

NEGRO SLAVES IN EARLY COLONIAL MEXICO

I the widow Catalina Vélez Rascón do hereby promise to pay to you, Diego de Villanueva, alderman of this City of los Angeles, 1,100 pesos of pure gold . . . for six slaves (*piezas de esclavos*), to wit: the Negro Lorenzo, *ladino*, born on the Island of Tercera (in the Azores), his wife Antonia, Negress, born in Biáfara, with a young mulatto daughter of hers named María, plus a Negro called Manuel, born in Zapa, and a Negress Catalina, born in Portugal, with a young Negro daughter of hers named Paula, making six slaves in all, all of whom were disposed of in public auction as part of the estate of Francisco Muñoz, deceased, in two lots, and were sold to my son-in-law Don Juan de Zúñiga, bidding on my behalf. . . . Given in this city of los Angeles on the 16th day of July in the year of the birth of Our Savior Jesus Christ 1554.¹

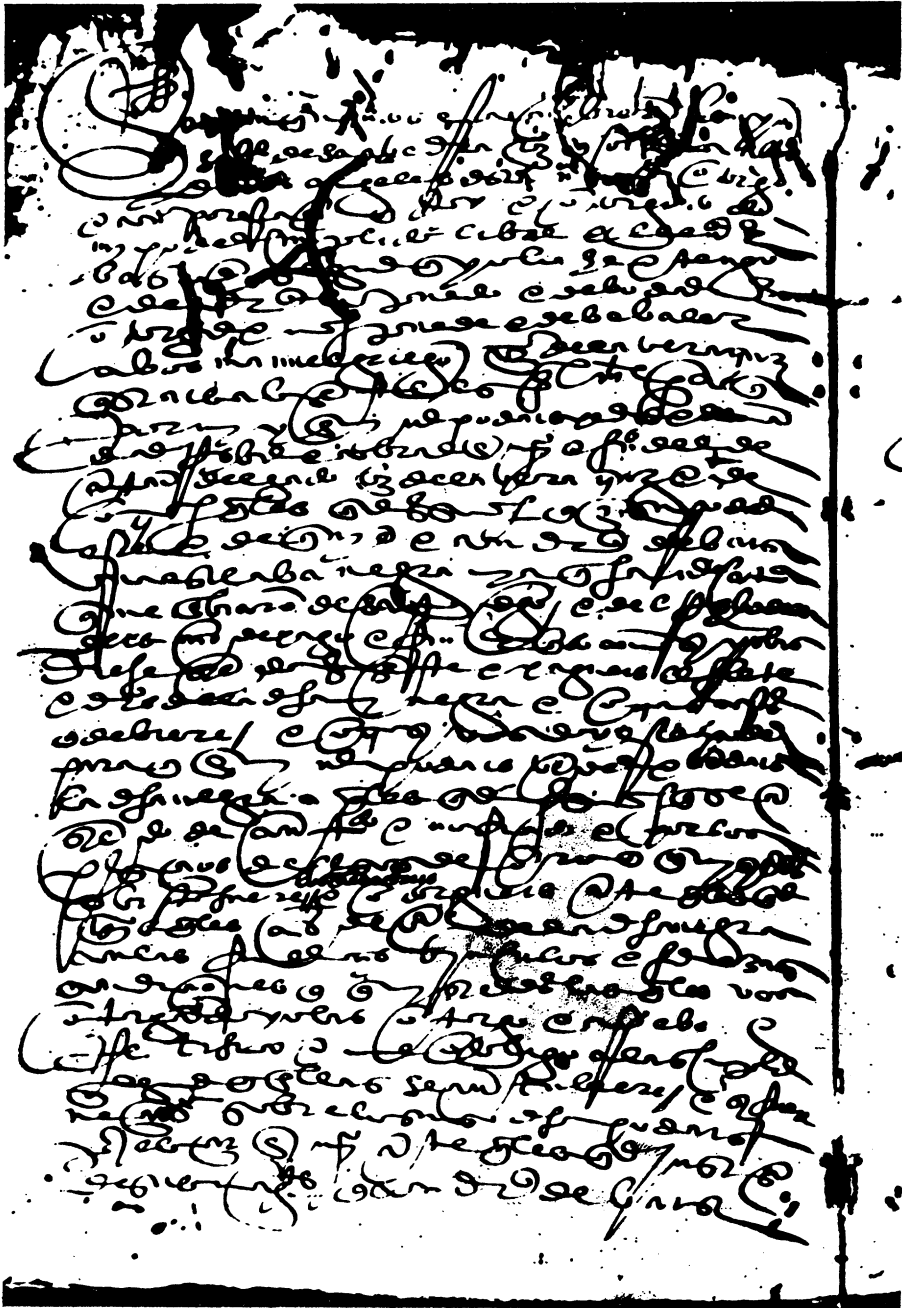
THE notarial archive of the Mexican city of Puebla de los Angeles, virtually complete from 1540 on, is a treasure-house of information about social and economic life in the early colony. Many of its earliest documents are, however, in deplorable physical condition, unindexed and chronologically unorganized, which makes them extremely difficult and time-consuming to consult. In order to remedy this condition and make the archive more accessible to scholars both in Mexico and elsewhere, I have indexed and extracted from microfilm the substance of over 1,600 documents executed between 1540 and 1555. These will probably appear in a two-volume collection published by the Editorial Jus in Mexico City. The documents make fascinating reading. There are wills, dowries, contracts, law-suits, partnerships, promissory notes, rentals, powers of attorney, as well as bills of sale itemizing every imaginable kind of property from real estate to livestock to produce to general merchandise.²

Though slavery, both Indian and Negro, is only one of many topics upon which the collection can shed new light, I propose in this short article to explore what the local documents of the period can tell us about Negro slavery in Puebla between 1540 and 1556.

Concerning the daily treatment of Negro slaves, the documents are

¹ A translation of Doc. No. 546 in Vol. II of our forthcoming collection entitled *Indice y extractos del Archivo de Protocolos de Puebla (1540-1556)*, henceforth to be referred to simply as the *APP*.

² For further information about the archive and its contents, see Boyd-Bowman, "Early Spanish Trade with Mexico: A Sixteenth Century Bill of Lading," in *Studies on Latin America: A Miscellany (Buffalo Studies, Vol. IV, Aug. 1968)*, pp. 45-56.



A sample notarized document from the Puebla archive, dated April 29, 1553, the substance of which is translated in the footnote on the following page. As can be readily seen from the plate, many of the documents have been attacked by bookworms and mildew.

of course silent, but the records frequently mention their names, state of health, approximate age, sex, knowledge of Spanish, physical defects (if any), temperament, occupational skills (if any) and the prices paid for them. There are also some interesting references to their tribal origins in Africa.

The Negro slave trade in mid-sixteenth century Puebla does not appear to have been very heavy, to judge by the small number of individuals, (less than 240) documented over a 16-year period. This is due in part to the fact that Indian slave labor was plentiful right up until 1542 when the controversial royal decrees (the *Nuevas Leyes*) prohibited the enslavement of Indians except as punishment for rebellion against Spanish rule. Ironically the suppression of the great uprising in Jalisco in 1541-2 produced a flood of such 'legitimate slaves' (*esclavos de buena guerra*) and several Indians from Jalisco were sold in Puebla in the years immediately following.

Moreover in Mexico as elsewhere the use of Negro labor was less marked in the temperate highlands than in tropical coastal regions where sugar and cotton plantations required a cheap and abundant labor supply. However, our tabulation shows a noticeable rise in sales in the 1550's, which suggests that the trade in Negro slaves was starting to increase even in Puebla at about this time.

From our detailed records of the period it is clear that Puebla's economy depended in its early years upon the following agricultural staples: wool, hides, wheat, corn and cochineal (a dye purchased from the Indians in the surrounding countryside). There were also some nearby silver mines of no great importance, a few local industries like candy-making (which has survived to this day), weaving mills for homespun and woolens, and a few tanneries, stone-quarries and lime-kilns. None of these activities required the use of Negro slaves in any large numbers. Apart from agriculture itself the city's chief source of prosperity was commerce with Spain and commerce with Mexico City, Oaxaca, Guatemala, Campeche and Yucatán. All inter-city transporta-

"I, Sebastián de Saavedra, a citizen of Los Angeles, empower you, Manuel Griego, citizen of Veracruz, absent, to reclaim from Antón Delgado, citizen of Veracruz, . . . a female Negro slave of mine called Catalina, whom they shipped to me from Santo Domingo, and to issue an appropriate receipt for her in my name, likewise to pay the freight charge and duties on the said Negress and to make any other payment that may be owing, and I further empower you to sell the said Negress to anybody you please, provided it be for cash and not for credit. . . .

"Executed in this city of Los Angeles in New Spain on the 19th of April of the year of our Lord 1553." (*APP*, II, Doc. No. 312.)

tion of goods was by mule-train or trains of pack-horses numbering from twelve to thirty animals, and no pack-train (*recua* or *harría*) was complete without the one to three Negro slaves who went with it as a matter of course and were sold as part of it whenever it changed hands. In Puebla almost one half of all the Negro slaves of known occupation were employed as teamsters and another quarter of them worked on the outlying sheep and cattle ranches.

The information given about a slave at the time of his sale varied greatly. Apart from the indications of tribal origin mentioned earlier, we find occasional references to skin-color (*atezado*, *prieto*, *pardo*, *moreno*, *mulato*, *loro*, *color de membrillo cocho*, literally 'the color of stewed quince'), age (most slaves sold appear to have been under 25, with not a few of them children), and degree of acquaintance with Spanish. Of 167 Negro slaves (126 males and 41 females) who actually changed hands in Puebla between 1542 and 1556, 46 were described as *bozales* (i. e., fresh from Africa with no knowledge of Spanish), another 33 as *ladinos* (i. e., with a fair command of Spanish), and yet another 5 as in between (*entre ladino y bozal*). The linguistic skills of the remaining 83 were not specified, but it is safe to assume that they were not *ladinos*, or else the fact would surely have been mentioned as an asset increasing their sales value.

The prices for Negro slaves, almost invariably quoted in terms of *pesos de oro de minas*,³ ranged from a low of 65 for a male sold in 1545 to a high of 495 for another male in 1549. Small children cost 55 pesos or less. In the peak years of 1544-46 the average price for both males and females was about 105.⁴ *Ladinos* brought slightly higher prices than *bozales*, as did those with occupational skills.

Whenever a Negro slave changed hands, the seller was required to declare any major defects that might affect the slave's market value.

"I do sell to you, Cristobal de Morales, a slave girl called Catalina with a slight knowledge of Spanish (*entre ladina y bozal*) a native of Santo Tomé and of the land of Jo (Gio), for 150 pesos of pure gold,

³ The *peso de oro de minas*, made of pure gold (*oro de ley perfecta*) was worth 450 *maravedís*, while the *peso de oro común* (common gold) often called *oro de lo que corre* or *oro tipuzque*, was reckoned at only 272 *maravedís*.

⁴ Examining the 34 male and 10 female Negro slaves sold in Mexico City between 1525 and 1551 for whom prices are quoted in Millares Carlo's index (see Note 6), we found a low of 50 pesos for both males and females in 1536, a high of 205 for a male in 1551 and 300 for a female in 1528, and in general somewhat higher prices for male Negro slaves in Mexico City than in Puebla (about 125 pesos vs. 105).

certifying that she is neither a drunkard nor a thief nor a runaway and has no defect or hidden ailment that I know of." (APP, II, Doc. No. 429.)

"I, Alonso Ortiz, do sell to you for 160 pesos a Negro slave about 30 years old, born in Guinea, who I certify is neither a drunkard nor a thief nor suffers from epilepsy (*gota coral*), and who does not have clear eyes." (Mexico City, 1527, *APMx*, I, Doc. No. 181. See footnote 6.)

"I, Gerónimo de Peralta, merchant, do sell to you, Diego de Herrera, citizen of Los Angeles, a Negro slave girl named Catalina, native of the land of Bran, whom I sell to you as neither a drunkard nor a thief, but as a runaway because she ran away from me once, and on her left leg she has a bruise and a small wound with a scab on it, but I sell her to you as healthy despite the wound, since it is not dangerous." (APP, II, Doc. No. 457.)

"I, Diego Cortés, merchant, do sell to you for 220 pesos of pure gold, a Negro slave called Hernando, freshly arrived from Africa from the land of Bran, who is neither a thief nor a drunkard nor afflicted by devils, sound in all his limbs and not given to running away, and who was taken in war and not in peace."⁵ (APP, II, Doc. No. 402.)

The *ladinos* were often far from docile: "I, Rodrigo de Mendoza, blacksmith, do sell to you for 180 pesos of pure gold one Juan, *ladino*, with a wound on his hand and as a thief, a runaway, a drunkard, a fornicator, and with any other faults he may prove to have." (APP, I, Doc. No. 324.)

Another male, born in Lisbon, was described as "a drunkard, a thief, a runaway, lame, crippled and nearly blind, and . . . a cunning rogue. . . ." (APP, II, Doc. No. 560.)

Sometimes a whole family was sold together. ". . . and furthermore I do sell you a Negro man and woman, married, called Francisco and Felipa, together with five children of theirs, namely two boys and three girls, and another slave-girl called María, and I do sell you all (eight) head of slaves (*piezas de esclavos*) as my very own and subject to bondage." (APP, II, Doc. No. 118.)

⁵ *Avido de buena guerra y no de paz*. This constantly recurring formula was more usually applied to Indians, the enslavement of whom was normally prohibited by the *Nuevas Leyes*.

BRAND MARKS

Slaves usually arrived from Africa branded on the arm or on the back of the neck with a trader's initials, but recaptured runaways could expect to be branded with their current owner's surname right on the forehead or neck, to make future escapes more difficult.

“ . . . he has a brand on the right arm in the shape of a ‘ P ’ ”

“ . . . marked with a ‘ P ’ on the back of the neck and an ‘ R ’ on the left arm.”

“ Pedro, sold with the letters ‘ A G U I L E R A ’ branded on his face because he is a runaway and a great scoundrel.” (APP, II, Doc. No. 181.)

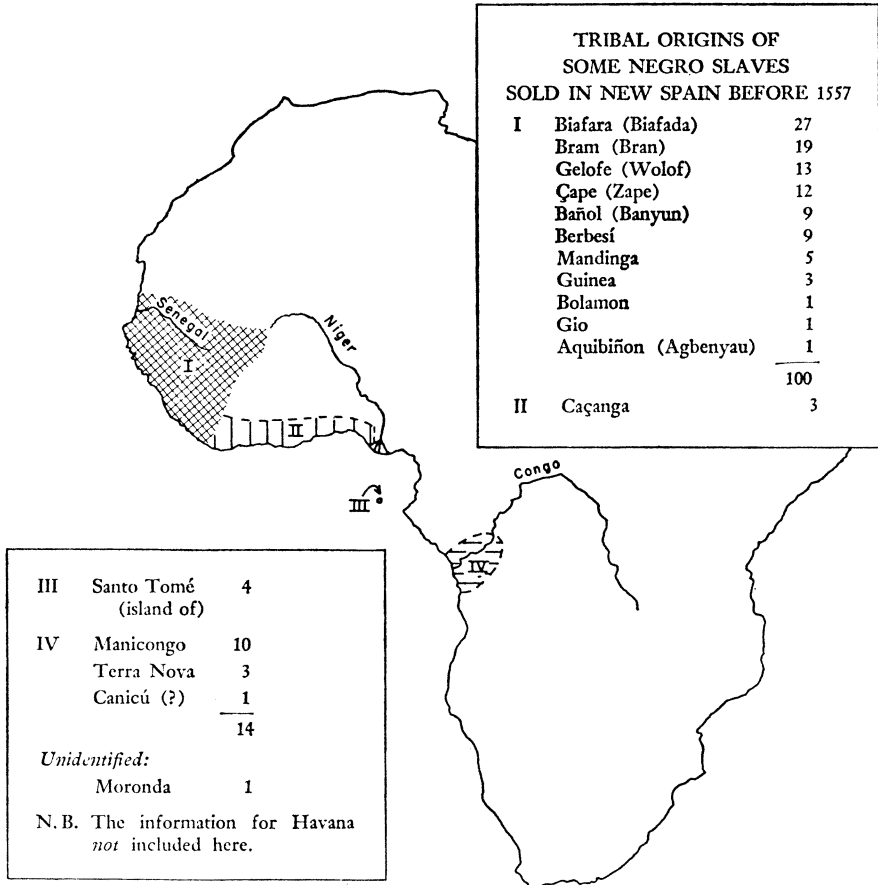
“ Juan, a runaway, recaptured wearing an iron collar around his neck with letters spelling the name ‘ MIGUEL GARCIA XARAMILLO ’ [his master].” (APP, I, Doc. No. 2141.)

TRIBAL ORIGINS IN AFRICA

Information about the tribal or regional origins of Negroes brought to the New World, especially in the early days of the slave trade, has hitherto been discouragingly scarce. African historians seldom have access to the Spanish colonial archives where such information is buried, and even then the results of research can be very meager. For example, the 2,651 documents from the notarial archive of Mexico City extracted by Agustín Millares Carlo and published by him in Mexico in 1945-6 yielded only *six* such indications of origin.⁶ Another XVIth Century source, the notarial archive of Havana (APH),⁷ recorded only 32 more, and Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán's important demographic study of the Negro in colonial Mexico, *La población negra de México: 1519-1810* (Ediciones Fuente Cultural, México, D. F., 1946), tabulated the tribal origins of only 87 Negroes *for the entire century in all of Mexico*. (See chaps. VI-VIII and especially p. 244.) In the light of this, the 124 Negro slaves sold in Puebla between 1540 and 1556 for whom we found such information represent a significant contribution to our knowledge in this area, one to which we hope to add considerably more as work progresses. Here is a tabulation of tribal origins as revealed in all three archives, ranked in order of their frequency:

⁶ Agustín Millares Carlo, *Índice y extractos de los Protocolos del Archivo de Notarías de México*, D. F., Vol. I (1524-1528), Vol. II (1536-1538 and 1551-1553).

⁷ María Teresa de Rojas, *Índice y Extractos del Archivo de Protocolos de la Habana, 1578-1585* (La Habana, MCMXCVII *sic* for 1947?).



<i>Born in Africa:</i>	1525-51	1540-56	1578-85	<i>Total</i>	<i>Year first Mentioned in our Sources</i>
	<i>Mex. City Archives</i>	<i>Puebla Archives</i>	<i>Havana Archives</i>		
1. Biáfara	—	27	—	27	1546
2. Bran	—	19	5	24	1545
3. Çape	1	11	9	21	1545
4. Congo (Manicongo, Maricongo, Maconicongo)	—	10	3½ ⁸	13½	1551
5. Jolofo (Jelofe)	—	13	—	13	1549
6. Bañol	1	8	2	11	1551
7. Berbesí	—	9	—	9	1546
8. Angola	—	—	7½ ⁸	7½	1585
9. Mandinga	—	5	—	5	1545
10. Santo Tomé (island of)	—	4	—	4	1554

⁸ "Ysabel, half Angolan, half Congolese" (*de nación entre angola y conga*). (APH, 371, 1585.)

11. Terra Nova	-	3	1 ⁹	4	1554
12. Caçanga	-	3	-	3	1553
13. Guínea	3	-	-	3	1527
14. Moçambo (Masambique)	-	-	2	2	1579
15. Jo (Gio)	-	1	-	1	1554
16. Bolamon	-	1	-	1	1552
17. Aquibiñón (= Agbenyau)	-	1	-	1	1552
18. Moronda (Moronu?)	-	1	-	1	1556
19. Canicu	-	1	-	1	1541
20. Anchica (Anzicana?)	-	-	1	1	1585
21. Berbería	1	-	1	1	1551
22. Nalú	-	-	1	1	1579
23. Calabari	-	-	1	1	1579
<i>Born in Europe:</i>					
Spain	-	3	-	3	1552
Portugal	-	3	-	3	1552
Azores	-	1	-	1	1554
Cape Verde Islands	-	-	1	1	1579
Totals	6	124	34	164	

Checking these XVIth Century names against the very extensive list of tribal names found in George P. Murdock's *Africa, Its People and Their Culture History* (McGraw-Hill, 1959), permitted us to identify the geographical area of most of the tribes mentioned in our table. We also consulted Vol. X of Johan Blaeu, *Le Grand Atlas ou Cosmographie Blaviane* (Amsterdam, 1663),¹⁰ in which there are lengthy descriptions of the African coastal areas and peoples together with maps that reveal scant and often highly inaccurate information about the entire area.

By far the largest proportion of our combined total of 162 slaves of known tribal origin came from coastal West Africa, in the general area between Senegal and Sierra Leone (region I on our map). This area, accounting for 112 (70%) of our total, includes the following tribes or kingdoms: the *Berbesi*,¹¹ the *Gelofes (Jolofos, Wolofs)*,¹² the *Ban-*

⁹ Though the Havana documents mention only one specific individual, the citation itself is clear evidence that Negroes from *Terra Nova* must have been an element of some significance in the city: "I, Francisco de Rojas, a Negro freedman and a native of Tierranova (*sic*), do . . . (here follow the terms of his will). . . . Furthermore, I order . . . my body to be buried in the cathedral of this city . . . *in the tomb of the Negroes of Terranova*. . . . (Havana, 1579; *APH*, 129.)

¹⁰ Third Centenary edition (facsimile) in twelve volumes. Amsterdam, 1968.

¹¹ "La rivière des *Barbacins* . . . se rend dans la mer à quelques 90 mils ou 20 lieux du Cap Verd . . . Le pays des *Barbecins* y *Berbecins* ou sont les Royaumes d'Alé et de Brocalo, dont le dernier aboutit au fleuve . . . nommé par les Portugais Rio de Gambia, . . . et d'un costé et d'autre de ce mesme fleuve l'on void le Royaume de *Mandinga*." (Blaeu, X, 102.)

¹² "Le nom de *Gelofe* comprend plusieurs peuples, dont les principaux qui sont du costé du Senega, sont les *Barbacins* que Iarric appelle *Berbecins*, Tucurons, Caragoles et

yuns or *Bañoles*, the *Mandingos*, the *Gios* ("land of Jo"), *Guinea*, *Nalú*, *Bram* (*Brame*, *Bran*), *Bolamon* (*Bolamo*), *Biafara* (*Biafara*, *Biafra*) and *Çape* or *Zape*. This same area, the Cape Verde region of West Africa, also accounts for almost all of the 87 Negroes whose tribal origins Aguirre Beltrán (pp. 244-245) was able to tabulate from a roster of 123 Negro slaves owned by the conquistador Hernán Cortés.

Though a large kingdom called *Biafara* is shown on Blaeu's maps in the general area of the Cameroons, and a capital city named *Biafra* is vaguely indicated in the interior, there appear to have been *two* groups of this name, of which ours is the western one, located in the Senegambia region. Evidence for this is furnished both by Murdock, who lists a tribe called *Biafada*, *Biafar*, or *Bifra*, in the Senegambia region only, and by Blaeu (pp. 111-112), who locates them around the mouth of the *Rio Grande* or *Corubal* in present-day Portuguese Guinea, a mere 300 miles south of Cape Verde.¹³ Tempting though it would be to identify these *Biafara* with the present-day Biafrans of S. E. Nigeria, the evidence, alas, is against it.

East of Sierra Leone we find the *Caçanga* or *Cazanga* (Region II on our map), probably along the Slave Coast of present-day Ghana and S. W. Nigeria. From Blaeu's description their exact location is unclear.¹⁴ The Ivory Coast was, according to Aguirre Beltrán (p. 124),

Baganos: et les principaux du costé de la rivière de Gambea, son ceux de *Ful* . . . ceux de *Mani Inga* (*sic* for *Mandinga*, which appears correctly spelled on the map), . . ." (Blaeu, X, 109-110.)

¹³ "L'on trouve les *Biafares* en la Province de *Biafar* par laquelle la grand rivière, appellé *Rio Grande* [= *Rio Corubal* in Portuguese Guinea] à l'Espagnole (*sic*), se va mettre dans la mer, a 66 lieuës du Cap Verd (approx. 300 mi. south of C. Verde), en tirant au Su (*sic*). Plus avant l'on voit la rivière de Donaliu, qui passe par le pays des Maluces, . . . et l'on va delà à la rivière de Tabito, ou des Vagas on trouve le pays de *Capé*, arrosé de deux grandes rivières de Caluz et des *Caceres* [today corrupted to the *Great and Little Scarcies Rivers*]. . . ."

¹⁴ "Plus avant on voit la rivière de Marive, et la Montagne, ou *Serre-Lyonne* [= *Sierra Leone*]; puis la rivière de Suero, qui est entre le Cap des Palmes et les Trois Pointes, prés d'Axim, ou les Portugais ont leurs facteurs pour l'achat de l'or. Au reste les Portugais qui trafiquoient autrefois par la rivière de Calamanse, vont à present negocier avec les *Casangas* par un bras de la rivière de S. Dominique, qui est un peu plus bas du costé du Sud, et va se rendre en ce Royaume; et c'est sur ce bras que les Portugais ont basty leur fort de Saint Philippe. Les Pays de ces *Casangas* est arrosé de plusieurs rivières. . . . Les Portugais trafiquent fort avec cette nation, principalement en esclaves qu'ils achètent d'eux bien souvent mal à propos, pource que la plupart sont injustement reduits a cette servitude par le Roy, qui fait pour ce sujet des lois fort blâmables."

"Les *Buramos* habitant au long de la rivière de S. *Dominique* confinent avec les *Casangas* et s'épandent jusqu'à l'emboucheure de la *grande rivière*, qui est plus avant vers le sud, et passent encor au delà. Le premier bourg de ces *Buramos* est à huit lieuës loin du port de S. Dominique, ou Iarin, et c'est en ce lieu que fait sa demeure le principal Roy de ces peuples." (Blaeu, X, 112.)

the home of the *Agbenyau* (= *Aquibiñon*), while the *Calabari* were one of the tribes inhabiting the Niger delta.

Santo Tomé is of course the small island due south of the Niger delta used by the Portuguese as a slave collecting station (region III on our map).¹⁵ From the area around the mouth of the Congo River (region IV) we have the *Manicongo* (*Maricongo*, *Macanicongo*, *Congo* or *Canicu?*) with *Angola* to the immediate south of it, *Anchica* (marked *Anzicana* on Blaeu's map), and possibly *Terra Nova* (Portuguese for 'New Land'), though we have been unable to locate the term on any map. However there is, according to Esteves Pereira and Guillerme Rodrigues (*Diccionario Portuguez*, Lisboa, 1904, Vol. 7), a community by that name just north of the mouth of the Congo, in the Portuguese enclave of *Cabinda*.

The Havana archives later in the XVIth Century mention two slaves from *Moçambo* or *Masambique*, which is of course the Portuguese East African colony of Mozambique. *Berbería* is the Barbary Coast of Northwest Africa. *Moronda* may perhaps be the *Moronu*, a tribe named by Aguirre Beltrán (p. 124) as inhabiting the Ivory Coast.

Three Negro slaves were described as having been born in Portugal, another in the Azores, and yet another in the Cape Verde Islands. Of the three born in Spain, two came from Andalusia. Negro slaves born in New Spain were as yet uncommon and there was no special term for them, but later in the century they would come to be known as *criollos* (creoles), a term which surprisingly enough was in all early colonial records applied exclusively to Negroes and mulattoes, *never* to whites.¹⁶

Blaeu's knowledge of African geography becomes increasingly fragmentary and faulty as he rounds the bulge of West Africa and proceeds eastward along the coast towards the mouths of the Niger. Indeed, on his maps he shows the Niger flowing into the Senegal and the Congo connected with the Nile! In view of this it is possible that in the paragraph just cited Blaeu's 'grande rivière' may mean the Volta rather than the Niger itself.

¹⁵ In fact one slave girl, already cited, is described as having passed through there: "from Santo Tomé and the land of Gio."

¹⁶ Here are some examples translated from my long-range computer-assisted research project, now in its third year, entitled LASCODOCS (*A Linguistic Analysis of Spanish Colonial Documents*):

"... Negro slaves ... María, the freed one, a *creole* ..." (Havana 1579; *APH*, 69). "... the Negro slave called Francisco, a cowherd, a *creole* of this island" (Havana, 1579; *APH*, 145). "The Negro slave Francisca, a *creole* from Cape Verde ... aged 24 ..." (Havana, 1579; *APH*, 202). "A slave ... aged 13 ... a *creole*" (Havana 1579; *APH*, 299). "A Negro slave, a *creole* of Santo Domingo ..." (Havana, 1589; *APH*, 315). "A Negro, Pedro, by birth a *creole*, who said he was the slave of a certain Rodriguez" (Monterrey, 1637; Israel Cavazos Garza, *Catálogo y síntesis de los Protocolos del Archivo Municipal de Monterrey* (1599-1700). Monterrey, 1966 (= *Cat. Mont.*), 17. "A Negro slave of his called Luisa, a *creole* aged

SLAVE DEALERS

Who in Puebla were the principal slave dealers? To judge by the number of their transactions involving the purchase or sale of Negro slaves during the 16-year period under study, the following individuals appear to have definitely engaged in the slave trade at the local level, though I have found no documents to suggest that any of them were importers in the sense of having contractual arrangements with persons overseas:

NAME	OCCUPATION	CITIZEN OF	SLAVES SOLD	YEAR	SLAVES BOUGHT
Almaguer, Antonio de	merchant	Puebla	7	1553	-
Alonso Larios, Diego	?	Mexico City	9	1555	-
Alvarez de Campos, Francisco	merchant	Puebla	-	1543	1
			2	1547	1
Ayala, Juan de	merchant	Puebla	4	1555	-
Cataño, Juan and Pasqual	merchants	Mexico City	10	1544	-
Fernández Portillo, Luis	?	?	-	1555	7
Hernández Portugués, Francisco	teamster	Puebla	-	1552	6
Martín Larios, Alonso	teamster	Puebla	-	1547	2+
			1	1552-4	2
Lucas, Juan de	merchant	Puebla	1	1554	3½
Mansilla, Luis de	merchant	Puebla	2	1546	-
			2	1551-2	-
Martín del Alamo, Pablos	weaver	Puebla	-	1555	4
Muñoz, Francisco	landowner and merchant	Puebla	4	1552	-
			4	1554	-
Palacios, Cosme de	landowner	Puebla	-	1551	8
Pérez, Andrés	merchant	Puebla	4	1551-2	-
Quintero, Marcos	cartwright	Puebla	1	1554-5	3
Rebolledo, Hernando de	merchant	Veracruz	4	1554	1
Reynoso, Francisco de	owner of a ranch	Puebla	1	1553-4	4
Rodríguez, Bartolomé	?	Puebla	1	1546	-
Sánchez, Lázaro	?	Puebla	8	1551	-
Santa Cruz, Juan de	?	Mexico City	4	1552	-
Sarniento, Juan	owner of a ranch	Puebla	-	1555	4
Torres, Pedro de	merchant	Puebla	3	1555	6
Ureña, Gerónimo de	merchant	Puebla	4	1554	1
Villanueva, Hernando and Pedro	landowners	Puebla	-	1544	8
			8	1554	-

17 whom they call the *Mulata*" (Monterrey, 1647; *Cat. Mont.*, 46). "A Negro slave of his called Pascual, aged 25, a *creole*, branded on the face" (Monterrey, 1655; *Cat. Mont.*, 59). "A *creole* Negro slave of his called Ana, of about 44 years of age . . ." (Monterrey, 1699; *Cat. Mont.*, 181).

[For further information about LASCODOCS, see *Computers and the Humanities*, Vol. 3 (Jan., 1969), pp. 179-180].

Each of the above men bought or sold at least four Negro slaves in Puebla during the period 1540-1556. Thirty-six others bought or sold from two to three during the same period. Occasionally a half-interest in a slave would be sold, which accounts for the 3½ slaves bought by Juan de Lucas. The Church also bought slaves from time to time. For example Francisco, born in Terra Nova, was in 1554 sold for 200 pesos to the monastery of Saint Augustine in Puebla, while in that same year the priest Antonio Martínez, resident of Puebla, sold one slave and bought another.

THE NAMES OF NEGRO SLAVES

A statistical analysis of 221 names (170 male, 51 female) given to Negroes in and around Puebla between 1540 and 1556 shows some correlation with those given to white children in Mexico City at about this time. Among the first 400 male white infants baptized in the cathedral of Mexico City in 1560 the six commonest given names were *Juan*, *Diego*, *Pedro*, *Alonso*, *Francisco* and *Hernando*, in that order.¹⁷ Among the Negroes of Puebla the first six were *Juan* (37 cases), *Pedro* or *Perico* (24), *Francisco* (23), *Antón* (17)—instead of *Alonso*—, *Diego* and *Hernando* (12 each).

Among the less numerous female slaves the commonest name was *María* (13) and the next most frequent *Catalina* (10), exactly as among the white girls baptized in 1560 in the Mexico City cathedral.

Very few slaves had surnames. Indeed out of a total of 221 slaves with names, only ten, all male, had a second name of any kind, and this was usually a nickname such as *Antón Barba* (beard), *Juan Redondo* (round), *Juan Viejo* (old), *Juan Tuerto* (one-eyed), or *Juan Garrote*. There were two slaves called *Anton Portugués*, one *Francisco Portugués* and one *Juan de Córdoba*, presumably allusions to their place of origin, while a certain *Juan Valiente*, whom we shall mention again later, took his surname from his master Alonso Valiente, a prominent citizen of Puebla. In the case of one slave, *Pedro Caravayo*, we are not sure whether the second name refers to an unidentifiable African tribe or is a mispronunciation of the common Portuguese surname *Carvalho*, presumably the name of his original master.¹⁸ One slave was known only by the nickname *Capitán*.

¹⁷ Cf. Boyd-Bowman's forthcoming study of changing fashions in names entitled "Los nombres de pila en México desde 1540 hasta 1950," due to appear in the next issue of the *Nueva Revista de Filología Hispánica* (NRFH).

¹⁸ The latter explanation is perhaps the more likely in view of the difficulty Negroes had, according to contemporary sources, in pronouncing the palatal sound represented by *ll* in Spanish and by *lh* in Portuguese. See Amado Alonso "La *Ll* y sus alteraciones en España y América," *Estudios dedicados a Menéndez Pidal*, Vol. II, pp. 46-47.

OCCUPATIONS OF NEGRO SLAVES IN PUEBLA

By far the commonest occupation in which the Negro slaves of Puebla were engaged was that of *harriero* (teamster), an activity in which the records suggest that *Indian* slaves were almost never employed at all, either because of the relative ease with which the latter could escape in their own country or because they had no experience in dealing with horses and other pack-animals. Since each pack-train regularly included two or three Negro teamsters it is not surprising to find that of 106 Puebla slaves of known occupation no less than 48 were used in connection with transporting goods from one city to another. For example, in a two-year partnership formed on May 4th, 1551, between Francisco Hernández Portugués and Francisco Muñoz, both citizens of Puebla, the former invested 2,650 pesos "in a pack-train consisting of 28 horses and 3 Negro slaves as teamsters to accompany them, whose names are Perico, from the land of Jolofó, Pedro, from the land of Manicongo and Thomás, from the land of Bañol . . . and also 30 leather packs . . .," while his partner Muñoz agreed to purchase a second pack-train of equal size, likewise with 3 Negro slaves and 30 leather packs for approximately the same amount. (*APP*, II, Doc. No. 90.)

Another Puebla document dated April 3rd, 1554, empowers one Luis Rodríguez, a teamster, to purchase in Mexico City "a pack train of 25 horses, 3 Negroes and 25 leather packs and other accessories, for a sum not to exceed 1,600 pesos of pure gold. . . ." (*APP*, II, Doc. No. 498.)

The next commonest occupation was that of workers on the many *sheep and cattle ranches* to be found in the outlying areas around the city (29). Another 9 were described as engaged in Puebla's small *textile industry* (chiefly woolen goods), while only 5 were used as *miners* in the local silver mines, where Indian labor predominated. Other occupations recorded were *blacksmith's helper* (4), *wine-skin maker's helper* (2), *cartwright's helper* (2), *shepherd* (2), and one each was employed by a *dyer*, a *saddler*, a *chandler*, a *leather currier* and an *inn-keeper*.¹⁹

I could find no correlation between tribal origin and occupation with the possible exception of slaves from *Bañol*, almost all of whom were teamsters.

¹⁹ In the Mexico City archives mentioned earlier, information on the occupations of Negro slaves is extremely rare. I could find only 14 cases in all the documents extracted. Of these 9 were *teamsters*, 4 were *miners* and 1 an assistant to a *confectioner*.

RUNAWAY SLAVES

“In the city of Los Angeles on the nineteenth of February in the year of Our Lord 1546, before his Magnificence, Pedro de Meneses, mayor by royal appointment, and in the presence of myself, Diego de Baeca, notary for His Majesty and for the municipal council of this city, there appeared Alonso Rodríguez Rubio, citizen, bringing before the court a Negro who he said was a runaway, and asked the mayor to have him kept in close custody until he could be returned to his owner, and he himself received his lawful bounty. The mayor then asked the Negro his name and who his master was and if he was indeed a runaway, to which the Negro replied that his name was Juan, and that he belonged to Miguel García Xaramillo, and that he had indeed run away, and upon inspection he was seen to have an iron ring around his neck bearing the name ‘Miguel García Xaramillo.’ The mayor thereupon ordered the bailiff, Francisco de Lerma, to put him in jail and as jailer to feed him at his owner’s expense, and not to surrender him without his (the mayor’s) express permission and command. Whereupon the bailiff received the slave in custody and the mayor signed the order.”

Signed: Pedro de Meneses and Francisco de Lerma.²⁰

That escapes were at this time quite frequent among Negro slaves, both in Puebla and in other cities, is clear from the many references to runaways.

(Oct. 3, 1541) . . . “and I also empower you to recover any other Negro slaves of mine who may be at large, in particular a mulatto (*loro*) slave called Diego, from the land of Canicú, and you may do with him and with the others as you see fit, either selling them or setting them free.” (*APP*, I, Doc. No. 39.)

(Feb. 19, 1551) “. . . you are empowered to recover a slavewoman of mine called Constanza, born in Manicongo, a runaway who left me about two weeks ago, and when you get her back I authorize you pay whatever bounty is owing on her.” (*APP*, II, Doc. No. 38.)

(Aug. 30, 1552) Saavedra, citizen of Puebla, empowers two citizens of the city of Santo Domingo on the island of Hispaniola to reclaim on his behalf from a certain Alonso de León, merchant, “two Negro slave-girls of mine called Catalina, from the land of Bolamon, and Luzía, from the land of Maconicongo, who at the time I left Santo Domingo to come to New Spain escaped and absented themselves from my serv-

²⁰ Document No. 241 of our forthcoming collection.

ice and custody, and to take possession of the said two slave-girls together with the fair value of whatever work they may have performed for the said Alonso de León or others up to the time you reclaim them." (*APP*, II, Doc. No. 216.)

Slaves were particularly apt to escape while accompanying their masters on journeys. For instance, the teamster Juan García in 1545 reported the escape of one of his Negro slaves on the way to Puebla from Mexico City. In 1554 Juan Rodríguez Girinol, citizen of Puebla, empowers a teamster to reclaim "from anyone who may have them in custody, three Negro slaves of mine who escaped from me in Mexico City, called Diego, of the tribe of Biáfara, Luis, of the Bañol tribe, and Gerónimo. . . ." (*APP*, II, Doc. No. 498.)

CRIME

Negro slaves convicted of theft could expect severe punishment. A bill of sale from Mexico City dated Dec. 14, 1536, concerns "one slave, a mule-driver called Alonso, jailed in the City of Veracruz for theft, whom I am to hand over to you free of the said crime and imprisonment in such a way that he not suffer amputation of hand or foot, and if they cut off his ears or flog him let this be at your risk and not mine." (*APMx*, II, p. 90.)

Next to running away and stealing, the crime with which Negro slaves were most frequently charged was sodomy (*el pecado contra natura*) a habit no doubt attributable in some cases to a slave's lack of opportunity to lead a normal sex life. For example in a document dated March 29th, 1552, a citizen of Puebla relates that Francisco Verdugo, *corregidor* of the village of Tepeaca, "ordered the arrest of a Negro slave of mine named Antón, a mulatto, on the charge of having committed sodomy, and on this charge *had him remanded as a prisoner to the Supreme Court in Mexico City* (!), before which court the case against my mulatto slave is now pending" and for this reason he empowers his son-in-law, away in Mexico City, to attempt to secure his prompt release if he is not convicted, or at least to secure a swift decision in the matter. (*APP*, II, Doc. No. 179.)

SETTING NEGROES FREE

Though the Puebla documents occasionally mention the manumission of slaves in reward for faithful service or as an expression of Christian conscience in the terms of a will, the slaves thus freed invariably turned out to be Indians rather than Negroes. This can be explained by the

fact that the Church officially condemned the mistreatment or enslavement of the native Indian population as a mortal sin, but offered no such moral judgment in the case of Negro slaves, whom even Bishop Las Casas, the Apostle of the Indies, had recommended as fit for bondage.

Despite this attitude, the manumission of Negroes was not altogether unknown, as we can see from a curious document dated June 5th, 1548:

Francisco Garcia Hermosilla, teamster, citizen of Los Angeles, after buying a mulatto slave-girl named María for 250 pesos of pure gold from the *bachiller* Alonso de Molina, physician, enters into the following agreement with said slave: "In order that you may gain your freedom . . . I release you from paying 50 pesos on account of the good services you have rendered me . . . and I confess that I have received . . . from Francisco Marín de Buendía, teamster, as a contribution towards this ransom, another 50 pesos, therefore leaving a balance of 150 pesos still payable." Until the latter sum is earned, "you are to be my slave and must serve in bondage either me or whomever I sell or mortgage you to for the 150 pesos of gold, and be it understood that you may not pay me the said 150 pesos nor buy your freedom until one year from today, whereafter you may make payment any time you please. Should I sell you, such sale will be subject to the above-mentioned stipulation, namely that by your paying the 150 pesos, you will thenceforth be free from all servitude and may dispose of your person and property like any free man, and be it understood that if I wish to sell you it is a prior condition that I must first notify Francisco Marín so that if he should want to pay me the 150 pesos, I must sell you to him rather than to anyone else, and be it understood that if you, the said María, should not wish to be sold to Francisco Marín, this condition will then be null and void and I need not fulfill it, but rather may sell you to whomever I may see fit, and that the buyer, upon receipt of the said ransom, will be obligated to give you a properly executed certificate of manumission (*carta de horra*)."

This document lends itself to speculation concerning the nature of the relationship between this particular slave and her master!

FREEDMEN

That a Negro who obtained his freedom frequently preferred to start life anew in a different environment is evidenced by the numerous free Negroes (*negros horros*), both men and women, whose names and

description appear in the registries of XVIth Century emigrants to the New World. Juan de Montalvo, the Negro town crier of Puebla in 1555, may be just such an emigrant, though it is by no means certain just where and under what circumstances he became free. In an instrument dated October 12th of that year he empowered the royal notary Pedro de Padilla, citizen of the Province of Guatemala, present, "to take into your custody on my behalf my wife Ana Hernández, a Negress, whom I left in Guatemala and who is a servant of the wife of Farfán and resides in the home of her mother Francisca, likewise a Negress, the which said wife of mine you may compel and coerce into coming to this city (of Puebla) to share married life with me (*hazer vida maridable*) as she is supposed to, and you may take her into your care and custody and bring her here to me at my expense, using all legal means to force her to comply." (Signed on his behalf by a witness.)

To conclude our documentation of Negro slavery in mid-sixteenth century Puebla, we present some new biographical information concerning Juan Valiente, the Negro *conquistador*:

On October 3, 1541, Alonso Valiente, a wealthy citizen of Puebla, sent to his nephew, Pedro Mexía, absent, the following power of attorney: "About eight years ago . . . having in my possession one Juan Valiente, a Negro, as my slave, and wishing to treat him kindly and having confidence that he would conduct himself properly, I granted him permission before Alonso de Sopena, notary public of the City of Veracruz, to go to Guatemala and Perú and wherever else he might wish to go and earn a soldier's pay like a free man, earning whatever might be his share, provided that he keep an accounting of it and bring it all back to me within four years; and though the said Juan Valiente did not do so nor keep his promise, I, having trust in him, did, when the time was up, send him another authorization, but in all this time I have received no word from him. I therefore commission you the said Pedro Mexía my nephew to demand a reckoning from my slave Juan Valiente of all he has earned during this time and to take possession of it, and if the said Negro should desire his freedom, you, Pedro Mexía, are empowered to agree on a fair price and to execute a letter of freedom and of quitclaim, but should he not desire to be free, and neither he nor anyone on his behalf pay the ransom you ask of him, then you may either bring or send him back to me in New Spain or else sell him for whatever price you see fit."

This curious document,²¹ published here for the first time in any lan-

²¹ Doc. No. 39 of our forthcoming *Indice y extractos del archivo de protocolos de Puebla (1540-1555)*.

guage, fills an important gap in the biography of Juan Valiente, the lone Negro conqueror of Chile, who (presumably after leaving his master in 1533 and joining up in Guatemala with Pedro de Alvarado's famous expedition to Perú in 1534) distinguished himself in the Chilean expeditions of both Almagro in 1535 and Valdivia in 1540, in which latter army of only 150 soldiers he served at his own expense, fully equipped and as the owner of a splendid horse worth between 1000 and 1500 pesos. As a reward for his distinguished military service in Valdivia's campaigns against the fierce Araucanian Indians he was in 1546 granted an estate near the city of Santiago, which he had helped to found. Some time before 1548 he married Juana de Valdivia, who to judge by her surname and the custom of the day may have been a Negro slave freed by her master the governor don Pedro de Valdivia himself. In April of 1550 the governor rewarded Juan Valiente further with a coveted *encomienda* or fief of tribute-paying Indians near the city of Concepción, and in that same year Valiente commissioned a royal official by the name of Estéban de Sosa to negotiate in Perú and New Spain the purchase of his legal freedom, but Sosa returned directly to Spain without honoring his promise. And by that time Alonso Valiente, Juan's former master, living 4000 miles away in Puebla, finally learned of his slave's whereabouts and took legal steps to claim the wealth which according to the laws of the time belonged to his master. Juan Valiente the Negro *conquistador* had, along with the governor, already perished at the hands of the Indians in the 1553 disaster at Tucapel.²²

The strange story of a Negro slave from Puebla who became both a Spanish *conquistador* and the feudal lord of tributary Indians in distant Chile quite surely deserves a place in the early history of Negro slavery in the New World.

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²² For previously known facts (and some unfounded speculation) concerning Juan Valiente, see especially Tomás Thayer Ojeda, *Formación de la Sociedad Chilena* (Santiago de Chile, 1941), Vol. III, pp. 320-322.