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*Fray Juan de Santa Gertrudis  
and the Marvels  
of New Granada*

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FRAY JUAN DE SANTA  
GERTRUDIS  
AND THE MARVELS OF NEW  
GRANADA

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**PART I**

**FRAY JUAN DE SANTA GERTRUDIS**

**AND THE MARVELS OF NEW**

**GRANADA**



# Fray Juan de Santa Gertrudis and the Marvels of New Granada

## Mendicant and missionary

During the Age of Enlightenment, when other European empires in America lapsed into defeatism and decline, the Spanish Empire underwent a new phase of expansion, mainly political and economic in inspiration, but with religious implications. New frontiers of the empire, or its weaker edges, were usually fortified not only by soldiers but also by priests: the gun and the gospel moved together, and missionary expeditions into Indian territory received military escort 'for better security', as it was said. Charles III claimed that 'my first obligation and that of all my successors is to protect the Catholic religion in all the dominions of this vast monarchy'. Even so, the prospects for missions were not entirely favourable and the Bourbons were never crusaders for the faith.

One of the leading frontiers of evangelisation in the eighteenth century was the southern extremity of New Granada beyond Popayán – specifically the Caquetá and the Putumayo. A vast region of rivers and jungles, this was first assigned as a mission field to the Spanish Franciscans of Quito, who began operations in 1634. This phase was brought to a halt in 1721 by an Indian rebellion in defence of polygamy, during which six missionaries were killed. By 1745 the Franciscans had recovered and now administered ten mission stations in the Caquetá and nine in the Putumayo served by 14 religious among 48 native tribes. In 1759 these missions were transferred to the Colegio de Misiones of Popayán, designated as a mission college in 1754, and the base for renewed endeavour.<sup>1</sup> But it was always an uphill task, the neophytes were held only by continuous handouts, and casualties among missionaries were high. This was the mission field chronicled by one of the great, yet forgotten, chroniclers of the colonial period, Fray Juan de Santa Gertrudis Serra, a Mallorcan who went to Spanish America in 1757 in the company of a group of missionaries appointed to Popayán, in the Franciscan Province of Quito.

Fray Juan was born in Palma de Mallorca in 1724 and after a conventional Catholic and Franciscan education, including a period at the Universidad Luliana in Palma, was ordained into the Order of Friars Minor in 1748-49.<sup>2</sup> He undertook missionary studies at the Franciscan College of San Buenaventura in Baeza and at the Colegio Apostólico de San Antonio in Arcos de la Frontera, where he subsequently became guardian. Travels in Italy and other parts of Europe

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<sup>1</sup> Luis Carlos Mantilla, 'Colombia: La evangelización del norte y mediodía', Pedro Borges (ed.), *Historia de la Iglesia en Hispanoamérica y Filipinas (siglos XV-XIX)* (HIHF) 2 vols. (Madrid, 1992), vol. II, pp. 334-36.

<sup>2</sup> For these and other details of the life of Fray Juan see Luis Carlos Mantilla Ruiz, O.F.M., 'El último cronista franciscano de la época colonial en el Nuevo Reino de Granada: Fray Juan de Santa Gertrudis Serra', *Academia Colombiana de Historia, Boletín de Historia y Antigüedades*, vol. LXXIX, no. 779 (1992), pp. 889-917, virtually the only study on the subject. I am greatly indebted to Dauril Alden for finding me a copy of this article in the library of the University of Washington.

completed his education before he was posted to the American missions and there found his true vocation. He remained in Spanish America for eleven years, until 1767, after which he returned to Arcos as guardian and finally to Palma de Mallorca, where he died at the age of 75 on 8 August 1799. In addition to natural history, his writing interests seem to have focused on medicine and preaching. He wrote a treatise, *Medicina luliana*, a commentary in manuscript form on the work of Raymond Lull, and at least three volumes of sermons under the title *La virtud en su palacio*. But his finest work, and his greatest gift to the Americas, was his *Maravillas de la naturaleza*, written in Palma around 1790 and then left in archives for over 150 years, its contents ignored, its author unrecognised.

Fray Juan sailed from Cadiz in mid-January 1757 as one of a group of 14 priests assigned to the mission base of the Colegio de Propaganda Fide of Popayán, in the Viceroyalty of New Granada. He was 32 years old and assumed he would never return to Spain. The missionaries arrived in Cartagena after a voyage of 56 days, a fierce storm in the Canary Islands and a stand-off with an English fleet in the Caribbean. After disembarking at Cartagena they travelled by mule and canoe along the Magdalena, via Mompós and Honda, restoring religion to abandoned Christians on the way. From Popayán southwards to the River Putumayo they were in mission territory and changed their habits of *saya*, a coarse wollen cloth, for the blue tropical habits of local cotton, or *tucuyo*, as used by the ordinary people of the region. As they dropped off priests and picked up Indian guides and carriers at various stations on their route, they sang the *Te Deum* with Christianised Indians and tried to avoid their offerings of roast monkeys. Finally, only Fray Juan remained, at the end of the line, his last stage a journey by canoe along the Putumayo river system to meet his Indians and bring them in from the jungle. In the course of 1758 he assembled 280 dispersed Indians from various tribes and with a mass of thanksgiving founded his mission village of Agustinillo. He remained alone in the jungle for ten years among painted, and not too friendly, Indians armed with bows and poisoned arrows, nine days journey from the nearest mission. He made that journey and beyond in two excursions to Santa Fe and Quito in search of money and supplies.

During all this time Fray Juan took no notes and kept no diary, and when he came to write his book he relied solely on powers of recall. *Maravillas de la naturaleza* is the least known, and probably the last, of the great colonial chronicles. Written at the prompting of friends in the years when he held no office and had time to remember and reflect, the work claims to record only those things which he had seen, or heard from eyewitnesses he trusts, taking his viewpoint not from towns and settlements but from the remote interior and drawing on his experience among ‘los indios bárbaros’.<sup>3</sup> The style is simple and

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<sup>3</sup> MN, vol. I, pp. 48, 219, 332. The chronicle, which in manuscript form consists of four volumes, eventually found a home in the Biblioteca Pública, Palma de Mallorca. It was first published, with an introduction by Jesús García Pastor, in the Biblioteca de la Presidencia de Colombia, 2 vols. (Bogotá, 1956) and again, with a prólogue by Luis Duque Gómez, in the collection Biblioteca Banco Popular, 4 vols. (Bogotá, 1970). The present study uses the most recent edition, Fray Juan de Santa Gertrudis, O.F.M., *Maravillas de la naturaleza*, prólogo Juan Luis Mejía Arango (MN) Biblioteca V Centenario Colcultura, Viajeros por Colombia, 3 vols. (Bogotá, 1994). I am deeply grateful to Germán Carrera Damas, who first brought Fray Juan to my attention, describing his chronicle as ‘one of the greatest of the colonial chronicles,’ for me a rewarding judgement.

colloquial, unaffected by literary pretensions. Although written in the second half of the eighteenth century, the narrative owes little to the spirit of the age; on the other hand, it contrasts conspicuously with previous clerical chronicles in its lack of deference and assertion of individual rights. He specifically disavows what today is called 'conceptual framework' and looks only to 'history and nature'. The result is an unstructured chronicle with great movement through time and space but without a chronological narrative line. Dates are rarely given and the political background contains some mistakes of detail. On the other hand, the book is more reader friendly than many colonial chronicles. The author makes a rare effort to address questions of universal interest and to discuss in depth subjects of concern to later centuries as well as his own. Fray Juan develops three distinct themes identified from his journeys through New Granada and his experience in the Putumayo. The wonders of nature, the work of his mission, and daily life in colonial society: these are his three bequests to posterity.

### *The Wonders of Nature*

After eight weeks at sea, most travellers from Europe landed at Cartagena eager to tour the old city and view the walls and fortifications, themselves minor wonders of the Hispanic world. Fray Juan had other priorities. Before introducing Cartagena de Indias he pauses to report on the local flora and fauna, describing in minute detail the first fruits he saw, brought for sale in a boat as they approached the colony. Short essays present the coconut, the pineapple, the banana (*hay cuatro especies de plátanos*). In the old city he is more interested in the birds than the buildings: he describes at length five singular birds, and in the same style gives a detailed account of the latest women's fashions in New Granada, which, in his opinion, were so revealing that 'at first we were scandalised, but through time we became used to it'.<sup>4</sup>

Fray Juan surveyed the River Magdalena and its world with increasing astonishment, marvelling at the riches that nature revealed at successive stages of the journey, and looking upon birds, beasts and plants with the sympathy St. Francis himself would have shown. 'The River Magdalena is a pleasure and a paradise, a delight to the senses of all who sail it, and a feast for the eyes of the traveller, with such variety of objects that it would take volumes to describe them all.'<sup>5</sup> Even so, he did his best to describe them all, trees and flowers, fruits and vegetables, birds and fish. He identified four different kinds of the *pita* plant and their distinct uses, some for making into a drink, some for fibre.<sup>6</sup> He saw boas that were said to paralyse their victims with their breath, and in Chiquinquirá an eagle that carried a boy of fourteen through the air with its talons. Near the Mesa de Juan Díaz he learnt of ants that instead of earth dug up gold dust and heaped it in piles near their nests. The slave who discovered this was killed by his master to preserve the secret, whereupon the gold turned to

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<sup>4</sup> MN, vol. I, pp. 58-67.

<sup>5</sup> MN, vol. I, p. 93.

<sup>6</sup> MN, vol. II, pp. 43-4.

ding and the master died suddenly and unreconciled. Some of these were good stories, of a kind often heard in the Hispanic world.<sup>7</sup> Others were authentic.

Fray Juan was a dedicated naturalist, with a talent for vivid description, but he was not trained to identify or understand all he saw with anything more than intuition or local wisdom. He knew the work of José Gumilla, the Jesuit missionary and explorer, whose natural history of another great river, *El Orinoco ilustrado y defendido*, published in 1741, became the model for Spanish naturalists in South America. As Fray Juan approached the River Putumayo he encountered even more exotic creatures and fruits of nature, best described in his own language:

*Aquí sí que hay que admirar la variedad de arboledas tan frondosas de árboles no conocidos. Todo tejido de bejucos y follaje parecido ya a la balsamilla y ya a la maravilla, entreverados carrizos, cañabrava y guaduas, con variedad de flores, con la hechura y colores peregrinos.*<sup>8</sup>

In Santa Rosa he saw a bird that knew how to stitch and sew clothes. A fruit, *naranja*, smaller than an orange, with a sweet smell; mixed with water and sugar: '*es un refresco de los más regalados de cuantos yo he probado en el mundo*'.<sup>9</sup> Fray Juan goes beyond mere description: he relates animals and fruits to their functions and their appeal to the palate. Two Indian families give him *chirimoyas* as a present, which inspires him to a vivid description of this handsome, sweet smelling fruit with a taste that never cloy, and leads to an eloquent conclusion: 'God never created a fruit the like of this; there are none in Spain, only in Paradise will you find their equal. In all the world queen of fruits.'<sup>10</sup>

The common birds of the Americas were his delight, his birds of paradise in an often-cruel world. 'Near Honda I saw a small bird called the cardinal, crimson or scarlet in colour, smaller than a sparrow, but not a singer, emitting only a tiny squeak.'<sup>11</sup> Strange birds also captured his imagination:

From stage to stage of our journey there are birds the size of a crow, black with white feathers in the wings and a crimson beak. They call these birds *gritones*, because when they see any people pass they begin to cry loudly and continue until others further on respond, and the second birds cry until others yet further on reply, and so they proceed, each flock warning the next that people are coming or going. The Indians are aware of this, and on hearing these birds crying throughout the Putumayo, and particularly in the five mountain villages, according to whether the cry of the birds goes from above to below or below to above, they know that people are climbing or descending. And from experience the Indians can calculate the times and distances of people approaching and leaving.

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<sup>7</sup> MN, vol. I, p. 79, vol. II, p. 89.

<sup>8</sup> MN, vol. I, p. 206.

<sup>9</sup> MN, vol. I, pp. 214, 216.

<sup>10</sup> MN, vol. I, p. 235. *Chirimoyas* are custard apples.

<sup>11</sup> MN, vol. I, p. 163.

This may appear doubtful, comments Fray Juan, but hastens to add, 'It is simply a natural instinct which God has given these birds'.<sup>12</sup>

Spain sent two naturalists to New Granada in these years, one a religionist, the other a scientist. José Celestino Mutis taught mathematics at the Colegio del Rosario, and began the study of botany, launching his famous project, the Expedición Botánica, to record the flora and fauna of South America. While Fray Juan marvelled, Mutis measured. Both encountered a flying fish in the Caribbean. The scientist spent a whole day making an exact description, and finding no help in Linnaeus decided it was a new and distinct class of abdominal fish. Fray Juan held one in his hands and his reaction was less exact but more expressive: he decided it was a kind of large sardine, with wings next to its gills and as big as its body, to enable it to soar and escape from marauding sharks.<sup>13</sup> Scientist and religionist complemented each other. For Mutis the Magdalena was a laboratory in which to observe and measure. For Fray Juan it was a thing of beauty to flood the senses and feed the imagination. He did not react to the urban environment, only to that of nature. Santa Fe, capital of the viceroyalty and scene of a setback for his mission, receives scant attention in his work, while mountains and rivers, plants, animals and birds are described in meticulous detail. And from natural history he could slip into myth and fantasy.

In the mental world of Fray Juan nature dwelt close to the supernatural, and possessed qualities of magic and enchantment. He reported a tradition that in the lake of Guanacas there were two ducks, never more than two, which did not eat because they were two devils who guarded the treasure lying beneath the waters.<sup>14</sup> In Popayán he heard of monsters three times the size of men, humans in their upper body, hairy animals below, whom some called satyrs, others *alarbés*.<sup>15</sup> He was sceptical and took it to be a fable. Later in the Putumayo a fellow missionary assured him that he had seen such a monster and the bible was a witness to creatures of this kind: 'There ostriches will dwell, and there satyrs will dance' (Isaiah, 13, 21).

On the edge of this world lurked the Indians, souls to be converted but also strangers to inspire wonder and sometimes fear. Fray Juan was not an anthropologist, though his chronicle is a primary source for anthropology. His views of Indians in general were critical rather than approving. They were idolatrous and repudiated the Christian religion; they were natural thieves, unreliable, inclined to accumulate women and equally to disown them, and prone to drunkenness. Passive by nature, given any authority they became as arrogant as Lucifer.<sup>16</sup> Disconcertingly, he likened them to Jews, and believed they were the thirteenth tribe of Israel. These were his inner thoughts. In practice he was compassionate, and as the priest of his mission he was caring and correct. In Caquetá he met one of the Indians of a tribe, the Aguanungas, who moved liked toads in a crouching position. His attempts to raise him up were unsuccessful,

<sup>12</sup> MN, vol. I, pp. 226-7.

<sup>13</sup> José Celestino Mutis, *Viaje a Santa Fe*, Marcelo Frías Núñez (ed.)(Madrid, 1991), p. 97; MN, vol. I, p. 54.

<sup>14</sup> MN, vol. I, p. 186.

<sup>15</sup> MN, vol. I, pp. 212-3.

<sup>16</sup> MN, vol. I, pp. 171-2. Elsewhere he says they had no idols, MN, vol. I, p. 310.

because this was his birthright, 'the culture of that nation'.<sup>17</sup> He was told by colleagues that there were two villages where every third moon they took it in turns to keep the uncorrupted body of their first missionary priest, which guaranteed abundance of fish in the river for those whose turn it was.<sup>18</sup> There were Indians with the feet of goats, others whose legs from the knee down were back to front. Amidst the horrors of the jungle, real or imagined, his religious faith was solid and before the mystery of nature it remained a complement to reason. Everything good and beautiful came from the Author of Nature; evil and ugliness were the work of the Devil.

### Mission in the jungle

Churchmen admitted that many Indian groups remained hostile to the Christian religion because of the oppression they suffered from Christians. In the sixteenth century José de Acosta had expressed it differently: 'If the Indians believe in God in spite of the wickedness of our men, what would happen if they had seen the beautiful feet of those who bring the gospel of peace?'<sup>19</sup> Many churchmen also denounced the tyranny of the whites in the seventeenth century, less perhaps in the eighteenth. Was this enough? After the crisis of idolatry and the overthrow of the *Huacas* in the seventeenth century, the Indians could be called Christian, with little prospect of a mass return to their ancient religions. But was it yet a spontaneous Christianity? Or did they identify Christianity with the Spanish social system? In 1686 a group of Indians in Barquisimeto, Venezuela, stopped going to mass when the *encomiendas* were suppressed and they were liberated from personal service. Rebuked by the parish priest, they replied, 'Father, why do we have to go to mass if we are now free?'

The American mission had three spiritual arms, Franciscans, Capuchins, and Jesuits. In 1767 it lost the Jesuits, a great setback for mission expansion, and one which caused a major replanning of existing missions, by Church and by state. A mission frontier did not necessarily have imperial objectives. In many parts of the Americas the prime challenge came from untamed nature, the home of unconquered Indians. While it is true that mission zeal in general declined in the second half of the eighteenth century and that the expulsion of the Jesuits deprived the Church of the leading edge of evangelisation at that time, the Franciscans still carried the gospel to new and dangerous frontiers. Throughout the Americas their foundations, the Colegios Apostólicos de Propaganda Fide, recruited and trained a missionary elite who kept alive the evangelising spirit of the order. While souls were won, lives were lost. In 1766, 16 priests and numerous neophytes were killed in an Indian rebellion in Huallaga, eastern Peru. The Franciscans alone lost 70 missionaries in colonial America, victims of Indian attack by arrow, lance and club, apart from losses through disease and deprivation. Yet by the end of the century the Franciscans were still pushing forward their missions in Urubamba and Cocabambilla. And in the Putumayo

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<sup>17</sup> MN, vol. I, p. 244.

<sup>18</sup> MN, I, vol. 211-2

<sup>19</sup> Quoted by Eduardo Cárdenas, 'Panorama de la iglesia diocesana', HIFH, vol. I, pp. 343; see also Borges, 'Dificultades y facilidades para la evangelización', *ibid.*, pp. 457-70.

they struggled for souls in a corner of the empire where no other Spaniard chose to live.

Fray Juan accepted his vocation as it came and took orders in the cause of obedience. Otherwise he might have resisted his posting to Agustiniño, at the very edge of the mission field, the most dangerous and inhospitable location in all the Putumayo: isolated among jungle Indians, his own the *encabellados* 'the most fierce and arrogant of them all'; insufficiently provisioned by his superiors; equipped with a shotgun and ammunition but short of wine and hosts for mass.<sup>20</sup> He admitted the prospect was frightening. To be alone and faced by a band of these Indians, with their faces and bodies painted, their long hair standing out wildly, their language incomprehensible but alarming, and their poisoned darts to hand, 'would frighten the bravest heart'.<sup>21</sup> But the beauty of the environment soon overcame him:

The luxuriance of the River Putumayo makes it a paradise. It abounds in bamboo. The banks are thick with *guabos*, small and medium size. Palm trees of every kind grow in abundance. There are two extraordinary kinds of lianas. One is called *yoco*, from which the Indians make a drink... which is improved by fermentation. This is the usual drink of all the Indians of the Putumayo, who take *yoco* morning and evening. When I used to go out with them on the river to hunt or fish, if they came to a place containing this liana, they would immediately stop the canoe, and when I asked *Enque re gico*, meaning *¿qué hay?* they replied *Yoco payqui payre*, which means *Padre, aquí hay yoco*. Instead of saying Padre they say *payre*, because they cannot pronounce Padre.

The other liana, called the '*ya te veo*', was said to have magic qualities, which could wound the silent passer by but leave the talkative one untouched; thus Fray Juan found difficult to believe.<sup>22</sup>

New missionaries were given an interpreter, often a white *cholo* who knew the local language; gradually they learned the native languages by practice and experience and in deference to Indian culture taught their converts a kind of mission-speak.<sup>23</sup> Fray Juan also taught them to wear clothes, a particular obsession of his, especially when two naked young girls joined his household as servants. Not all the missionaries agreed. Passing through the mission station of Santa Cruz with its tribe of Mamos Indians he asked the creole priest, Father Rosales, if decency was not offended by the presence of naked natives in the church and at mass. 'He explained to me that the climate was hot and clothes irritated them; scruples were all very well in college but here it was essential to forget them or to forget any chance of conversions. What he said was true, but I was still determined to clothe the Indians when I got the opportunity.'<sup>24</sup>

Nine months later, following a lengthy drinking session, the Mamos Indians rose up and attacked Father Rosales when he tried to destroy their store of liquor.

<sup>20</sup> MN, vol. I, pp. 314-5.

<sup>21</sup> MN, vol. I, p. 221.

<sup>22</sup> MN, vol. I, pp. 253-5. *Guabo*: an American leguminous plant.

<sup>23</sup> MN, vol. I, pp. 264, 308-10.

<sup>24</sup> MN, vol. I, pp. 259-60.

He defended himself spiritedly but was outnumbered; they killed him, splitting his head with an axe and burning his body. Fray Juan thus learnt that clothing his Indians was not the only priority: it was also important to have a shotgun ready and loaded at all times. Fray Juan took a sensitive, though not a sentimental, view of his Indians and he refused to condone public beatings for crimes, the normal punishment and one imposed by many missionaries. Even when he uncovered a plot by a malcontent to instigate a rebellion and assassinate him, he intervened to stop a colleague who was flogging the offender: 'I couldn't stand it'.<sup>25</sup> He learned that it was useful to fire a shot in the air when approaching and leaving the village, partly as a warning, partly as a reassurance that this was the priest and he would do them no harm.<sup>26</sup> And he never said mass without a gun at the ready and his powder dry: 'I instructed my *chapelón* (Spanish aide) to accompany me armed for mutual assistance, and whenever I said mass he was to stand at the side of the altar, shotgun in hand, because many of the murders of missionary priests at the hands of Indians had been committed during mass'. Some years ago one of the Putumayo priests had sent a *cholo* servant to clean his shotgun at the river. A party of Indians approaching in a canoe asked him what he was doing with the gun and the *cholo* replied, 'As a matter of fact the priest has told me to clean it in order to kill you'. The Indians did not see the joke, recruited other Indians and together killed with their darts six priests as they said mass in the surrounding missions. 'So, one word spoken in jest by a *cholo* to an Indian caused the death of six missionary fathers.'<sup>27</sup> These missions carried security risks, from men as well as from nature, and the Putumayo mission, unlike some in Peru, had no military escort for their protection. At the end of each day Fray Juan collected tools and arms and stored them in a room within the priest's quarters.

Fray Juan was the most distant of all the Putumayo priests, nine days journey from the next station on the river, surrounded as he said by *barbaros* and mosquitoes. In his first year, 1758, it was his job to found a new mission by bringing in Indians (some 280) dispersed throughout the surrounding jungle, a proud and fierce people called the *encabellados*, hitherto unconquered. He called his village Agustinillo, named after the first Christian *cacique* of these Indians. There he not only had to build a church and call the people to mass and instruction – an awesome task in itself as they had no awareness of a personal God – but also to develop the area by clearing, ploughing and planting. And he himself had to take up the machete alongside the Indians, otherwise they did not work. 'Each morning I took the sacred host with one hand, the machete with the other, and I never went out without it, or else the shotgun.'<sup>28</sup> There plagued by heat and humidity, mosquitoes, ants, cockroaches and flies, and besieged by the relentless attack of the jungle – which held snakes and wild beasts in dangerous proximity – he taught and trained his Indians, not only to learn and understand the Christian religion but also to become skilful in arts and crafts, to manufacture bricks and erect buildings, to make yarn and sew, to create instruments and play music. He himself took lessons from the Indians, learning their special talents for

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<sup>25</sup> MN, vol. I, p. 336.

<sup>26</sup> MN, vol. I, pp. 261-3, 273.

<sup>27</sup> MN, vol. I, p. 261, vol. III, pp. 91-2.

<sup>28</sup> MN, vol. I, p. 290.

survival and their own crafts, such as making cloth from the bark of the *garapacho* tree, and making ink from a particular liana tree, which was also the source of poison used by the Indians.<sup>29</sup> And with them he performed the daily tasks of land clearing, ploughing, fishing and hunting.

Missionaries led by their example. Fray Juan tells of two religious and one secular priest who had recently set out to re-christianise the province of Cunacuna in the Chocó. The local *cacique* received them very obligingly, and when they retired for the night each found a girl in his bed. This is the custom of the Cunacuna tribe explained the chronicler: each year every village gives the principal *cacique* a virgin girl, and these are brought up to entertain any merchant or other traveller who visits the region. The priests ejected the girls, but thereby unwittingly insulted them; next morning the girls complained to the *cacique* that they had been rejected. The priests were then in danger of their lives and had to argue their way out of a difficult confrontation, pleading ignorance and different customs. On the second night, however, they again found girls in their beds; this time they thought it more prudent themselves to withdraw and sleep in the corner of the room. Next morning the *cacique* arrived with armed Indians to execute the priests, who fell to their knees in prayer and argued that their religion and their vows forced them to face death rather than commit sin. The *cacique*, who was evidently a reasonable man, agreed to accept this clash of cultures (*los estilos de su tierra*), and sent them on their way with a canoe escort and abundant supplies.<sup>30</sup>

Fray Juan was offered this mission in the Chocó, with all its temptations, but his superior decided that he was destined for the Putumayo. There, surrounded by naked women in their jungle missions, priests were not immune to desire, as Fray Juan was aware. He explains that two circumstances came to his assistance. The Indians observed and discussed everything the priest did and he would certainly lose face among them if he failed to live up to his ideals. And the knowledge that 'these barbarians would take his life whenever they felt like it' made him shrink from mortal sin and dying without a confessor at hand. He also mentioned that he found it off-putting to see Indian women delousing themselves and eating the lice.<sup>31</sup> The jungle was not such a paradise, the forbidden fruit not so tempting.

The greatest fear of the missionary was that he might never break through; the children were docile, but it was hard-going with anyone over twenty, and these would remain hostile to the last. They started with no concept of God, not even idols of their own. It took years to teach them the 'Our Father', 'Hail Mary' and the 'Credo', and some of them never understood. To teach them the sign of the cross might take three or four years.<sup>32</sup> As for the mass, they would attend with their alcohol ready and their weapons to hand: 'I had a lot to overcome, but I never beat them as some missionaries did'. He offered them gifts such as tobacco, and beyond this tools and equipment, and he worked to provide the

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<sup>29</sup> MN, vol. I, pp. 295, 298.

<sup>30</sup> MN, vol. I, pp.193-4.

<sup>31</sup> MN, vol. I, pp. 307.

<sup>32</sup> MN, vol. I, pp. 308-12, 316-20.

whole village with economic subsistence and agricultural development. 'They do not embrace the faith through knowledge of the truth or the light of natural reason, but only because that is what the missionary priest states and teaches, and because he interests them through gifts of axes, machetes and other hardware.'<sup>33</sup> With tools and work he might create a community and make his village a going concern. He also sought to attract them by appointing their own leaders as *alcaldes* and other officials, in the hope that if these converted to Christianity, others would follow. And he created the illusion of elections, placing names in a hat and drawing them out as in a lottery. 'As they did not know the characters, I myself made the elections for these offices of the six Indians who seemed to me most suitable.'<sup>34</sup>

One of the greatest problems for evangelisation was polygamy. Fray Juan attempted to convince his converts through rational discussion that it was natural for man to take only one wife. Sitting with his Indians on the banks of the river, he used the argument that many creatures of the surrounding jungle and mountains, parrots, macaws, lions, tigers and bears had one female only, and men must be the same; all Christians observed this and took only one woman. But his Indians turned the same argument back on him: cocks used many hens, they said, pigs many sows. The priest concluded from this dialogue that the Devil himself dictated these replies and he resorted to arguments from faith and religion and also to persuasion, trying to enforce a choice: the material resources and advantages of village life came with baptism, but baptism depended on having only one wife. At the same time he solemnly undertook to find new husbands for the abandoned wives, and in the meantime guarded them against rape and provided food and clothing for them.<sup>35</sup>

Fray Juan's greatest problems in Spanish America came not from the Indians, a burden willingly undertaken, but from his own order in Popayán and the regional headquarters of the mission. From the outset Agustínillo was starved of resources for its material development by the mission superior, who appropriated as much as possible of the mission funds (rightly regarded by Fray Juan as a royal grant) for his own project, a new college in Popayán, to the detriment of the missions in the field. When Fray Juan tried to generate his own resources by producing a surplus (mainly cacao) and selling outside, he was bitterly opposed by rival friars who suborned his Indian guides and persuaded them to steal his canoe and lose him in the jungle. He was opposed at every turn by his own Franciscan *comisario*, Padre José Barrutieta, president of the Popayán mission, who strove to monopolise all mission resources and prevent any independent trading by Fray Juan.

The discovery of gold in the mission territory, mainly in Mocoa and Caquetá, aggravated the conflict between the *comisario* and Fray Juan, and increased the friar's sense of injustice. The recently established Casa de Moneda of Popayán, backed by the colonial administration and supported by 'the *gamonales* of Popayán' all wanted to exploit the mines, each for their own interests. Barrutieta

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<sup>33</sup> MN, vol. I, p. 333.

<sup>34</sup> MN, vol. III, p. 99.

<sup>35</sup> MN, vol. III, pp.145-51.

also wanted to invest in this discovery and to open a road, overtly to benefit the missions but in fact to service the mines and earn a surplus for his own agenda. Against this powerful coalition Fray Juan argued that the mining interests, 'whose only God is gold', would extract slave labour from the Putumayo Indians, 'Christians and gentiles alike', thus causing a flight of his neophytes and the destruction of the missions. He decided to take the war to his enemies. Exhausted by a solo journey through the jungle, he staggered into Santa Rosa and in an angry confrontation with Father Barrutieta he accused him of lying, greed and tyranny, and of diverting mission funds from their proper use to investment in roads and mines.<sup>36</sup> Fray Juan, claiming to recognise no superior other than God, wanted to take the case before the viceroy in Bogotá and to make the issue one of missions versus mines, Indians versus mine-owners. But he was stopped by his own Franciscan provincial, who told him that the *comisario* had already won over the viceroy and Fray Juan had arrived too late. Basically the provincial was an appeaser who took a secular point of view:

I am convinced that the Father commissary seeks a temporal profit and you the spiritual profit of souls. But you ignore the intrigues and duplicities of the viceroy's palace and the deals between the leaders of this city and the family networks involved... I know from the viceroy's secretary that the viceroy will not give you an audience, and if you insist in this matter he will send you under guard to Cartagena and have you returned to Spain.<sup>37</sup>

Fray Juan accepted defeat and decided to rely on his own efforts to raise money for his mission; he travelled the length and breadth of the colony between Honda and Pasto preaching, arguing, begging, trading masses for money, supplies, tools, hardware and cattle, and recording his adventures in a gem of picaresque writing. He remained convinced, apparently correctly, that Barrutieta had received public revenues for the missions far in excess of what he had disbursed to the mission stations.<sup>38</sup> His own, alternative, source of supply – in effect a mass for a mule, a sermon for a machete – was a prodigious effort of mendicancy and transportation; at San Agustín his Indian drovers had to open a road through the jungle to Caquetá, where he counted 357 head of cattle and 830 sheep, for distribution to the various mission stations.

The balance sheet of Fray Juan's mission after ten years showed a total population of 1,472, among whom 311 adults were baptised and married and over 200 children baptised. There were 512 head of cattle, 623 sheep, over 200 cocks and hens, 300 quintals of cotton, 220 of wool and six looms, a variety of crops, numerous tools and items of hardware, 170 dwellings, a priest's house and a church.<sup>39</sup> The history of his mission in the Putumayo may appear less illustrious than that of another Franciscan missionary, also from Mallorca, Fray Junípero Serra in California, and his legacy less enduring. By 1783, some 15 years after Fray Juan's regime, Agustínillo had only 113 Indians who had been without a

<sup>36</sup> MN, vol. I, pp. 353-5, 363-7, 369-70.

<sup>37</sup> MN, vol. II, pp. 91-4, 103-9.

<sup>38</sup> MN, vol. II, pp. 155-9. Fray Juan's experiences in Pasto and Taminango and his impressions of life in the streets and on the road are described in MN, vol. II, pp. 199-240, and reproduced below.

<sup>39</sup> MN, vol. III, p. 169.

priest for many years and were marrying clandestinely.<sup>40</sup> This was a commentary, however, on Spanish mission priorities, the allocation of resources and the commitment of religious authorities. Abandoned as he was, Fray Juan could hardly have done more. Starting from nothing he had created not only a Christian community but also a rural economy which had raised the standard of living of its people.

Fray Juan was not a sentimental man. He saw his religious mission as a job, and one frustrated by his own superiors: 'somewhat disillusioned,' as he says, he applied for permission to leave and return to Spain. Towards his Indians he was cool-headed, though not hard-hearted. After ten years among them he disguised his final departure; even so, as he took his leave, he was overcome by emotion. 'I wanted to say goodbye to the people, as I knew it was my last farewell, but I started weeping and with hardly a word to them I embarked in the canoe.'<sup>41</sup>

### Social life in the colony

*Maravillas de la naturaleza* is not a record of public events or a source for political history. Where external pressures affect the work of evangelisation the author gives a few details. He refers to a mid-century rebellion in the province of Cunacuna, at the headwaters of the Chocó, previously governed as a *corregimiento* and valued for its gold. Politically it was a dependency of the Viceroyalty of New Granada, while its ecclesiastical government was under the bishop of Popayán. As an outlet to the Pacific, it was frequented by visiting French vessels, drawn by gold. The French supplied arms, and instructed Indians in the use of firearms, finding willing subjects among communities oppressed by the *corregidores*. Some of the French settled and married in the area. 'Eventually,' Fray Juan recorded with some exaggeration, 'the province rebelled, threw off the government of the Spaniards, and is lost to Spanish rule; the people have returned to paganism and now govern themselves.'<sup>42</sup> The Franciscans proposed to try again, and Fray Juan narrowly avoided being posted there; hence the reference to these events. The routes of gold and trade were always prone to banditry and north of Pasto, near Taminango, a band established itself in the hills known as El Castigo. This became, as so often in Colombian history, an unconquerable enclave. Sealed off from the security forces of the viceroyalty, it grew in size, recruiting a steady stream of criminals, outlaws, blacks and mulattos, and imposing a regime of extortion on nearby gold mines.<sup>43</sup> Events of this kind were evidently the social talk of the time, but they are only incidentally the concern of *Maravillas*.

Fray Juan did not pause to analyse colonial society. He simply collided with it on his travels, sometimes literally. On the road from Santa Fe to Tunja he and his mestizo companion came to a bridge over marshland, where an Indian keeper imposed a toll charge, otherwise the traveller had to make a lengthy detour to reach the public bridge. The Indian refused passage to Fray Juan without

<sup>40</sup> Mantilla, 'Colombia: La evangelización del norte y mediodía', HHHF, vol. II, p. 336.

<sup>41</sup> MN, vol. I, p. 35, vol. III, p. 172.

<sup>42</sup> MN, vol. I, p. 192.

<sup>43</sup> MN, vol. II, pp. 236-7. For the full account see below pp. 39-40.

payment, claiming that he had built the bridge and the local priest had given him licence to charge. 'Listen Indian,' replied Fray Juan, 'don't you know that neither that priest nor all the priests here can impose a general tax? Only the royal *audiencia* can do that. So, get out of the way, Indian, open this bridge and let me pass.' The dispute gathered pace: Fray Juan became more aggressive and grabbed his shotgun, while the Indian was joined by reinforcements and a group of 'screaming women', one of whom asked the friar's companion, 'Does this priest kill Indians?' 'He kills Indians like mosquitoes,' replied the *mestizo*, 'and that includes all of you.' At this point they opened the bridge and the travellers passed through, pursued only by the cries of the Indian keeper, 'Hey Friar, you Spaniard, you Jew, you renegade!'<sup>44</sup>

Fray Juan, with his white complexion and rosy cheeks, could not be mistaken in New Granada for anyone but a Spaniard. He was conscious of the tension between *peninsulares* and creoles. Resentment of the favour shown to Spaniards always smouldered beneath the surface of colonial life and erupted on occasions of particular grievance over appointments. Among the religious orders, loss of status and role in the eighteenth century aggravated identity crises and reactivated the confrontation between creoles and Spaniards. This was noticeable too in the missionary orders. Conflict among the Franciscans of Popayán was provoked when it was thought that new Spaniards were gaining promotion over experienced locals. A creole missionary on the Putumayo resented being superseded by a Spaniard, for as 'a native creole he had no desire to give way to a *chapatón* Father recently arrived from Spain'.<sup>45</sup> The bane of Fray Juan's life in the Popayán mission, Padre Barrutieta, was a creole from Quito, though the Spaniard does not invoke this as a reason for his hostility. According to Fray Juan, the Spanish-creole divide was noticeable even in table manners: Spaniards used spoons and forks, creoles, even the women, ate with their fingers.

Fray Juan introduces the reader to the various socio-racial groups of colonial society, and occasionally to the local economies that sustained them. A lengthy visit to the gold mines of Barbacoas, near Pasto, where the mendicants found that most, though not all, of the mine-owners were generous almsgivers, is the occasion of a detailed description of the infrastructure of mining, its methods, ownership patterns and social structure. The town of Barbacoas was a monument to the worship of gold: 'Gold in the mountain, gold in the rivers, gold in the ravines, gold in the city, in the plaza, in the streets, gold everywhere'.<sup>46</sup> And this only from the existing mines, without counting the unworked reserves. Social mobility was astonishing. A negro mineowner, Juan del Castillo, told him how he overcame his own slave origins by study, hard work and mining expertise: 'Through my efforts I have emancipated my entire family and we are all free; I have bought seven slaves of my own, and on a franchise from my former mistress I now work my own mine with my children and slaves.'<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> MN, vol. II, p. 111.

<sup>45</sup> MN, vol. I, p. 349; on table manners see vol. I, p. 68.

<sup>46</sup> MN, vol. II, p. 318.

<sup>47</sup> MN, vol. II, p. 346.

Fray Juan evidently spent much time closely observing women's fashions at different levels of society and for different regions of the country. His expert and detailed descriptions are models of their kind though, perhaps embarrassed by his expert knowledge, he often concludes by lamenting the growing 'indecenty' of women's tastes.<sup>48</sup> Vanity was not their only weakness: women actually smoked in the streets and nuns in their convents. On the sartorial habits of American man he has little to say. Male behaviour, on the other hand, was an essential part of his story. He recorded the seamier, as well as the worthier, side of colonial life, not only the more familiar infringements of the Christian commandments, infidelity, jealousy and crimes of passion, but also the rarer sins of paedophilia and necrophilia. He bewailed the lax sexual morals of the time, which he attributed to the neglect of the sacrament of marriage; he estimated that only about a quarter of women living with men were married. He recorded a one-man morality campaign waged by a religious in Barbacoas, nicknamed Father 'Get Married':

Any man who confessed to sinning against the sixth commandment he seized by the hair and beat quite severely, shouting, 'Get married! Get married!' But he was also known never to refuse absolution, so all the wild young men of the town queued up to confess to him, watching the comic scene in which he repeated the beatings and admonitions, thus enforcing the penance before the absolution.<sup>49</sup>

Towards Indian customs, apart from polygamy, he was tolerant:

One day a young Indian came to see me and said that he had an Indian girl with whom he was learning to get married. He had taken her from the village of Coello four years ago with the intention of marrying her, but his parish priest would not marry them because they were related. I spoke to the priest, who replied: 'These people are so barbarous that before marriage they live together for three or four years, and this, so they say, is learning to get married. If during this time they quarrel, the man will send away the girl with any children they may have and each will then seek another partner.' As for me (continued Fray Juan), I did not blame the barbarity of the people as much as the barbarity of Church and state in these provinces, who do nothing to resolve this problem.

In the event Fray Juan obtained a dispensation for the couple from a compliant Jesuit theologian and persuaded the parish priest to marry them.<sup>50</sup>

Fray Juan did not spare priests. Passing through these pages are false priests, gambling priests, priests who deceive nuns, and in his own order manipulating priests, not to mention the plausible scoundrel, Fray Judas, whose story is told below. And he chronicled clerical life with an unerring eye for concubines, referring casually to many cases of 'a priest who had a daughter', or a young woman 'daughter of a priest', or on one occasion a priest hiding inside a house while his companion directed Fray Juan to another lodging. 'Housekeepers' were often described as sisters or nieces. In one encounter on the road to Pasto the friar congratulated an Indian parishioner on his caring parish priest, to be told,

<sup>48</sup> For examples see MN, vol. I, pp. 122-4, vol. II, pp. 286-91; on smoking see vol. I, p. 66.

<sup>49</sup> MN, vol. II, p. 338.

<sup>50</sup> MN, vol. II, pp. 55-7.

‘Yes, he’s good, but he has given nothing to the sick’. I replied, ‘you should ask the lady, his sister’. ‘Father,’ he told me, ‘that lady is not his sister but his mistress, and for that reason no one in the village can approach her. She is more of a tyrant towards the sick than the priest is, for she only collects for herself and to send money to her mother in Quito.’<sup>51</sup>

Religion was the ultimate concern of Fray Juan, mass and the sacraments his best moments: preacher, confessor, moralist, he fulfilled his various vocations conscientiously and without excessive piety. Religion was his daily routine, part of the material world, and to a large extent he took it for granted. He had few illusions about sanctity and indeed rarely alluded to it; in this colonial society many priests and religious were unworthy of their office, and few of the faithful were ardent for virtue. His greatest delight was to celebrate mass with the most scrupulous attention to the liturgy, surrounded by his Indians seriously participating in word and music, as he had taught them. On his travels outside the mission he was much in demand for masses and preaching in the popular fiestas which formed an integral part of the Catholic calendar. Saints days and other feasts were a microcosm of Spanish American morality: masses, processions, veneration of the saints, followed by bullfights, feasting, drinking, dancing, and ending in general collapse into drunken stupor. Fray Juan describes a fiesta in Barbacoas in honour of Saint Francis of Paola, the patron saint of the negroes, mulattos and *zambos* of this mining area. It was an elaborate and costly ceremony beginning with a long procession to the church, punctuated by the firing of guns in the air, a sermon by Fray Juan, for which he was well paid, followed by extraordinary eating and drinking. ‘By dawn it was rare for anyone not to be drunk.’ His own sacristan, whom he found ‘swimming in wine’, took a whole day to sober up.<sup>52</sup>

As Fray Juan recreates the life of the Magdalena and the Putumayo, he moves easily across the thin line dividing the sacred from the profane. *Maravillas de la naturaleza*, written ‘for the glory of God and the instruction of workers in the missions’, is an incomparable memoir of the natural world of America, of colonial society and of life on the frontiers of the faith.<sup>53</sup> A bonus for the historian, it is more than a textual source or an exercise in environmental history: it absorbs the reader directly into the world of its author, imprints a vivid impression on the mind and creates a sense of virtually living in that distant time and place.

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<sup>51</sup> MN, vol. II, pp. 271, 283, 293-4, vol. III, p. 66.

<sup>52</sup> MN, vol. III, pp. 10-11.

<sup>53</sup> MN, vol. III, p. 431.



## **PART II**

# **THE WONDERS OF NATURE**



## The Wonders of Nature

Fray Juan de Santa Gertrudis, O.F.M.\*

### My experiences in Pasto and journey to the village of Taminango

I arrived in the city of San Juan de Pasto and immediately made my way to the friary. The guardian at that time was a very corpulent, bespectacled friar, who at our first meeting made himself out to be a senior priest of the province. However, I subsequently learnt that he had been for many years a lay brother and had only obtained permission to be ordained through the friendship of a priest of the Quito province, who had also secured his appointment as guardian. He received me very warmly and as there was no cell vacant he put me up in the cell of the father definator, Villapanilla. The latter was a Spaniard, a native of Gibraltar. As a boy he had sailed as a stowaway from Cadiz to Cartagena de Indias. From there he went to Santa Fe, where he entered the order and was ordained; he was studying philosophy when his talents came to the attention of a commissioner general, who appointed him to the province of Quito. There he read theology and in due course became definator and three times guardian. But he drank too much and was removed. He was a cousin of the Definator Terrero, whom I knew in the College of Arcos de la Frontera before I left for the Indies, a man well known for his books, *Primicias de Terrero*, and *El Serafin humano*, a life of Saint Francis.

A recent arrival in Pasto was a certain Don Antonio Flórez, under an assumed name of Fray Judas, a real Judas from what I learnt in Quito, which I will now relate. Flórez was a young fellow from Tacunga, a *mestizo*, with eloquence and effrontery enough to deceive the Devil. He married locally, but after a few years left his wife and took the road to Lima and from there to Cuzco. In Charcas he entered our order, on the strength of knowing a little grammar, and he completed the novitiate and made his profession. The superiors there were impressed by his intelligence and assigned him to philosophy, but he had no interest in studying and after a few months asked to be transferred to the pharmacy; there he remained for two years and was admitted to the tonsure and minor orders.

During this time he was cunning enough to acquaint himself with every office of the order from the general down to the novitiate. He had the opportunity to see a number of certificates emanating from the general, the commissary general in the Indies and the provincial. With lead engravings he managed to reproduce the relevant seals, letters, characters, signatures and rubrics, and he fabricated instructions from the general and authorisations from the commissary general in the Indies, all signed and sealed. He designed royal decrees and orders from the Council of the Indies authorising the foundation of religious houses. He

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\* Translated by John Lynch from Fray Juan de Santa Gertrudis, O.F.M., *Maravillas de la Naturaleza*, 3 vols. (Bogotá, 1994), vol. II, pp. 199-240.

then helped himself to some of the money and medicines belonging to the pharmacy and fled, making his way to Tucumán. He spent some time getting to know the region and managed to settle in one of its towns, where he put it about that he had come to found a convent of Claretian nuns. With the help of his forged papers he deceived everyone, and soon he had applications from the leading families enabling him to assemble fourteen young ladies. The town donated a house suitable for a convent, and there he enclosed his novices, coming to visit them at all hours. He took possession of their dowries and lavished attentions on them. This went on for four or five months and then one night he fled, loaded with money and leaving the novices without any prospects of becoming nuns. Taking care to cover his tracks and to change his habit for lay clothing, he made his way to Buenos Aires, where he posed as a medical doctor.

In Buenos Aires he spread the word that he was a Spaniard from Andalucía, and passed himself off as a doctor recently arrived from Spain. The news that a Spanish doctor was practising persuaded several sick people to become his patients, and as he managed to effect a number of medical and surgical cures he acquired some reputation. But it was his habit to consume a bottle of brandy every day and this drinking cost him his good name; and as he had money and spent lavishly he soon acquired a number of friends. He began to tell his patients that he did not want money but simply supplies of food and drink every midday and every night. And so it was; instead of money the families of his patients sent him food and cooked dishes, sweets and other delicacies, and with these sumptuous provisions he entertained his cronies to lavish feasts every midday and every night. This only lasted three months, for he began to worry about what he had done with the nuns in Tucumán and he secretly embarked for Portobelo.

In Portobelo he practised medicine for a few months until his money began to run out, at which time he sailed for Caracas. There he got a job as a pharmacy assistant in the hospital and stayed for four years. During this time his cunning enabled him to accumulate money once more, and leaving the pharmacy he sailed for Cartagena. Again he pretended that he had just arrived from Spain and that he had been professor of medicine in Seville. So he acquired patients and gained appointment too in the Hospital of Saint John of God. For a few months things went well for him.

One night he presented himself at our friary and asked the guardian for a habit to serve as a shroud for a corpse. They gave him one and he thereupon set out for Mahates with some Indians. On the way he learnt that from Mahates to Barranca was only two days' journey, so on reaching Mahates he took to the road on his own, got rid of his layman's clothing and put on our religious habit. Once more he fabricated warrants from the general of the order and pretended that he came from Spain with appointment as fiscal definator in the province of Cuzco. He reached the friary at Mompós and Honda and fooled the authorities with his forged papers. He left Honda and, on being informed that as far as the city of La Plata the people were all Indians and that most of them spoke the Inca language, which he himself had learnt from childhood, he passed himself off as a missionary.

In the villages he visited he deceived the parish priests and covered the truth in a veil of lies. First he admitted that he was not a priest, because having taken minor orders he considered himself unworthy of the others, and so he had not proceeded to ordination. This was true, but he added the lie that he came from Spain as fiscal defintor of Cuzco. As such he gave sermons and honoured the Blessed Sacrament and the Virgin Mary. In the course of these sermons he would break into the Inca language, to the astonishment of everyone, not least the Indians, who were unaccustomed to hearing sermons in their own tongue. This should have been enough to alert the priests that this man could not have been what he claimed, for there is no Spaniard – no matter how long he has been in Peru – who ever manages to pronounce the native language of the Indians, unless he has imbibed it with his mother's milk.<sup>1</sup> But he fooled everyone. In this way he obtained free board and lodging everywhere he went, and when he wished to leave they transported him from one village to another without any charge.

Thus he proceeded until he reached the village of El Retiro, where he heard of a curacy held by one of our friars. I do not remember the name of the village but it was not far from El Retiro, some four leagues distant. There he went and, with the help of his fraudulent papers of appointment as fiscal defintor of Cuzco, he took in the parish priest and, seeing that he had won him over, gave him to understand that on his return he had a further commission for the province of Santa Fe. The priest had his family and kinship there and he told Fray Judas of his wishes. The latter promised that he would attend favourably to all his needs, and on the strength of this the parish priest presented him with a large sum of pesos. No sooner had he got hold of the money than he quietly robbed the priest of his canonical [licence] and, politely taking his leave, set off for the town of La Plata. There he proclaimed himself parish priest.

He remained some days in La Plata and then moved on to Popayán. He reached our college wearing only the habit, without the cowl, explaining that he had lost it on the highland plateau of Guanacas. He had acquired a habit of blue cloth, and as he arrived with the name of Fray Judas, parish priest of such and such a place, they needed someone in the college who could vouch for him and advise the father superior accordingly. It was obvious that his manners did not conform to the modesty expected of a religious, so the superior asked him to declare who he was. He repeated that he was parish priest of La Plata and displayed the canonical. But as there was no one in the college who was able to vouch for him, he invoked his fraudulent documents of appointment as fiscal defintor of Cuzco, claiming that he only bore the office of parish priest to conceal his identity until he reached Cuzco.

As his documents bore the signature and seal of the general, they were nonplussed, unsure what to do with him. He let it be known that he had been professor of medicine in Salamanca and immediately this news was spread all over Popayán. The governor happened to be ill, and there was not a single doctor in the city, for the medical lay brother whom we had brought from Spain had left

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<sup>1</sup> 'Peru' can be taken to mean 'South America'. The Viceroyalty of New Granada was created in 1739, separate from that of Peru.

the college and gone to Quito. Rich patients in Popayán had to rely on a single pharmacist, who prescribed for them lots of medicines, for that was profitable; but if you were poor, you died as best you could. As soon as the governor heard that a Spanish religious had arrived who had been professor of medicine at Salamanca, he sent for him. The guardian had to go and tell the governor that the religious was not in a decent state, because in sheltering under his habit from a sudden storm on the plateau of Guanacas, he had carelessly lost his cowl and had no other to replace it. And as he wore the blue habit, while in the college they were dressed in coarse grey cloth, it was unseemly to combine a blue habit with a grey hood, which was the only kind they could lend him.

The governor promptly sent a sedan chair and two negroes to bring Fray Judas to the palace. And he gave such a good account of himself that the governor immediately ordered coarse blue cloth and sent for tailors to make him a habit. Fray Judas remained in the palace; a well-furnished room was prepared for him and orders were given to provide him with everything he needed. He began to practise medicine, coming and going as he pleased, visiting patients throughout Popayán and making a lot of money. Much of his treatment was nonsense and he dispatched many patients to eternity, but in the end he found a cure for the governor. After a month, when the governor felt better, he gave Fray Judas three hundred pesos and sent him back to the college. He had proved very expensive to keep: every evening he invited in his friends and ordered snacks with lots of drinks. In the month he was at the palace, he went through seven jugs of wine and three of brandy; a bottle of wine cost six pesos and one of brandy nine pesos.

When he returned to the college he got himself a good mule with saddle, which up to then he had not possessed, and kept it at the house of a friend. Meanwhile, our parish priest who had been robbed of his priest's licence noticed one day that it was missing and made inquiries of an Indian servant. She told him that on one occasion, when the priest had gone out to administer the last sacraments to an Indian woman, she had seen the Fray Judas who had stayed there taking papers from the desk and reading them. The priest immediately sent a messenger to the guardian of the college to explain that if Fray Judas was still in Popayán he should be deprived of the priest's licence, and if he had moved on to Pasto or Quito then the messenger would catch up with him and present letters to the guardian in Pasto and the provincial of Quito. The messenger arrived one evening but Father Judas happened to be out. He was sent for, and when he came in the guardian read out the letter from the parish priest and ordered him to hand over the licence. Seeing that he complied without any reluctance, and moreover was obviously guilty of the robbery and lacking in any semblance of a religious, the guardian consulted his advisers and decided to place him in custody while he wrote to the guardian in Cartagena to ask if this friar had really come from Spain with proofs of his identity, or whether it was another who had come with the commission of fiscal of Cuzco, and this character had taken his papers through cunning or violence and even perhaps taken his life. The papers themselves, being written, signed and sealed, apparently correctly, were never suspected.

It was awkward for the college, but they prepared a small room, which had a window giving out to the garden. That night the guardian and his advisers summoned Fray Judas and informed him that he was going to be confined to this room until they had established his true identity. Thereupon he began to issue threats. He warned them that with the power he had received from the general, whose instructions had been sent in advance, he would destroy the college on his return from his journey. He would banish them all and disperse them to different provinces, or he would take them captive to Spain to face the general. But in the end, having given him supper, they left him locked in the room.

The same night, when he was sure that the Fathers had retired, he escaped through the window into the garden and over the wall. He went to his friends' house where he kept his money and the mule and, pretending that a messenger had arrived for him, he told them that he had to leave without delay. He needed a lantern and a negro to accompany him until daybreak. As the people of that house were close friends and the owner had enjoyed his parties, they immediately did whatever he asked. So in the middle of the night Fray Judas left Popayán on the road to Pasto. He travelled for the rest of the night with the lantern and the negro. At daybreak he dismissed the negro and continued alone, reaching Alto del Rey, a small village of Indians and *mestizos*, just after midday. On his arrival he happened to meet a gentleman from Popayán who knew him and was returning there. Dismounting at a house, the friar ordered maize for the mule and a hen for himself, then he sent for brandy and, while he ate and talked, drank the whole bottle himself, for the man from Popayán had already eaten and did not wish to drink. But the *popayanejo* informed the fathers at the college of all this and took them a reminder from Fray Judas that they should prepare themselves for the prompt fulfilment of what he had promised them.

For more than a month he travelled around the province of Patia until he had spent all his money, and then he stopped at Pasto, which is eight days distance from Popayán. He had arrived at Pasto shortly before my own arrival. I have already said who the guardian was. But as for Fray Judas, who was capable of deceiving the most eagle-eyed, what could be done with the crazy fellow? When I arrived the guardian explained to me that a few days previously an important man had arrived from Spain, that no one knew for certain who he was, only that he carried letters patent from the general and, judging from some incautious remarks made by this religious in Pasto, it was assumed that he was going to unseat Father Soto y Marni, who was then commissary general of Peru and was in Lima. Meanwhile, he claimed to be parish priest of a certain village in order not to reveal his authority until he reached Lima. I asked his name, and the guardian replied that he was called Fray Judas. I told him: 'He may well be an important man, but his name speaks of shame'.

When I had arranged the bits and pieces in the cell of Definitor Villapanilla, I went out in search of the syndic, don Ramón de la Barrera, to whom I assigned my cacao, to see if it had been sold or not.<sup>2</sup> I found him at home and told him who I was; he replied that all the cacao had been sold, except a few *arrobas*, which he had kept for himself. He told me that the sale price was three pesos an

<sup>2</sup> The *sindico* of a friary was its business agent outside.

*aroba*, and he had given fifty pesos to the Indian carriers, leaving five hundred and fifty pesos for me. So we agreed on the accounts. Meanwhile, Fray Judas had returned to the friary and the guardian let him know of my arrival. Father Baquero was also there and, as they walked together in the cloister, they gave him news of me and told him that I was the one who had been preaching missions in the *llanos* of San Juan.

When I returned to the friary and saw him, I knew immediately that this was the Spanish father whose story the guardian had regaled me with. As soon as he saw me he rushed forward with arms outstretched to embrace me, crying, ‘Ay, My dear Juancho, give me an *abrazo*’. I reacted with reserve towards this shameless demonstration from a man whom I did not know and pushed him away, saying, ‘Restrain yourself, father’. He persisted in trying to embrace me, repeating, ‘My dear Juancho’. So I pushed him away more vigorously and kept him at a distance of four paces, saying, ‘Father, where have you learnt your manners? This is not our religious courtesy, but the worldly style of people without honour. I am usually addressed as Fray Juan. What do you mean by saying my dear Juancho to someone whom you have never seen or known before? Either you have been brought up among barbarians or you know very little of religion.’

The guardian and Father Baquero, seeing the revulsion which I showed, stood gaping in astonishment, and as they had formed a high opinion of him they came closer and motioned me to calm down. Father Judas asserted, ‘When you realise the authority I have you will treat me better’. Father Baquero added, ‘The father brings very important orders from the general’. And Father Judas declared, ‘If I wished, I could put you in prison this very night’.

By now I was becoming impatient and replied first to Father Baquero: ‘The father may bring orders from the general to punish scoundrels like you and Barrutieta.<sup>3</sup> But I not believe that the Most Reverend Molinas has delegated his power to a presumptuous and irreligious person such as you. As for you, Father Judas, let me see your documents. Let father guardian say whether you have shown him any reports against the missionary fathers.’ The guardian replied that he had seen none. So I continued, ‘Father Judas, I am no frightened dog. Go and give orders where you have authority, but don’t mess with me, otherwise I tell you, you will end up in the shit, where you belong. And I say to all of you, he is in no position to talk of putting me in gaol.’

When he saw that my language was becoming more insulting, the guardian took me by the hand and said, ‘Come now, Fray Juan, leave the father; he has said nothing to annoy you’. He took me to my cell and we changed the conversation to my business with don Ramón. That day a priest had died in Pasto and I later went with the rest of the community to the burial. I noticed that the guardian wanted me to walk at his side, though I drew back, for there were several older religious there, including the father definitor, Villapanilla. But the latter took my hand and placed me next to the guardian, saying, ‘This is your place, because you are a missionary’. And as he paid no compliments to Father

<sup>3</sup> On Barrutieta see above, p. 10-11.

Judas, my opinion of the latter worsened. On our return from the funeral, Father Judas approached me and said, 'Fray Juan, would you please come with me for a minute to this house?', pointing to a house at the corner of the square where the friary was. I assumed this gesture was meant to be conciliatory, and so I went with him.

A shoemaker lived there, a man not highly regarded in the friary because of a death he had caused; other rooms were rented by three young girls, all of bad repute. At the time I knew nothing of this, so we went in and there we saw the shoemaker's wife, uglier than a dragon, wearing a pair of old shoes and filthy as a spider. We did not enter the living room but sat on a bench in the hall. Father Judas took out a cigar and the woman brought him a bottle of brandy. He took a good drink and offered it to me, and when I declined he insisted and pushed the bottle in my hands, so I dashed it against the wall, saying, 'I am not a drunkard'. Just then two of the girls came up and with a lot of giggling and joking sat close to Father Judas. I was watching carefully and noticed he had an arm round the neck of one of the girls and a hand on the other's breasts. I gave him an angry look and he made as though to desist. This happened five or six times, but in the end my efforts prevented him from realising his wicked intent and my anger from boiling over.

Soon afterwards the shoemaker's wife brought a table and a cloth filthier than herself, while Fray Judas remarked, 'It is not everywhere I eat, only in a clean and honourable house like this'. Thereupon the woman served him two fried eggs and a piece of bread on a gourd instead of a plate, and when Father Judas began eating with his fingers, she brought the knife they used for cutting soles of shoes and threw it on the table. Fray Judas was already dipping the bread into the eggs and chewing vigorously. 'Señora,' he said, 'don't stand on such ceremony with us. Eat, Fray Juan, eat up.' At this point if I had not been so angry I would have burst out laughing. But I had no sooner declined than he invited the two girls to join him, and the three of them ate the meal together.

When they had finished eating, Fray Judas declared himself full and content. I rose and said, 'Let's go'. He too got up but in the doorway detained me, saying, 'Over here, just a moment, there is something I have to do'. With that he took me to another house nearby. In it lived a woman who was married to a creole, son of an Indian woman and a priest. The creole had a hacienda with a sugar mill and sent his wife bags of molasses; she then mixed this with water and made it into brandy. Seeing Fray Judas, the woman knew what he wanted and from one of her rooms brought out a wooden measuring cup full of brandy. At the doorway he took it from her and drank, but as I was on the alert and turned suddenly I noticed he was putting his hand up the woman's skirt, but stopped when he saw me looking. He did the same thing again until I restrained him, and this happened five or six times. Finally, I addressed him severely: 'Come, father, to the friary'.

With that we left the house, I red faced with indignation, but when we arrived home I said to him mildly, 'Let us go and see the guardian'. He agreed and we went into his cell. At that point I ceased to hide my rage and shouted at him,

'Father, you are a great scoundrel, infamous, vile, dishonest and scandalous. Why do you go around embracing women and indulging in actions even more obscene, such as I have just seen? You are Judas by name but an even worse Judas by nature. You said you had the power to put me in prison, villain that you are. If I were the superior here, I would put you in a cage. Who do you think you are, pretending to be a delegate of the general? What a story, and as for your papers, if you have any, they are spurious. If I did not respect the habit you are wearing, I would give you a good kicking for your scandalous behaviour, but the habit is the only thing of a religious that you have and you disgrace that.' I then told the guardian what I had seen; but he seemed quite unperturbed and remarked that the whole thing was only a joke.

Fray Judas ate with the guardian and Father Baquero in the guardian's cell, and I too ate there, for otherwise everyone had to eat in their own cell, as the refectory was out of use. At midday and in the evening a blind old woman used to come, a former procuress as I later learnt, together with another poor old woman, and the friars used to give them the leftovers in the cell. One evening, the blind woman was sitting on a bench in the porter's lodge while I was passing through the cloisters. I saw Fray Judas enter and when he noticed the blind woman he went up to her and lifting up his habit to his chest threw it over her, at the same time taking her hands under the habit. As the woman felt the habit falling over her she took it and threw it off, crying, 'Ay, Juditas, Juditas'. This was not the first nor the last time he did this, in fact I saw it more than ten times. I suppose he was just fooling around, but it was indecent and unworthy of a religious.

From the first night at table there was no end to the nonsense he spoke. He claimed to have been to Rome, Naples, Venice and the greater part of Italy, the whole of France and London and Holland. As I had not at that point formed such a bad opinion of him, I kept quiet. But one night he asked me a very odd question, and I replied, 'Father, so you want to question me? Well, instead of that, let me question you.' And I questioned him in English, Dutch, Italian, Neapolitan, and he could not reply a word. I asked him things about Rome, Naples, Venice, and he was unable to respond. I asked him about Seville, of which he claimed to be a native, and it was clear he had not even seen it in a picture. Nor did he know anything of Cadiz. I so harassed him with questions that on rising from the dinner table, he said, 'No one has ever pulled me up like that or tormented me as much as you'.

From then onwards I knew for sure that he was not Spanish nor had he ever been in Spain, and soon I had further proof. It so happened that just then the monastery had a fiesta and the Indian people from the villages in its jurisdiction came for the event and in the evening remained to say night prayers, as is the custom. Father Judas had previously pressed the guardian to allow him to preach that night and he received permission. The guardian mentioned it to me, so I went into the choir to hear him. The sermon took the form of first propounding a point of Christian doctrine, then moralising upon it. He fulfilled the first part with such good order and presentation, and in so resonant a voice, that he could have taken in the most expert listener. But in the second part he broke into the

Indian language as naturally as the Indians themselves. As I listened to his pronunciation and eloquence in the Indian language, I knew for certain that he had been born here and not in Spain, and I told the guardian so and added, 'Tonight I am going to find out for certain if he really is a religious'.

I had heard tell of a case in Mallorca where a soldier who was sentenced to death for a crime he had committed swore that he was a Franciscan friar, and so he got his sentence suspended until the truth was established. They sent him to our monastery to check him out and see if he was a religious or not. They handed him over to a very learned father of the province, who investigated him as follows. He closeted himself alone with the soldier, and began, 'Well, brother, you say you are a religious. So kneel down and reply to my questions. What does our Father Saint Francis say in the Rule when he speaks of *De Predicatoribus*?' The soldier replied, '*Nonum capitulum*'. With that single reply the father proved that the supposed soldier was in fact a Franciscan friar. With the same evidence I proved that the pretended Fray Judas was in fact a layman and not a religious. While we were at dinner I asked him that question, and he could not reply. I then told him, 'If I was guardian, I would deprive you of your habit tonight, and send you under arrest to Quito as a layman, because you are not a religious, nor do you act as a religious. Your entire conduct is that of a layman and a very dissolute one at that.'

From the time he arrived in Pasto he spread the word that he was a doctor, and that was enough to persuade all the nuns of the Convent of the Incarnation to send for him and seek his treatment. One complained that she had lost her appetite, another that she was depressed, another that she had a headache and so on, each explaining their ailment to him. He entered the convent as its doctor morning and night, and with his smooth tongue he soon had them eating out of his hand. From the first he made it clear that he wanted snacks sent out to him every afternoon. And so it was done. Those poor nuns worked for him, each one making what she could, filling his cell with foods and dishes, pots and pans, while the convent was left in disarray. He began to prescribe them purges and emetics, and soon turned the convent into a hospital, until at last the vicar of the diocese intervened and forbade him to visit the convent again.

Two days after my arrival in Pasto, Fray Manuel Salas arrived; he was a Franciscan of that community and was returning from Barbacoas. He had a badly bruised big toe with a sore caused by a stumble on the rough mountain road. When he heard that Father Judas was a doctor, he went to consult him to see if he had any ointment. 'Don't worry,' said Father Judas, 'I'll have your foot better in an instant.' He went into his cell, ground some sulphuric acid, mixed it with a piece of tallow candle, and applied the plaster to the affected flesh. Sulphuric acid smarts so much that within half an hour the whole foot was inflamed. The priest was unable to withstand the pain and as fast as it worsened so he cried out, 'Father Judas, I can't stand this burning. Look, my whole foot is inflamed!' Fray Judas replied, 'Leave it to me, father, this will cure you all the quicker'. But Father Salas was now desperate and called out for me, explaining what was happening. I removed the plaster and noticed the pieces of sulphuric acid. 'Let's get rid of this,' I said, 'it is for cauterising.' I had the sore washed with lukewarm

tincture of rosemary and I applied to it the yolk of an egg mixed with olive oil, and with this it began to heal. I then went with the plaster to confront Father Judas, and when he saw that I had discovered the sulphuric acid he simply said, 'It was all I had, so I used that'.

At last Fray Judas left Pasto and took the road for Quito, travelling without a hat. On the first day he reached a village called Guáitara, of which I will say more later. The priest there was one of our friars, Father Sebastián Vallinas, son of old Vallinas, an Andalusian who had married in Quito. This priest was very mean, and when he saw the visitor without a hat and wearing a blue habit he expressed disdain for travelling in such a style, and traded the habit for a hat. So Fray Judas proceeded, ascending gradually towards Quito, but before he reached his destination he came to a village where he found the parish priest desperately ill. He pretended to be a priest, heard his confession and gave him the last sacraments before he died. He then said mass and buried him. And helping himself to a lot of cash, he left for Quito. This outrage was his undoing.

Fray Judas reached Quito, and again his documents of appointment as fiscal of Cuzco hoodwinked the provincial guardian and all the other fathers of the province. Soon the whole of Quito knew that this great man had arrived from Spain, where he was professor of medicine at Salamanca. He began to practise and acquired a great reputation as a doctor. He cunningly made use of an accomplice to collect dog's piss, together with that of a child and a mule, mix them all in a glass in front of witnesses and then enable Fray Judas to demonstrate his knowledge. This is how he did it. As he was passing along the main street in front of crowds of people, he was called into a shop and shown the glass of piss. 'Reverend Father, for God's sake look at this urine of a sick person and tell us what needs to be done.' He played up so well that no one could imagine that it was he who had planted the trick. 'This could fool the quacks of Quito but not me,' he retorted, 'for I am professor of medicine at the famous University of Salamanca. And that you may all know exactly who I am, I tell you that here we have the urine of a dog, a child and a mule.' And with that he swaggered out. As no one realised the deception he had practised, his knowledge was applauded and his reputation as an oracle of medicine spread throughout the city.

At about this time a judge of the *audiencia* fell ill from blockage of the urine. For four days he had not passed water, and in desperation he turned to Fray Judas, who ordered him to be covered in ice from the chest downwards. He remained like this for several hours, when at last he began to urinate again, but died within twenty-four hours. Then one of the principal ladies of Quito became ill. She was known as La Curico, which means a piece of gold, because she had been very beautiful, though she was now an elderly lady. It so happened that for several years she had had a servant who was in fact the mother of Fray Judas. She sent the servant to ask him to come. As soon as his mother saw him she recognised the son whom she had not heard of for so many years; she could not restrain her mother's love and with tears of joy rushed to embrace him. But Father Judas pushed her aside, saying, 'You are a lying Indian bitch. I am not

your son. I am a Spanish gentleman.' And the more she insisted he was her son Antonio Flórez, the more resolutely he denied it.

Repudiated by her own son, the mother turned to the father provincial and declared that Fray Judas, doctor, was truly her son and was called Antonio Flórez; he had married in Tacunga and his wife was alive.

This unexpected news caused the provincial to put a spy on Fray Judas to tail him everywhere. And as the suspect was not known for discretion or caution, they soon discovered that his talk frequently slipped into the Indian idiom, that his brandy drinking was excessive, and that his indecent behaviour with young women of easy virtue was shameless. These reports and the statement of his own mother led the defintory to meet and they decided to examine his papers again to see if they were authentic or fraudulent. This was begun and they summoned him for investigation. Among his papers they found a parish priest's canonical licence relating to the parish mentioned above, transcribed from the original which he had stolen from the said priest. This aroused their suspicion and they ordered further searches. They then found a set of lead stamps, which he had made for authenticating such documents as he required. Thereupon the defintory ordered him to be placed in custody and he was disciplined. But he contrived to escape. He bribed a lay brother to open the prison door one night and fled over the wall of the monastery, to take refuge in the Dominican priory.

They had no time for him there. One night he went out into the square outside our monastery and threw stones at the windows of the provincial and three fathers, shouting at them a stream of insults. News of this scandal was all over Quito the next day, together with the accusations that he was married and that his mother lived in the house of La Curico and his wife in Tacunga. Someone in a shop was heard to say that he had seen him saying mass on the occasion that he heard the confession and conducted the burial of the priest to whom I have referred. The allegations were widely publicised and reached the ears of the Inquisition. This tribunal instituted its own inquiries and, once it had established the truth, arrested him. After trial, they ordered him to be whipped in public, to wear a *sanbenito* (penitential garment) in perpetuity and to return to Tacunga to live with his wife. After a few months he moved to Guayaquil and set up as a doctor; there he still lives with his wife, unless he has moved somewhere else.

Shortly before I reached Pasto another person had arrived from Quito who was known generally as 'the Doctor'. He was a *mestizo*, about whom I received the following information. He gave out that he was an astrologist and that through the art of magic he knew ways of making women desirable. And as in those parts most women are affected by this weakness, the fame of his magic spread throughout the provinces. Wherever he visited, women sought him out and pressed gifts on him, usually to persuade him to apply his arts on them, even before he had demonstrated them. So when the doctor arrived at the town of Ibarra, he was immediately rushed by these nubile young girls, and as he was unable to give them all complete satisfaction, he summoned a number of them to a field at midnight. There he lit a good fire, and when he had gathered them all together he made them stand around the embers with their skirts up, telling them

that she who received most smoke between her legs from certain powders that he threw on the fire would be the most desired. When they had all positioned themselves, he produced a case containing two pounds of powder and threw the whole lot on the fire at once. The result scorched them all and he fled.

From there he moved to an Indian village called Sapuyes, where the parish priest was a *quiteño*, Dr. Reyes, who told me this story. The priest received a notice from the *corregidor* of Ibarra to seize this doctor, and to remove from him a young girl of eight whom he kept as his daughter but was in fact his lover, whom he had kidnapped in the town of Riobamba. In Sapuyes the priest had him arrested and placed in jail. The girl was so young and tiny that the priest thought it impossible for her to be what was alleged, so the only precaution he took was to place her in his kitchen with an Indian servant woman. But the girl got out at night; she slipped into the prison between the bars of the door and slept with the man. As she did the same thing every night she was eventually seen and reported to the priest. He set a spy on her, who caught her in the act. The priest remonstrated with the man for the evil he was doing to so young a child, but he retorted that it was untrue, because he was physically incapable of performing the sexual act. He was then ordered to be examined, but he had the art of withdrawing his sexual member in such a way that it did not come to an erection any larger than a nipple of a woman's breast. Evidence was taken from the girl, and she confessed the truth, that he knew how to shrink his member when he wished, and also knew how to bring it erect when it was time to do so.

Once he heard of the girl's statement, and that it was known she was not his daughter but his lover, he got someone to help him out of prison one night, fled from Sapuyes and arrived in Pasto. There he cleverly deceived a rich widow by the following plan. He went to see her with the news that less than a league from the city he had discovered a trove of money in *pesos duros* and *reales*. Would she please keep them hidden for him, for he was soon to undertake a journey and he wanted to leave them in a safe place? The lady agreed. So off he went and bought some yards of sackcloth, which he cut up and sewed together to make bags capable each one of holding a thousand pesos. He then secretly provided himself with a quantity of lead, which he cut and melted to make *pesos duros* and pieces of four *reales*, two *reales* and one *real*. When he had everything ready, he covered in dirt fourteen real *pesos duros* which he had, so as to make them look as though they had been buried for some time. He warned the lady to be on the alert that night, for he was coming with a bag about midnight to avoid anyone seeing him.

He filled a bag with false pesos, placing at the top the fourteen good ones. At the appointed hour he returned to the house and gave a signal, the lady opened the door and he staggered in with the bag. They both went to the kitchen, and with a machete made a hole in which to hide the bag. But first he opened the top and took out a handful of pesos, saying, 'Look at this silver, how dirty it is; it must have been buried for years. But it is pure silver, listen to the sound.' He dropped one on the floor and it sounded like real silver. 'Look how pure it is', and he chipped it with the machete and showed her its fine colour. So they buried the bag, he went for more, and in all he brought twenty bags to deposit in

the same place. Now that he had set the trap, he bided his time, and one afternoon he went to the widow in a state of high spirits and asked her to lend him two thousand pesos, for he had arranged a purchase of mules and had to go with the money and take delivery. On his return he would repay her from the money she was keeping for him. As she had seen the bags of pesos in her possession, the lady made no difficulty. She gave him the *pesos de a ocho* he needed and off he went. He has not been seen since. After a time the news of this doctor's behaviour and of what had happened in Sapuyes reached Pasto. The widow began to have suspicions, and when he did not reappear she opened the bags. She found only fourteen silver pesos, the rest lead.

The town of San Juan de Pasto is situated in a plain encircled by four rivers. The largest is the River Pasto, from which the city takes its name and which is crossed by a fine stone bridge. Then there is the Rumiyaço, which means the river with many stones, which in fact it has; in the Indian language *rumi* means stone and *yaco* means water. Third, the Galinaso Yaco. As for the fourth, I do not remember its name. The climate of Pasto is mild, falling slightly to cold. The town has over two thousand inhabitants, most of them white, but including a strong mixture of *mestizos*, Indians, blacks and mulattos. In the region to the right of our mission there is a large unpopulated mountainous area containing many deer and tapirs, and some jaguars, bears and pumas. But because it is a land frequented by huntsmen who go in search of deer, the wild beasts keep out of sight and out of range of the hostile dogs. Half way round to the right there is another highland area of scrubland called El Alto. This borders on a mountainous region of barren land. To the left of the mission area there is another mountainous area with a mixture of grassland and scrub, and here abundant cattle are raised as well as mules. Half way round there is more barren land, the highest of all, and on its crest there is a volcano, at times during exceptional storms sending its flames across the scrubland to near Pasto. So this town is surrounded by mountains. At the foot of the volcano there are various streams that have their source in the River Guáitara, of which I will speak presently. The colour of the streams is yellow, like sulphur, and among the stones there are many pieces of sulphur; it is often said that in that place there are minerals of sulphur and the volcano burns with sulphur. The town has good houses, each with its vegetable garden and trees of *capulies* (a fruit something like a cherry), apricots, peaches, *gaitambos* and apples.

In one garden I saw a large almond tree, but they told me that it never flowered or gave any nuts. They also grow good cabbages and lettuces, but never eat them, feeding them rather to the guinea pigs; visiting Spaniards are the only people who eat them. I was told that in one garden there were good lettuces, so I sent for some, obtained oil and vinegar, and in the house of a lady near the monastery I got her to make a salad one evening. No one else wished to try it, and they were all astonished at how much I enjoyed it. After I left, the young daughters said to their mother, 'Mama, that Spanish father eats grass like the guinea pigs'. Pasto has good crops of wheat, and bread is cheap. There is also barley, lots of potatoes, cassavas, sweet potatoes and good pumpkins. From the neighbouring Indian villages they bring all kinds of fruit: bananas, *chirimoyas* (custard apples), avocados and pineapples.

There is a good parish church situated in the centre of town, and in my time there were ten priests. In a suburb on the other side of the River Pasto, an auxiliary parish has been established, called San Sebastián. There are four monasteries, Dominican, Franciscan, Mercedarian and Augustinian, together with a convent of Conceptionist nuns; there also used to be a Jesuit college called Loreto. While I was in Pasto, two *mestizos* decided one night to excavate an Indian tomb of which they had heard, situated in a street on the other side of Loreto College, alongside the college wall. They began to dig, but were heard and the rector came out and stopped them. The next night the rector himself excavated the tomb with his negro slaves, and in money and jewels they recovered over 70,000 pesos.

The Jesuits wanted to use the money from this haul to buy the town's *ejido* (common land). The land was over a league in extent and contained a lot of grass and vegetation, among which wild turkeys and nightingales proliferated. I often went there with a shotgun to hunt and bagged plenty, including stags and fallow deer. They offered the town 60,000 pesos, not a bad offer, and the municipal authorities said they would consider the proposal and reach a decision. Those who expected to make some money out of the deal promptly said yes. Others doubted whether the town had the power to sell, because the land was a royal grant for the common good of the community. This was where the people got their firewood, and where the poor pastured their mules, or oxen, or sheep; to sell it would be harmful to the common good. Those who had an eye on their own interests in the sale argued that the income would allow the establishment of a hospital for the poor, and was a great boon for the whole town, even for the poor Indians of neighbouring villages. All this was argued interminably among the authorities, and not a single conclusion was reached.

While things were thus undecided, I was passing one evening through the square to go and visit a sick gentleman called don Domingo Apraiz, a Spaniard from San Sebastian, Vizcaya. He had decided to leave the woman with whom he had been living in order to get married, and in a rage the wench had dealt him a witch's curse and turned him mad. He had been like this for some time and squandered all his wealth, when Fray Judas arrived in Pasto. Don Domingo's wife, doña Antonia, is of the Pasto elite, with two sisters nuns, another married to a Mallorcan, don Francisco Ferrer, another (doña Gertrudis) single and a married brother don Diego, who was in the local government. She took her husband to see this famous doctor, who gave him hope of a cure. He administered soup of turkey buzzard, a foul bird like a crow, a medicine that left him totally delirious, and in a short while he died in my arms.

Anyway, as I was passing through the square some of the town authorities were in a shop talking about the *ejido* project. Don Ramón de la Barrera, a native of Pasto, saw me and remarked to the others that it wouldn't be a bad idea to seek the opinion of the missionary father. They all agreed and called me over to the shop where the authorities were gathered, among them an extremely rich cleric who took the side of the Jesuits. This priest rehearsed all the arguments in favour of the sale and the advantage to the common good from the establishment

of a hospital, and concluded by asking me for my views. I replied, 'There are too many of you for me to give my opinion. I might speak to one person, if I trusted him; but in front of so many, I don't dare.'

But the syndic don Ramón, the deputy and the *alcaldes* of the town council all insisted, and so I responded: 'If you do what I say, then I am of the Yes opinion; and if you don't, then I am of the No opinion. Let me explain. The Jesuit fathers naturally have to look to their own interests in this purchase; they are not so stupid as to offer 60,000 pesos for a piece of land which is not going to yield a profit. On this assumption, if the sale goes ahead, the following will be the result: the town will take the money and with it will either build or not build the hospital you are talking about. Even if it is built, half of the money will stick to the fingers of whoever handles it. As for the fathers, in the first year they will take stock of the *ejido* and miss nothing; in the second year they will begin to put a wall around it. In two or three years they will have it ready for pasture and a single gate for entry. Then they will introduce mules and cattle for fattening. Anyone who wants firewood will have to go and buy it; anyone who wants to pasture his mule, or horse, or ox, or sheep, will have to pay for it. So, with these charges, the whole of Pasto will soon be a hospital, because the only pasture and fuel in Pasto is to be found in the *ejido*. The poor, who now pay the town four pesos for access to the *ejido* to grow their potatoes for a whole year's consumption, will die of hunger if they don't buy them from the fathers. In this case, I say that it is worth selling to the fathers; sign the contract and get the 60,000 pesos immediately, and build the hospital you are talking about as soon as possible. From the surplus have 500 lances made. Meanwhile, the fathers will have turned the *ejido* into pastureland and filled it with mules and cattle. Go there one night with 500 men, each with his spear, and despatch all the cattle and mules. If they replace them, do it again; if they station negroes to defend them, put them also to the lance; and if the fathers go there, do the same with them. If this is what you want, then I say it makes sense to sell the *ejido*; otherwise, on no account should you sell it. Señores, God be with you; this is my opinion.'

I left, and I learnt later from don Ramón that his colleagues had agreed that the father had torn the blinkers from their eyes. From then onwards there was no further talk of such a sale, but the interested parties knew from the priest, don Manuel, what had happened, and it did not increase my popularity with them. During my first days in Pasto the nuns pressed me to hear their confessions. I had to say that I did not have faculties either from my superior or from the bishop of Quito. The vicar wrote to the bishop and I to the provincial, and I also took the opportunity to write to our Father Salvador, who was procurator of the college in Quito. I told him how I was placed in Pasto, with 500 pesos from the sale of a little cacao that I had brought from the mission, and that I would like to buy tools and clothes for my Indians. And I asked him whether I should send the money for him to arrange for these purchases, or whether I should come to Quito to see to them myself.

I sent this letter on 21 June. That night at dinner the guardian began to bemoan the poverty of the community, telling me that they were losing alms for want of anyone to make appeals. And now we were losing the income from

Taminango in favour of San Juan. I knew that the reply to my letter to Quito, allowing for going and coming, would take at least a month. And so I replied, 'Father Guardian, if you are asking me to go and do this, then provide for my journey and I will go and beg alms in Taminango'. He was delighted and thanked me; he immediately saw Father Baquero about a mule and they went the same night to collect it from the pasture. The next morning they gave me a small and very fat mule, and to accompany me appointed don Pedro Gallardo, son of an ecclesiastic, who was going to Taminango to collect money. His job was selling clothes made in Quito in all the villages belonging to Pasto and the province of Patía; each parish has its principal town with jurisdiction over its dependencies, and he used to allow them credit until the feast day of the village saint. These small villages only see a priest and hear mass once a year when the priest from the principal parish arrives for the feast day. In Lent and during Holy Week they come to the main village to go to confession.

These feast days give the salesman security; clothes that cost him four pesos are sold on credit for eight or ten, and this profit, or usury, is assured by the Devil himself. The fiestas attract people from all the neighbouring villages, even those four or six days away, and the *mayordomo*, or steward, of the fiesta provides maintenance for his entire village and for the visitors for three days. There is usually a play and a dance, and there tends to be a lot of fooling around, some of it rather lewd; as clerics and religious from the principal villages also attend, the whole thing degenerates into a bawdy revel. They kill a lot of cattle for the occasion; a plentiful supply of *champuz*, *guarapo* and *chicha* is available, and drunkenness prevails.<sup>4</sup> The local chiefs and clerics spend these three days playing cards and dice, and cheating invariably leads to brawls and obscene language, to the great scandal of the public.

The two of us set off and travelled by the Alto (high road), for the plateau was in a bad condition. Don Pedro brought a roast fowl and at about ten in the morning we stopped and had lunch. I didn't feel like eating, for the wind up on the Alto upset me. About two in the afternoon we reached a hacienda called Meneses, belonging to don Ramón de la Barrera. By then I was so exhausted that I would have preferred to stay, but as I did not know the road to Taminango on my own, and did not want to get lost, I pressed on. In the course of the afternoon the little mule began to tire badly; his corpulence together with the heat of the journey so reduced him that by the time we reached another hacienda around nightfall he could hardly take a step further. He left the road and carried me to a hillock which had been eroded, and when I made to stop him it was too late; he bolted and plunged into a crevice for more than fifty yards and I thought the pair of us would only be brought out in pieces. The people of the house began to shout, and I to apply the spur and pull on the reins, but he slipped to the bottom on his rump. I got out on foot, and the people came to find a way of extricating the mule.

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<sup>4</sup> *Champuz* is a type of maize porridge made with sugar and orange juice. *Guarapo* is a drink made from sugar cane, taken as a juice, or more commonly fermented. *Chicha* is an alcoholic drink made from fermented maize.

In this hacienda lived a priest whom I had already seen in Pasto. He was the son of a cleric, and his mother had such enormous breasts that one night when she was sleeping with his father she turned over and a breast flopped onto his throat. She so crushed him that he woke up in a fright thinking he was choking to death and needed the last rites. I had hardly arrived before I went down with a fever, one of the worst I have ever had. At supper the first spoonful of food I took made me so ill that I could not proceed further and only wanted get into bed; this was an animal skin, the usual bed in hot climates. My travelling companion, don Pedro Pintado (*sic*), advised me, 'Father, with your mule exhausted you will not be able to keep up with me tomorrow, and I have got to be in Taminango then, so I will be rising early. You come in your own time, for I can't wait for you.' And that is how it was. He left at three o'clock, and I remained until five, by which time the fever had left me. I asked a negro of the household what road to take and he said that the ferryman at the river would tell me.

I left on my own and at eight o'clock reached the river. There I met the ferryman who said, 'Father, the river is high; I'll take the mule across and you cross by the cable'. On this side of the river the cable starts on an embankment about fifty yards high and on the other side terminates at the edge of the water. He secured me in the cable and as he let go he shouted, 'Shut your eyes, shut your eyes!' But I opened them again and saw that I was in flight to the other side. The real difficulty of this crossing is experienced by those coming the other way, for the end of the cable which will be in ascent has to be attached to a horse and pulled. As they slowly ascend they are left hanging for about half an hour from the cable, swinging on its ropes, and if they were to fall into the river from that height there would be no point in looking for them. Anyway, I crossed safely and the ferryman got the mule across. I then asked him the way and he told me that after crossing two hills I would see a house on the edge of a ravine, and next to the house was the road to Taminango. I set off, and on reaching the spot I saw the ravine and the house and headed in that direction. Arriving at the house I went in, calling, 'avemaria'. The only occupant was an Indian woman who was cooking a pot of maize to make *chicha*. 'Señora,' I said, 'show me the road to Taminango.' 'Señor,' she replied, 'I am blind and don't know any road.' 'Is there no one else here?' I asked. And she explained that everyone had gone to the fiesta of Taminango. 'All right then,' I said and left. But as hard as I looked from one side to the other, I could see no road, only the bare back of a hill extending upwards for more than a league. Travellers on foot go up and down, and it had better not be raining and they must go with great care, for it is extremely steep.

As I could see no other road, I began the ascent along this route. Before I had gone a hundred paces I had to dismount, partly because the mule could do no more and partly because the way was so steep it was impossible to ride. The heat was scorching and unbearable, so I took off my habit. Every fifteen paces or so the mule stopped, and what I most feared was that he would not start again. At about three in the afternoon I reached the top, tired and dying of hunger, because I had now gone more than thirty hours without a bite. Coming over the hill I saw

a large rubber tree, and I paused to relax under its shade. After a short rest I got dressed, and as the mule was also refreshed I mounted again.

I proceeded for about half a league then I saw a house on the left about a quarter of a league away. I continued on my way, and on crossing a small stream I noticed that the grass had covered the road and there seemed to be no road ahead; but there was a track so I followed that. This took me to a mountain pasture all grassed over and there the road ended. I was now totally lost and did not know what to do. Just then I saw a wild cow coming down from the mountain and it approached as if to attack me. I jumped off the mule and ran to take cover behind a tree, driving it off with stones.

The sun was now beginning to set, and what I most felt was to be hungry and without food in a deserted spot. It was too late to return to the blind Indian whom I had seen cooking maize, so I decided to make for the cottage I had seen on the left in the hope of finding food there. But when I arrived I found it was empty and abandoned. There were three *chilguacanes* trees in front, and I climbed to try the fruit but it was green and inedible.<sup>5</sup> Fortunately, I found a toad about the size of a head. I cut it in two and ate one half raw, keeping the rest for another day. I unsaddled the mule and put him to good pasture. I had with me a flask full of brandy, which don José Jurado, secretary of the administration in Pasto, had given me before I left. I took a good drink from it, and using my habit for a blanket I lay down to sleep on a wooden frame bed which was in the house.

No sooner had I settled down than the bugs came out, so many that I did not sleep a wink that night, which with my hunger seemed like an age. I arose at daybreak determined to return downhill to the blind Indian in search of food, even if it was only toasted maize. But on coming over the first hillock I saw six houses in meadows. I recovered my spirits, confident that I would find people there to help me. I went to the nearest house and even before reaching it I could hear hens clucking. By then I hadn't the strength to blow out a candle. 'Great,' I said to myself, 'now I won't die of hunger, even if I have to eat raw meat.' The house was closed, but it had a small garden at the side, and in it were maize plants with cobs growing and some excellent cabbages. I dismounted and leapt into the garden, and I began to eat raw cabbage, which seemed like a treat. I then heard a dog barking in the other houses, so I knew there would be people there.

At the dog's house I found an old *mestiza* woman with a young daughter and a son with a crippled leg. I explained my needs and immediately the mother made me a meal of half a dozen eggs and a plate of soup, which just about satisfied my appetite for the moment. I asked about Taminango and they told me it was still five leagues away, and all the people of this village, which was called Las Yeguas, had gone to the fiesta. The lady asked me to stay for the day and hear their confessions that night. The next day was the vigil of Saint John, and after breakfast the young man would accompany me to another village, called San Lorenzo, a larger place where I would find someone to guide me to Taminango.

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<sup>5</sup> *Chilguacanes* are fruit trees similar to the papaya.

I did not need much persuading to stay. At midday they gave me an excellent stew of meat with potatoes and *yucas*, and I enjoyed it, the same at night.<sup>6</sup> There was a tiny church, and before supper I heard the confessions of all three. After supper I made them say the rosary, and we were half way through when from the wall of the farmyard an owl began to hoot. When she heard this, the old woman began to say, 'I believe in God, I believe in God'. At the next cry of the owl, the daughter did the same. When we had finished prayers they were still saying, 'I believe in God', and I asked them why. The old woman explained: 'The bird singing here is a soul in torment'. I tried to dissuade them of the idea but it was useless, for the people of Peru are very credulous towards omens and much given to superstition. The girl got up, saying, 'I'll send you to hell', and she went in another room and came out with a sword in her hand. I thought she was going to use it to fright off the owl, so I rose and told her, 'Let us both go, and you will see what an owl is really like'. But she replied, 'There is no need to go there, father; now you will see how it stops hooting'. With that she took the sword and plunged the tip into the floor, and clasping the cross of the sword, she said, 'Begone and suffer in hell'. She then pulled out the sword and explained that it would sing no more. And in fact it did not.

In the morning they served me a little broth with eggs. After the meal the mule was saddled up and I left, accompanied by the boy with the lame leg. After travelling a short distance we reached a crest and in the plain below could see the village of San Lorenzo. The boy now told me, 'There you are, father, that's San Lorenzo; you cannot get lost on this road, and once you are there someone will guide you to Taminango'. He left and I continued. When I arrived I went into a house and found a young girl alone. I asked her where the people of the village were and she told me they were all at the fiesta of Taminango. Did she have any eggs? Yes, she did. So I asked her to cook me some. I was determined to travel with a full belly, in case I got lost again. Meanwhile, I saw a young man passing and called out, 'Young man, I'm going to Taminango and don't know the way. Would you kindly accompany me? You will have a good time, I assure you.' He told me he was just going to have lunch, but would return and accompany me. I was afraid that if he went he would not return, so I insisted that he stay and eat with me. But he wanted to go to his own house for lunch, and with much misgiving I had to agree. I kept my eyes on that house until he returned, for he said he was the only man left in the village.

He returned shortly after I had finished eating, and then we were ready to go. In order to secure his good will, I asked him if he would like a drink of brandy. He said he would and took a good swig from the flask. He was in fact the biggest drunk in those parts, but I did not know this, and so I said, 'Help yourself'. He was a hatmaker by trade, and he produced fine and excellent hats. But to get one out of him it was necessary to lock him up and give him nothing to drink except water, otherwise he drank everything he earned. At first I knew nothing of this, but once we were on our way I soon noticed that he was swaying about. We proceeded about half a league and reached a plain where the grass looked very inviting. 'Father,' he said, 'let us rest here and the mule can feed for a while.' I

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<sup>6</sup> *Yuca*: a tropical plant of the *Liliaceae* family yielding an edible grain. Term sometimes used for manioc.

dismounted and after a short rest got up to go. He then told me, 'Father, I am only going to accompany you as far as the river (which we could hear flowing), and if you want me to go further you will have to give me another drink'. I replied that perhaps the unsteadiness that I had noticed was due not to the brandy but to the scorching heat; and in view of his proposal I retracted the bad judgement I had made. I took out my flask, saying, 'Have a drink, the sun is oppressive; when we arrive at Taminango you can have it all'. Again he took a good pull on the flask and got himself really soaked, so much so that he was soon stumbling and gabbling. And so we reached the edge of the plain, from where it was necessary to go down a slope to the river, which we could hear below.

From this point one could see a herd of cattle grazing at least two leagues away, and he said, 'Father, see those cattle in the distance? That's the way. You'll find houses there and get directions, and Taminango is less than a league away.' What astonished me most was that he could actually see the cattle, which were hardly visible to me. 'So you are not coming with me?' 'If you don't give me another drink I'm going.' I pressed him not to leave me, but he insisted, 'Another drink'. Finally I promised him a drink when we reached the river below, and so he agreed. I made him walk ahead, fearing that if he followed me he would remain behind. The slope was hard and rough and very stony, and if he had been stumbling on the flat ground, here on the slope he was rolling along until he was crawling on all fours. He fell more than thirty times. We came to the river and now the trouble really started, because in crossing to the other side he had water up to his knees. He got really mad and began shouting, 'Father, give me the drink', but by now he couldn't speak coherently and kept shouting, 'I want a driiink'. He repeated this endlessly, and I told him, 'Drink water, man'. But it was no use.

On the other side of the river lay some flat ground and nearby a dilapidated house. As we were climbing up the bank I continued my entreaties and promised him he would have his drink at the top. I was hardly there before he was running to catch up with me, shouting, 'Father, giive me the driiink', then he stumbled and fell on his back, crying, 'drink, drink'. He was now so done in that I could see he was incapable of proceeding further. And the sun was so oppressive that I felt sorry for him; I dismounted and, holding him under the arms, took him to the shade of a tree. I went down to the river again, filled my hat with water and returned to wash his head. This helped him to recover somewhat. I told him to stay there until he felt better and then return to San Lorenzo. With that I mounted, and when he saw me going he struggled to his feet and ran after me, shouting, 'Father, give me the drink'. He fell over some muddy ground and got covered in filth, but he continued to call out, 'I want a drink'. I went ahead, while he ran to some higher ground on the right and began to shout after me, 'Bah, Moorish friar, Jewish friar, Jew, Jew!' until I was out of earshot. I proceeded on my way, and about four in the afternoon reached Taminango.

The village of Taminango consists of eight houses and the church. It has a population of sixty inhabitants – Indians, *zambos*, and mulattos. The rest of the people live scattered among the hills, where they have their houses, good banana

plantations and fields of maize and *yuca*. Some may have a cacao plantation, and all have cattle and animals. The village stands on a level plateau amidst pleasant grassland. The organiser of the fiesta was a mulatto called Antonio Méndez. So I learnt as I came down the hill, and when he was informed he came and accompanied me along the way. He took me to a house in which there wasn't even standing room, for there were more than fifty guests. He was the friary's syndic in that village. I told him of the assignment I had from the guardian and he assured me that after the fiesta he would come out with me to beg for alms; the poor give money according to their means, and those who are able give a calf, or a heifer, or a bull.

He unsaddled the mule and sent it to a paddock, and he had the saddle and harness safeguarded, because there were so many people there from all the villages – more than three hundred families – that he was concerned to assure me that everything would be kept safe until my departure. He took me to the house of the parish priest, whose main community is near the sugar mill of don Francisco Ortiz. There I met two priests from Pasto, one a Dominican friar and the other a Mercedarian, and half a dozen *mestizos* who were playing dice with the parish priest, the biggest gambler in the whole province. As it was now night we had supper and ate very well, after which I excused myself and retired to an attic in the house where Antonio Méndez had lodged me. It was comfortable but I slept little on account of the racket made by people dancing until daybreak, while I remained alone in the house with a mulatta woman covered in sores, a horrible sight.

About ten at night, as it was impossible to sleep, I went out in order to enjoy the fresh air. There I bumped into one of the priests and he told me the following story. To the left of the church, and about a league distant, there is a range of high mountains jutting from the plateau of Guanacas and cutting through the province of Cali and Antioquia in a half circle, ending at Cunacuna. Within this half circle there are extensive grassy plains, intermingling with patches of scrubland. Some time ago a band of robbers managed to seize a consignment of thirty mule-loads of the king's silver travelling from Pasto to Popayán and, fearful of royal justice, sought a safe haven for themselves. Some Indians of Taminango told them of this place which they call 'El Castigo'. This mountain range is so situated that it is impossible at any point to descend to the lower land below. So the thieves contrived to position staves and construct a cable, which enabled them to lower animals, banana trees, maize, the boxes of silver and the arms that they had. They also passed down women and numerous Indian girls whom they seized from the province of Patía, and when they had everything they wanted down below, they themselves descended, dismantled the cable and established their defences. Although their presence there was known, and they were confronted by all the power of the viceroy of Santa Fe and the governor of Popayán, no way was found to suppress them and all subsequent attempts have failed.

In the course of time these men have produced offspring, their cattle and animals have increased as have their crops and bananas, and they have opened up crevices in the crags to enable them to come and go. They have constructed a fort

at the bottom and posted guards there to check on anyone who wants to descend. Entry is restricted to one person at a time, and the second is not allowed to descend until the first has been checked and searched, and so with the others waiting, thus preventing any treachery. Through time they have acquired tools and firearms and thus made themselves even more impregnable. All those in Peru who commit a crime of murder, if they can escape, seek asylum in El Castigo, where the people in command, themselves criminals, admit them to their company.<sup>7</sup> Thus large numbers of villainous negroes and mulattos have gathered in that place and rendered it increasingly invulnerable.

There they have found deposits of fine quality gold, and greed for gold has drawn merchants who sell a vast quantity of clothes, which they are allowed to lower by cable. This trade supplies all their needs, because through these merchants they can order gunpowder, bullets, ammunition, arms and tools. The result is that at the present time they have an armoury next to the fort holding more than five hundred shotguns, numerous pistols and many swords and lances. They also have a drum, which can be heard up to three leagues away and is sounded at intervals to summon everyone to arms, with the death penalty for anyone who does not answer the call of the drum; in addition smoke signals are used at specific places. These safeguards and defence measures render those people unassailable by any human power.

The day of the fiesta arrived and I went to the church and said mass; afterwards they served me a couple of fried eggs and *guarapo*. A Dominican friar who was supposed to preach the sermon had not arrived, and it was known that a few days before he had been unwell. When he had not appeared by eight o'clock, Antonio Méndez went to ask the parish priest what was to be done about the sermon. The priest was still asleep, for he had been gambling until dawn, and they had to break in and wake him up. 'Ask the missionary father if he feels like preaching,' he said, 'and if he doesn't then there will be no sermon.' Méndez came and offered to pay me whatever fee I named, but I said, 'No, give me what you would have given the absent preacher'. 'Come now,' he replied, 'I'll give you twenty-five pesos, which is the going rate, plus five more as an extra because you get me out of a difficulty.' I immediately retired to a grove of guava trees nearby and prepared my sermon. The parish priest sang the mass assisted by the two other priests, and the two friars and four Indians officiated at the altar, with music from three violins and three harps, two clarinets, a horn and a fife and drum. I mounted the pulpit and began my sermon, and I had hardly uttered a few phrases when who should I see entering the church but the Dominican preacher. He heard the sermon and afterwards came to thank me. The rest of the day was spent in outrageous behaviour and noisy revels, and in the house of the parish priest non-stop gambling.

Then young bulls were brought out and there was bullfighting all afternoon. Meanwhile, to the left of the church a large stage was erected and a theatre prepared to show a play. On the first night of the fiesta a dance was held until nine o'clock, then we had dinner, followed by the play, which had been presented in Pasto and wasn't bad. I was told that the author was our convent's

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<sup>7</sup> On Peru, see note 1.

syndic, don Ramón de la Barrera, and the plot concerned a soul guided by the holy fear of God in its struggle with the world, the devil and the flesh. Seeing that half the night was over by the time it finished, I promptly retired to bed and was soon asleep; although they were carousing in the square until daybreak, I heard nothing until I woke up next morning. I went to say mass and noticed in passing that in the parish priest's house they were still gambling.

The third day was the same as the previous one, and about four o'clock in the afternoon the whole mob of people was assembled in the square without rule or order, and they brought on a mare decked out in a saddle, a halter of flowers and a garland. A comic proclamation was read out, and the men then began to take hold of the women, and the women the men, and with a great din they placed a halter of flowers and a garland on each other's arms, and mounted that person on the mare, changing places all the time, and this lasted until nightfall. Seeing the great commotion they caused – and the fact that they respected neither the parish priest, nor the clergy, nor the religious, who were watching from a distance – I withdrew into the church to take sanctuary from the revellers in case they mobbed me. Although the Dominican friar came with a priest and half a dozen *mestizos*, determined to remove me from the church and to perform on me the same treatment as on the others, I was on the alert and called to a sick negro who was with me in church, and sitting in the confessional I made him kneel down as though he was confessing. Seeing this the revellers did not dare to interfere and they returned to their revelry.

When this excitement had calmed down they organised another dance, and after a while I emerged from the church and cautiously went in search of Méndez to tell him, 'Give me something for supper, as I am tired; the fiesta dinner will take ages and I don't feel like waiting'. From his storeroom he gave me a piece of ham and another of roast meat, some bread and a jug of *guarapo*. Calmly, without anyone noticing, I withdrew to the patch of *guayusos*, and there, hidden away where no one could find me, I ate alone and in peace and there I slept.<sup>8</sup> The dance lasted all night, for when I woke up in the early morning they were still dancing and they continued until sunrise. I went early to the church and as soon as it was light I said mass; after saying my prayer of thanksgiving I left by the church porch and they then brought the dance to an end. I went to have breakfast and Méndez asked me, 'Where did you sleep last night? They couldn't find you anywhere.' When I asked who was looking for me he replied, 'You know how bad the preacher whose sermon you gave has felt about it. The two Dominicans swore last night that they would make you dance and would win from you at dice the money you got for the sermon, and they spent the whole night looking for you, even in the church.'

I withdrew to the lodging house, and within an hour and a half everyone had left, except the gamblers, who continued another three days gambling most of the day and night. For my remaining two days Méndez provided a horse and together we went begging for alms, collecting twenty-three silver pesos and twenty-five head of cattle. Méndez placed these in his paddock and asked me to

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<sup>8</sup> *Guayuso*, a plant yielding a drink similar to *mate*.

tell the guardian that within fifteen days he would send them to the hacienda Meneses of the syndic, don Ramón de la Barrera, to dispose of as he saw fit.



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