

## Origins of Wealth and the Sugar Revolution in Cuba, 1750–1850

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THE period from 1750 to 1850 forms a major historical watershed in the social, economic and political evolution of Cuba. The island transformed itself from a neglected, underpopulated, and somewhat economically stagnant way station on the periphery of the vast Spanish overseas possessions to become the center of an emasculated American empire.<sup>1</sup> By 1850, when the old colonies were increasingly regarded as administrative “millstones” and their ultimate independence considered inevitable, the Spanish government viewed Cuba most highly. The island replaced Saint-Domingue as the richest tropical colony, the most valuable source of metropolitan income, and the most attractive opportunity for Spaniards to realize their individual ambitions.<sup>2</sup>

In the early nineteenth century, Cuba failed to respond to the prevailing centrifugal forces which established the independent states on the mainland and in Haiti. Rather, influential Cubans with the connivance and the gratitude of metropolitan court favorites, flaunted their colonial status by dubbing themselves and their colony “Ever Faith-

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1. Until 1822, the cost of administration for the island of Cuba was borne by New Spain. See Jacobo de la Pezuela, *Diccionario geográfico, estadístico, histórico de la isla de Cuba*. 4 vols. (Madrid, 1863–1866) I, 159. The economic revolution may be followed in Roland T. Ely, *Cuando reinaba su majestad el azúcar* (Buenos Aires, 1963); Manuel Moreno Fragnals, *El ingenio: El complejo económico social cubano del azúcar, 1760–1860* (La Habana, 1964); and Hugh Thomas, *Cuba: The Pursuit of Freedom* (New York, 1971), pp. 27–105.

2. A. F. Corwin, *Spain and the Abolition of Slavery in Cuba, 1817–1886* (Austin, 1967).

ful.”<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, concurrent with this manifestation of fidelity and subordination, came the fundamental changes in wealth, property and the structure of the society, generating the surreptitious pressures which eventually exploded in the Grito de Yara on October 10, 1868.<sup>4</sup>

Until the middle of the eighteenth century, Cuba remained essentially a settler community of small-scale agricultural enterprises, artisans, frontiersmen and petty bureaucrats. The most extensive and lucrative commercial activity centered around the growth and export of tobacco, a royal monopoly. The two major towns of the island, Havana in the northwest and Santiago de Cuba in the southeast, were modest concentrations of unimpressive houses and unpaved streets. They offered limited opportunities for the acquisition of wealth or for upward social mobility. In 1774 the entire population of the island amounted to merely 171,620 inhabitants. Of this number, seventy-seven percent were free, and fifty-seven percent were of unmixed European ancestry. Almost the entire population lived in the few towns strategically located at regular intervals along the coast. This pattern of settlement was designed to protect the colony from non-Spanish marauders, but as it turned out, coastal locations also facilitated the mutually desirous, but until 1776, illegal intercourse between passing ships and the local residents.<sup>5</sup>

By 1861, as the first elaborate census indicates, Cuba had experienced a complete metamorphosis.<sup>6</sup> The total population had increased about eightfold, to 1,396,530. The proportion of slaves (72.5 percent) to free (27.5 percent) remained approximately the same in 1861 as in 1774, as did the size of the European sector (56.3 percent). The enslaved population, however, replaced the non-white free group as the

3. This slogan began to appear on official correspondence during the 1820s. It was a sort of *quid pro quo* for the gradual dismantling of the commercial monopoly of the earlier period.

4. On the Grito de Yara, see Franklin W. Knight, “A Colonial Response to the Glorious Revolution in Spain: The ‘Grito de Yara,’” in C. E. Lida and I. M. Zavala, eds., *La Revolución de 1868: Historia, pensamiento, literatura* (New York, 1970), pp. 196–206; also, Ramiro Guerra y Sánchez, *Guerra de los diez años*. 2 vols. (Habana, 1950–1952).

5. Emilio Roig de Leuchsenring, *La Habana: Apuntes históricos*. (Habana, 1939), pp. 82–84; Rafael Rodríguez Altunaga, *Las Villas: Biografía de una provincia*. (La Habana, 1955), pp. 70–72. The census figures for 1774 are taken from Ramiro Guerra y Sánchez, et al., *Historia de la nación cubana*, 10 vols. (Habana, 1952) II, 78. See also, V. Martínez Alier, *Marriage, Class and Color in 19th century Cuba* (New York, 1974).

6. Spain, *Instituto Geográfico y Estadístico, Censo . . . 1860* (Madrid, 1863). See also Franklin W. Knight, *Slave Society in Cuba during the Nineteenth Century* (Madison, 1970), pp. 22, 88; R. Morse, et al., eds., *The Urban Development of Latin America, 1750–1920* (Stanford, 1971), p. 78.

TABLE I: Cuban Population Growth, 1774-1919.

Year of Census	Interval since last Census	Total Island Population	Numerical increase	Estimated Decennial	Percentage Whites*	Variations: Non-Whites
1774	—	171,620	—	—	—	—
1792	18	272,300	100,680	32.5	59.3	57.9
1817	25	572,363	300,063	44.0	67.6	165.3
1827	10	704,487	132,124	23.0	20.9	24.9
1841	14	1,007,624	303,137	30.7	34.5	49.8
1861	20	1,396,530	388,906	19.2	89.7	2.3
1877	16	1,509,291	112,761	5.0	29.0	-19.4†
1887	10	1,631,687	122,396	8.1	7.8	8.8
1899	12	1,572,797	-58,890†	-3.0†	-3.0†	-4.4†
1907	8	2,048,980	476,183	37.8	34.9	20.5
1919	12	2,889,004	840,024	34.1	46.1	28.9

\* Includes Chinese and Mexican Indians.

† Denotes a decrease in both population and percentages.

Source: Constructed from *Censo de la República de Cuba* (Havana, 1919), p. 284 and p. 305.

Note: These data may also be found in K. Kiple, *Blacks in Colonial Cuba, 1774-1899* (Gainesville, 1976). I have recalculated the percentages for the decennial column, using a simple linear rate of increase. Had the gross population figures been more accurate, a compound rate would have yielded more reliable results, removing the distortion of the simple calculation. In addition, I have corrected the decrease figure for 1899.

second largest social component, although the 27.5 percentage figure represented a significant decline from the all-time high of 43.4 percent in 1841. Havana, with a population of 196,847 in the metropolitan area, and Santiago de Cuba with 36,752, had become bustling cosmopolitan port cities with well-defined barrios, streets with names and numbered houses, handsome residences, and a society elaborately differentiated and labeled.<sup>7</sup> Eight other towns—Cárdenas, Cienfuegos, Guanabacoa, Matanzas, Puerto Príncipe, Sancti Spíritus, Trinidad and Villa Clara—had more than 10,000 inhabitants each. Most of these were new towns, and not all were ports. Puerto Príncipe, Villa Clara and Sancti Spíritus were inland cities with populations of 30,685, 10,511, and 12,853 respectively. Guanabacoa was fast becoming a suburb of Havana. Equally significant, the agricultural revolution had tremendously augmented

7. Pezuela, *Diccionario*, IV, 238, 256. Descriptions of Havana are numerous. For some good examples of the nineteenth century see, Archivo Histórico Nacional (Hereafter cited as AHN) (Madrid), Sección de Estado. Legajo 6370. Año de 1828, "Relación de las obras y fiestas públicas . . ."; Antonio J. Valdés, *Historia de la Isla de Cuba y en especial de la Habana* (first published in 1813, New edition, Havana, 1964), pp. 157-158; F. Bremer, *Homes of the New World* (New York, 1853), II, 265. Antonio Gallenga, *Pearl of the Antilles* (London, 1873), p. 26; Emilio Bacardí y Moreau, *Crónicas de Santiago de Cuba*, 10 vols. (Madrid, 1972).

the rural population. Rural Santiago counted a population of nearly 60,000; and altogether, twelve of the thirty-two jurisdictional divisions of the island had more than 50,000 inhabitants each.

I have referred elsewhere to these extensive and interrelated changes in the demography, landholding and occupational divisions as the sugar revolution in Cuba.<sup>8</sup> The most dramatic dimensions of these changes can be conveyed easily in gross statistical figures. Yet such gross figures often obscure the most significant facets of cultural and socio-economic phenomena. As an example one can take the figures for houses and populations recorded by Jacobo de la Pezuela, and drawn from the official census of 1861.<sup>9</sup> With 29,588 houses serving a population of 171,620 in 1774, each household accounted for 5.80 individuals. By 1855, the 1,044,185 residents and 145,066 houses yielded a household-size increase to 7.2 individuals per unit. Yet these figures indicate little of family size or even the actual residential patterns. For one thing, the locations of business enterprises dictated that some individuals maintain a number of houses. The expansion of slavery, the availability of wealth and the customary demands of a changed society all combined to seriously distort the relationship of residents within households as well as between individuals and households. The statistical data for Güines in 1774 provided many examples of single individuals having as many as five houses.<sup>10</sup> Comparable figures do not exist for the rest of the island.

Lacking a general census, one can nevertheless make a provisional assessment of the data on the expansion of wealth and property and their relationship to society during the period of relatively rapid changes which accompanied the conversion of the island from a settler society to a plantation society. And it is possible to ascertain who were the wealthy, and what was the relationship between land, wealth and society in the period, 1750–1850.

Until recently, historians commonly assumed that the Cuban evolution from individualistic settler to corporate plantation society was

8. Knight, *Slave Society*, pp. 25–46. Properly speaking, this should be called the first sugar revolution, to distinguish it from the second sugar revolution which took place principally in Oriente in the period 1905–1924.

9. Pezuela, *Diccionario*, IV, 238. Public buildings are excluded.

10. For Güines, Archivo General de Indias (Hereafter cited as AGI), Ultramar, Isla de Cuba, legajo 64. *Empadronamiento* data exist for Puerto Rico and several mainland archbishoprics but not for Cuba, apart from Güines. The discovery of such a roll would greatly facilitate the study of Cuban socioeconomic changes for this period.

fueled by new men and new money.<sup>11</sup> Despite a deficient data base, the assertion seemed then to be warranted, especially from a nineteenth-century perspective. With additional data—still patently deficient—the situation merits re-evaluation and qualification, perhaps even retraction.

New men and new money entered Cuba during the nineteenth century, but they served merely as catalytic factors in a revolutionary transformation that was primarily internal in nature. They joined a process in motion, but did not create that motion. Indeed, the dynamic for change came from among the oldest stock of Cubans, from among a leading group whose distinguished ancestry often preceded their advent to the Antilles.<sup>12</sup>

Of a sample of 450 families taken from Francisco Xavier Santa Cruz y Mallen, *Historia de familias cubanas*, only 112 or 24.9 percent, came to Cuba during the nineteenth century.<sup>13</sup> The majority of these great families—189, or 42.0 percent—came sometime during the eighteenth century; 114 or 25.3 percent came during the seventeenth century; while 35 or 7.8 percent arrived during the sixteenth century. While the sample does have some defects, it clearly illustrates that only about one-quarter (24.9 percent) of the wealthy, aristocratic Cuban families came during the nineteenth century. If one excludes those who came after 1860 when local opportunities for making a fortune diminished, then the percentage is even lower.

Of the 450 families, the lineage of 428 can be traced back to Spain, France, Portugal, Ireland or the Low Countries. Again, the overwhelming proportion of the latter—347 or 81.0 percent—came from families distinguished prior to their arrival in Cuba. These families had established their peninsular social importance by the ancient possession of a *casa solar*, military service to the Castilian monarchy, membership in exclusive military orders in the Peninsula, or elevation to the nobility through personal service in the imperial bureaucracy, or fealty to the to the victors in monarchical disputes. Naturally, they all fulfilled the additional Spanish requirement of *limpieza de sangre*, admitting to the

11. See Knight, *Slave Society*, p. 183; Thomas, *Cuba*, p. 97; and Eugene Genovese, *The World the Slaveholders Made* (New York, 1969), pp. 65–71, see esp. quotation on pp. 68–69.

12. Anne Perotin, "Le Project Cubain des Grands Planteurs de la Havana: Jalons pour une lecture de Francisco Arrango y Parreño (1769–1839)," in *Mélanges de la Casa de Velasquez*, X (1974), 273–313. The most complete source to the genealogy of the majority of prominent Cuban families is, Francisco I. Santa Cruz y Mallen, *Historia de familias cubanas*, 6 vols. (Havana, 1940–1950).

13. Excluded from my sample are families which failed to survive with male offspring until 1700 and families which arrived in Cuba after 1900.

family's unfailing adherence to the Roman Catholic religion, and the absence of any trace of Moorish or Jewish blood through at least four generations on either side.<sup>14</sup>

Moreover, it seems clear that the older families distinguished themselves—by property and marital ties—from the *nouveaux riches* or *recién llegados*. The incidences of intra-family conjugality were at least as high as within the metropolitan Spanish aristocracy, and the continuous lateral unions apparently reinforced the normal aristocratic tendencies toward latifundism, genetic conservation, and property accumulation.<sup>15</sup> These families, however, displayed no reluctance to engage in trade, or to be innovative in the technical development of Cuba during the period. Indeed, they were integrally related to the entire sugar revolution, just as they were involved closely in the administration and the religious and benevolent institutions in the island throughout its history.

By the nineteenth century, land ownership had become both the symbol and the prerequisite of wealth. Yet it had not always been so. Nor was it necessarily so even then to the substantial proportion of the Cuban population of African and indigenous American ancestry. Neither African nor Indian concepts of wealth coincided with that of the European, but the degree to which this differing heritage affected their attitudes toward wealth and property in Cuba during the period cannot as yet be ascertained.

This essay concentrates on the Spanish, and Spanish Creole, sector of the population. To the Spanish and other Europeans who crossed the Atlantic Ocean, the Indies represented the "New Frontier" of opportunity.<sup>16</sup> The magnetic attraction of the Americas after the sixteenth century was intrinsically related to the utopian possibility of accumulating wealth.

Nevertheless, two interrelated factors still seriously restrained the possibility of acquiring wealth in Cuba. The first was the general European mercantilistic identification of bullion and trade as the primary axes of wealth and power. The Spanish, whose values were seriously distorted by the early experience in Mexico and Peru, were amazingly reluctant to relinquish those ideas. The second was, of

14. AGI, Indiferente General, leg. 2165. Información de Nobleza.

15. V. Martínez Alier, *Marriage*, pp. 82–83.

16. J. H. Elliott, *The Old World and the New, 1492–1650*. (Cambridge, 1970) pp. 54–78. Even soldiers became speculators and merchants. See Richard Konetzké, ed., *Colección de documentos para la historia de la formación social de Hispano-américa, 1493–1810*, 5 vols. (Madrid, 1953), III, 1, 22. Eric Wolf, *Sons of the Shaking Earth* (Chicago, 1959), pp. 102–202.

course, the rigid, monopolistic control of land, when both the extensive agricultural land use and commerce offered a viable alternative to bullion and precious metals as the principal generators of national wealth and power—as Melchor Gaspar de Jovellanos and Pedro Rodríguez were advising the government of Charles III.<sup>17</sup>

Cuba failed to yield the vast deposits of gold and silver which made Mexico and Peru legendary in the annals of Spain's American expansion. The island depended for its bullion on New Spain, and for its specie—except in times of war, the bankruptcy of the Crown, or other international malaise—on Spain and the other European trading states.<sup>18</sup> Trade, then, produced quick wealth. And in Cuba, soldiers, imperial bureaucrats and members of the town councils were most favorably positioned to exploit trade. Metropolitan legislation failed to curb the practice of using public service for private gain.

Indeed, an initial review of the 450 Cuban families indicates an extremely strong correlation between office-holding, military service and wealth before 1792. Even minor offices were bought with the speculative commercial calculation common in the Spanish empire at that time.<sup>19</sup> The names Calvo de la Puerta, Beltrán de Santa Cruz, Peñalver and Zayas Bazán figured prominently as members of the Havana town council between 1760 and 1820. Mateo Pedroso, the richest Cuban in 1764, was a lifelong alderman of the Havana town council, and his father-in-law was a justice of the peace and the chief constable for rural Havana. The established, wealthy, maritally related families of Calvo, Peñalver, O'Reilly, Montalvo, Arango, Herrera, Pedroso, Recio, Núñez de Castillo and O'Farril monopolized Havana society and government for more than a century. Yet new frontier towns in the interior, and newly founded towns offered new opportunities for the purchase (or sale) of municipal offices, creating a brisk market at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Prices, of course, varied according to the estimation of expected fiscal return. In 1803, Dn. Tomás Josef Gómez bought the position of regidor (member of the local town council) of the Villa de Santa Clara, for 437 pesos 4

17. Luis Marcelino Pereira, *Reflexiones sobre la ley agraria* . . . (Madrid, 1788); Antonio Rodríguez Villa, *Cartas político-económicas escritas por el conde de Campomanes . . . al Conde Lerena* (Madrid, 1878); Miguel Ignacio Pérez Quintero, *Pensamientos políticos y económicos dirigidos a promover en España la agricultura* . . . (Madrid, 1798).

18. AGI, Indiferente General, leg. 2156. Juzgado de Arribadas. Also, AHN, Estado, leg. 6372; *Revista Bimestre Cubana*, 2, no. 6, p. 84; AGI, Santo Domingo, leg. 1520.

19. AGI, Ultramar, leg. 58–70. "Oficios vendibles y renunciables."

reales. At the same time, Dn. Esteban Alfonso bought a similar position in Guanabacoa for 750 pesos, while a fellow councillor Dn. Alonso Fernández Romero, paid 1,000 pesos for his privilege. All offices paid an additional eighteen percent inheritance or transfer tax.<sup>20</sup>

Service on the local town council (cabildo) provided an eminently strategic location from which to pursue the acquisition of wealth. And by the later eighteenth century, the Spanish colonial system had made public office a necessary prerequisite to, or concomitant of, private wealth. The town councils in particular were important because they provided two highly remunerative services: the regulation of commerce; and, until 1816, the distribution of usufructal tenures of land for residences or agricultural purposes.<sup>21</sup>

Town councils set the selling price of most basic trade commodities such as meat, flour, bread, wine, olive oil, clothing, soap, fruits and vegetables. In 1755, for example, when the Las Villas cabildo set the selling price of meat at four pounds (avoirdupois) per real, it also stabilized manioc prices at three pounds per real.<sup>22</sup> The scarcity of specie forced on the island inhabitants a complex form of barter in which commodity exchanges were assigned monetary value without the actual involvement of cash, just as other early colonists did throughout the Americas. The virtual absence of a cash economy inhibited the purchase of land and luxuries. Then as now, members of the municipal councils often used their official authority to perpetuate their political positions, expand their business opportunities and bolster the *de facto* economic and social advantages they, their families and their friends possessed. For example, in return for an annual contribution of 150 pesos, the Santiago de Cuba cabildo in 1783 awarded Don Miguel de Arce a monopoly for the public sale of quicklime. Such gratifications were an accepted and established pattern of Spanish office-holding.<sup>23</sup>

As a source of income, the municipalities relied mainly on the irregular receipts of a nominal levy imposed annually on all land distributed in *mercedes* of usufructal tenure. All land fell into two categories: municipal land enclosed by a common pasture for grazing; and Crown land, or *realengos*.<sup>24</sup> Within defined urban limits, the municipal

20. AGI, Ultramar, leg. 69.

21. C. Bayle, *Los cabildos seculares en la América Española* (Madrid, 1952).

22. Rodríguez-Altunaga, *Las villas*, p. 74.

23. Bacardí y Moreau, *Crónicas*, I, 229. AGI, Ultramar, leg. 172. AGI, Gracia y Justicia, leg. 1605. exp. 44.

24. Duvon C. Corbitt, "Mercedes and Realengos: A Survey of the Public Land System in Cuba", *HAHR* 19 (1939), 262-285; J. M. Zamora y Coronado, ed., *Biblioteca de legislación ultramarina*, 6 vols. (Madrid, 1846) VI, 36-57.



councils alienated the land in conflicting circular grants, specifying its use. For the grant of a site to build a house, the council charged one real per year. Grazing and farming concessions cost upward of two reales. The fee could be waived for widows and poor families, and some municipalities did not bother to collect it for long periods.<sup>25</sup> But public expenditures were small and private benevolence constituted a major part of social services until the middle of the nineteenth century. Limited income and limited needs made public office and public services almost tantamount to private prerogatives and family patronage.

Like the town councils, the Crown also distributed mercedes of usufructal tenure. Unlike the councils, however, the monarchs could, and with increasing frequency did, alienate *realengos* in fee simple, or outright grant, as a reward to any deserving vassal. Often these grants were made with such generosity that they exceeded the available supply, or merely overlapped with prior awards. Each merced had a specially designated purpose. A change in the specified activity, required an additional payment to the royal treasury as well as gratuities to various officials.<sup>26</sup> Before the early nineteenth century, land could be inherited, but it could not be sold, sublet or subdivided without royal permission, and each royal permission required a royal fee. Moreover, until 1816, the hardwood forests on the otherwise fertile agricultural plains of Cuba could not be freely exploited by local entrepreneurs. Hardwood cutting was a monopolistic concession, and much of the lumber produced went toward the construction and repair of ships for the royal navy, or the finishing and furnishing of palaces in the metropolis.<sup>27</sup>

Although no open real estate market existed in land before the end of the eighteenth century, land ownership remained a socially desirable goal and a patent indication of wealth. The Castillian monarch laid the foundation for future large-scale landholding in Cuba by its generous *repartimiento de tierras* among the early pioneer families of the sixteenth century, some of whose descendants were still in evidence three hundred years later, including the Ponce de León family from Cáceres, the Pérez-Najarro family from Castille, the Cepero family from Burgos, the Sotolongo family from Oviedo, and the

25. Rodríguez-Altunaga, *Las Villas*, p. 71.

26. Bacardí y Moreau, *Crónicas*, I, 133–134; II, 120.

27. Valdés, *Cuba*, pp. 284–289; Knight, *Slave Society*, pp. 14–18. With the change of law in 1816 abolishing mercedes, any family using *realengos* for a period of forty continuous years could petition for a grant of the land in fee simple.

Recio family which formed the first mayorazgo, or landed trust, in the late sixteenth century. By 1800 the founding of mayorazgos had become commonplace.<sup>28</sup> The Garro family from Guipúzcoa established a mayorazgo in 1702 and another in 1752. The Gómez family from Andalucía formed one in 1765. In 1774, the Silva family, originally from Portugal, founded a mayorazgo and the town of Guisa, for which it received the title Marquis of Guisa. In 1775, another family of Portuguese ancestry, named Zequeira, founded a mayorazgo while twelve years later the Manuel de Villena family did the same. Hereditary succession and lateral class conjugality produced some impressive examples of latifundism. In 1792, for example, the Count of Casa Montalvo had an estate of 5,500 *caballerías* of land, or 184,250 acres.<sup>29</sup> Nor did everyone follow the conventional legal channels of formally requesting land from the Crown or the local municipal councils. In 1814 the authorities discovered that much of the *tierras realengas* around Guantánamo Bay had simply been absorbed into private haciendas.<sup>30</sup>

The establishment of a mayorazgo required, apart from the necessary personal and official connections in Cuba and Spain, a considerable capital outlay to guide the proceedings through the various stages of the imperial bureaucracy. The gratuity was, after all, a recognized part of the process of Spanish officialdom and an enduring Iberian legacy.

28. Santa Cruz, *Grandes familias*. The popularity of mayorazgos might indicate a general acceptance of land as a secure—if not the most secure—transmittable source of wealth.

29. The figures for the size of the estates are taken from Moreno Friginals, *El ingenio*, p. 10. Cuban land measurements, in common with all Spanish measures, varied over time and from region to region, as illustrated by Felipe Poey y Aloy, *Compendio de la geografía de la isla de Cuba . . .* (Havana, 1849). *Webster's New International Dictionary* (2d ed., Springfield, Mass., 1957), p. 369 defines a *caballería* as "an ancient Spanish land tenure similar to the English knight's fee; hence, in Spain and the countries settled by the Spanish, a land measure of varying size. In Cuba it is about 33 acres; in Puerto Rico, about 194 acres; in Mexico about 106 acres." There is no equivalent study for Cuba to Manuel Carrera Stampa, "The Evolution of Weights and Measures in New Spain," *HAHR* 29 (Feb. 1949), 2–24. Most authors, however, concur with the estimate of approximately 33 acres. The *Bureau of Statistics U.S. Sugar Manufacturers*, pamphlet, "Concerning Sugar," (Washington, 1915) gives the size of a *caballería* as 33.161 acres. Irene Wright, *The Early History of Cuba, 1492–1526* (New York, 1916), p. 374 gives an equivalent of "approximately 33½ acres." Duvon C. Corbitt, "Mercedes and Realengos: A Survey of the Public Land System in Cuba," *HAHR*, 19 (Aug. 1939), 262–285, following Wright, also gives about thirty-three and one-third acres" (p. 266). My calculations follow this. H. Thomas, *Cuba, The Pursuit of Freedom* (New York, 1971), p. 1569, is apparently incorrect in claiming a *caballería* as a "Cuban measure equivalent to 330 acres or 130 hectares."

30. AGI, Ultramar, leg. 173.

Obviously, a number of Spanish and Cuban families were willing and able to pay whatever was required and expected. Some families even made the stipulation that, prior to inheritance, a mayorazgo had to be extended to a specific size, a challenge as well as a warning to their heirs. All uninherited mayorazgos reverted to the Crown and were integrated into the *tierras realengas*.

While some Cubans thus built up large landholdings, it could be argued that prior to the agricultural revolution of the late eighteenth century, rural landholding did not offer the type of purely financial remuneration which justified the expenses of acquisition. Prior to 1774, the main agricultural exports were tobacco and beeswax. A royal monopoly controlling the marketing of tobacco paid growers a discouragingly low price, while the international market for beeswax was not exceptionally large. Tobacco and bee-keeping were, nevertheless, rewarding pursuits which had the special advantages of requiring neither a large parcel of land nor a large labor force. Both could be adequately managed on the urban mercedes which ranged from 1 to 5 *caballerías* (33 to 167 acres of land) and both could be successful family operations. Enough land to provide self-sufficiency, rather than a source of entrepreneurial speculation, seemed to be the main goal for the majority of those who requested mercedes. Large-scale agricultural activity remained restricted to a few families, and grazing was the dominant form.

One important factor impelling those with surplus capital to invest in land was the desire for security. Liquid assets could easily be confiscated by pirates and filibusters, or lost by the frequent currency devaluations or exchanges which plagued the Spanish commercial activity before 1868.<sup>31</sup> Land might not have yielded high capital returns but it provided a relatively safe investment for a family, and even for their heirs.

Until March 18, 1771, the most common legal tender in Cuba was a highly unstable coinage called the *macuquina*, probably minted locally from copper. Along with a number of foreign currencies and the *pesos fuertes* and maravedís from the metropolis, this coinage was the primary medium of exchange for many commercial transactions. Foreigners, especially Veracruz merchants, were reluctant to handle the *macuquina*—not the least because the Spanish required a nine percent

31. On pirates and filibustering, see AGI, Santo Domingo, leg. 1520; on currency, Juan Alvarez, "Valores aproximados de algunas monedas hispano-americanas (1497-1771)," *Revista de la Universidad de Buenos Aires*, Año XIV, tomo XXXV (1917), 516-580.

commission on its exchange—and preferred to reinvest it in Havana thereby boosting its local circulation even more. Frugal individuals hoarded this currency at home, since banks were then few and unreliable. Then in 1771 came the decision of the metropolitan government to phase out the *macuquina* and replace it by the *peso fuerte*, a decision which caused severe losses for those who had hoarded the currency. Between 1778 and 1782, the government collected about two million *macuquinas* and replaced them by a little more than a million *pesos fuertes*. The merchants and hoarders estimated their loss at nearly fifty percent of their holdings, while the shrewd merchants from Veracruz, then in possession of valuable specie, were no longer eager to reinvest their receipts in the city of Havana.<sup>32</sup>

The loss from the withdrawal of the *macuquina* was advantageously offset, however, by the increase in trade (stimulated by the declaration of Havana as a free port in 1776), from government expenditure on defensive establishments, public offices and urban embellishments, and from the stationing of troops at Havana between 1765 and 1801. Indeed, the change in currency and trade opened new opportunities for wealth. All these factors promoted the first economic boom at the end of the eighteenth century.

War and the prospect of war stimulated the Cuban economy. The period after the loss of Havana witnessed a massive infusion of reliable, easily convertible currency—largely supplied by New Spain until 1808—designed to bolster the military posture of the island. In 1765 alone, the Spanish government spent 700,000 pesos in Havana to supply the troops and to pay daily wages for the construction and expansion of the military fortifications. The war years between 1779 and 1791 brought an estimated total investment of thirty-five million pesos. After 1791, large sums flowed into the island with the stream of refugees from Louisiana, Florida, Saint-Domingue, and the insurrectionary mainland colonies.<sup>33</sup>

Some of this new money undoubtedly went into the purchase of land and the expansion of agriculture but the relative proportions cannot be traced at this time. Certainly cattle and small stock increased, as well as the supplies of ground provisions required to meet the demand of the increased imperial forces then stationed on the

32. Jorge L. Martí, "La evolución económico," in Emilio Roig de Leuchsenring, ed., *Curso de introducción a la historia de Cuba* (Havana, 1938), pp. 157–166.

33. AHN, Estado, leg. 6366; Bacardí y Moreau, *Crónicas*, II, 18; José Antonio Portuonodo, "La inmigración francesa," in Roig de Leuchsenring, *Curso*, pp. 193–207.

island. But the effects of an expanding economy were most noticeable in the plantation sector.

Indeed, the years between 1774 and 1820 witnessed a simultaneous infusion of local money, development of trade, expanded demand for agricultural products abroad, and considerable diversification of agricultural production. Tobacco production, the oldest agricultural mainstay, increased. Coffee, with new techniques introduced by the immigrants from Saint-Domingue, assumed commercial importance. Sugar, the most marketable and most rewarding tropical product of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, quickly dominated the other exports. Both the area planted in sugar cane and the number of mills increased dramatically after 1770. The average size of an *ingenio* went from about four *caballerías* (134 acres) in 1774 to more than twenty *caballerías* (670 acres) by 1790. The average capacity of sugar mills also increased, from about forty tons per mill in the 1760s to approximately 170 tons in 1827.<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, the technique of producing sugar remained relatively unchanged until the 1830s. But to boost this agricultural production required the supplementary trade in African slaves, perhaps the most lucrative single international commercial operation of the time. Altogether, these were the catalytic forces of the new Cuban agricultural revolution.

The post-1770 agricultural revolution diversified the opportunities for acquiring wealth, and telescoped the time required for becoming rich. Individuals could eschew the customary paths of imperial or military and municipal service in order to accumulate wealth. Furthermore, the expansion of trade, the establishment of cities, the specialization of tasks and the increasing involvement of the society in the ideas, politics and economics of the wider world, created a new milieu in which high social status and family associations, while still extremely important, were no longer the indispensable prerequisites of wealth accumulation. The result was the rise to prominence of a new group of families. Their successes were indeed so spectacular that some historians have assumed that they were the rule and not (as was the case) the exception.

The expansion of trade was the most obvious manifestation of the new order. The futility of efforts to stimulate Cuban trade between 1740 and 1763 provides an amazing contrast with the rapid growth experienced after the 1760s. The port of Havana registered 371 maritime arrivals and departures between February and December,

34. Thomas, *Cuba*, pp. 62–65; Moreno Fragonals, *El ingenio*, p. 19.

TABLE II: Port Activity, Havana, Feb.-Dec. 1775.

Month	Arrivals			Departures		
	No.	With commercial cargo <sup>1</sup>	Percent-age of annual total*	No.	With commercial cargo <sup>2</sup>	Percent-age of annual total*
February	20	12	9.4	12	6	5.7
March	15	8	6.3	13	6	5.7
April	19	14	11.0	16	10	9.4
May	22	17	13.4	26	16	15.1
June	11	8	6.3	25	14	13.2
July	23	18	14.2	19	10	9.4
August	18	14	11.0	28	20	18.9
September	13	6	4.7	6	2	1.8
October	10	6	4.7	12	5	4.7
November	21	15	11.8	17	10	9.4
December	11	9	7.1	14	7	6.6
Total	183	127		188	106	
Percentage	100	69.3		100	56.4	

\* Percentages relate to totals with commercial cargo.

Source: AGI, Santo Domingo, leg. 1520.

<sup>1</sup> Includes in transit vessels bound for other ports of the Spanish Indies or Iberia.

<sup>2</sup> Includes in transit vessels, but excludes all sailing in ballast, or coastal vessels.

1775.<sup>35</sup> Trading vessels accounted for 62.8 percent of this activity, or 233 arrivals and departures. Of the 183 arrivals, 127 vessels held commercial cargo. Twelve came from other Cuban ports, often in transit; 51 came directly from Spain and the Canary Islands; 97 came from other Spanish American ports; and 12 came from non-Spanish ports. Twenty-two vessels had one or more in transit stops. Only 10 officially registered their cargo as slaves—all purchased under the *asiento* agreement in other non-Spanish Caribbean ports, and invariably accompanied by supplies of wheat flour. Thirty-two ships brought European merchandise (*efectos de Europa*). Officially registered ships, however, did not account for all the commercial activity between Cuba and the outside, and the seizure of two English vessels off Mariel on November 19, 1775, indicated the involvement in illegal, or contraband trade. Of the 188 outgoing vessels during the same period of time, 77 went to Spain; 93 to other Spanish American ports; 15 to non-Spanish American ports; and only one to another Cuban port. Twenty-eight of the departing ships sailed in ballast, and 87 carried Cuban products abroad.

35. AGI, Santo Domingo, leg. 1520.

TABLE III: Commercial Shipping Activity, 1852. Incoming Vessels.

Port	No. of arrivals	Percent- age to individual Port	No. of foreign ships	Percentage foreign of all ships	No. of Spanish ships	Percentage Spanish of all ships
Havana	1594	44.0	1004	27.8	590	16.3
Matanzas	447	12.4	360	10.0	87	2.4
Cárdenas	391	10.8	384	10.6	7	0.2
Mariel	26	0.7	25	0.7	1	0.03
Trinidad	168	4.6	106	2.9	62	1.7
Cienfuegos	270	7.5	237	6.6	33	0.9
Nuevitas	62	1.7	50	1.4	12	0.3
Sagua	98	2.7	98	2.7	0	0
Remedios	42	1.2	42	1.2	0	0
Santa Cruz	16	0.4	16	0.4	0	0
Sancti-Espíritu	19	0.53	18	0.5	1	0.03
Stgo. de Cuba	334	9.2	214	5.9	120	3.3
Gibara	46	1.3	22	0.6	24	0.7
Manzanillo	64	1.8	61	1.7	3	0.08
Baracoa	37	1.0	30	0.8	7	0.2
Guantánamo	3	0.08	3	0.08	0	0
Total	3617		2670		947	
Percentage			73.8		26.2	

Source: *Balanza general del comercio de la isla de Cuba en 1852 . . .* (Havana, 1853).

Note: Percentages are calculated from the total number of commercial arrivals in the first column.

In 1775, despite the rapid growth in agriculture and commerce, Cuban trade remained mainly the Havana trade, conducted in Spanish ships and going to and from Spanish and Spanish American ports. This aspect accommodated the older Havana families, especially those with connections in Spain and the empire, and those already having land to use as collateral for credit: the Peñalver, Pedroso, Zaya, Poey, Calvo de la Puerta, Pedro de Estrada and Montalvo of Havana; Isnaga of Trinidad; and Kindelán of Santiago. The pattern of the 1775 trade clearly indicates that it was an appendage to the agricultural enterprise, a form of exchange in which there was little room for specialization. The farmers and the merchants remained virtually indistinguishable, although someone like Mateo Pedroso obtained his original wealth from his commercial activity, rather than from his land grants and public service. The major difference in the nineteenth century was that trade and trading began to be so extensive that it became a speciality in itself, generating such great wealth that merchants could, and did join the landed group.

While the volume of trade fluctuated from year to year, the general increase was unmistakable. By 1800, the number of merchant vessels

TABLE IV: Cuban Commercial Shipping, 1852. Outgoing Vessels.

Port	No. of depar- tures	Percentage departing at this port	No. of foreign ships	Percentage foreign of all ships	No. of Spanish ships	Percentage Spanish of all ships
Havana	1140	34.8	686	21.0	454	13.9
Matanzas	528	16.1	438	13.4	90	2.7
Cárdenas	382	11.7	375	11.5	7	0.2
Mariel	26	0.8	25	0.8	1	0.03
Trinidad	170	5.2	113	3.5	57	1.7
Cienfuegos	271	8.3	237	7.2	34	1.04
Nuevitas	64	1.95	52	1.6	12	0.37
Sagua	96	2.9	96	2.9	0	0
Remedios	54	1.64	53	1.6	1	0.03
Santa Cruz	15	0.5	15	0.5	0	0
Sancti-Espíritu	20	0.6	17	0.51	3	0.09
Stgo. de Cuba	348	10.6	218	6.7	130	3.97
Gibara	43	1.3	23	0.7	20	0.6
Manzanillo	73	2.2	72	2.1	1	0.03
Baracoa	40	1.2	32	1.0	8	0.24
Guantánamo	4	0.12	3	0.09	1	0.03
Total	3274		2455		819	
Percentage			75.0		25.0	

Source: *Balanza general del comercio de la isla de Cuba en 1852 . . .* (Havana, 1853).

Note: Percentages are calculated from the total number of outgoing vessels in column one.

unloading at Havana exceeded 800.<sup>36</sup> In 1828 a total of 1,057 merchant vessels—excluding the large number of slave ships—entered the port.<sup>37</sup> By 1837, the number of ships had increased to 2,524; and by 1852, 3,617 ships sailed into sixteen different Cuban ports, unloading nearly thirty million pesos worth of foreign products. In the same year, 3,274 ships sailed away, taking just over twenty-seven million pesos worth of Cuban agricultural products abroad.<sup>38</sup>

With the greatest development by far occurring in the Western Department, Havana continued to dominate the trade pattern for the island. Almost seventy-five percent of all imports, and forty-seven percent of all exports passed through the city of Havana. But, as Tables IV

36. Moreno Fragnals, *El ingenio*, p. 35.

37. *Censo de la siempre fidelísima ciudad de la Habana. Año de 1828* (Habana, 1829).

38. D. Turnbull, *Cuba* (London, 1840), p. 116; A. Humboldt, *The Island of Cuba*, J. S. Thrasher, trans. (New York, 1856), pp. 302–304; *Cuba, Balanza general de comercio . . . 1837* (Havana, 1838); *Cuba, Balanza . . . 1852* (Havana, 1853).



TABLE V: Import Trade of Cuba, 1852.

Port	Total Imports	Spanish	Per-cent	USA	Per-cent	English	Per-cent	German	Per-cent	Lat. Am.	Per-cent	Others	Per-cent
Havana	22,108,371	7,436,957	33.7	3,800,303	17.2	4,847,221	21.9	1,000,639	4.5	1,798,066	8.1	3,225,187	14.6
Matanzas	2,116,708	972,292	45.9	711,624	33.6	145,152	6.8	18,109	1.0	269,593	12.7	—	—
Cárdenas	655,791	72,889	11.0	511,657	78.0	71,285	11.0	—	—	—	—	—	—
María	11,973	11,973	100.0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Trinidad	718,096	389,411	54.2	230,701	32.2	33,321	4.7	12,791	1.7	51,873	7.2	—	—
Cienfuegos	636,245	274,773	43.2	196,425	30.9	87,165	13.7	4,309	.7	24,787	3.9	48,785	7.7
Nuevitas	368,645	84,728	23.0	273,035	74.0	10,883	3.0	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sagua	115,419	—	—	115,419	100.0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Remedios	56,812	—	—	51,186	90.0	5,623	10.0	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sta. Cruz	12,794	—	—	3,087	24.0	723	6.0	8,984	70.0	—	—	—	—
Sti.-Espíritu	67,406	—	—	29,489	43.7	37,917	56.3	—	—	—	—	—	—
Stgo. de Cuba	2,488,232	879,112	35.3	539,382	21.7	372,587	15.0	49,197	2.0	300	0.01	647,935	26.0
Gibara	254,217	60,333	23.7	13,845	5.4	2,307	1.0	4,376	1.7	—	—	173,356	68.2
Manzanillo	76,997	—	—	45,457	59.0	18,294	23.9	3,598	4.6	—	—	9,649	12.5
Baracoa	90,056	29,936	33.2	16,606	18.4	6,366	7.1	—	—	—	—	37,148	41.3
Guantánamo	2,413	—	—	2,413	100.0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	29,780,175	10,212,404	34.2	6,540,629	22.0	5,638,824	18.9	1,102,003	3.7	2,144,619	7.2	4,142,060	14.0

Source: Constructed from: *Balanza general del comercio de la isla de Cuba en 1852*, . . . (Havana, 1853).

Note: Imports represent value in pesos. Percentages pertain to imports of each port; and errors in the original have been corrected. The relatively small sums carried under "Deposito Mercantil" have been omitted, except in the overall totals.

TABLE VI: Export Trade of Cuba, 1852.

Port	Total Exports	Spanish	Per- cent	USA	Per- cent	English	Per- cent	German	Per- cent	Lat. Am.	Per- cent	Others	Per- cent
Havana	12,950,124	2,689,521	20.7	3,834,672	29.7	2,914,995	22.5	529,404	4.1	694,222	5.3	2,287,310	17.7
Matanzas	4,685,582	454,353	9.7	2,023,657	43.2	1,164,578	24.8	228,661	4.9	88,388	1.9	725,945	15.5
Cárdenas	1,492,795	—	—	1,469,732	98.5	23,063	1.5	—	—	—	—	—	—
Maríel	5,534	—	—	5,534	100.0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Trinidad	1,294,746	286,685	22.1	717,534	55.4	—	—	173,590	13.4	18,479	1.5	98,458	7.6
Cienfuegos	1,500,517	96,594	6.4	1,173,546	78.2	172,456	11.5	—	—	—	—	57,921	3.9
Nuevitas	373,002	55,502	14.9	285,005	76.4	23,185	6.2	—	—	—	—	9,310	2.5
Segua	1,084,277	—	—	1,081,816	99.8	2,461	0.2	—	—	—	—	—	—
Remedios	327,675	5,451	1.7	317,617	97.0	4,607	1.3	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sta. Cruz	67,541	—	—	31,635	46.8	17,040	25.2	18,866	28.0	—	—	—	—
Sti.-Espíritu	106,902	18,749	17.6	75,103	70.2	10,802	10.1	2,248	2.1	—	—	—	—
Sigo. de Cuba	2,755,335	185,871	6.7	826,044	30.0	1,038,718	37.7	383,284	13.9	72	—	321,346	11.7
Gibara	383,026	89,910	23.5	25,434	6.6	10,244	2.7	236,384	61.7	—	—	21,054	5.5
Manzanillo	243,829	—	—	110,539	45.3	92,392	37.9	36,301	14.9	—	—	4,597	1.9
Baracoa	157,443	—	—	72,927	46.3	12,138	7.7	—	—	—	—	72,378	46.0
Guantánamo	25,614	—	—	25,614	100.0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	27,453,942	3,882,636	14.1	12,076,409	44.0	5,486,679	20.0	1,608,738	5.9	801,161	2.9	3,598,319	13.1

Source: Constructed from: *Balanza general del comercio de la isla de Cuba en 1852* . . . (Havana, 1853).

Note: Exports represent value in pesos. Percent pertains to each port. Slight errors in the original have been corrected.

and V indicate, the pattern of trade became quite diverse. Spain lost its commercial hegemony, handling only thirty-four percent of the import trade, and fourteen percent of the export trade. The more Cuba produced, the more its inhabitants consumed, and the less could its imperial metropolis supply either the market for its commodities or the source of its consumer demands. After the expansion of free trade in 1776, the United States became the single largest trading partner of the island, handling thirty-four percent of the imports and forty-four percent of the exports. The pattern of Cuban economic and social growth indicated by the above tables remained essentially unchanged for the succeeding century. The *ingenio*, the *vega*, and the *almacén* dominated Cuban thought and action. So great was the demand for all types of products and services, that slave trading and merchandising became the most rapid media for the accumulation of wealth, surpassing the old family connections and the exploitation of public office.

The sugar revolution derived its greatest impetus from the entrepreneurial skills of the oldest families in Cuba. These families, having become rich in land and having access to public offices, found themselves strategically positioned to take every advantage of the early economic development. Until the early nineteenth century—indeed, until the technical and capital transformation of the period beginning around 1838—this oligarchy maintained control and prominence. Eventually they gave way to new men and newly acquired wealth and the new economies of scale which the industrial age required. Between 1760 and 1810, these old oligarchs had increased per mill production from the vicinity of 165 tons to more than 400 tons. They increased the acreage of sugar cane, and expanded the number of mills. The largest producers remained unchanged: Arango, Montalvo, Duarte, Peñalver, Cárdenas, Herrera, O'Reilly. Their social dominance continued long after their economic hegemony had been eclipsed by the immigrants of the nineteenth century, the Bacardís, Aldamas, Diagos, de la Torrientes, as well as Tomás Terry, José Baró and Julián Zulueta. Nevertheless, by the middle of the century, the old families fell behind new individuals and corporations involved in multiple facets of the agro-economy of sugar and plantation slavery. By the middle of the century, too, almost all the wealth which went into plantations came from commerce. Trade, after about 1818, became the great engineer for wealth.

The atmosphere in the island during the first half of the nineteenth century was almost one of serendipity. All sectors of the society responded with extraordinary creativity in exploiting the many oppor-

tunities for acquisition of material possessions.<sup>39</sup> Free men sought those material things which indicated wealth and status. The enslaved sought, above all, freedom. Those already with status and wealth acquired more land, slaves, machinery, titles. Those who lacked status and wealth sold their labor or their intellectual skills. The competition locally and internationally produced internal friction, and generated the first of those centrifugal tendencies which eventually shattered the last remnant of Spain's American empire. But the opportunities available, despite the risks, attracted a steady stream of the lesser advantaged from the metropolis. A large number of Basques and Catalans came to Cuba to engage in trade and commerce, in any one of the multifarious interstices of purchase, transportation, supply and distribution opening up in the new society.

Life in Havana [wrote the historian, Manuel Moreno Friginals] acquired a new rhythm. One could see a profound ecological transformation which created an extraordinary world of connections and enterprises subordinated to sugar. It was a world of the slave trade, codfish, jerked beef, rum, molasses, machinery, ration-cloths, wood, land, cattle, transport, financial and commercial operations, grocery stores, the fixing of roads, the great merchant marine, and a host of lesser matters. . . . The unprecedented demand for labor exhausted the local Havana supplies and effected a wide circulation of money among groups until then dispossessed. Even artisans, servants and apprentices, many of whom were free black and mulatto persons, could make money.<sup>40</sup>

The established families—the Calvos, Montalvos, Peñalvers, Arangos, O'Farrills, and Jacotts—dominated and directed the expansion of wealth.<sup>41</sup> From their individual positions in public office, or their cooperative efforts through the Havana Economic Society, they rapidly multiplied their private wealth in friendly competition with one another. Arango y Parreño virtually monopolized the importation of flour from the United States. The Count of Casa Montalvo, Ignacio Montalvo y Ambulodi, built nine *ingenios*; the Marquis of Real Socorro, Antonio José Beitia y Castro, built ten, each with its own contingent of slaves.<sup>42</sup>

The activity of the old oligarchy did not, of course, preclude the participation of the industrious new Iberian immigrant of the nineteenth

39. A number of patents and plans are found in AHN, Fomento. Also, *Cuadro estadístico de la siempre fiel isla de Cuba . . . 1846* (Havana, 1847), pp. 31–33.

40. Moreno Friginals, *El ingenio*, p. 34.

41. R. Shafer, *The Economic Societies in the Spanish World* (New York, 1958); Thomas, *Cuba*, pp. 111–167; Ely, *Cuando reinaba*, pp. 427–629.

42. Friginals, *El ingenio*, p. 16.

century. Many immigrants came. Many became wealthy; and some went back to Spain. Two individuals illustrate the divergent careers in that dizzy period of social and economic expansion and growth: Julián Zulueta and Facundo Bacardí Masó.

Zulueta was born in Anucita, an obscure agricultural village in the Basque province of Alava.<sup>43</sup> The son of a common laborer with no education and no money, he followed the example of thousands of Basques and Spanish of his age and circumstances: he migrated to Cuba. By his own account, Zulueta's goal was to save approximately 2,500 pesos to return to Alava and become a middle-level proprietor, owning anywhere from 10 to 100 hectares.<sup>44</sup> Once in Havana, Zulueta entered the slave trading operation as a middleman, and within twenty years had become one of the richest and most powerful men in Cuba. In 1857 he owned several estates—one of which, Alava, was a show-piece of modernity and efficiency—a large merchandise mart, and stocks in several railroad ventures and banks. A member of the Havana City Council between 1860 and 1876, he served three times as deputy mayor, once as mayor, was president of the notorious Casino Español between 1868 and 1878, and was made Marquis of Alava and Viscount of Casa Blanca. In 1875, he was appointed a lifelong Senator of State, and elected representative from Alava to the Cortes. Between 1856 and 1876, Zulueta was probably the single most influential individual in Cuba.

Facundo Bacardí's career was only slightly less spectacular.<sup>45</sup> He arrived in Santiago de Cuba in 1838, a poor, struggling Catalán, apprenticed to a family firm. Experimenting in the kitchen of his patron's house, Bacardí succeeded in distilling a rum superior in body, flavor, smell and taste to any previously offered on the market. The light amber color and taste, and the virtual absence of ammonia smell, made addicts of an ever-widening circle of *aficionados*. From Santiago the fame of Bacardí's kitchen distillery spread to Havana; from Havana to Madrid, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, London and Shanghai. The local folk in Santiago called the new product "ratbat liquor", but Bacardí's family prospered. A large modern distillery worked in-

43. Data on Zulueta from Gallenga, *Antilles*, pp. 91-118; Santa Cruz, Vol. IV; and his great-grandson, Dn. Alfonso de Otazu y Llana of Madrid. To my knowledge no study has been yet done on the Havana merchant group.

44. Edward Malefakis, *Agrarian Reform and Peasant Revolution in Spain* (New Haven, 1970), p. 15.

45. Max Henríquez Ureña, comp., *El libro de Santiago de Cuba* (Santiago de Cuba, 1931). For some curious reason, the Bacardís are not listed in Santa Cruz' study.

cessantly to satisfy the expanding thirst of a universal group of connoisseurs. Beginning with the Philadelphia centennial exhibition of 1876, the Bacardí label won eleven gold medals in international competition. The Bacardí family derived special pride from a letter written by the secretary of the Spanish king, Alfonso XIII, stating that Bacardí rum had saved the life of the ailing monarch! Cuban rum, like Havana cigars, became internationally known for its high quality.

The Zulueta and Bacardí fortunes represented the acme of mobility and success in the plantation economy. Along with a number of other nineteenth-century immigrants, these were undoubtedly new and self-made men, successfully exploiting the opportunities available to the free white sector in the society. But it is grossly inaccurate to conclude that they either dominated or directed the sugar revolution in Cuba. The sugar revolution merely gave them the means to achieve what would have been impossible in Spain. On the other hand, the old established families, including some of ancient nobility, participated fully in the revolution, expanding their wealth and adapting themselves to the new circumstances.<sup>46</sup>

In Cuba between 1750 and 1850, the society was dynamic, creative, fluid within accepted class boundaries—but far less so across class and racial lines. Nevertheless, as time went on, the criteria for “success” experienced a tremendous inflation as did everything else in the society: land, labor, commodities, and the necessities of life.

The substantial investment required for efficient sugar production and the inadequacy of the banking and economic system combined to handicap the small producer and minor landholder. In the sugar economy, a hundred failures accompanied each startling success. The expanding awareness of wealth articulated eloquently by Francisco Arrango y Parreño, Francisco Frías y Jacott, Cristóbal Madan, Juan Poey, José Antonio Saco, José Montalvo y Castillo, and José García de Arboleya, percolated from the elite to the free masses.<sup>47</sup> The pursuit of

46. The Spanish queen mother owned San Martín, the single largest sugar producing estate in 1860, although the ownership was listed simply, but aptly, as “La Gran Azucarera!”

47. For Arango’s numerous writings, see his *Obras* (Habana, 1952); Francisco Frías y Jacott, *La isla de Cuba: Colección de escritos sobre agricultura, industria, ciencias . . .* (Paris, 1860); C. Madan, *Llamamiento de la isla de Cuba* (New York, 1854); J. A. Saco, *Colección de papeles científicos* (Paris, 1859); J. Montalvo y Castillo, *Tratado sobre la crisis mercantil en el año de 1837 que abraza las causas de decadencia del precioso fruto del azúcar* (Havana, 1859). I have looked at the property and occupational profiles of the free non-white groups in “Cuba”, in D. W. Cohen and J. P. Greene, eds., *Neither Slave nor Free* (Baltimore, 1972), pp. 278–308.

wealth largely obscured a vicious process of social disintegration, polarized ethnic antagonisms and international political and economic dependency which were the hallmarks of the slave society in the Atlantic world.<sup>48</sup>

It is quite obvious from this preliminary examination that the Cuban revolution of the nineteenth century did not find its origins in new men and new wealth. New men and new wealth merely participated in a process which evolved slowly during the eighteenth century and gathered discernible momentum after 1775. Those early inhabitants who had foresight and the good fortune to have had vast expanses of land, were ideally suited to take advantage of the crucial prerequisites for the plantation economy: land and labor. Moreover, their political positions and family associations provided the opportunity to fashion laws which further reinforced their situations, by effectively restricting the avenues for land acquisition. In this way, the Royal Cédula of July 16, 1819, which abolished the urban mercedes, and cast doubts on the legality of all such grants made after 1729, seriously undermined the expansion of small and intermediate landholdings.<sup>49</sup> One result was a tremendous increase in the real estate value of haciendas and mayorazgos. At the same time, the partition of land occurred among a smaller and smaller circle of individuals. Land remained available. Exploitable sugar land rapidly diminished. By 1850 it was relatively easier to purchase a hacienda of 3,000 *caballerías* than an urban *solar* on which to build a house. The progressive restriction of landholding by legal and extralegal means was designed to create a class of landless individuals dependent on the plantation culture. This reality was not only a commentary on wealth: it was also a commentary on the social revolution in Cuban society during the nineteenth century.

48. See Raúl Cepero Bonilla, *Obras históricas* (Havana, 1963), especially his *Azúcar y abolición*.

49. Zamora y Coronado, *Legislación*, VI, 56–57.