On February 4, 1637, Manuel Henriquez requested an audience with the Inquisitors. He told them about a scheme, concocted in the cells, to get Portuguese out of jail. This New Christian conspiracy had little to do with religion but everything to do with confessions and lies: In league with Jorge de Acuna, Juan de Acevedo and others rounded up in the 1635 dragnet, Henriquez advised fellow inmates to “give false testimony against Castillians”. Why? “...because then it would be obvious...that all these testimonies were false;” i.e. that the hundreds of accusations made against Portuguese women and men for Judaising were groundless. The hope was that when “his majesty” was confronted with perjured testimony against Castilians – whose innocence was never in doubt – he would see the point of the hoax. He would “realize that whenever [the Inquisitors] arrest anyone who is Portuguese, they accuse [that person] of being Jewish”.¹

Henriquez’s et al’s plan made perfect sense in light of the confusions of the times: the modern confusions of “nation” with religion, of religion with ancestry, and of ancestry with political loyalty. The plotters’ idea was to lay bare these irrational assumptions. The trick was to turn them upside-down: If Inquisitors, King, and Council could find the absurdity in making blanket charges against Old Christians, they might find a similar absurdity in making blanket charges against New Christians. Henriquez, Acuna, and all the others who, most likely, confessed in order to live, harbored the belief, and the trust, that the authorities responsible for their predicament would spot the mistake and correct its consequences. They would recognize the cultural fallacy of conflating Portuguese, New Christian, and Jew – and of infusing all with characteristics of race.

This chapter is concerned with the dynamics of state-building and race-thinking: with the
practices making “government in the name of truth” into a bureaucratic mandate to fix the “racial” essence of state subjects. Inquisitors were involved with two race-thinking designs as they went about the business of state. One, at the root of the Henriquez et al plot, racialized culture through purity of blood laws, but expanded its course the “nation-state” (Portuguese/Castilian) and economic function (merchant vs agrarian/military“nobility”). The other, the colonial frame, racialized global geopolitics, by turning imperialism into a caste structure and attaching color to both political privilege and economic function (“negro” slave, “indio”/brown/tribute-payer, “espanol”/white/exemption from tribute). Some scholars have thought of these designs in a linear fashion: purity of blood statutes as a precedent for race-thinking; or, “ethnicity”/“culture” as a nascent form of race-thinking in contemporary life. But a careful look at history also suggests that race-thinking can take several, coeval shapes, and that race-thinking’s duplicity lies in the ways its different manifestations go unrecognized and intertwine.

The Spanish Inquisition – while only one of several state bureaucracies – was a considerable player in the field making social categories into racial truths. Nowhere is this more evident than in the murky arena of New Christian/Portuguese/Castilian and Spanish/Black/Indian/Mestizo/Mulatto personhood. Tribunal court records – along with a legal compendium, manual for missionaries, and a chronicle-critique of the Crown – are the principal sources helping us imagine the vision underlying the Inquisitors’ judgements: the vision of humanity magistrates were working to create and recreate, along with the conceptions, ideologies and commitments that they found so dangerous. To explore the political culture that would have nurtured Henriquez et al’s confession conspiracy, then, we will
focus on the entanglements of Peru’s race-thinking: the confusions of “casta y generacion” (caste and ancestry); the contrary meanings of New Christian in the New World; the complications of blood purity in the New World; the calculations of race-thinking – from Imperial and New Christian perspectives; and the dialectics of state, individual, and race.

**What is “casta y generacion”**

Every woman and man brought before the Tribunal was asked to place themselves in the world/social order of things: that meant defining themselves in terms of the formal categories of state – name, age, place of birth, marital status, social standing – as well as “casta y generacion”– caste and ancestry. In seventeenth century colonial courts, “casta y generacion” usually referred to “indio”, “negro”, and “espanol”, moderated by “mestizo”, “mulato”, and “sambo” – the “mixed-breeds” who didn’t fit the original colonial plan. “Espanoles” and partly Spanish “mestizos” and “mulatos” were also required to specify the nature of their “Spanish” ancestry – declare if they were “Old Christians” and taintless, or if they were descendants of one of the New Christian subcastes of Jews and Moors.

“Casta y generacion” should be straightforward; however, it was anything but. All Europeans born in Spain or in its colonies were not considered “Spanish;”

*Portuguese could have as much to do with religion as with nationality; Jew and Moor could have as much to do with kin than with belief; “mestizo” could have as much to do with legitimacy as with ancestry, “indio” could have as much to do with dress as with descent. “Casta y generacion” was at its most confusing, however, when it came to “New Christian”.*

Were All New Christians Alike?
In early modern Europe, Spanish jurists and theologians were sparring seriously over the New Christian character; the Spanish conquest, however, brought added complications to these debates about ancestry and faith. For with colonization, Spaniards were channeling pagan natives into that same, New Christian state-of-being, and the Viceroyalty’s thousands of acolytes were triggering fresh challenges to Peninsular disputes. Did descent tarnish the religious capabilities of every novice? or did it just affect certain ones? Or did it affect certain ones in different degrees? So, now, tied to the big question – could New Christians ever be good Christians? we find the colonial sequel – Were all New Christians alike?

First, the official view. Jurists, like Solorzano, the editor of the seventeenth century’s premier compendium of laws governing the Americas, resolved the New Christian problem by deciding that New Christians were not all alike. Of course, New Christians were somewhat alike – there was never any doubt that the colonial caste system’s subordinate groups – Indians and blacks – were infected with corrupt blood like their “converso” counterparts. But, Indians and Blacks, Solorzano argued, became New Christians under different circumstances, and, therefore, were subject to different ordinances. For example, although Peninsular law prohibited Jews and Moors from government office, professions, and nobility, there was nothing to suggest that Blacks and Indians should suffer similar restrictions. Blacks and Indians, according to this reasoning, were of superior mettle, and so, by comparison, carried stains that were easier to bleach. This considered opinion was linked to another comparative judgement: Solorzano calculated that it would take descendants of Moors and Jews two hundred years to become like Old Christians; but, it would take Indians and Blacks only four generations.

This tally represented a major shift in official judgment. Bureaucrats specializing in
human nature used to give Europe’s New Christians four generations, too. But that was before conquest, the rigors of state-making, and the necessities of colonization brought their own dialectic to bear on questions of personhood. The result, on the official page, made it clear that race-thinking in the Spanish empire took different forms, and, in addition, that these forms were in dialogue. The result, in practice, was a doubled lesson in how political necessity infused political principal: ideological requirements – in this case, the formal responsibility of colonial regimes to colonial subjects – could trump “color” (Indians/Blacks were better than the “Portuguese”); but, these ideological requirements, all the while, were being systematically contradicted in colonial practice – and, nowhere more heartily than in the Viceroyalty of Peru.

Colonial Stains and Colonial Possibilities

So, according to experts, Portuguese New Christians were stained; stains blackened their character; and, it was the state’s responsibility to stop them from holding public office. Peru’s Blacks and Indians also carried polluted blood. How would pollutions effect their possibilities in public life, in a colonial world? Missionaries sent to evangelize Andean natives could hardly avoid these “race” matters, and Pena’s guidebook for missionaries casts a telling light on how Peru’s governing class made sense out of the irrationality of race. Pena had to decide concrete and prickly issues, like, Could competent Indians and Blacks be shut out of a religious calling because of impure blood; Were they capable of preaching anywhere and to anybody or should their efforts be restricted to people of their same “casta y generacion”? The dilemma pitting blood against ability was simmering double-time in the Americas, and Pena’s guide was one attempt to resolve the quandaries of imperial cultural geopolitics.

Pena combed the existing literature – the mounting royal cedulas, papal decrees, and
legal compilations. But his findings were ambiguous: the experts’ opinions on “stains” – stains derived from Indian blood, Black blood (enslaved and free), and mixed blood – supported both sides of the debate. Sorting through this theological chaos, Pena, with his pro-ability leanings, sided with the underclasses (“the Church of God..regularly admits everyone who is apt, virtuous, and appropriate, without exception;” “Indians [and Blacks] do not forfeit the right to be ordained on account of ...their origin and nature”)\textsuperscript{10}. Men of all colonial backgrounds – “mestizos”, “indios” and “negros” – could enter the priesthood, in his judgement, as long as they met the Church’s standards: that they were competent and knowledgeable, moral and upright – and, legitimate.\textsuperscript{11} Ever the preacher, Pena made his point about the Church’s openness to all qualified men of good repute with a case steeped in another sort of tainted blood. Pena reminded his audience of the Church’s early days when a bishop had been famously reprimanded for not accepting a converted Jew into the priesthood. With antiquity as precedent (and admonisher?), Pena argued that Peru’s recently converted should be allowed to follow the same path as ancient Rome’s\textsuperscript{12}.

Peru’s race-tinged prejudice, however, was an unavoidable presence, and Pena was forced to admit that the ordination of Blacks would bring added complications to colonial realities. The colonial caste system making “negros” into slaves posed a particular set of problems: first of all, Spaniards considered slavery to be a venal, “indecent,” honor-less condition; second the slave was subject to his master’s will and, in principle, could be stopped from carrying out his spiritual duties. But the really vexing issue was the awkwardness of color in a color-conscious world: Could Blacks – at the lowest rung in colonial society – minister to Whites – at the highest rung? Some experts argued that Blacks should not: “because it would cause great horror
to see a Black person step to the altar to say mass for “naciones blancas” (literally White peoples). Other authorities, Pena assured us, “very weighty ones” at that, claimed the opposite: “Negros should become priests without hindrance”, because “in these parts where there are so many [Blacks], with some holding the rank of Captain and other military offices, [a Black priest] would not cause any revulsion”; why some blacks, he added, “have even inspired great devotion.” This being said, Pena had to acknowledge he was on weak ground: he found much less support in royal decrees, in ecclesiastic orders, or among the experts, for Africans, or their descendants, to go out into the world and preach.

And, finally, what about “expulsos” – kin to women and men expelled from Spain? Only when discussing the question of Black ordination, did Pena ask about the standing of New Christians. Why here? Perhaps because of the weight of impurities both “negros” and “conversos” were presumed to carry. Pena, unfortunately, was not very expansive when delineating the arguments pro and con; nevertheless, keeping to his bent valuing talent and virtue over pollution, Pena came out in their favor.

Pena’s manual outlines a template of possible outcomes to these dilemmas of race, faith, and ability. How and if his arguments were used to direct decision-making in specific cases; how and if they shaped the lived experience of colonial women and men – that’s something else. At the least, his words took on life in the ideological climate of the times. Did they help precipitate the ordination of New Christian “indios” and “negros”? – perhaps; we need more studies like Kathyrn Burns’s monograph on Cusco’s Santa Clara convent to give us a flavor of racial politics on the inside. Nevertheless, Pena’s abstracted ideal of colonial racial equality – with pulpits open to qualified men regardless of “casta y generacion” (women are not discussed)
remained, for the most part, an ideal. Notable exceptions? Perhaps the Viceroyalty’s well-placed, educated, up-and-coming New Christian aristocracy.\textsuperscript{17}

\textbf{A Theory of Race Fractions}

As the seventeenth century progressed, state officials attempted to build ever-more precise categorical boxes to place their ever-more racially-confounded subjects. The world has witnessed various solutions to the conundrum of “mixed race”, and official Spain devised a different one for each of their two race problems. Inquisitors followed something like the one-drop rule in their dealings with conversos: New Christians, in the end, remained New Christians, regardless of their Old Christian forebears. Bureaucrats came up with a more subtle solution, however, to the colonial order’s racial paradox: subcategories based on percentages of tainted blood. But in both cases, whether race was cut in parcels or in whole-cloth, race-thinking was never in doubt; \textbf{taken together, Peru’s} designs helped broaden and solidify the experience of living in a race-phrased universe.

Race fractions brought unexpected predicaments to a range of ecclesiastical issues; and one such arena involved marriage dispensations. Missionaries, who preached the sanctity of wedlock, had to confront problems involving marriages between baptized natives and their uncivilized fellows. Would an Indian with a spouse who refused to convert be allowed to divorce him/her in order to marry a Christian?\textsuperscript{18} Here the answer was easy, Yes. But race fractions turned an apparently simple problem into a thorny dilemma: Would the same dispensation be applied to a “mestizo”? (Yes.) But this was the seventeenth century and racial mixing didn’t stop with “mestizos”.\textsuperscript{19} “Degrees” had multiplied, and Pena had to work out a solution for “the quarteroons (quarterones)” – offspring with one quarter Indian blood; and, even
more troublesome, for the “children of Spaniards with quarteroons; and, then again, for children of Spaniards with octaroons (Puchuela).”

In trying to sort this all out, Pena, eventually, had to confront the most bedeviling issue of all: Could someone with Indian ancestry ever become a Spaniard? Is there any point at which the amount of “stained blood” became so negligible that it no longer counted? So, should quarteroons or octoroons (or beyond) be granted the special dispensations allowed Indians and “mestizos”? or not? Pena drew his line at the offspring of Spaniards and octoroons: 1/16% Indian blood was so minuscule, he contended, it disappeared. Here Pena turned to a host of experts from throughout the Indies – the Philippines, Peru, New Spain, New Granada, Quito – along with the weight of public opinion (which played a particularly significant role in this case), to find appraisals matching his own. Pena, we should note, ended up reaching the same conclusion as the legal scholar, Solorzano – it would take four generations to rid a body of Indian stains.

Pena argued that “mulatos” were subject to similar principals, so that the continual admixture of European blood could eventually whiten a lineage and overcome its Black ancestry: “...they would have so little [Ethiopian in them] and so much European that they would not be taken for [Blacks]. . . .[and thus] following public opinion, the portion [of them] that is ...Ethiopian begins to disappear.” The “Europeanizing process”, then, would appear to be equally applicable to “Indian” and “Black” blood. But, that was not always the case in Pena’s equations.

For, in other contexts, Pena ranked “indios” and “negros” along a scale of stain. Not that either “mestizos” or “mulatos” were blessed with blood purity; both had pollutions coursing
through their veins. However Black stains were the blackest. Pena noted this distinction when asking himself who should be sent to minister to the countryside if there were a choice to be made between a “mulato” or a “mestizo.” “Mestizo”, of course. Even though both were polluted, “mulato” blood, in Pena’s words, “had an uglier stain” (“una mancha mas fea”).

Calculating Practices

Pena’s figures became part of the official sense of the era, and, in spite of (or along with) a tilt toward capacity over descent, they reenforced the fundamental racial logic at the heart of the colonial state. Inquisitors never employed a calculus as precise as Pena’s. They did, however, give flesh to abstract categories, by marking human boundaries in racial terms and by inscribing “percentages” into the identity of colonial prisoners. Accused heretics of all stripes found that admitting “stain” was not enough: New Christians and “mestizos” and “mulatos” had to declare exactly how much stain flowed in their blood. They had to become fluent in race-fractions. Colonial state-craft articulated, with some refinement, the “racial mix” of its colonial subjects. The smallest mix commonly found in tribunal records was “quarteroon” and magistrates applied it to both Black and Indian stains. Women accused of witchcraft were made into (Indian) quarteroons: for example, Dona Luisa de Vargas (aka la quarterona (“the quarteroon”)); or Dona Bernarda Cerbantes, who, “heard she had a mestizo grandfather on her mother’s side”. And, women accused of witchcraft were made into (Black) quarteroons: Ana de Castaneda, quarter “mulata”, Juana de Morales, “quarter mulata”, Ana Maria de Ulloa, “quarter mulata”. Magistrates also recorded a “metis” category for those with Black and Indian ancestry. The common term was “zamba”; thus Francisca de la Pena was “a mulata zamba”; and Maria de Castro Barreto, was said to be “of ‘zamba’ color because she is the daughter of a ‘mestizo’ and a
‘negra’”.

Are we witness to the beginnings of a typology of looks? -- like using “zamba color” to reenforce Maria de Castro’s racial place. Men and women would sometimes make a stab at identifying heretics via physical characteristics: “He said he was the son of Spaniards, but he looks mestizo”, or “she looked like she had mulata [in her]”; or “[the accomplice] was ‘morena’ in color; or “he looks to be Spanish”, or in reference to an accused Judaizer, “he looks mestizo”. “Looks,” shades of color, carried an awful potential that was beginning to be realized – to be transformed into an “objective” scale of humanness; to be transformed into a measure of real distinctions among human beings.

Peru’s Portuguese community was subject to a similar – if less articulate – calculus of pollution. Like the colonial-caste system, Inquisitors demanded that accused judaizers provide the details of Old Christian/New Christian mixes – exactly which parents, grandparents, and collateral kin were tainted and which were not. Here are a few of the ways they responded: Juan Rodriguez Mesa confessed to being a descendent of “the hebrew nation,” but, when pressed, reckoned one exception: his grandmother on his mother’s side, “who he took to be an Old Christian”; Henrique J. Tavares, Portuguese, declared he was Old Christian “on the part of his paternal grandfather”; in one breath, Francisco Rodriguez, asserted he “was from the caste and lineage of Jews”; in another he declared his father was Old Christian. Infamous Bachiller Francisco de Silva, the confessed Jew who not only evangelized in prison but challenged his jailers to theological debates, confirmed that his father’s entire lineage was “de Judeos”, but that his mother’s was Old Christian; and, the unrelated Bartolome de Silva, who initially claimed that “his parents were Old Christians”, later decided “that his parents had something of New
Christian [in them]”.  

The Lima Inquisition required indicted Judaizers to name their New Christian and Old Christian ancestors, but, unlike the calculations for men and women “de color”, the converso scale was a descriptive one: Inquisitors did not attach a precise stain-fraction to converso identities. Perhaps this was because percentages didn’t mean much. Having an Old Christian grandfather or an Old Christian mother did little to alter the New Christian stigma: it didn’t seem to matter how much New Christian pollution was circulating through the prisoner’s body; or how much Old Christian honor. New Christians were equally suspect whether tainted by one grandfather or an entire kinline.

Nonetheless, whether calculated as percentages or as totalities; whether mocked, questioned, or seen as God’s truth, race-thinking – that irrational melange of race, nation, ancestry and culture – had gripped Peruvian imaginations. Albeit in different ways, and with different confusions.

Alternate Understandings: Some Basic Agreements

But, although Peruvians – across caste and class – appeared to increasingly see the world in terms of race-based looks and fractures, Peruvians also lampooned them – to the great consternation of secular and episcopal authorities. Their activities were audacious enough to alarm officials, concerned that Peruvians (particularly “indios”) were able to change caste, as easily as they changed clothes. Here are just a few examples of race-sneering found in the tribunal archives: Angela de Figueroa, Gabriela Colmenares, and dona Francisca de Bustos – accused witches all – troubled magistrates by dressing “Indian style”; dona Ynes de la Penallilo warned one client never to say that a Spanish woman had given her love-charms, “but
rather, an Indian”, since the Inquisition did not have jurisdiction over natives; Dona Luisa de Vargas – who told Inquisitors she carried one quarter Indian blood and sometimes went by the nickname “quarterona,” also called herself – and was known by others as -- Luisa Blanca (Luisa White). Alvarez Enriquez and his brother, Vasco de Xerez flaunted their “new” origins, by dressing in the velvets and silks only Old Christians were supposed to wear; Juan de Acevedo became don Juan de Acevedo in Peru; Manuel Bautista Perez, consciously acting and talking like a Castilian, tried to remove any palpable traces of his Portuguese origin; Luis de Valencia and his son, Juan de Acosta, insisted “they were taken to be noblemen...”, Don Simon Osario and Antonio Leal (among others) bought Old Christian ancestry – with false documents; and, the most grievous mockery of all: Manuel Henriquez and his co-conspirators accused Old Christians and Castilians of being Jews.

Of course, Portuguese New Christians and native New Christians had their own ideas about the meaning of New Christian, the significance of race, and what it would take to become an “Old Christian.” And, perhaps not surprisingly, they agreed on a few basics: for one, an Old Christian was the child of a New Christian. Hernan Jorge, asked to categorize his ancestry, claimed his parents “were New Christian descendants of Jews”, but that he, on the contrary, was a “baptized Christian...an Old Christian”. Like Hernan Jorge, Francisco de Silva gave New Christian a one generation shelf-life: he was both an “Old Christian” and “the grandson of Portuguese.” Guaman Poma de Ayala, the Andean nobleman and critique of the Crown, shared in this understanding: “the children of baptized Christians” were Old Christians. New Christians, Poma said, were just that: the recently converted, Peru’s “indios” and “negros”.
Guaman Poma and Hernan Jorge would have agreed, as well, that to be Christian meant to join the faithful, worship Christ, and be a member in good standing of the Church. Christianity, for both “New Christians,” was a question of belief and practice, not ancestry. With that understanding, Guaman Poma berated Spaniards for not behaving in Christian fashion and made his case that in Peru, Indians, newly converted to Christ’s ways, were better Christians than Spaniards (“[greedy Spaniards] say that Indians are barbarians and not Christian. It is the opposite...”). He also reminded Europeans that there was a time when they, like Indians, had been ignorant of Christ’s ways; so that Spaniards had became Christians the way Andeans were becoming Christian – by desire and learning, not by descent. And, Portuguese echoed these sentiments, pointing out, in moving testimony, that there were “conversos” who worshiped Christ with a passion not always matched by Old Christians. Some even argued that Portuguese were better Christians, or at least more honorable Christians, than were Castilian Christians.

But Portuguese and natives did not always share opinions about the colonial order.

**Guaman Poma’s Global Design – Andean Race-Thinking**

Guaman Poma – like many of his Portuguese peers – was at odds with himself when it came to questions of belief and culture, race and “nation”. Guaman Poma insisted that faith was a question of action and not ancestry. Yet, he shared the Inquisitors’ skepticism about the true faith of Iberia’s New Christians. Poma strongly believed in Christianity’s bedrock equality (“Christ died for everyone, whether Moor, Jew, Black...”). Yet, he seemed reluctant to consider that Jews’ and Moors’ descendants could be Christians, too. In his long letter to the Crown, Poma never distinguished between a “converso” past and present; he never talked about “New Christians” or “Portuguese”– just about Jews and Moors. Only natives were given the benefit of
belief: So, while Guaman Poma wrote pages and pages demanding that the faith of native Peruvians be judged by their actions and their beliefs; he froze Portuguese “New Christians” in the faith of their ancestors. Poma’s thoughts on ancestry, ability, religion, and social rank – like the “conversos””, as you will see, were contradictory, like the irrational system of race-thinking, on which they were drawn.

Guaman Poma was an unrelenting supporter of, in his words, “blood and lineage” - the cornerstone, in his opinion, of any policy for good government. His design for a just and well-ordered colonial society was built squarely on notions of purity – both of caste (Spaniard, Indian, and Black) and of status (nobility/commoner-peasant). In homage to the racial/caste divisions of the modern colonial world, he partitioned all humans into three undefiled races: (“to be a worthy creature of God, son of Adam and of his wife Eve [requires]...pure Spanish, pure Indian, pure Black”). And each pure caste was to be ruled by a member of its own nobility (i.e. someone like Guaman Poma should govern Peru) who, in turn, would owe allegiance to the King of Castile. Poma’s vision – predating Avila by decades – joined race, government, territory and sovereignty in broad, global strokes: “...thus, Castile belongs to Spaniards, and the Indies belong to Indians, and Guenea[sic] belongs to Blacks....Each are the legitimate owners, possessors, not by virtue of the King, but by virtue of God and his justice.”

Poma argued that a successful colonial government ultimately depended on preserving strict boundaries between society’s constituent groups. And, he was as concerned about the lower orders within castes trying to become what they were not born to (“...from peasant they want to become lord, and from poor lineage, King;” or “from Indian tribute-payer to Indian nobility”)) as about caste-members trying to pass for what they were not. Combining both
concerns – and an obsession to construct a native nobility – Poma urged Andeans to marry their social equivalents, and pressed kurakas -- members of the colonial indigenous elite – to be sure that, “they do not give their daughters in marriage to either Indian peasants (mitayos) or to Spaniards, but rather to their equals, so that a good caste (buena casta) is produced in this kingdom.\textsuperscript{52}

If marriage between unequals in rank menaced good government, marriage outside of “race/caste”, Guaman Poma charged, would ring its demise. Facing the stunning decline of native populations and the unbearable erosion of community life, Poma turned to “mestizaje” – “racial mixing” – as their principle cause.\textsuperscript{53} Poma wrote apocalyptically about the proliferation of Peru's "malas castas"; the stained, illegitimate "mixed breeds" -- mostly “mestizos”, but also “mulatos” and “sambaigos” (Indian and Negro unions) -- whose scandalous lives (his judgment) seemed to feed colonial disorder\textsuperscript{54}.

Colonial caste mixtures were a ready target of Poma’s scorn; but so was “converso” blood. So, on top of mestizaje, Poma railed against the depravity of Jewish stains – calculating them to be more denigrating than the otherwise despicable, bastard ones carried by “mestizos”. This is what he had to say about marriage between Old Christians and Jews: “If the [husband] branded by the stain...were from the lower orders or a Jew, and the wife from a line of caballeros and Old Christian, she loses everything...their [children] are of a ruined caste, worse than “mestizo”\textsuperscript{55}. And, in this context (as opposed to writings in which Poma berates Spaniards for their un-Christian like behavior), Poma gave “Old Christian” a similar valence as the Inquisitors. Old Christian represented an overlap of descent, nation, and status; it meant Castilian, honorable, pure-blooded, and noble; and, by implication, everything Jews were not.\textsuperscript{56}
Guaman Poma took the racial triad seriously, so seriously that his take on Spanish could be curiously at odds with the Spanish take on Spanish purity. Spaniards understood their racial vigor to reflect an absence of Jewish and Moorish pollution – a sentiment we know Poma supported with vehemence. But when Poma was immersed in the globe’s race-trinity, he supported, with equal vehemence, the opposite view. Arguing that the “mala casta blanca” was still the “casta blanca” (i.e. Jews, Moors, and their descendents were full-blooded Spaniards), Poma waxed on about the virtues of Spanish endogamy, including the intermarriage of Spaniards with Jews and Moors: “how good this law [of racial endogamy] would be, because one Spaniard vis a vis another Spaniard – even if he were a Jew or a Moor – is a Spaniard”. Spaniards, “would not mix with any other people (“nacion”) except Spaniards.” And, in this, as you will read, Poma comes close to the philosophy of New Christians, like dona Mencia de Luna or Manuel Bautista Perez, who believed themselves as Spanish as any Iberian born.

Coupling Spanish imperial race theory with his own designs for indirect rule, Poma argued that Spaniards – whether Old Christians or Moors or Jews -- would always be foreigners in Peru. In Poma’s schema of racialized nationalism – one that was true to the demands of colonial transnationalism (if not to Spanish colonialism) – the racialized nation, as a whole, trumped its internal differences of wealth, status, or even “tainted blood”. And, in line with imperialist requirements, membership in that “nation” was congruent with ancestry, with “casta y generacion” – not residence or place of birth. Poma’s version of indirect rule argued that even if Spaniards were to come to Peru, hold important positions and prosper, they were always outsiders: “Castile belongs to Spaniards, the Indies belong to Indians”. The Indies might owe allegiance to Castile, but, Spaniards were forever alien in the Americas, whether born in Lima or
Guaman Poma ardently defended his global race-triad; at the same time, he ardently recognized that his global race-triad was inadequate. For one, it papered over internal differences in rank, something Guaman Poma, with noble pretensions, was acutely sensitive to. (In one rendering of colonial order, Poma actually put “Indian noble” in the same category as “Spaniard”, and “Spanish peasant” in the same category as “Indian.”) Poma berated Spaniards for lumping Indians together as if they were one people: “[Spaniards] called [the Americas] Indies, because it meant land in the day time [i.e. en dias] and not because the natives called themselves Indians... And thus [Spaniards] call them Indians, even to this day; and it hurts”. But, Poma was also aware – from sermons, books, discussions, and experience – that “viracochacuna”, the quechua term most Andeans gave to Spaniards (and sometimes to Europeans in general) were not the same, either. Viracochacuna were divided by their political and cultural histories; just like Indians. To be fair, Poma berated Indians for doing the same kind of stereotyping as Spaniards: “Indians also call [all Europeans/Spaniards] Viracocha, [even though] each group has its own name” “ – [whether] Castilian, foreigner, Jew, Moor, Turk, Englishman, Frenchman.” Poma’s groups inherited stains as well – even Englishmen.

Guaman Poma had a practical strategy to ensure that race (and class) -purity would prevail. Knowledgeable in Spanish civic lessons (i.e. a healthy respect for documents in general, and for lineage certificates in particular), Poma’s scheme for enforcing racial boundaries was an exemplar in the modern practices of state. Poma said, simply, that everyone in the Viceroyalty should carry a blood purity I.D. Now, Guaman Poma was not naive. He was well versed in Peru’s black market for phony documents. (“[Here] everyone is a caballero. In exchange for four
reales they have a certificate of proof." But, in spite of the bourgeoning trade, Poma was convinced that stain-verification certificates, carried in the breast pocket, would be the best, if not the only, way to approach the passing problem: “how, then, can we know if someone carries the stain of ...Jewish [blood], or Moorish, or Turkish, or English”(!)? or “if he is a peasant, if he is a nobleman,...” if he is a Jew or Moor or “mestizo” or “mulato” or “negro.” Without a certificate, race was too confusing. But, with Poma’s long lists of stain-carriers or status-carriers – from Moor to Englishman to peasant to nobleman – race was just plain confusing.

More Race-thinking: Portuguese Perspectives

Our modern-world-in-the-making was ridden by slips and incongruities that showed race-thinking for what it was. The Henriquez-Acuna confession conspiracy – skewering the translation of New Christian, Jew, and Portuguese into a racial being – was a telling, and ultimately tragic, example. Here we delve into the New Christian/Portuguese/Jew equation. We begin with the conditions that made it a historical possibility.

Anti-Semitic Roots and the Portuguese Connection

The Spanish Inquisition was a product of fear – that Jews or hidden Jews were sabotaging Christian supremacy. Some historians trace its creation to the mid fourteenth century, a period when popular and official anti-Semitism coalesced into mob violence. Pogroms in many of the Peninsula’s urban centers – Seville, Cordoba, Valencia, Barcelona – lead to the murder of hundreds while terror compelled hundreds more to accept baptism. Spain’s New Christian community was born out of these forced conversions, and, from its inception, members of elite and popular classes looked on the community with distrust. New Christians, or so went this plank of Iberian anti-Semitism, were a fifth column, the enemy-within the Christian state.
As the enemy-within, New Christians were frequently mistaken for practicing Jews. But why were New Christians also assumed to be Portuguese? And why was the Portuguese connection so explosive? To answer, we have to look again at the consequences of the 1492 Act of Expulsion. Some estimate that after the Act, at least fifty thousand Jews – half of all those who left Spain – resettled in neighboring Portugal. Their venture swelled the percentage of Jews living there to, by some estimates, one fifth of the country’s inhabitants. In 1497 these immigrants had to face, yet again, the order to convert or be expelled. Most converted en masse, giving Portugal a coherent block of “conversos” – some of whom became devoted followers of Christ, while others retained their belief in Judaism and secretly practiced its rites.

One hundred years later, prompted this time by the Portuguese Inquisition’s vicious attacks against assumed Judaisers, New Christians left their Portuguese homes and emigrated back to Spain. This “return” migration had a significant impact on New Christian-Spanish relations. First, the mass exodus to Spain revived Spanish Inquisitors’ concerns about a Jewish peril. Second, a substantial number of these emigrants were involved in global trade, creating a notably Portuguese presence in commerce and finance. It was this flight to Spain, then, that spurred the burgeoning stereotype that all Portuguese, like all New Christians, like all merchants, were Jews.

With Portuguese added to the monikers of New Christian and Jew, migrants to the Americas were now judged against the backdrop of Spain’s foreign affairs, and, in particular, Castile’s often ambiguous relationship with Portugal. In Peru, Portuguese-Castilian tensions were directly linked to conflicts over territory in Brazil. A Portuguese
colony since the fifteenth century, Brazil came under the jurisdiction of the Spanish monarchy in 1580, when Felipe II assumed the Portuguese crown. And, along with the Crown, Felipe inherited Portugal’s decade’s-long skirmish with the Dutch over land in Brazil’s Northeast. While Colombia not only questioned the loyalty of Portuguese subjects but were disturbed by the growing involvement of Portuguese merchants in imperial commerce; many Portuguese, on the other hand, judged life under Spanish rule as a kind of bondage and chafed at Spanish attempts to impose a Hispanic model of monopoly trade on their more liberal traditions. The fact that the majority of New Christians arrested (and executed) by the Spanish Inquisition were either born in Portugal or had parents who had been, only amplified frictions. Ancestry damned these women and men twice-over: as Portuguese, they were mistrusted for their fidelity to Lisbon; as New Christians, they were mistrusted for their fidelity to Judaism. These suspicions were further compounded by the 1624 Dutch victory over Castile in Brazil’s Northeast.

The Dutch were Spain’s principal rivals for control over South America, and during the first half of the seventeenth century Dutch forces were trying to establish footholds on South American soil and were wreaking havoc with Spanish trade. It was a Castilian commonplace that Portuguese New Christians were secret allies of the Dutch, and many Spaniards, like the playwright Lope de Vega, blamed seditious Portuguese for Castile’s initial loss of Bahia in 1624 (recaptured in 1625), as well as for Castile’s defeat in Pernambuco six years later.

For Peru’s Inquisitors, a Dutch colony at its borders represented a serious threat.
Since victims of Spanish intolerance could practice Judaism in Dutch territories, they feared that a vibrant Jewish community in Brazil would only facilitate the enemy’s political goals. Of course, they worried equally that Bahians might encourage their recently arrived, “converso” kin to cross the Amazon and settle in Peru.\textsuperscript{74}

Although the Inquisition has become such a commonplace that its existence – along with its fanatical anti-Semitism – seem a given of Spanish life, we can’t lose sight that many, including members of the elite, did not share the tribunal’s anti-Portuguese, anti-New Christian sentiments. Throughout the Spanish realms debates flared over Inquisition justice and over New Christian character. Peru was also a theater of conflicting attitudes and policies, and, as we have seen, debates over the power of conversion to transform heretics into “true” and trustworthy subjects were especially poignant here.

The Portuguese attained their greatest influence under the reign of the Duke of Olivares’s – Felipe IV’s court favorite and perhaps the most powerful man in the kingdom.(1621-43). The Duke supported New Christians, as did Felipe IV’s confessor, the Inquisitor-General (no less), in large part because they wanted to take advantage of the “Portuguese's” fiscal and commercial skills.\textsuperscript{75} Following Olivares' general spirit of tolerance, men of Jewish ancestry were sought after for positions in government and became significant players in the world of Iberian finance – something Lima’s accused heretics were well aware of.\textsuperscript{76} Colonial Lima, like the rest of the empire under Olivares' tenure, saw “converso” merchants enjoying prosperity and esteem; and some were on the verge of becoming a new aristocracy.

Nevertheless, in the sea-saw of anti-Semitic feelings, resentment of New Christians,
and fear of their treacheries, were never far from the surface. Lima’s Inquisitors – particularly under the sway of Manozca, were distrustful of Olivares and the Portuguese presence. Their mission, under Manozca’s aegis, was to sharpen and clarify the battle lines for civilization; and, for most, Castile vs Portugal, Old Christian vs. New Christian, True Christian vs. Jew were one and the same struggle.

Portuguese, New Christian, Jew, and “Espanol”

The Inquisitors practiced a kind of “racial” profiling in their efforts to uncover the “truth”. Profiling attached guilt (or, its overwhelming possibility) to a specific class of human beings, and it was not a great leap from possibility to near-certainty to stereotype – as victims of tribunal justice were well aware. In their pursuit of New Christian ancestry, magistrates showed that their judgements were beholden to stereotypes – as well as that stereotypes could create their own kind of truth, a truth which could, in its twisted way, create its match among the living.

In seventeenth century Peru, New Christian = Jew = Portuguese was the currency of the day. Not just Inquisitors, but viceroys, slaves, the general populace, and even the accused themselves regularly used Portuguese or New Christian when they meant Jew. Inquisitors wrote letters to the Crown complaining about the “Portuguese” presence, Father Vazquez de Espinosa, in his compendium of the Indies, talked about the New Christians who (“praise God”) had been punished by the tribunal; so Antonio Suardo, writing in his diary about arrests in the “conspiracion grande”. Castilians in the Lima cathedral, listening to sermons with a strong anti-Jewish message, thought they were “directed at the Portuguese” parishioners; a slave swore to the tribunal that his owner, Jorge Paz, was a Judaizer because “whenever a Portuguese came to talk to [Paz], he would close the door” Portuguese = Jew was in the cultural
New Christians might have been born in cities as noble as Seville or Madrid, but that made little difference to Inquisitors. When determining “casta y generacion,” they invariably linked “conversos” back to Portugal. Most often, the court would record a “converso”’s place of birth, but then emend it to reinforce the Portuguese connection. So, Felippa Lopez, although born in Seville, was from the “casta y generacion de judios portugueses;” Diego Lopez de Fonseca, who shared the terrible scaffold with Manuel Bautista Perez, was born in Badajoz, but “descended from Portuguese.” And, Sr. Castro y Castillo, the Tribunal secretary, used this shorthand in case summaries sent to Madrid: Juan de Ortega, Portuguese, born in Bordeos, France; Diego Gomez, Portuguese, born in Seville; Manuel Alvarez Despinosa, Portuguese, born in Madrid; Antonio Fernandez, Portuguese, born in Valladolid.

Even indicted Judaisers confounded Portuguese with Jew, and so, participated in – and accelerated – the confusions between religion, nation, and race. Padre Manuel Nunez Magro was said to have worshiped in Venice’s famous synagogue, “with all the rest of the Portuguese;” Joan Vicente talked about confessing his Jewish beliefs to fellow Portuguese. Indicted heretics were routinely accused of shopping from or residing with or visiting “Portuguese with whom they shared “casta y generacion.” Inmates active in the “confessions conspiracy” called Manuel Bautista Perez the Captain or Rabbi of the Portuguese; even Manuel Henriquez swore, “cursed be the Law of Moses and damned if I have anything more to do with the Portuguese.”

But the contradictions embedded in this muddle of descent, faith and nation were so insurmountable that they inevitably reached the surface. Not surprising, witnesses themselves voiced the impossibility of such a sleek cultural melange, even as they were calling one another
Portuguese while accusing one another of Judaizing. Some detainees pointed out the irrationality of the equation when they were questioned about their wives – with whom, of course, they shared “casta y generacion”. When Antonio Cordero was asked if his wife was “Castilian or Portuguese”, he insisted she was a devout Christian, although the “daughter of Portuguese”; so did Sebastian Duarte, although his wife – Manuel Bautista Perez’s sister-in-law – was known to have Portuguese/New Christian ancestry; so did Alvaro Mendez, although his wife was a member of “the hebrew nation”. And, in these cases, the Inquisitors agreed with the accused -- in spite of their wives’ questionable backgrounds and suspect marriages. Even Inquisitors could have doubts that all Portuguese were New Christians were Jews.

The Prosecutor’s charges played on a stock assumption that Portuguese would inherently make common cause, that the mere fact of being from the same “caste and ancestry”, would compel New Christians to conspire. This premise, pervading accusations made against “conversos,” appeared again and again in the Prosecutor’s indictments: In the 1627 broadsheet denouncing Manuel Bautista as a rabbi, “[Perez’s] name was followed by [others], all of the same “casta y generacion”; or an associate of a well-known merchant, who had been taunted and called a “Jew” in public, felt compelled to defend him because “the Castilians cannot stand anyone from his “casta and generacion”; or Manuel Bautista was accused by the Prosecutor of giving incomplete testimony to “conceal... the names of conspirators who were of his “casta and generacion”. Again, the racialized nature of “truth”.

Contrary to stereotype it was not all Portuguese for one. Inquisitors (on some level) knew this and so, of course, did the accused Judaizers. Witnesses opened up the Portuguese box for inspection and revealed that Portuguese came in different stripes. Some were Judaizers, others
were not; some were wealthy, others were not; some were New Christians, others were not; some were merchants, others were not.¹⁵

One accused heretic, Jorge Rodriquez Tavares, decided to take the Inquisitors’ profiling head on. Rodriguez Tavares was “not well thought of by [the Portuguese] in this town” ⁹⁶. Economics seemed to play a part, for Rodriguez claimed to be desperately poor, but with enough pride not to want Manuel Bautista Perez to think his visits were a pretext for handouts.⁹⁷ Rodriguez Tavares, miserable, excluded and definitely not a beneficiary of Portuguese largesse, was riled by the idea that Portuguese could be viewed as a homogeneous, united community. So riled, that he squarely confronted tribunal members with their prejudice.

Inquisitors saw themselves as modern and impartial state servants, and, accordingly, above the common mis-perceptions of the day. Magistrates didn’t want to appear to be blindsided by stereotypes, or caught by them. They were deeply offended by Rodriguez’s suggestion that the tribunal, in fact, was condemning Portuguese out of hand: “what did Rodriguez mean by ....‘you [Inquisitors] think all Portuguese are alike’?.” ⁹⁸ Nevertheless, in spite of all the thundering declarations of the importance of evidence, magistrates consistently made New Christian ancestry into proof of sinning and Portuguese birth into proof of guilt. Like many of us caught between the incongruity of race-thinking’s stereotypes and the reality of social practices, the Inquisitors did – and occasionally did not – believe that New Christians were Portuguese were Jews.

Bartolome de Leon – one of the first apprehended in the “conspiracion grande”, the first to be tortured, and the first to recant – had a take on the rampant retractions of testimony that owed much to the racial premises of tribunal justice. His revised affidavit was recorded on
December 2, 1636, when, in tears, he asked the tribunal for a hearing. Like others, Leon accounted for his duplicity and his change of heart by appealing to the horror of imprisonment, the fear of being falsely accused, the dread of torture, and the persuasiveness of the Acuna/Acevedo/Henriquez gang. He not only showed the obvious – the relation of “truth” (or, better said, confessional testimony) to the human beings with the powers to define it. Leon also pointed out the peculiar way issues of race entered into relations of truthfulness.

Bartolome de Leon explained to the tribunal that he believed “truth” meant something very specific when it was Inquisitors who were asking for it. Telling them why he wanted to revoke the accusations he had made against so many, Leon blurted,

....the Honorable Tribunal had said they only wanted the truth, which [Leon] understood to mean that he had testified against an Old Christian and [Acevedo] said that the Honorable Tribunal told him the same thing, and it seemed to him that he had also testified against an Old Christian...and they both decided they would [retract] their confessions, saying they had lied, because by doing that, they believed a pardon would be certain. (underlining in the original)

Not only was truth relative; it was bound to the ongoing, but increasingly resolute, debates about what constituted a legitimate, fully privileged member of the Spanish community. Leon’s presumption that Old Christians were saved in Spanish courts bridged several formidable premises about who was Spanish and who Portuguese; about the tie between religion, nationality, and “race”; and, finally, about the social relations institutions certified them all.

Now we must remember that State bureaucrats did not always agree about official definitions of personhood, and the way Inquisitors defined “Portuguese” could be at odds with
the regulations set by others. We see this when the Viceroyalty, strapped for cash, decided to levy a tax on all “foreigners.” In order to tax foreigners, royal officials had to first define what “foreigner” (including Portuguese) meant; and Lima’s royal authorities determined that “nationality” was fixed by place of birth. With this understanding in mind, Manuel Bautista Perez, born in Portugal and desperate to avoid what would have been a hefty payment, went in search of a document to certify he had been born in Spain. Miraculously, Perez’s elderly aunt “found” (or bribed officials for) such a document – a baptismal certificate archived in one of Seville’s distinguished parishes. Circumstance had much to do with how state institutions defined their subjects; and Manuel Bautista Perez, who worked so hard to appear “Old Christian,” often passed; but in this momentous time, Perez, like the majority of indicted Judaizers, was nothing but Portuguese.

“Espanol”, then, could refer to different people at different times and different people at the same time; regardless, its various meanings were colored by the Portuguese = Jew equation. There were occasions when “espanol” included Portuguese; and there were occasions when it did not. But, in most circumstances, “espanol” harbored a banner of nationalism with a racialized-religious twist, one that disavowed any taint of Portuguese. Under this flag, Spanish birthplace was worth little. It could never expunge the stink of the “mala casta blanca” – the white caste whose evil was inherited and whose destiny was an eternity in hell. “Espanol”, one of the poles in colonial social relations, was wedded to “espanol”, the symbol of a potential nation in the emerging modern world.

Limited Critiques

“Conversos” were severe critics – not of colonial hierarchies, which they never questioned
but of the Inquisitorial bent to racialize Spanishness into Old Christian purity. The Manuel Henriquez - Acuna - Acevedo conspiracy expressed one critique of race-thinking’s inherent irrationality: that ancestry determined religious belief and nationalist loyalties.\textsuperscript{103} Other accused judaizers challenged the concept of “casta y generacion” in different ways. Some claimed ignorance (Diego Lopez “didn’t know if he was an Old Christian or a New Christian”\textsuperscript{104}); some refused to equate Portuguese with caste (Henrique Tavares didn’t know what “[his ancestors’] casta y generacion” was, but that they were Portuguese\textsuperscript{105}). Dona Mencia de Luna’s kin were cloudy, too: Her husband, Henrique Nunez, admitted he was New Christian, but then added, “truthfully, he did not know if he was a New Christian or Old”; dona Mencia’s older sister, dona Mayor, said she didn’t know her casta y generacion, but that “her parents were taken to be Old Christian;” dona Mayor’s daughter dona Isabel Antonia said “she was the daughter of Portuguese”, and couldn’t say what her caste was either.\textsuperscript{106} But it was Dona Mencia de Luna who voiced the most stunning rejection of all.

Dona Mencia de Luna’s riveting testimony conveyed another challenge to the New Christian = Jew = Portuguese equation, one that, in its way, also went to the truth of race. Curiously, ironically, Dona Mencia was accused of being the Jewish community’s most stalwart defender of New Christian endogamy;\textsuperscript{107} but this accusation flew in the face of what dona Mencia had to say about her ancestry, about the nature of Portuguese/Castilian relations, about the make-up of the colonial elite, about the meaning of Old Christian and the meaning of Jew. When asked by the Prosecutor to name her “casta y generacion”, dona Mencia said, “that all [her ancestors] are Old Christians”; and, “they are intermixed, Castilians and Portuguese”.\textsuperscript{108}

The prosecuting attorney called this perjury. He had dona Mencia pegged – a closet New
Christian and Jew in search of a cover-up. But the Prosecutor’s prim, unmoving truth, was not dona Mencia’s. In her words, “it is just a lie, that [she] is a New Christian, which she is not, rather, [dona Mencia] is an Old Christian, like her parents, grandparents, and great-grand parents.”

We could dismiss dona Mencia as a liar trying to dupe the court – as the Inquisitors did. 

**But there is another way of looking at dona Mencia’s defiant refutations. Perhaps she didn’t agree with the choices; did not accept the categorical terms through which the Prosecutor (and much of Spanish society) understood human difference.** In the prosecution’s judgement, Dona Mencia was declaring the impossible: no one could claim to be both Old Christian and New Christian at the same time; or, looking at dona Mencia’s more subtle version of kinship, no one could claim to be both Old Christian and “intermixed, Castilian and Portuguese” at the same time.

Dona Mencia had a different understanding of what the modern/colonial world’s emerging distinctions should look like: in her eyes, **ancestry was irrelevant to social distinctions based on religion, and, in the colonies, place of birth was irrelevant to caste:** even full-blooded New Christians could become Old Christian, and even men and women born in Portugal could become Spaniards. Dona Mencia and her tormentors parried gravely over her position in the categorical scheme of things; their dispute, after all, went to the heart of who she was – on the one hand, and, on the other, of the powers of the Inquisitorial bureaucracy to define her humanity.

Dona Mencia, along with other New/Old Christians (and more on them in the next chapter), refused to countenance the wizardry turning religious belief into a caste, and “nation” into a race-like snare of social being. But only up to a point. Dona Mencia’s concern was to
remap “espanol” so that Castillian and Portuguese, Old Christian and New Christian could share a place in the modern/colonial scheme of things. But I imagine she drew a line separating “espanol” from the rest and doubt she would have extended her philosophy of racial boundaries to “indios” and “negros”. So dona Mencia, who wouldn’t consent to certain ancestral calculations, was, like most of us, blind to the nature of others; she did not (could not) see that the same conflicting, overlapping ideologies and social relations at the heart of “espanol” were also at the heart of “negro”, “indio”, “mulato”, “mestizo”, “zamba” – and Portuguese.

**Race-think Designs and Spanish Distinctions**

There was one boundary that could override all the fine points of cultural stains: that was the line separating Spaniards from the rest. And both of Spain’s race-think designs – as enacted by the Inquisition – worked to that end. Autos-de-Fe made that distinction very public: accused witches of “pure” Iberian descent were spared the humiliation of the lash and semi-nudity, but their sisters “de color” – regardless of how little stain mottled their blood – were paraded through the streets of Lima with breasts bared and backs whipped,¹¹¹ the grisly punishments meted out to accused Judaizers became a spectacular lesson in the boundaries that separated the “true” Spaniard from his inauthentic look alike, as the Inquisition made visible undetectable qualities of ancestry, belief, and culture. Both colonial and New Christian race-thinking, then, came together in the figure of unsullied Spaniards – the “nacion” especially chosen by God to lead the conquest of the Americas. For, blood purity was by no means incidental to Spain’s divine charge. As the jurist, Solorzano reminded his readers, God selected Spaniards to take his mission to the New World – and not any other people – because it was Spaniards who bore the purist blood.¹¹²

The Empire’s two race-think designs worked in dialectic, as modern, global history wed
relations of state-making to colony-building. Transported to the Americas, the New Christian syndrome, with its language of stains and its obsession with blood purity, dirtied the blood of “indios” and “negros” and fertilized the racial bent of colonial geopolitics; in turn, the racial logic of colonialism, increasingly obsessed by human mixtures and fractions, made its obsessions felt by all “espanoles”, now accountable to state officials for the finer details of tainted descent. Race-thinking’s two dimensions were bound in counterpoint: together they confused nation, culture, and caste; together they celebrated an illusion of purity; together they sharpened the divide between Spaniard and the rest. Together they cultivated a modern take on what it meant to be human.

Abstractions of State, Individual, Race and the West’s “Subterranean Stream”

The special circumstances joining colonialism and modern European state-making linked different social relations and different ideologies of personhood – and spawned new kinds of social beings in the process. But, as modern political thinking would have it, these “social beings” were independent of one another, populating the globe before “Spaniards” ever set up shop in the New World: Black, Spaniard, Indian were imaged as distinct and definable classes of humanity, existing before their momentous historical encounter. New Christian/Old was part of this identity-matrix, so, in spite of the fact that Spaniards were creating “New Christians” all the time, Portuguese New Christians were understood by many to be a discrete, recognizable, social entity, as ontologically distinct from Old Christians as Indians were from Spaniards, or Spaniards were from Blacks.

These racial notions, projected in state practices, were more than a bureaucrat’s cookie-cutter to apportion a diverse world. They were an ideological matrix, and as such, they were a
means through which women and men engaged their universe; they were a means through which 
women and men understood themselves. The portrait of racial categories of state as distinct 
entities, fixed by “blood stain,” obscured the social relations at the very core of modern life – 
along with their violent birth. “Race-think” categories, then, like state-think categories, were 
magical: they made the social relations of colonialism and of state-formation disappear; they 
made the social relations of colonialism and of state-formation appear external to the creation and 
identity of social being.

These machinations were accomplished in dialectic with that other modern, abstract, 
invention, “the individual”. It is a commonplace that modern identity is rooted in the concept of 
the individual or, as Marx saw it, the abstract individual could not exist apart from the abstract 
state. Foucault pinpointed the confession as a paradigm of individuating practice, Gilroy, the act 
of slavery, Marx, the collapse of feudal society. In all cases the erosion of traditional social 
bonds, or the forced uprooting of individuals from their traditional moorings, set in play the 
ilusion that an individual, existing apart from social relations, was at the center of modern life. 
So, when Inquisitors demanded that each prisoner articulate their vital statistics for bureaucratic 
consumption, they were framing a very modern bond between personhood, individuated political 
experience and the state.

But, modern life, associated so wholeheartedly with the emergence of “the 
individual” and “the state,” was inseparable – in its origin and its history – from race-
think designs. The demand that state subjects identify their “casta y generacion” was party 
to that achievement. Branding someone New Christian or Quarterona, using percentages to 
create caste subsets, or demanding to know which ancestors were Castilian or Portuguese,
tribunal members – like all colonial state-makers – were constructing modern individuals, and they were doing so through modern race-thinking. It was race-thinking that imparted palpability, concreteness to the experience of being an “individual”. The dialectic of state and individual was really, then, a threesome (at the least); and their whirl imparted an impression of tangibility, a sensation of material existence, to what were (are) the principle abstractions of modern life.

Ideologies of race and state – under the cover of rationality – brewed a mixture of confusions, along with an invidious measure of stains and abilities. Colonial fictions attached to nation-fictions – forging ideas of self and personhood on both sides of the Atlantic – were anything but “true”. It was an ugly dance, that of state and race: fashioning a cultural milieu that encouraged subjects to see themselves as individuals – but through racialized state designs; making race and state an intrinsic part of being – and then cutting off their political moorings. These were the processes making the modern world and our modern selves; these were the processes that have absorbed, promoted and obscured the West’s terrible “subterranean stream”.
1. AHN, Inq, Leg 1647, no.11, f.91v

2. Etienne Balabar and Immanuel Wallerstein, Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities (London: Verso), 1991. This volume of essays is an important contribution to the complexities of the ideologies of race and nation. Balabar makes the argument that in our contemporary world, “culture” or ethnicity is becoming the modern version of race. See his, “Is there a neo-racism” in this volume, pp. 17-28


4. When Manuel Henriquez and Manuel Bautista Perez were asked to name "casta y generacion”, they declared New Christian( AHN, Inq, Leg1647,no.11,f.56v; AHN,Inq,Leg 1647,no.13,f.246-247v, 248v, 249). Accused “conversos”, like Duarte Mendez, Vasco de Xerex, and Joan Vicente, claimed to be New Christian “ of Jewish descent.” AHN,Inq,Lib 1028, f.300,339; Leg.1647, no.3,f.47; But accused “conversos”, like Duarte Mendez, Vasco de Xerex, and Joan Vicente, claimed to be New Christian “ of Jewish descent;” others, skipping over New Christian, claimed to be of the "casta y generacion de judios" or in the words of the repentent Joan Lopez of the evil "mala adventurada" generacion de judios" AHN, Inq, Lib1028, f.347v.

5. Juan de Solorzano Pereira, Politica Indiana, Lib.II, Cap.xxix, pp. 437-438 (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Espanoles). Kamen, while, importantly stressing controversies surrounding purity of blood statutes, also noted that by the mid seventeenth century honor in religion and race were equated in published treatises; See Henry Kamen, The Spanish Inquisition: A Historical Revision (New Haven: Yale University) Press, 1998, pp.235-254


7. Solorzano, Ibid, Lib.II., Cap.xxix, p.437. There were disagreements regarded racial calculations. This was Solorzano’s understanding after examining a set of conflicting decrees.

9. Solorzano argued that while Indians even “if descended from fathers or grandfathers who were pagan, should be admitted to the Priesthood”. Ibid, p. 436

10. Alonso de la Pena Montenegro, Itinerario para parochos de Indios, en que se tratan las materias....., (Lyon, France: Joan A Hugetan), 1678, f.368-9

11. The debates surrounding illegitimacy turned on two reservations: one, that “the incontinence of the fathers would be inherited by the children;” two, that “dishonor” and “infamy” would forever enshroud them. These burdens made anyone from an illegitimate background suspect or “irregular”; but, Pena strongly contended, the Church provided an opening – a bishop’s dispensation could override all shortcomings. He was also very explicit that the drawbacks of illegitimate birth cut across colonial boundaries (“whether the person was espanol or mestizo,”) and likewise, the means to override them. Ibid, 366-68

12. Ibid, f.368-9

13. Ibid f.370-371


17. The Lopez de Lisboa family comes to mind.

18. Pena says yes, basing his argument on two papal decrees from the past century.

19. “Mestizo here is narrowly defined as the offspring of two pure “castes”. “Mestizo” could also refer to a general state of racial mix.

20. Ibid, f.393-404; for similar disputes over the dispensations needed to contract marriage within the 3rd degree, see f.488

21. Here we are looking at the official blood language, and not actual social practice.

22. Ibid, f.403-404

23. Ibid, f.403-404

24. Pena, f.370
25. AHN, Inq, Lib 1031, f.497, f.382; Lib 1032, f.220v; also see the case of Diego Cristobal, the son of a Spanish man (Old Christian) and a mestiza woman, called one/quarter mestizo. AHN, Inq, Lib 1030, f.390.

26. AHN, Inq, Lib, 1029, f.499; Lib 1031, f.495v, 497, 527

27. AHN, Inq, Lib. 1031, f.332v, Lib. 1032, f.380; also see David Cahill’s excellent article on colonial classifications for the even more complex racial categories of the 18th century; David Cahill, “Colour by Numbers: Racial and Ethnic Categories in the Viceroyalty of Peru, 1552-1824”, in Journal of Latin American Studies, Vol 26 (1994), pp. 338-346. Cahill underscores the social construction of these categories, their instability, and the ways that class, ethnicity, and race intertwined.

28. AHN, Inq, Lib. 1032, f.228v, Lib. 1030, f.360v; 213v, 383v; Lib. 1031, f.494

29. AHN, Inq, Leg 1647, no. 11, f.46v

30. AHN, Inq, Lib 1031, f.339

31. AHN, Inq, Lib 1029, f.49

32. AHN, Inq, Lib 1031, f.121

33. AHN, Inq, Lib 1031, f.136v

34. The Lisbon Inquisition, however, did impose “percentages”; in a 1658 auto, they registered Paula de [or da] Crasto, “half a New Christian;” and Thereza Maria de Jesus, “more than half a New Christian” in American Jewish Historical Society, p. 172

35. See chapter, “The Witches’ Inca”

36. See Karen Spalding, De indio a campesino (Lima: IEP) 1974, p.181. There was special concern about Indians passing – since that would diminish the number of men obliged to fulfill labor and tribute obligations.

37. See AHN, Lib 1029, f.8-8v; AHN, Lib 1029, f.250v; AHN, Inq, Lib 1032, f.113v; AHN, Inq, Lib. 1032, f.421, AHN, Inq, Lib 1031, f.497, f.382

38. AHN, Inq, Lib 1028, f.274v, 299v; AHN, Inq, Leg 1647, no. 12, passim; AHN, Leg 1647, n.12, f.38, 61v, 84 (also note that Bachiller de Valencia, most likely Luis de Valencia’s brother, was educated in the most elite universities of the times – Salamanca and Coimbra – AHN, Inq, Lib 1029, 59-59v; Medina, op cit, vol. II, pp.114-115, AHN, Inq, Lib 1030, f.154
39. AHN, Inq, Lib 1028, f.422-422v

40. AHN, Inq, Lib 1031, f.224. There were confusions regarding racial calculations. A royal cedula of 1539 pronounced that the Christian grandchildren of Judaizers would have permission to travel to the New World. Boleslao Lewin, El Santo Oficio en America, p.84-85. That is not necessarily the same as determining “old” Christian standing.


42. Guaman Poma de Ayala, Cronica de Buen Gobierno, p. 533

43. Guaman Poma de Ayala, Cronica de Buen Gobierno, p. 863, also see p. 871

44. Ibid, p.882.

45. AHN, Inq, Lib 1030, f.367-; Inq, Lib 1031, f.160, 186

46. Guaman Poma, op cit, p. 887

47. Guaman Poma, ibid, p. 421, 908

48. Ibid, p.498. I have written about Guaman Poma’s insistence that the only way for the indigenous population to return to its pre-Columbian levels, would be for the “races” to remain strictly separate. For this reason he reserved special venom for “mestizos” (predominantly Spanish father and Indian mother, and illegitimate) and Indian women whose sexual excesses, he argued, also contributed to the destruction of the Indian population. See “Family Values in Seventeenth Century Peru”, in Native Traditions in the Postconquest World, Elizabeth Boone and Tom Cummins eds. (Washington D.C.:Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1998) pp.63-89.

49. Guaman Poma, op cit, p.857-858


51. Guaman Poma, op cit, p.511, 1025

52. Guaman Poma, op cit, p.692

53. See Silverblatt, “Family Values in Seventeenth Century Peru”
54. Guaman Poma, op cit, p.189,498,504,509

55. Ibid, p.470.

56. Ibid, p. 620,659,725, 878

57. Ibid, p.858

58. And therefore, in line with Poma’s political protest, the Viceroyalty’s illegitimate governors.

59. Because of the confusions of race and status inherent in colonial categories, he sometimes merged racial “stains” and class “stains” in ways that complicated the global racial picture. For example, he would put Spanish peasants – the tribute-owing “picheros (sic)”-- in the same basket as the castes “of color” (“Spanish peasant, Jew, Moor mestizo, mulato”) Ibid, p.1064, also p.1025; or he would place Indian elites in the same basket as Spaniards, p.726

60. Ibid, p.342; p.96

61. Ibid, p.878

62. Ibid, p. 878

63. Ibid. As far as I know, this is a first for English “stains”.

64. Ibid, p. 504; Guaman Poma also thought people should dress according to caste for easy recognition. See p.511

65. The Inquisition was established in Castile and tribunals set up in different Spanish cities as early as 1478. However, in 1483, a papal bull initiated the process that united the Inquisitions of the Spanish Crown under a single jurisdiction. See Kamen, Inquisition and Society, 18-43; David M. Gitlitz, Secrecy and Deceit: The Religion of the Crypto Jews (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996), pp. xiv-xvi; 18-25

66. For a more detailed discussion of this period see Julio Caro Baroja, Los Judios en la Espana Moderna y Contemporanea, (Madrid, Ediciones Arion, 1961), Vol.1, 125-64; Kamen, The Spanish Inquisition, 1-65; Gitlitz, Secrecy and Deceit, 3-34.

67. Gitlitz, Secrecy and Deceit, 75. Estimates range from 50,000 to 120,000, with the lower end seeming most likely. See Kamen, The Spanish Inquisition, 267, for the numbers of Jews living in Portugal.

68. Scholars have stressed the significance of this early history of Portuguese Jews, converted as a block to Christianity, for New Christian communities. See Kamen, The Spanish Inquisition,

70. Gitlitz, Secrecy and Deceit, 51-53; Kamen, The Spanish Inquisition, 287-90. Portuguese not of Jewish descent were often outraged that they were assumed to be Jewish. See C. R. Boxer, The Portuguese Seaborne Empire, 1415-1825 (London, Hutchinson, 1969)

71. J.H. Elliott, Imperial Spain (London, 1990), 249-84, 337-49; Lockhart and Schwartz, Early Latin America, 221-27,251; Gitlitz, Secrecy and Deceit, 43-46.

72. Coleccion de las Memorias o Relaciones que escribieron los Virreyes del Peru acerca del estado en que dejaban las cosas generales del reino, Angel de Altolaguirre, ed. (Madrid,1930), pp.194-297; Juan Antonio Suardo, Diario de Lima de Juan Antonio Suardo (1629-1639) (Lima,1936), pp.259-61.

73. Although it is difficult to determine allegiances with great accuracy, evidence suggests that Brazil’s New Christian population held divided loyalties: while some, principally crypto-Jews, might have sided with Holland, many, perhaps even the majority, fought to keep Brazil under Iberian control. See the excellent study by Anita Novinsky, Cristaos Novos na Bahia (Editora Perspectiva, Sao Paolo,1972). In a 1997 conference hosted by the John Carter Brown Library,
“Jews and the Expansion of Europe: 1450-1800,” Novinsky reiterated her belief that a significant proportion of New Christians remained loyal to Spain. In a similar vein, a commonplace of the time (as well as today) held that Portuguese Jews had controlling interests in the Dutch West Indies Company. After a careful examination of Company records, Jonathan Israel concluded that although some Jews had investments in the Dutch West Indies Company, they never dominated it. Israel, Empires and Entrepots, 356, n. 2. Also see Kamen, The Spanish Inquisition, 42-43, 64-65, 290, 293-94, 297-98; and Gitlitz, Secrecy and Deceit, 61-62

74. See AHN Inq, Cartas, Rollo 9, f. 51, letter from Inquisitors Juan de Manozca, Andres Gaytan, Antonio de Castro y del Castillo to Muy P. Senor, May 18, 1636; also Lockhart and Schwartz, Early Latin America, 250. Part of the preceding discussion comes from my publication, Irene Silverblatt, New Christians and New World Fears in Seventeenth Century Peru”, Comparative Society for Society and History (2000), 524-546


76. Ibid, p. 315; AHN, Inq, Rollo 9, f. 166-18. Even officers of the Inquisition joined the bandwagon. Felipe IV’s confessor, the Inquisitor general, spoke positively that: "the Portuguese who are here would be capable of drawing off from Holland many of those who have most capital there, if some concession were made to them concerning a pardon for past offences, should they undertake to live in the future without offense to the Catholic faith", in Israel, Empires and Entrepots, p. 362

77. Letter of May 18, 1636, in Jose Toribio Medina, Historia del Tribunal del Santo Oficio de Lima (1569-1820) (Santiago, Chile, Gutenberg, 1887), 2 volumes; vol. 2, pp. 48-76; Fernando de Montesinos, Relacion de la auto de la fe celebrado en Lima a 23 de enero de 1639, Appendix 1 in Boleslao. Lewin, El Santo Oficio en America, (Buenos Aires, Sociedad Hebraica Argentina, 1950)


79. I am indebted to the great Spanish historian, Jose Antonio Maravall, who analyzed sermons as the popular culture of the times. See his, Culture of the Baroque: Analysis of a Historical Structure, trans. by Terry Cochran. (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota, 1986).

80. AHN, Inq, Lib 1030, f. 67

81. Epithets like “children of Portuguese”, or even “grandchildren of Portuguese” were quite ordinary. Other examples include Manuel Anriquez AHN, Inq, lib 1028, 367; Bernabe Lopez Serrano, AHN, Inq, lib 1030, f. 280; Martin Lopez de Taide AHN, Inq, 1030, f. 344; Tomas de Lima AHN, Inq, Leg 1647, no. 11, f. 23v; Alvaro Rodrigo de Acebedo, AHN, Inq, Lib 1032,
See Jonathan Israel for a discussion of the different backgrounds of Portuguese settlers in Mexico. The Old Christian Portuguese who tended to be small farmers and artisans – not merchants – resented being called Jews. Loyalty to Portugal could override, however, internal divisions of occupation and background, especially when phrased in terms of the oppression of the Castilian monarchy. Israel, Empires and Entrepots, pp. 320-322, 328-342.
compatriot of Henriquez’s from Cartagena, and one of Leon’s uncles still observed the Law of Moses, AHN, Inq, Leg 1647, no. 13, f.85

100. AHN, Inq, Leg 1647, no. 13, f.86

101. In sermons laying out the colonial scheme of things, Avila and Avendano would equate “espanol” to “gente blanca” (including Portuguese) whenever Spanish-White was counterposed to the peoples “de color” (“indios” and “negros”). When the “Portuguese” faithful died (including those reconciled and punished by the Tribunal), they were buried in the Lima cemetery designated for Spaniards. One example is Luis de Valencia, registered as “espanol” at his death, and who was taken to the cemetery by Manuel Bautista Perez’s widow. AHN, Inq, Leg 1647, no.12, f.129

102. Be wary of the “Hebrew nation,” the Suprema admonished its Lima affiliates, they are in the habit of accusing “non-Portuguese” of engaging in Judaizing habits. AHN, Inq, Lib 1031, f.31

103. Henriquez and company also tried to reenforce their argument, by presenting the reverse: articulating what was quite well-known – that New Christians had attained the highest (and noblest) positions in the Spanish court, as knights in Castille’s elite military orders and as “asentistas” – the most respected and influential advisors – to King and Council. Wouldn’t these achievements, plus the visible acceptance of New Christians by court society, prove that Portuguese could be authentic Spaniards as well? See AHN, Inq, Rollo 9, f. 166-18; AHN, Inq, Lib 1029, f.59-59v. The conspiracy also accused Old Christian Portuguese of Judaizing. One man exonerated by the Tribunal was a Portuguese merchant; another, the Portuguese Antonio de los Santos, was one of the Inquisition’s “familiars;” so was Ambrosio de Morales, another native of Portugal who had been falsely accused. I imagine that by choosing to make false charges against Portuguese, the confession conspirators were aiming to show, once more, the bankruptcy of the tribunal’s assumptions: All Portuguese, contrary to stereotype, were neither New Christian nor Judaizers; neither were all merchants, Jews. See Medina, op cit, p. 186-187

104. AHN, Inq, Lib 1031, f.89. For more examples, see Andres Rodriguez, AHN, Lib 1029, f.32v; Isabel Catana, AHN, Lib 1028, f.262

105. Henrique Tavares, AHN, Lib 1031, f. 339

106. AHN, Inq, Leg 1647, no.10, f. 18, 22, 27v,

107. This charge played into assumptions that New Christians/Jews would not marry outsiders. Kaplan has argued that in fact, Amsterdam’s Sephardic community was highly endogamous, even excluding Ashkenazic Jews from their cemetery. In any case, it was considered something that defined Jewish behavior, which accounts for the fact that verbal support for marriage prohibitions was part of the rhetoric used to denounce oneself or others as Judaizers. See Yosef Kaplan, “Political Concepts in the World of the Portuguese Jews of Amsterdam during the Seventeenth

108. AHN, Inq, Leg 1647, no.10, f.35

109. We know, but it is not clear if the Lima Inquisitors knew, that three decades before, dona Mencia and her immediate family, classed as “Portuguese and New Christian,” had been condemned by the Lisbon tribunal. Hidden in a 1603 deposition is testimony that dona Mencia had been imprisoned. Isabel de Sosa, Joan Vicente’s wife, explained that she had been apprehended along with “the parents and siblings of Gonzalo de Luna”. (Isabel de Sosa and her husband had long-standing ties with the wealthy Luna, who was a sponsor of Joan Vicente’s business dealings in the Viceroyalty). Isabel de Sosa “had been put in the same cell as dona Mencia de Luna, Gonzalo de Luna’s younger sister”. Somehow the Inquisitors trying the Luna clan in the 1630’s missed this testimony, and never brought it to bear as evidence against dona Mencia. The Inquisitors disputed dona Mencia de Luna’s age (about twenty years difference). Perhaps dona Mencia was trying to keep them off her brother’s trail AHN, Inq, Leg 1647, no.3, f.14-14v; Inq, Leg.1647, no. 10, f.35-35v.

110. AHN, Inq, Leg 1647, no. 10, f.41

111. One exception is dona Maria de Aguilar, described as “mestiza,” who was married to the “procurador” (fiscal officer) of Potosi, a high position in government. AHN,Inq,L1028, f.511-515

112. Solorzano, Politica Indiana, Libro 1, Cap. XI, p. 113