Urban Slavery in Colonial Mexico

Using the city of Puebla de los Ángeles, the second-largest urban center in colonial Mexico (viceroyalty of New Spain), Pablo Miguel Sierra Silva investigates Spaniards’ imposition of slavery on Africans, Asians and their families. He analyzes the experiences of these slaves in four distinct urban settings: the marketplace, the convent, the textile mill and the elite residence. In so doing, *Urban Slavery in Colonial Mexico* advances a new understanding of how, when and why transatlantic and transpacific merchant networks converged in Central Mexico during the seventeenth century. As a social and cultural history, it also addresses how enslaved people formed social networks to contest their bondage. Sierra Silva challenges readers to understand the everyday nature of urban slavery and engages the rich Spanish and indigenous history of the Puebla region while intertwining it with African diaspora studies.

Pablo Miguel Sierra Silva is Assistant Professor in the History Department at the University of Rochester, New York.
Urban Slavery in Colonial Mexico

Puebla de los Ángeles, 1531–1706

PABLO MIGUEL SIERRA SILVA

University of Rochester, New York
For Felipe Monsón y Mojica
Contents

List of Figures and Tables  xi
Acknowledgments  xiii
List of Archival Abbreviations  xvii

Introduction  1

1 Early Puebla and the Question of Labor, 1531–1570  21
2 Ambition and Agency in the Obraje  45
3 Captive Souls: Nuns and Slaves in the Convents of Puebla  76
4 The Puebla Slave Market, 1600–1700  107
5 Life in the Big City: Mobility, Social Networks and Family  144
6 The Other Market: Commerce and Opportunity  177

Epilogue  200

Appendix A Bill of purchase for Arara captives on the
Puebla slave market, 1615  205
Appendix B Testament of Francisco Carmona, 1633  207
Bibliography  211
Index  223
Figures and Tables

Figures

0.1 Map of Puebla de los Ángeles, seventeenth century. Created by Benjamin Gerstner

4.1 Number of enslaved people sold on Puebla slave market, 1600–1700

4.2 Map of central and eastern Mexico. Created by Tim O’Brien

Tables

2.1 Workforces in inspected textile mills, 1583–1584

2.2 Number of married slaves owned by obrajeros in seventeenth-century Puebla

3.1 Enslaved people in Puebla convents, 1597–1710

4.1 Sample of slaves in Puebla bills of purchase by region of provenance, 1590–1639

5.1 Brotherhoods for people of African and Asian descent in seventeenth-century Puebla

6.1 Manumission of María de Terranova compared to other prices
Acknowledgments

This project began in the fall of 2006 when I arrived as a graduate student at the University of California, Los Angeles. The faculty and staff of this wonderful institution always made me feel a part of a greater academic community that challenged my thinking in ways I could have never foreseen. To my doctoral advisor, mentor and dear friend, Kevin Terraciano, I can only offer my utmost gratitude. I am just as indebted to Robin Derby, Andrew Apter, William Summerhill, Christopher Ehret, Brenda Stevenson, Teófilo Ruiz, Juan Gómez-Quiñones and many other UCLA historians. The seminars, independent studies and candid advice on the academic profession have proven invaluable. I must also extend a heartfelt “thank you” to Professors Mark Sawyer, Edward Telles, Claudia Parodi and Anna More for making me a better scholar. To my cohort, Dana Velasco-Murillo, Brad Benton, Verónica Gutiérrez, Xóchitl Flores, Peter Villela, Zeb Tortorici, Phillip Ninomiya and Sabrina Smith, mil gracias. I am especially in debt to my wife, best friend and colleague, Molly Ball. This project simply would not have been possible without you.

This book is also the product of the rich debates and conversations fostered at several academic conferences. My first paper was delivered at the Annual Meeting for the Society of Ethnohistory. The members of this vibrant community have always welcomed me into their midst, and for that I am grateful. Throughout the years, Matthew Restall, Susan Schroeder, Lisa Sousa, Laura Matthew and Camilla Townsend have offered insightful suggestions at Ethnohistory conferences. To Ben Vinson, Nicole von Germeten, Paul la Chance, Sherwin Bryant, Evelyn Jennings, Roquinaldo Ferreira, Joseph Miller and all of the commentators for the chapters that have gradually morphed into this book, thank you. Robert Schwaller contributed valuable insights for Chapter 1. Anne MacPherson and the members of the New York State Latin America History Workshop (NYSLAHW) have offered constructive criticism for Chapter 3. Tatiana Seijas has helped me understand the slave market of Mexico City, while David Wheat and Marc Eagle have been instrumental in expanding my understanding of the
transatlantic slave trade and Spanish circum-Caribbean. Alex Borucki, this book simply would not have been possible without you. Thank you for sharing your time and knowledge.

I am honored to publish this study as part of Cambridge University Press’s Latin American Studies Series. Debbie Gershenowitz saw this project through from a few chapter samples to a finished product. Kristina Deusch put all the pieces together to complete this colonial puzzle. Thank you to both! Kris Lane and Matthew Restall, thank you for your time and invaluable support as series editors. It means the world to me. I would also like to thank this book’s anonymous reviewers for their insightful commentaries and suggestions. I hope I have matched your expectations.

I am greatly indebted to the University of Rochester, where I have been warmly received as a member of the academic community. Matt Lenoe, Mike Jarvis, Laura Smoller, Ryan Prendergast, Margarita Guillory, Jennifer Kyker and all my colleagues at the U of R, thank you for making the transition from graduate student to assistant professor such an enjoyable experience. The wonderful maps found in this book are the careful work of Benjamin Gerstner and Tim O’Brien. I also hold a debt of gratitude to all the wonderful graduate and undergraduate students who have challenged my thinking during these first years of teaching. Tucker Million, many thanks for indexing this project. I owe an especially effusive “thank you” to Anna Jarvis for her copyediting and suggestions during this project’s final phase.

Funding for this project came from several generous institutions. A Fulbright-Hays DDRA Fellowship supported research in Puebla and Mexico City. The UCLA School of Graduate Studies supported summer research in New Orleans, while UC-Mexus also contributed a grant to further fieldwork during my final year of doctoral research. An internal fellowship at the University of Rochester’s Humanities Center provided valuable time to complete the manuscript and funded research in Seville. Further financial support from U of R made additional research in Lisbon possible.

I must express my gratitude to the gatekeepers of Puebla’s archives, María Antonieta Esquivel Torres, Gabriela Rivera Carrizosa, María Aurelia Hernández Yahuitl. To the parish priests of Analco, San José and El Sagrario, and to the staff and directors of Puebla’s Municipal, Notarial and Judicial archives and many others: mil gracias. I will always be indebted to Blanca Lara Tenorio for her willingness to share handwritten archival notes, unpublished papers and the treasures found in the Centro INAH-Puebla. Through the years, Lidia Gómez García has provided a blueprint for the selfless researcher, mentor and colleague that I hope to become. Gracias, Lidia! Miguel Ángel Cuenya Mateos opened the doors of the Casa Amarilla library and the greater BUAP research community to me. I will always be indebted to Isis Zempoaltecatl, Guillermo García
Acknowledgments

Rodríguez, Gustavo Mauleón and Rafael Castañeda García for their camaraderie and support.

Finally, this book would not have been possible without the care and support of my loving family (spread out across many lands and nations). Familia, muchas gracias!
Archival Abbreviations

ACCP  Archivo del Cabildo Catedralicio de Puebla
AGI   Archivo General de Indias, Sevilla
AGMP  Archivo General Municipal de Puebla
AGN   Archivo General de la Nación, México
AGNP  Archivo General de Notarías de Puebla
AHJP  Archivo Histórico Judicial de Puebla, INAH
AHN   Archivo Histórico Nacional, España
AHU   Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Lisboa
APSJ  Archivo Parroquial del Señor San José
ASAC  Archivo del Santo Angel Custodio (Analco)
ASMP  Archivo del Sagrario Metropolitano de Puebla
BNE   Biblioteca Nacional de España
FAJML Fondo Antiguo José María Lafragua, Puebla
LAL   Latin American Library, Tulane University