Martín, became virtually a servant of his half-brother, also named Martín, Cortés's son by his second Spanish wife.

Spanish women usually arrived after the fighting was over, but that was not always the case. A woman named Isabel de Guevara helped conquer Argentina and Paraguay in the 1530s and 1540s. Years later, in an attempt to gain an encomienda for her part in the conquest, she wrote a letter to the Spanish Crown, describing how the women of the expedition took over when famine killed two-thirds of their party. As the men fainted from hunger, wrote Guevara, the women began "standing guard, patrolling the fires, loading the crossbows . . . arousing the soldiers who were capable of fighting, shouting the alarm through the camp, acting as sergeants, and putting the soldiers in order."

The most famous "conquistadora" of all was Inés Suárez, a woman of thirty when she came to America in 1537, alone,

looking for her husband. She searched first in Venezuela, then in Peru, where she found her husband already dead. Suárez then became the mistress of the conqueror of Chile, legendary for her actions during an indigenous attack there. Her plan was to terrorize the attackers by throwing them the heads of seven captured chiefs, and her most famous deed was to cut off the first captive's head herself. Despite (what was regarded as) her heroism, the conqueror of Chile, who had a wife in Spain, put Inés Suárez aside when he became governor of the new territory.

Favorable marriages outweighed even extraordinary ability in the lives of women. The marriage contract was a pillar of the Spanish social structure, crucial to the distribution of property. Marriage was a religious sacrament, and religious conformity was serious business in the Spanish Empire.

Spanish conquest had meant an earthly and a spiritual conquest, the defeat of the old gods. Spanish churchmen arrived to teach Catholic doctrine. They searched insistently for sacred objects that the indigenous people still preserved, hidden away, from their old religions—"idols," in Catholic eyes. The priest and the holder of the encomienda stood side by side in many areas, as the only two representatives of Spanish authority. As had occurred during the Christianization of Europe centuries earlier, the conversion of kings (or, in America, caciques) brought whole communities into the church at once. In their haste to baptize, missionaries perfunctorily sprinkled holy water on indigenous people in mass ceremonies that did little to teach them Christianity. Still, the baptized could remember the imposition of other imperial state religions, for that was a pattern familiar from before the Encounter. Among sedentary peoples, the Spanish made a habit of erecting churches on sites already sacred to indigenous deities. The people of Tenochtitlan cannot have been surprised to see Spanish conquerors level the Aztec Great

Pyramid and construct their cathedral on practically the same spot.

The fully sedentary people of central Mexico and Peru survived the Encounter infinitely better than did semisedentary people such as the Tupi. Still, the Encounter had a dire impact on settled agricultural societies, too. The Spanish often demanded more tribute than had indigenous overlords. For example, Andean villages had provided a labor draft called the *mita* to their Inca rulers, but after the conquest mita laborers were forced to do something new—toil in the shafts of deep silver mines, sometimes locked down for days. In addition, epidemic European diseases continued to decimate the indigenous population.

By the end of the 1500s, the basic contours of Latin American ethnicities were established. American, European, and African genes and cultures had begun to mix, creating rich potential for human diversity, but the violent and exploitative nature of the Encounter would sour the mix for centuries to come. In Brazil and the Caribbean region, Europeans and Africans took the place of the indigenous populations that were virtually wiped out. In Mexico and Peru, by contrast, Nahuatl- and Quechua-speaking societies survived to be gradually transformed. One way or the other, the original sin of Latin American history—the festering social injustice at the core—had done its durable damage. How would more equitable, more inclusive communities ever emerge from the smoking ruins of conquest? The next step, systematic colonization, the creation of entire social systems geared to serve the interests of distant masters in Europe, only made matters worse.