The Political Economy of Colonialism

In the 1570s, the local peoples of Huamanga finally became Indians. Toledo’s reorganization did not erase their ethnic diversity, but subordinated it to a wider, more decisive set of relationships. For the Caviñas, Acos, Angaraes, Huayacomas, Huaros, Paricas, Chilques, Papes, Totos, Tanquihua, Quichua, Aymaraes, Lucanas, Soras, Chalcos, Huachos, Yauyos, Chocorvos, and other peoples of the region, the contours of local ayllu and ethnic life would be forever defined by their shared incorporation into a new colonial category, the so-called “republic of Indians.” Within the Indian caste, a large class of native peasants controlled by a revamped indigenous elite or directly by the colonials themselves would provide goods, labor, and profits to the Crown and to the other great caste, the “republic of Spaniards.” Within the latter group, a ruling class of colonials with diversified interests in commercial production, mining, trade, agriculture, and administration would dominate the mixed-bloods and other Europeans, and reap the greatest rewards of exploitation of the indigenous peasantry.1

Because Toledo’s economic design imposed harsh obligations on self-sufficient native communities, it required coercion to enforce compliance with the state’s rules of extraction. The secret of Toledo’s achievement was his construction of the “political arm” of colonization: the organization of coercive, violent institutions and relationships into power structures capable of implementing a grand design for economic development. By tying extraction to the institutions, patronyme, and repressive apparatus of a revitalized state, Toledo domesticated the colonial elite—a class of aristocrat-entrepreneurs who combined noble pretense with a sharp eye for trade and profit. When the state, its officials, merchants, and local elites accommodated one another, the game of political alliances and connections served up highly profitable economic opportunities to be shared by them all. Favoring access to political power, European enterprise, led by a dynamic mining sector, embarked upon a tremendous boom. Economic expansion and prosperity, we shall see later (Chapter 6), developed a dynamic of its own. Eventually, the colonials’ economic dynamism and the peasants’ deepening poverty would allow Huamanga’s elites and lesser citizens to accumulate resources and exploit labor without having to depend as much as they had at first upon political favor or the formal patrimony of the state. But in the last analysis, the economic dominance which eventually permitted the elites to exploit large amounts of labor more directly, sidestepping the state, originated from the advantages bequeathed to entrepreneurs by Toledo’s legacy, the political arm of colonization.

THE GRAND DESIGN AND ITS BURDENS

In Huamanga as elsewhere, Toledo dispatched inspection teams to collect the demographic and economic information needed to set up a planned system of extraction. The inspectors counted a total of 21,981 tributaries (healthy males eighteen to fifty years old), and a total population of 122,629 Indians, in Huamanga’s twenty-three “core” encomienda districts, called repartimientos. The great visita pegged tribute liabilities to the various tributary counts of the repartimientos (Table 4.1), and converted the encomenderos into pensioners of the Crown. Of every ten “core” repartimientos, three held over 1,000 tributaries each—a high figure in greater Peru. Another five surpassed respectability by far, with over 500 tributaries each.

Table 4.1. Size distribution of tributary counts in Huamanga repartimientos, 1570-1575

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of repartimientos</th>
<th>1,500+</th>
<th>1,000-1,499</th>
<th>500-999</th>
<th>300-499</th>
<th>1-299</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of repartimientos</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>47.8%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The boundaries of the Huamanga district changed somewhat during the entire colonial period. The figures cited for Huamanga’s twenty-three core repartimientos exclude the Jauja repartimientos to the north, five small groups of mitmaq whose colonies lay in the Chocorvos district, but whose ethnic homelands were outside Huamanga, and several repartimientos on the peripheries of the Huamanga region.
Source: Tasa de la visita general, ed. Cook, 260-80.

In general, a repartimiento’s Indians owed about four pesos ensayados (12.5 reales each) per tributary—nearly three in silver or gold, and the rest in kind. From each repartimiento’s assessment, the state deducted administrative “costs”: priests’ salaries, a church fund, sums for the salaries of state officials and for “good works,” salaries for major kuracas, and, in the beginning, a surplus assigned to community cash boxes. The remainder was “free” for the
Table 4.2. Variations in repartimiento incomes based on Toledo’s visita

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tributaries:</th>
<th>Soras</th>
<th>Quinua</th>
<th>Huaros</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tributes:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silver</td>
<td>6,713</td>
<td>2,628</td>
<td>963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cloth</td>
<td>1,500^g</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corn</td>
<td>768^h</td>
<td>510^i</td>
<td>200^h</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheat</td>
<td>263^j</td>
<td>283^k</td>
<td>63^h</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potatoes</td>
<td>126^j</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swine</td>
<td>188^9</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Footwear</td>
<td>188^m</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chickens</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>81^9</td>
<td>38^h</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9,766 pesos</td>
<td>3,504 pesos</td>
<td>1,285 pesos</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Costs*:  
- **Priests**: 2,400 | 827 | 298  
- **Church**: 100 | 50 | 12  
- **Judges**: 498 | 300 | 69  
- **Kurakas**: 460 | 150 | 30  
- **Surplus**: 1,002 | 300 | 81  
| Total        | 4,460 pesos | 1,627 pesos | 490 pesos |

| Net Tribute:  |         |         |         |
| In money      | 2,223   | 1,001   | 473     |
| In kind       | 3,053   | 876     | 322     |
| Total         | 5,276 pesos | 1,877 pesos | 795 pesos |

- ^a^net tributary population (excludes kurakas removed from sum of taxable tributaries).  
- ^b^All figures are monetary values for one year, as calculated in Toledo’s visita, and rounded off to the nearest peso ensayado (of 12.5 reales).  
- ^c^600 large textiles, at 2.5 pesos each.  
- ^d^1,050 fanegas, at .75 pesos each (1 fanega = c. 1.5 bushels).  
- ^e^680 fanegas, at .75 pesos each.  
- ^f^160 fanegas, at 1.25 pesos each.  
- ^g^350 fanegas, at .75 pesos each.  
- ^h^930 fanegas, at .75 pesos each.  
- ^i^50 fanegas, at 1.25 pesos each.  
- ^j^505 fanegas, at .25 pesos each.  
- ^k^42 fanegas, at .5 pesos each.  
- ^l^125 adult head, at 1.5 pesos each.  
- ^m^1,000 pair sandalwear, at .875 pesos each (16 pair = 5 pesos).  
- ^n^664 fowl, at .09375 pesos each (32 chickens = 5 pesos).  
- ^o^300 fowl, at .125 pesos each (8 chickens = 1 peso).  

tected local subsistence stocks. If a crop failed on Inca lands, the state had to accept the loss and rely on its reserves from previous seasons. Colonial tributes in kind, in addition to claiming the community’s “surplus” labor time, eliminated the protection of community and ayllu stocks. Though communities continued the tradition of producing taxes on lands set aside especially for that purpose, they would have to make good on tribute even in years of poor harvests. In effect, the community would have to dip into harvests or warehouses assigned to local subsistence. To protect themselves, and to retain the option of selling surpluses on their own behalf when market prices rose, various ethnic groups won viceregal decrees which allowed them to commute payments in kind into equivalent money tributes (calculated at fixed prices).

The most oppressive and fearful institution, however, was the forced labor of the mita. Consider what awaited the tributary who marched off with his ayllu’s contingent to the mercury mines at Huancavelica, to the silver mines at Castrovirreynia or elsewhere, to the obrajes factories scattered throughout Vilcashuamán, or to the central plaza of Huamanga, where the elite and lesser colonials received mitayo allotments for agriculture, ranching, construction, food processing (sugar, alcohol, grains), household duties, and any other “worthy” tasks.

For the next two to four months, the mita meant far more than a short work stint away from community life. The mitayo found himself consigned to a brutal relationship, in which colonial entrepreneurs tried to squeeze out the greatest amount of labor possible before the mitayo’s time expired. Long work-days and high production quotas shaped a grinding, taxing existence. Mitayos followed the old practice of taking along wives, children, or other relatives to assist them, give company, and prepare meals in work away from their “core” residences. By bringing along relatives and foodstuffs from the community, the mitayos could hope to avoid purchasing food to supplement the rations given by their masters, and thereby take home most of their meager wages. Such practices, however, exposed a larger group of people to the harsh realities of mita labor. Colonials raped women, commanded the labors of relatives for secondary tasks, and set impossible production quotas to force mitayos to utilize the labors of their families. In short, colonials increased profits by appropriating for themselves all the productive resources, including human labor-power, brought by the mitayos. In the obrajes, for example, the mitayos tended to be older men or children. Despite the long hours put in by the children, they could not meet daily production quotas without the help of parents, or brothers and sisters. In construction, the Europeans forced mitayos to transport building materials in their own mantas (carrying cloaks) until the tough textiles wore out.

Long, hard work in dangerous conditions pressed in on health. Back-breaking, sweaty mine labor in the high cold climates of Castrovirreynia (silver) and Huancavelica (mercury) invited pneumonia and respiratory ailments. The worst work was underground. Laboring by candlelight, Indians hammered away at flint-hard rock, carried heavy bags of ore up hundreds of tortuous feet, and emerged—hot, exhausted, and thirsty—into the cold air. Some died in accidents, when underground support columns collapsed. Ore-rich columns, especially, were subject to theft during off-hours which weakened their stability. Occasionally, the raiders included overseers responsible for mines and Indian laborers during regular hours. In Huancavelica, poor ventilation, mercury vapor, and mercury-rich dust conspired to make poisoning a terrifying reality. Many miners who contracted the mercury sickness did not die quickly, but suffered long, debilitating illnesses. The malady ulcerated the respiratory tract, infected blood and bones with mercury, induced bouts of trembling, fever, and paralysis, and slowly led some victims to a merciful death. Those who survived or held off death for a year or two lived on in their home communities, disabled in varying degrees, visible reminders of the horrors of mita labor in Huancavelica. Given the harsh regime endured by mita laborers, one needs little insight to understand why some twelve percent, or nearly one out of every eight mitayos sent from Lucanas to the silver mines of Castrovirreynia, found ways to escape rather than serve out their mitas.

Even mitayos who escaped the dangers of mine labor could not assume that they would preserve their health. Work from sunrise to sunset in textile workshops must have stifled the physiological development of the children sent to obrajes. Mitayos diverted from farming or ranching for intense labor in hot sugar lands struggled against fatigue, which invited disease and accidents. Several died horrible deaths in the mills, ground up by the heavy wheels meant to press sugar cane.

In exchange for two to four months of hard work under dangerous conditions, a mitayo earned not a remuneration sufficient to maintain his household’s subsistence economy and pay off tribute assessments, but rather the right to struggle for such an outcome. The state’s regulation of mita labor provided for a modest wage, along with food rations (including meat in the mines). But from the moment his service began a mitayo contended with pressures to enter commercial transactions which reduced his net pay. If daily rations and the foodstuffs brought from home communities proved insufficient to support the mitayo and the relatives who accompanied him, the peasant would need to purchase the remainder from his temporary master or in the market at large. In a dynamic mining center, a fanega (c. 1.5 bushels) of corn, a standard ration for one adult for two months, cost well over twenty reales, or seven work-days in wages. Even without a food deficit, mitayos had good reason to turn to the market. Rations did not generally inclu-
clude coca, an indispensable source of sustenance during Andean labor. Unless a mitayo enjoyed ample access to coca through ayllu kinship relations, he had no choice but to buy the prized leaf from one of the numerous merchants who flocked to cities and mining centers, and travelled through rural hinterlands. Nor could a mitayo simply ignore traditional religious obligations or other festivities. Indeed, the release from misery and subjugation found in drunken celebrations and outbursts created dependencies upon liquor as well as coca which drew mitayos further into the market. Moreover, a mitayo who kept a lid on commercial consumption during the official mita period often had little choice but to buy foodstuffs in the market while he waited for days or weeks after the mita to collect wages. In the race between debts and wages, spurred on by masters eager to save on wages by selling goods at inflated prices, those gifted with luck, tremendous discipline, or substantial original resources stood the greatest chance to accumulate significant amounts of money. The native assigned to a relatively “easygoing” miner considered himself lucky to avoid working for a large, powerful, and demanding miner like Juan de Sotomayor. Everyone knew that Sotomayor drove his work gangs hard, leading them to physical exhaustion, high debts, attempted escapes, and even death. A native whose homeland lay relatively near the worksite could send for needed food or clothes more easily than the mitayo from far away, and thus limit his dependence upon market transactions. Similarly, a wealthy peasant could mobilize kinfolk and community resources to support him during mita labor more readily than his poorer counterpart. A man who enjoyed good health could pile up wage credits for more work-days (or production quotas) than aailer laborer whose poor health lowered earnings and raised expenses. If we are to believe the wage records available for 107 Lucanas mitayos who died or fled Castrovirreyna in the years 1597-1603 (Table 4.3), a small minority of mining mitayos (18.7 percent) did indeed manage to avoid debt, or at least hold indebtedness to less than a fifth of wages. But the majority of workers (51.4 percent) incurred debts amounting to over 60 percent of their mita wages, and one in seven (14.0 percent) earned no net wages at all!

These figures exclude market transactions independent of direct claims on wages by miners, and thus may underestimate true debt burdens. But even if we ignore the unrecorded obligations, the debts claimed by the miners alone prevented most workers from accumulating significant sums of money from mita labor. The records for sixty-five mitayos at Castrovirreyna who accumulated credits for twenty-five or more work-days (Table 4.4) indicate that nearly one in three (30.8 percent) netted no wages or less than one peso after debts. Another fifth (21.5 percent) netted one to four pesos, enough to meet tribute claims in part or in full, but with little or nothing left over. Fewer than one in ten (9.2 percent) enjoyed the economic resources, skills, or luck to end their mita labor with net wages amounting to eight pesos or more—enough to take home significant earnings after tribute deductions. A mitayo in agriculture or obrajes earned only about half the daily wage of his counterpart in the mines, and therefore relied upon a much smaller wage credit to cover debts and commercial transactions.

Table 4.4. Net wages of Lucanas mitayos, Castrovirreyna, 1597-1603

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of mitayos</th>
<th>none</th>
<th>.01-.99</th>
<th>1-3.99</th>
<th>4-5.99</th>
<th>6-7.99</th>
<th>8 or more</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of wages</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*in pesos ensayados (of 12.5 reales each).

Note: Excluded from this sample are records of Indians whose work-day credits totalled less than twenty-five days when they died or fled Castrovirreyna because such cases might underestimate the net pay of workers who survived or remained in Castrovirreyna during the full mita period. The work-day credits accumulated by Indians who stayed during the entire mita varied enormously, and the 25-102 range in this sample is, I believe, a fair one.

Source: Wage records in Appendix A.

Under these circumstances, a mita laborer was fortunate if his remuneration, after deduction for tribute, was sufficient to support him and the relatives who accompanied him during his labors, let alone compensate for the labor-time lost to his household’s economy. In effect, the resources and human labor-power the mitayos brought along from home communities subsidized the colonial entrepreneurs, who were thereby freed from having to pay a salary which could, by itself, sustain and reproduce the labor-power of their work forces.

Yet the more a mitayo brought with him to avoid mounting debts which would consume more than he earned, the more he risked undermging his household’s subsistence economy. As long as a mitayo and his close relatives were tied to mita life and labor, they could neither apply their labors to the ayllu fields assigned them, nor to the interchange of reciprocal labors which normally earned them the assistance of other households. Since the mitayo was likely to belong to the poorer segments of native society in the first place, he enjoyed a smaller, less effective network of kin ties to mobilize for the care of fields and animals during his absence. A returning mitayo frequently encountered deteriorating or unworked fields, and an eroding network of relatives to call upon for reciprocal labor assistance. For such an individual—and there were many—the mita, more than repre-
senting a discrete amount of labor-time lost to the household economy during the year, brought with it the corrosion of relationships without which families could not survive and reproduce themselves.

From the point of view of the wider community of ayllus, too, the mita disrupted access to vital resources and relationships. As often as not, a community contended with double the legal number of mita absences because, in practice, the mitas overlapped. Several days or a week before the official period of one mita expired, the next contingent would have to begin its trek under the watchful eyes of native and sometimes European functionaries. When the previous mita finally expired, the ex-mitayos would have to wait several days to over a month for wage payments before beginning their march home. In rainy season, downpours slowed progress to a long, sometimes dangerous crawl across soggy paths and torrential rivers. Since most mitas in Huamanga lasted only two months, communities might face mita overlaps of a total of five or six months every year. Consider, for example, the condition around 1600 of a populous repartimiento, in Andahuayas, with some 3,000 tributaries. Among their mita liabilities, they owed 250 mitayos to mercury miners at Huancavelica every two months. In practice, however, they had to count on 500 absent heads of households. In effect, at any given time of the year, they lost one of six, not one of twelve, of their vigorous men to Huancavelica alone. In real life, the overlaps could double the total mita assessment to nearly one of three tributaries, particularly if legal mita drafts had not yet been revised to take into account population decline.

In addition, communities could not even count on the return of all mitayos. As we have seen, records at the Castrovirreyna mines showed that, around 1600, some twelve percent of the mitayos sent from Lucanas escaped from the forced labor, disease, and the misfortune in them. Even if most of the escapees returned to their home communities, a net attrition rate of only three percent could prove extremely burdensome. For a repartimiento like the one in Andahuayas, which sent 1,500 mitayos (six mitas of 250 each) a year to Huancavelica, such a rate would cost it some 45 tributaries annually, or one of every six or seven tributaries over a decade.

The prolonged absences of considerable numbers of mitayos, who themselves tended to take along relatives to their temporary workplaces, and the attrition represented by mita flights, siphoned off high proportions of available labor-power. Particularly in labor-intensive agriculture, the mita's drainage inevitably forced communities to retrace the scope of their subsistence economies and restrict the production of surplus crops which would tide them over poor harvests. Perhaps more difficult than the loss of labor-power as such was the fact that traditional relations of production acquired a less dependable character. The absence of laborers on a temporary basis did not, by itself, constitute a new or disruptive element. As we have seen, ayllus and communities traditionally worked scattered pockets of resources which required considerable geographical mobility and significant absences from "core" settlement areas. A local mita system, integrated into a network of reciprocal interchanges of labor among a community of producer-relatives, had long played an important role in the subsistence economy. Expectations that labor assistance would be reciprocated later allowed absent producers to call upon relatives to tend to their interests until their return. The mita's established by the Incas permitted such expectations to continue.

But the colonial mita made such expectations problematic, even foolish, not only because it reduced the total labor-time available for community work, but also because it disrupted the dependency of traditional forms of interchange. The mitayo and his relatives might never come back! Or if they returned, they might not arrive in time for crucial moments in the agricultural cycle, when their labors were most needed. Or the mitayo might return in time, but too sick to put in the work expected of a young man. By injecting new risks and uncertainties into local work relationships, the colonial mita induced a collective deterioration which undermined the efficacy of traditional institutions as a reliable source of labor. Only in this way can we understand the widespread complaint, in societies which had long managed to integrate labor rotations, geographical mobility, and temporary absences into their economic organization, that mitayos could not find people to tend to their fields while they were away.

THE SURVIVAL OF AYLLU SELF-SUFFICIENCY

Ideally, the system of tributes and mita allotments, set by the supposed carrying capacity indicated in demographic counts, were to have supplied the colonial economy with a flow of money, commodities, and labor while preserving the basic self-sufficiency of autonomous native economies. As we have seen, reality proved far more complex. Tributes in kind and repeated demands for the community's surplus labor-time set in motion a process of hardship and attrition which, over the years, menaced subsistence stocks, shrank the core mass of available labor-power, and disrupted relationships and activities that had once constituted renewable annual cycles of ayllu production and reproduction.

Yet the state's extractive institutions did not immediately, in one blow, destroy the internal vitality or subsistence capacity of peasant economies. The process which ultimately undermined the economic independence of native societies took time, and was itself contradictory. For the very same forces—an expansive commercial economy driven by large-scale mining—which drove indians to prostrate themselves in labor and tributes also gave Indians a chance to exploit commercial opportunities. And the revenues Indians accumulated in trade could help them reverse setbacks or inroads on
local subsistence. For at least a decade or two after Toledo's reorganization, access to sufficient lands, animals, labor-power, and other resources, together with creative local adaptations to the commercial economy, allowed most communities to meet their subsistence needs, and even to accumulate surprising cash surpluses.

Population decline, colonial interests, and the natives’ own tactics helped preserve local self-sufficiency. Demographic decline reduced the total amount of lands, pastures, and labor time needed to sustain the remaining local populations. Unlike their eighteenth-century counterparts, whose expanding population hungered for land, Huamanga's sixteenth-century peoples usually held surplus lands which they could not work because of population decline and labor drafts for Spanish enterprise. In addition, colonial extraction was premised upon exploiting the Indians' self-sufficiency, rather than eliminating it. The state, therefore, instituted policies designed to place limits on colonial expropriations. Toledo's inspection teams set aside lands for the exclusive use of the resettled communities and, as we shall see (Chapter 5), colonial juridical institutions allowed communities to revise their tribute and mita obligations downward in accordance with declines in the tributary populations. Just as important, the private interests of colonials as individual entrepreneurs also favored local self-sufficiency. Even wealthy miners—the entrepreneurs most capable of paying wages sufficient to support workers' families, and whose labor regime most threatened the subsistence economy of the mitayos' rural communities—relied on cheap labor, whose maintenance was subsidized by community economies, to increase profits and minimize risks.

The natives themselves developed strategies to protect their self-sufficiency. They sued in colonial courts to lower tribute and mita quotas, convert tributes in kind to tributes in money, fight off European intrusions on tertiye lands, and the like (see Chapter 5). With the tacit consent of local officials, they abandoned residence in the new relocations for more traditional, dispersed settlement patterns. The new resettlements, had they been enforced, would have eaten into labor-time available for production by stretching out travel to scattered holdings. Most important, by connecting resilient and dynamic local economies to commercial networks, communities managed to generate a monetary income which could, for a time, pay off tributes, minimize labors in distant sites under conditions not easily controlled, and make up for shortfalls in subsistence storage or production. Natives sold excess lands, worked local mines on their own account, and marketed surplus animals, commercial crops, and processed goods such as wool and cheese. Particularly in southern regions such as Lucanas, Soras, and Castroviirreyna (before the discovery of silver c. 1590), access to extensive pasturelands unexpropriated by colonial ranchers allowed communities to earn money by selling thousands of animals whose care required relatively little labor. (Colonial estancias first spread near the cities of Huamanga and Huancavelica and along the commercial route through Vilcashuamán.)

In effect, many communities displayed an internal vitality that enabled them to survive—for a time—as relatively autonomous and modestly prosperous productive units. By producing and marketing a surplus on their own account, they could compensate for the inroads made by colonial institutions upon local self-sufficiency. In Parinacochas, for example, local curacas sometimes entered the market for their repartimientos' tributes in kind, and bought back foodstuffs their ayllus had just turned over for tributes. By the 1580s and 1590s, many ethnic groups were accumulating thousands of pesos in cash reserves deposited in community coffers. The reserves, coveted by local elites, colonial bureaucrats, and royal treasurers alike, grew into a headache for royal policy well before 1590. The system of extraction set up by Toledo had not anticipated the kind of dynamic adaptations which allowed communities, after turning over goods, money, and labor to the colonial economy, to generate substantial surpluses and cash reserves for their own use.

Thus, though colonial tributes and mitas imposed hardship, disruption, and drainage which were away at and ultimately impoverished local subsistence economies, the process of attrition took time. Communities reduced to a bare subsistence by 1620 or 1630, unable to pay scaled-down tributes or even to meet administrative “costs” (salaries for priests and functionaries, church funds), managed to put aside thousands of pesos after paying hefty tributes in 1580 or 1590. Economically, Toledo's extractive regime functioned as a crude “siphoning” process drawing upon the labor and resources of independent, sometimes wealthy, local economies. At least until around 1590, the natives' access to resources and shrewd adaptations to colonial conditions enabled many communities to maintain an impressive subsistence economy, buttressed by cash accumulations.

As a result, ayllus had no economic reason to submit to the mita labor or tribute assessments imposed by Toledo. In societies where producers retain independent access and control of resources sufficient to provide for their subsistence, no compelling economic necessity drives them to deliver surplus goods or labors to prospective employers or masters. Even if producers maintain inadequate access to resources, barely able to eke out a living, some form of extraneconomic coercion or pressure often proves necessary to exploit their labors. In the case of Huamanga's local societies, Toledo's reorganization imposed a harsh regime of extraction upon groups of producer-relatives who could, more than scratch out a living, generate considerable wealth on their own. Even had communities accepted money tributes as the price of “social peace,” they would have had little economic rea-
son to comply with mita labor drafts, especially in the mines, to earn wages. Their own resourceful adaptations to the commercial economy, and the comparatively high wages commanded by non-mitayo labor, provided less abusive alternative modes of accumulating money.

The irony of Toledo’s extractive regime was that it imposed terrible burdens which ultimately menaced local economies and life rhythms, but did not immediately eliminate the natives’ subsistence capacity or economic independence. Under these circumstances, only one force could translate the horrors of the mita, along with a tribute system, into workable institutions. That force was force itself.

THE POLITICS OF ENFORCEMENT

What was new after Toledo was not the tributes or mitas in themselves, but the state’s ability to rationalize and implement them on a large scale. Under the system of post-Incaic alliances, Indians and colonials alike had dubbed the transport of tributes by natives to the city, and the natives’ subsequent stay for a period of service to their encomenderos, as the fulfillment of a “mita.” To translate such practices into veritable institutions providing a regular flow of goods, money, and forced labor to an expanding European economy, including a prosperous mining sector, required the reorganization and integration of local power structures into an effective network of state power.

The corregidor de indios system begun by García de Castro, along with Toledo’s massive campaign of local inspection and reorganization, provided the means to enforce the state’s extractive institutions. The new settlements established by the visitadores (inspectors) did not last long as permanent residential centers, but as we saw earlier, the reorganization entourages which fanned out over Huamanga represented the true arrival of state authority to demoralized rural districts. The itinerant judges settled local disputes, supervised construction of new towns and churches, and made clear that the state would replace troublesome kurakas with more pliable functionaries. To centralize the lines of rural power, Toledo grouped Huamanga’s twenty-three core repartimientos into four rural districts, or corregimientos (Huanta, Angaraes-Chocorvos, Vílcamachaymán, Lucanas). As the state’s chief administrative agent, judicial officer, and jailer, the corregidor de indios ruled over the economic, social, and political life of his corregimiento. Like his counterpart in Spanish cities such as Huamanga and, later, Huancavelica and Castroviirreyca, he did so in alliance with the prominent powers of his district.

A revamped indigenous power structure, dependent upon the state’s benevolence for its tenure and privileges, would serve as local agents of the corregidor and colonial regime. The major kurakas, who retained their chieftainships subject to the consent of the state, would have to share authority with new native officials. Within the corregimientos, the principal towns of the repartimiento districts would seat Indian cabildos modeled after the Spanish municipal councils. The Indian alcaldes (mayors), assisted by his administrative aides (regidores), policeman (alguacil mayor), and other cabildo officials, would together with the kurakas oversee local life and represent the natives before state authorities. The cabildo officials, like the kurakas and the Indian assistants of local priests, enjoyed exemption from tribute and mita levies. In addition, major kurakas and several other native functionaries received rights to modest salaries (10-100 pesos ensayados a year). In effect, the state sanctioned the creation of privileged civil and religious power groups, recruited partly from traditional elites but also from more humble “social climbers.” In both cases, the natives’ elevated position would depend greatly upon their commitment to the institutional arrangements of the colonial regime.

When the reformed colonial power structure functioned well, it nurtured a series of local, regional, and supraregional networks of elites. By connecting themselves to one another and to state officials and institutions, these elites could work out alliances of coexistence, mutual favors, and distribution of the profits extracted from an Indian peasantry. At the local level, whether in rural Indian society or in the Spanish cities and mining centers, the corregidor or gobernador (governor) appointed by the viceroy held a strategic position. He was the primary judge who heard disputes, administered state institutions such as mita and tribute, and exercised the authority and police powers of the colonial state. Like any person who secured a major appointment from Lima, the corregidor was already a man of some means or influence. Eager to make a small fortune during his term of several years, a newly arriving corregidor often cultivated working relationships with regional elites whose interest, like his, lay in tying together opportunities in administration, commerce, manufacturing, mining, and agriculture. In rural society, the corregidor de indios and his lieutenants mediated key relationships between Indian communities and the colonials seeking to exploit them. The kurakas, Indian functionaries and municipal officials, corregidor and lieutenants, rural priests, locally powerful encomenderos, landowners, and other entrepreneurs, well-connected merchants, prominent outside individuals and groups with significant local interests (such as miners with rights to mita labor), and the Spanish, mixed-blood, black, and Indian managers, assistants, and officials linked to them—together these figures composed a power group that dominated rural society in any given locale and enjoyed influential ties with state officials and elites in cities like Huamanga, Huancavelica, or Lima.

In some respects a loose assemblage of competing powers at odds with one
another and with other such networks, at other moments a more tightly woven mesh of mutually cooperating exploiters who enveloped rural Indian society, the power group developed its own internal hierarchies, ties of kinship and friendship, patron-client relations, and contradictions. When competition for influence, clientele, and profit went too far, internal divisions and contradictory individual interests created favorable conjunctures for Indian resistance, sabotage, or assertion of legal rights. But taken as a whole, the local and regional elites depended upon their connections and loyalties to one another, and to state officials and institutions, for their authority and profits. They shared a common interest and interdependence, and they knew it.44

Hence, when Don Juan Manuel de Anaya arrived in Lucanas in 1578, he sought out the kinds of working relationships with established local elites which could turn his two-year term as corregidor into a highly lucrative venture. On the European side, he sent Indians to work the fields of powerful Hernando Palomino. Palomino was head of a high elite family which lorded over a rich local encomienda (Sorases), housed skilled native silversmiths at Hernando's villa and base of operations on Huamanga's central plaza, organized large and small rural estates and farms throughout the region, owned huge herds of cattle which "by custom" supplied the Huamanga meat market, held several mines in gold- and silver-rich Parinacochas to the south, lent monies to colonial officials, other elites, and lesser residents, and spent thousands of pesos to carve out and decorate the main chapel of the awesome Dominican church in Huamanga.45 On a more petty level, Anaya cultivated a friendship by arranging for the sale of 100 Indian llamas to Juan de Quesada at less than two-thirds the going price. Quesada, a rural priest, accumulated money and commodities sufficient to finance commercial networks stretching out to Ica and Lima on the coast.46 On the Indian side, Anaya befriended and obligated native elites as well. Passing through on inspection of the vast Lucanas districts, the corregidor appointed Don Francisco Ucso, an important kuraka, as his lieutenant and spokesman in Lucanas Andamarcas. In Lucanas Laramati, he vested his authority in yet another native "Don Francisco."47

Such alliances with local lords or notables, whether Indian or European, were normal procedure for a corregidor or his lieutenants. In Castrovi-
reyena, for example, Indians complained that the corregidor's brother and chief lieutenant gave 180 pesos in community money to one Don Juan Quilla "for being his compadre," or godfather of the Indian's child.48 A rural corregidor frequently turned to local elites to post the fianza, a surety which guaranteed the Crown payment in case of fraudulent accounts, or to serve as the corregidor's local representative.49

In rural society, then, Toledo's reorganization created imposing networks
of authority, formal and informal, in which the corregidor stood at the center, armed with the police powers of the colonial state. The "police powers" were real enough, for corregidores and other officials jailed and whipped people, and impounded their belongings, under the guise of enforcing laws and punishing criminals. In a sense, each of the notables in a local power group operated in a similar way to cultivate working relationships with other prominent figures inside and outside of Indian society. Like the priest who learned to milk the local countryside, a corregidor had to avoid overreaching his effective power, or violating locally established boundaries of entitlement. If too greedy, he could create a strong group of enemies ready to embroil him in dangerous, costly litigation when an incoming corregidor conducted the standard residencia, or judicial review, at the end of his term. But an intelligent corregidor found that all interested parties, from humble peasants to pretentious high elite families, sought to accommodate an authority whose favors they would need. Indians oiled the wheels of justice with petty gifts—fish, eggs, and the like. Among the expenses of an elite family was an entry for nine arrobas (about 225 pounds) of sugar, worth six months of abundant food and drink to a skilled Indian muledriver, spent to finance a huge feast during the corregidor's visit to their sugar estate.

THE POLITICS OF PROFIT

The expense invested in the feast made good sense, because in the colonial society reconstructed by Toledo, possession of political power and institutional connections, and the state's benevolence, paved one's way to enormous economic achievements. Given the breakdown of the post-Inca alliances, the economic ambitions of the colonials, and the resilient self-sufficiency of ayllu economies, the mechanics of extraction had come to depend more than ever upon access to effective political force organized by a central state. Despite internal rivalries, the game of political partnership and mutual favors was one which all members of a power group had to play. The figure most likely to come out ahead in the short run was the corregidor—the combined judge, administrator, and jailer of any given district. By dominating the circuits of commerce and, in the countryside, plundering local economies, he could rapidly accumulate a small fortune and finance ambitious economic ventures.

Our figure from Lucanas, for example, Don Juan Manuel de Anaya, threw his energies into one driving purpose: to convert political eminence into quick profits. A career bureaucrat who later served as royal treasurer, and a man of considerable means before leaving the city for his corregimiento in 1578, Anaya had no other reason to look forward to two years in a remote Indian hinterland. In an economy where investments in commercial capital could provide swift wealth, Anaya used his position at the hub of local power to commandeer labor, seize money and goods, control and expand trade circuits, and back up ambitious commercial ventures. The corregidor passed out free or cheap labor to his friends, and demanded that expert native weavers supply him valuable luxury textiles at substandard prices. Anaya's merchant-partners came to animal-rich Lucanas to "buy" thousands of alpacas and llamas from unwilling Indians at pitifully low prices. Then they made off for high-priced markets elsewhere. To a commercial partner, Antonio Troncoso, Anaya gave 5,200 pesos (of 12.5 reales) from the local repartimientos' cajas de comunidad (community boxes for cash reserves and legal documents). Acting on his own rather than in collaboration with local priests and kurakas, the corregidor created a minor scandal. The 5,200 pesos, ostensibly withdrawn to buy "needed" ornaments and materials for local churches, were in fact used for a large commercial investment in Lima. Among the luxury goods bought with the Indians' money in the cheaper Lima market were elaborate religious ornaments and silverwork. Anaya promptly resold them at inflated "Huamanga prices" to the Indian parishes in Lucanas.

Again and again, Anaya dipped into the cajas de comunidad for money or capital. His responsibility for the repartimientos' financial affairs and records gave him enviable access to the silver and gold pieces, worth thousands of pesos, accumulated by dynamic community economies. Moreover, he violated legal ordinances by retaining all three keys to each caja. (Normally, a kuraka and one other native should have held two keys, and the corregidor a third.) More than fifteen years later, the Crown was still struggling to clear up the muddled accounts left by this rapacious functionary.

Anaya left behind a trail of notoriety and complicated litigation typical of authorities whose greed overreached their effective power, but his actions belonged to the mainstream of the colonials' prerogatives and abuses. Throughout Huamanga, corregidores used political posts as a resource with which to extract labor and tributes, plunder local economies, and set up profitable commercial arrangements. Much to the Crown's chagrin, corregidores everywhere converted the cajas de comunidad into private pools of capital. If a corregidor could work out an effective alliance with local "lords"—native, Spanish, or mestizo—he could subvert the outflow of legal tributes and mitayos which drained the local economy. In doing so, he could channel more resources into exploitation by the rural power group. Even when they did not sabotage state-sponsored tributes and mitas, Huamanga's corregidores funnelled labor to their friends, and, often with the consent of the kurakas, set up putting-out systems to produce domestic manufactures such as cloth or twine. Through the putting-out method, and by confiscating or buying at low prices commodities such as animals, wool, leather, or coca, the magistrates controlled the commercialization of local products in
outside markets. In addition, they monopolized and expanded the inflow of commodities. Handling local repartimientos like captive markets, corregidores (or their friends) set up stores and managed a lucrative commerce in religious items such as wax or ornaments. In Castroviirgeyca, the corregidor’s brother and rural lieutenant plied a profitable wine trade. Not content merely to monopolize a modest local market for good wine at reasonable prices, the enterprising bureaucrat took advantage of his authority to unload numerous jugs of bad wine—“part of it vinegar”—upon the Indians.

By converting his political base or advantage into a money-making operation, a corregidor simply followed a widespread colonial strategy. Any significant official—whether a corregidor, his lieutenant, a priest, or “protector” who represented the natives in legal proceedings—could command a certain stream of “gifts,” bribes, and labor services from the natives in his jurisdiction. Anyone who established himself or herself as an effective power, linked to an array of other potentates, passed through doors closed to others. A Catholic priest, for example, held the authority of the victorious Christian gods, and represented a powerful Church hierarchy charged with controlling religious life. The priest could bestow exemptions from the mita upon his favored lay assistants, and heap abuses upon the troublesome by accusing them of idolatry. By becoming a local “lord” to be reckoned with by the other lords, Andean or European, a priest could command tributes and labor drafts, set up a putting-out system to weave luxury cumbí textiles, and finance far-reaching commercial ventures. In the mines of Huayllay (in Huanta), even Spanish colonials fumed at the economic exploits achieved by “the powerful hand” of an ambitious priest.

All the characters of an elite network—petty pretenders to noble status and powerful lords, permanent mainstays and officials passing through—knew that the accumulation of political favor and authority constituted the gateway to economic success. On an informal level, the entrepreneur or oligarch who cultivated the friendship of state officials expanded opportunities for profitable commercial arrangements, extralegal labor drafts to supplement mita contingents, a sympathetic hearing of petitions, or simple enforcement of legal rights to tribute and mita.

On a more official level, too, the state held the key to labor and wealth. Its mita drafts provided the bulk of exploitable energy for hard work in mines and obrajes, and a substantial share for agriculture and ranching. Its reorganization of Indian communities regulated a flow of tributes and salaries to encomenderos, other pensioners, and officials, and set up a convenient source of further capital in the form of the repartimiento cash boxes (cajas de comunidad). During the sixteenth century, when communities accumulated impressive precious metal reserves, regional elites and the royal treasury itself raided the cajas for censos, long-term loans whose principal was

Priests as members of power groups. Above, a priest and corregidor provide one another companionship and entertainment. Below, a Dominican priest uses his authority to sequester a native woman he accuses of idolatrous concubinage, and to set her to work weaving cloth on a traditional Andean loom. Poma de Ayala complained that such women were commonly transformed into concubines of rural priests.
paid back at the option of the borrower. The Crown lamented the anarchic
trends left by functionaries eager to rob the caajas or to pocket interest pay-
ments on outstanding censos, but never opposed the institution itself. The
state’s official patrimony further included basic resources such as mines and
lands. Toledo expropriated the Huancaleva mercury mines, and set up a
contract system which leased the site to miners for a production quota sold
back to the Crown. Even where the state did not itself own mines, rental
contracts show that its control of mita labor determined their market value.66
From the 1590s, land itself fell under the Crown’s patrimony. Periodically,
judges went out on composiciones de tierras, or inspections of land titles. In ex-
change for an agreed upon contribution to the royal treasury, inspectors
awarded or confirmed rights to lands theoretically unneeded or unworked
by the natives, but frequently coveted by Indians, whites, and mixed-bloods
alike for their fertility or commercial value.67 Finally, the state distributed
lucrative bureaucratic posts and managed a juridical system which could
back up labor drafts, tributes, and property rights with coercion.

Under these conditions, political weight and skill determined one’s share
of the economic spoils. In 1599, for example, 200 respectable Huamanga
residents held rights to mita contingents of 681 natives sent to the city plaza
for work in agriculture, ranching, or household service.68 But 100 (50 per-
cent) of the colonials could claim just 15.0 percent of the mitayos, or one
(1.02) laborer each. By contrast, a mere twenty citizens (10 percent) com-
mmanded 41.1 percent of the mita contingent, an average of fourteen (14.0)
natives each.69 At least eighteen of the twenty were encomenderos from old
local families, and ten belonged to a small circle of “high elite” families who
had parlayed a background of encomienda and conquest politics into a set
of tributes, farms, ranches, workshops, mines, administrative perquisites, and
commercial interests.70

The figures actually understated the share of the politically powerful. Close
relatives of the influential, for example, received allotments which upped
the share of just nine high elite families to nearly a third (30.8 percent) of the
contingent, or over twenty-six mitayos (26.3) per family.71 Moreover, the
681 natives sent to Huamanga’s plaza did not include direct allotments to
rural estates which bypassed distribution in the city of Huamanga. For
example, the powerful local figure Crisóstomo de Hontiveros, who was apportioned
only six mitayos at the Huamanga plaza, enjoyed a direct allotment of
twenty-nine others besides. Pedro Díaz de Rojas and Diego Gavilán, who
each received eighteen mitayos at Huamanga, got another sixteen and
twelve workers respectively, in direct allotments from their encomiendas.72

It was, in fact, the long-established leaders of Huamanga, joined by influ-
tential institutions, bureaucrats, and newcomers, who cornered the state’s
regional patrimony. In Vilcashuamán, distinguished figures such as Jerón-
imo de Oré and Hernando Guillén de Mendoza secured drafts of more than
two hundred natives for obrajes set up among the families’ encomienda
Indians. The vicerey deemed Nuño de Romaní and his haciendas worthy
equal to accommodate his petition for supplementary labor with four ex-
tra mitayos. The Jesuits’ political muscle earned the religious order a special
two-year allotment of fifteen mitayos for construction.73 In the mining cen-
ters of Huacavelica and Gastrooviyyana, the powerful and rich included
men such as Pedro de Contreras and Juan de Sotomayor, big miners with
cruel reputations and allotments of several hundred workers. Though
neither could claim membership in Huamanga’s older high elite circle, their
rise had been predicated upon political talent, an early local presence, and
important ties to Huamanga and Lima.74 Despite the openings which
mineral-rich Huamanga gave to fortune-seekers and transplanted elites,
some of them “citizens of Lima,” old Huamanga leaders such as Amador
de Cabrera and Crisóstomo de Hontiveros enjoyed sufficient means to hold
on to impressive mining interests, or to develop new ones.75

In a society where access to influence constituted the lifeline of wealth and
enterprise, high lords and petty tyrants alike spun complicated webs of kin-
ship and placement which enhanced their political reach and stature. In the
countryside, corregidores and other Spanish lords were not too proud to be-
come godparents of Indian children. Local colonials even married the
dughters of curacas, who had their own reasons for such alliances.76 In the
city, distinguished citizens worked together on the municipal council, placed
lesser sons in the priesthood which spread out over the Indian countryside,
and sought out lucrative or powerful bureaucratic posts.77 Marriage linked
high elite families of Huamanga such as the Díaz de Rojas, Hontiveros, and
Oré, or extended their ties to cities such as Arequipa or Lima.78 Fat dowries
confirmed the serious stakes committed to friendships consolidated through
marriage. When Hernando Guíllén de Mendoza betrothed his daughter
Doña Micaela to the son of another encomendero of Vilcashuamán, he cer-
menced the alliance with a promise to provide his son-in-law with herds of
sheep, cows, goats, and horses, lands for farming and grazing, urban prop-
erty in Huamanga and Lima, textile production from his obraje, and luxu-
ries such as fine cloths and jewelry. The valuation of the dowry came to
15,000 pesos (of eight reales), equivalent to the market value of twenty-five
or thirty healthy adult Africans on the Lima slave market.79

In the final analysis, the energy and wealth devoted to solidifying or ex-
tending points of loyalty and cooperation in various elite networks could
make the difference between success and failure. In any given locale, the
correlation of forces that shaped the final outcome of exploitative ventures
could change, creating winners and losers. (For a more detailed discussion
of cleavages within the colonial elite, see Chapter 5.) In more than one area,
encomenderos closed out of local tributes and putting-out systems complained bitterly about the illegal extractions, which by draining communities of their surplus undermined the legal encomienda tributes. The partnership of corregidores and curacas proved so effective, however, that the litigants failed to prove their case. In a society where one's fortune reflected one's place in changing and contradictory alliances of power, no one enjoyed the luxury of neglecting political credibility or authority. A parish priest who seemed vulnerable to judicial charges found that his old Indian collaborators—even his cook—suddenly turned against him. Later, he managed to mobilize the political and economic resources necessary to swing the Indian chiefs back. Even for a corregidor, political isolation or weakness invited setback and disaster. In Huamanga, one unlucky magistrate incurred the violent wrath of too many notables, and suddenly found himself mired in charges of treason which cost him his life. His beheaded visage, impaled on a stake for all to see, stood as a morbid reminder that in Huamanga, at least, any person who alienated social allies would face alone the inherent brutalities of a colonial society.

VIOLENCE

And Huamanga was, indeed, a brutal society. Divided as they were by economic, ethnic, and racial geography, all the characters of colonial Andean society nevertheless shared at least one pervasive fact of life. From one angle or another, all knew first-hand the drama of confrontation backed by raw violence—physical, sometimes capricious, always a real-life possibility. The very nature of production and exploitation imparted a crude, direct quality to economic relationships. A series of tributes, labor drafts, and plunderings imposed upon a self-sufficient peasantry by right of superior power, in order to make prosper the mines, manufactures, rural estates, and high life styles of foreigners, could not easily mask its character as sheer usurpation. This was especially true since the impositions threatened to undermine local welfare and self-sufficiency. It was this crude character of economic extraction which made necessary such imposing networks of authority built around a revamped Indian power structure, an effective local bureaucracy, and an entrenched regional elite.

In such a society, extractive institutions and relationships required the repeated application of coercive energies simply to reproduce themselves. A mere preponderance of power through elite alliances was not, by itself, enough. Noise, threats, bribes, violence, sabotage, shows of prestige, even rituals of domination—all constituted regular, necessary parts of exploitative relationships. Only a naive encomendero, for example, expected to receive Indian tributes automatically, or smoothly. Twice a year a repartimiento owed tribute payments, and twice a year the Indians had to evaluate the balance of political forces, and their economic capacity to satisfy the tributes. Each time they had to decide whether to pay the full amount, pursue delaying tactics, or plead economic incapacity to pay the entire quota. Tributes regularly fell into arrears, and an encomendero who failed to send a legal agent to enforce payment might lose a good share of the revenues. In Villaahuanac, many communities refused to deliver tributes until legally forced to. "The curacas and notables and account-keepers and other leaders declared that they retained the tributes in their power on the account of the encomendero, in order to deliver them when and if he would order them delivered." Ultimately, the corregidor's capacity to jail the curacas and confiscate their property guaranteed the tribute payments. A census judge touring Andahuaylas in 1604 needed the assistance of various curacas to count the Indians; in one town, he appealed to the corregidor "to free the curacas that he held prisoner because of tributes." If the corregidor had reason to collaborate with the curacas to subvert legal tributes, encomenderos might never manage to mobilize the political force needed to collect their pensions.

The mitas, the most dreaded of the Toledan institutions, provoked repeated confrontations which taxed the balance of political forces. Most labor drafts called for fresh contingents every two months, and from the very beginning the Indians indicated that they would comply only when forced to. A corregidor knew that to fill the mita calls reasonably well, he would have to muster considerable persuasive efforts. Sometimes a skillful mixture of favors and threats was not enough. Beatings, jailing, and sequestration of property might all prove essential to mobilize a mita contingent. Always, close physical supervision of the drafted laborers would be needed to insure their arrival relatively intact at the work center. Try as a corregidor might to pass on all such tasks to intermediaries, he could nonetheless find himself pressed to intervene personally in the process.

The Indians' unwillingness to comply with the mita except under pressure presented a corregidor with touchy political dilemmas. The magistrate, interested in exploiting his district's peasantry, frequently shared the Indians' concern about the outflow of local people to distant mita centers. Moreover, his authority and profits depended partly upon his ability to obligate a clientele of Indian elites and pretenders. By cooperating with local elites to sabotage the mita, a corregidor enhanced his position as a powerful patron. But if he dispensed with the labor drafts altogether, he could bring on disastrous lawsuits and charges of fraud by miners, treasury officials, and other mita interests. As a result, corregidores usually had to force some degree of compliance, but often tolerated or encouraged efforts to limit the drafts to incomplete, sometimes irregular rotations. To receive their allotted quotas,
the mita interests normally had to commission special judges to visit the rural corregimientos, and force corregidores and Indians to comply more fully with legal rules.

In the end, only force and superior political power made the mitas a viable institution. When the system of enforcement weakened, the exploitative relationship simply could not reproduce itself. In 1599, a Huamanga official complained that “it has not been possible to gather all the [mita de plaza] Indians in one day . . . even though many efforts have been made.”

Even when mita contingents arrived with some regularity, the colonials had to reconcile themselves to a chronic deficit of mitayos “that the kurakas did not deliver.” At least once, sheer noncompliance forced authorities to consider native claims that mita quotas should be reduced in accordance with population decline. The practicality of a demand depended greatly upon the authorities’ ability to back it up with force. When the kurakas of Andahuaylas adamantly refused to send off a group of mitayos to Huamanga despite repeated orders, the corregidor jailed them and began to confiscate their property. Reluctantly, they dispatched the laborers. When a judge for a mining mita arrived in Ocopampa (Castrovielregna), he resorted to a public show of force to stifle resistance to the labor drafts. The judge hanged ten Yauyos Indians.

Violent discipline, then, served essential functions without which colonial relationships could not survive. Even had they wished to, the colonials could not have limited force to a mere option lurking in the distant background. Instead, they had to use physical punishment and humiliation as a living tool, a genuine threat, whose public display would prod natives into submitting to their political superiors. The social drama of punishment taught who commanded true authority, and how easily they could abuse those who dared to challenge them openly. When an Indian fisherman refused to give fresh fish demanded by the corregidor of Castrovielregna, the “indignant” magistrate “held [the Indian] prisoner in the public jail . . . three or four days. Later he took him out and hung him in the stock by the feet and gave him fifty lashes. Then he cut his hair and took him prisoner to the jail another time. . . .” The severity of the corregidor had a certain logic. A pretentious, arrogant, and abusive social style symbolized his authority, political superiority, and expectation of deference. Without it, a colonial did not command the respect needed to impose his economic will. In Tambo Que-mado (Lucanas Laramati), where travelling Spaniards normally demanded meals, lodging, and labor from the Indians, “a poor sick Spaniard on foot” could not even get a meal. Timid colonials would not enjoy success, for as two citizens of Huamanga put it: “all that [the natives] do has to be very slow and by force.”

Neither colonizer nor colonized could escape the violent tenor of life in-
The prevention may have been a wise one; a prominent citizen who visited his Lucanas encomienda around 1574, apparently without much protection, paid dearly for his negligence with an ugly death, "by a stone throw that an Indian... gave him in the temples." Two decades later, a well known colonial travelling up from the Pacific coast to Castrovirreyna never arrived. A search party failed to find him. Six years had passed when, almost by accident, the authorities learned that an Indian guide had murdered the Spaniard while they travelled alone across the high puna. The nagging fear of the colonials, at least in the sixteenth century, was that the Indians might organize their own violent potential into an open assault against Hispanic society. In 1589, a group of Angaraes mitayos plotted to destroy Huancavelica. Upon their arrival to replace the old mitayos, they planned to set fire to the city and to kill off the Spaniards. When the colonials discovered the conspiracy, they quickly gathered together their weapons and horses, and organized night patrols to prevent a rebellion.

Most of the time, the colonials' control of rural life and the natives' internal divisions discouraged organization of an open assault. But even so, Indian violence, sabotage, or obstinacy exposed the crude character of economic relationships. Occasional fires destroyed harvests, or burned cajas de comunidad whose stores of money and documents the correidore controlled. An authority who imposed putting-out systems had to guard against ayllu attempts to pass off goods specifically designed to ruin their market value. Miners at Huancavelica contended with workers who "do not take out the amount of mercury that they could, and besides... sell mercury to merchants for half or less of its true value." If a colonial misjudged the balance of political forces, or tried to impose new obligations upon the Indians, they might challenge him or her to a show of force which compelled the colonial to back off. In Vilcashuaman, Catholic priests convinced some of the kurakas and Indians to plant without pay nearly 300 hectares of wheat whose sale would benefit the church. But the pact ran up against so much resistance that the priests had to abandon the project.

PROSPERITY

Indians resisted Toledan institutions, and the viceroy's reorganization did not satisfy entirely the needs of colonial elites. Eventually, the Indians' resistance and population decline would undermine the effectiveness of Toledan mitas and tributes (see Chapter 5). Even in its heyday, and even from the point of view of the colonials, the economic system consolidated by Toledo and his successors had certain defects. It restricted the independence of colonial elites by linking their economic fortunes to the institutions and patriotism of a powerful state. The state provided the elites mechanisms of political control and coercion to force "lazy" Indians to turn over goods, money, and human labor-power. But it could not offer the colonials an efficient, self-reproducing system of labor exploitation free of sabotage, resistance, and continual struggle. Despite these deficiencies, however, the resurgent Peruvian economy of the late sixteenth century had one "virtue" which every colonial appreciated: the revenues and profits it produced were enormous.

In mining, the strategic nerve center of the regional economy, the state's ability to mobilize a large labor supply generated dazzling wealth. Before Toledo, Huancavelica's annual production of refined mercury measured in the hundreds of quintales (c. 100 pounds each). By the 1580s, the average count of officially registered mercury shot up to 7,500 quintales a year. Reorganization had transformed mercury mining into a massive primitive industry, whose heavy laborers fell primarily upon a rotating force of over 3,000 mitayos. During a boom year like 1587, registered production totalled 9,700 quintales. The huge contraband trade probably raised total production to at least 13,000 quintales (some 650 tons). To produce this much mercury, workers had to dig up, haul, and refine thousands of tons of ore in a single year. At the official Huancavelica sale price of 94 pesos corrientes (nine reales each) per quintal, the year's production totalled 1,222,000 pesos—enough to pay the salaries of all the correidores in greater Peru's seventy-one districts for an entire decade. With the discovery of rich silver deposits south of Huancavelica in 1590, the state's labor drafts ushered in yet another regional mining boom. The new mining city of Castrovirreyna enjoyed an allotment of over 2,000 mitayos, drawn primarily from provinces bordering on the Huamanga districts. Around 1610, well after the heyday of its early years, the Castrovirreyna mines still produced silver valued at 250,000-275,000 pesos corrientes a year.

Miners, of course, could not simply pocket all this wealth. The Crown, merchants, and even labor held large claims on production. The royal treasury's share at Huancavelica in 1587 amounted to 578,000 pesos, nearly half (47.3 percent) the year's total output. At Castrovirreyna, the Crown took about a sixth of annual production. Commercial capitalists siphoned off yet another large fraction. The merchants captured extra revenues by "underpaying" miners eager to dump contraband metals. In 1587, the take from underpayments at Huancavelica soaked up at least 128,700 pesos, or a fifth (20.0 percent) of the wealth left unexpropriated by the Crown. In addition, merchants charged inflated prices for the food and drink, textiles, animals and slaves, raw materials and tools, and equipment consumed in production. Stiff terms of credit tended to subject medium and small miners to utter dependence on merchants for subsistence goods, for certain factors of