

Marriage Patterns of Persons of African Descent in a Colonial Mexico City Parish

EDGAR F. LOVE*

DURING THE THREE CENTURIES OF colonial rule, more than 200,000 African slaves were brought into Mexico.¹ Historians and social scientists have paid relatively scant attention to the fate of the black man in either the colonial or modern period of Mexican history. And although it is generally known that considerable racial mixing, loosely described as *mestizaje*, took place in Hispanic America, scholars have not attempted a detailed analysis of the extent and direction of this miscegenation in terms of actual marriage patterns of persons of African descent. Despite the voluminous colonial marriage records available in the numerous Mexican church archives, few scholars have attempted to delve into such interesting questions as the following:

1. To what extent did Negro slaves tend to marry other Negro slaves rather than persons of other ethnic groups or legal status?
2. Did free Negroes and others of African descent tend to marry within or outside their racial groups and from which racial groups were mates chosen by those who married outside their own groups?
3. What were the marriage patterns of persons having only a little African blood? Did such persons tend to marry within their group or marry upward into the Spanish group?
4. Were interracial marriages between Spaniards and persons having Negro blood rare, and if so, how rare?

This pilot study of marriages involving persons of African descent deals with these basic questions.² The author, utilizing the colonial

* The author is a Professor of Political Science at El Camino College, Torrance, California.

1. Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, *Cuijla: Esbozo etnográfico de un pueblo negro* (México, 1958), p. 8. Dr. Aguirre Beltrán has calculated that during one period, 1595-1640, 88,383 African slaves were introduced legally into Mexico. *La población negra de México, 1519-1810: Estudio etno-histórico* (México, 1946), p. 220.

2. Other types of studies are being made of parish records. *La Academia de*

records of the parish of Santa Veracruz (Mexico City), analyzed most of marriages in which one or both persons were of African descent.³ The marriages studied covered the period 1646-1746, or, say, five generations.

The parish church of Santa Veracruz was founded in 1526 by Hernán Cortés. In 1568 it was finally completed and officially dedicated by the Archbishop Alfonso de Montúfar.⁴ Prior to 1781 the western boundary of the parish extended to Atzacapozalco, including the pueblo of Tacuba, and the southern area of the parish embraced the pueblos of Tacubaya, Mixcoac, San Angel, Coyoacán, Nativitas and San Agustín de las Cuevas (Tlalpan). The parish church was located in the heart of Mexico City, opposite the Alameda.

The basic statistical information for this study was taken from the records on *Casamientos de Castas* (marriages of persons of mixed blood). During the colonial period, the Church usually recorded all marriages, births, and baptisms in two separate parochial books—one for Spaniards and the other for the *castas* (persons of mixed blood). In the parish of Santa Veracruz, Spanish marriages were recorded in the *Casamientos de Españoles*, and *casta* marriages including persons of African descent, in the *Casamientos de Castas*. Marriages listed in the *Casamientos de Españoles* of the parish of Santa Veracruz are not, however, exclusively limited to marriages involving Spaniards or whites. One can find in these volumes numerous examples of Spanish men marrying mestizo and *castizo* women, and a few marriages between Spanish men and mulatto women are similarly to be found there.⁶ In a few remarkable instances, marriages involving only Spaniards are recorded in the *Casamientos de Castas* of the parish of Santa Veracruz.⁷

The colonial priest, in recording marriages, was required to list

Genealogía e Heráldica of Mexico City, for example, is currently engaged in a study involving the use of parish records.

3. The author is deeply indebted to Rev. Ernesto Santillán Ortiz, pastor of the parish church of Santa Veracruz, for granting permission to use the archival records of his parish.

4. Parroquia de la Santa Veracruz, *Ligeros apuntes históricos de la parroquia de la Santa Veracruz de México* (México, 1926), p. 11.

5. The *Casamientos de Españoles* was established in 1568 and the *Casamientos de Castas* in the year 1646.

6. A typical example is the marriage of Carlos de Vayesteros, *español*, to Anna María de Chávez y Rodríguez, *mulata*, March 21, 1730. (Archivo de la Parroquia de la Santa Veracruz, *Casamientos de Españoles*, vol. 9, fol. 101).

7. See, for example, the marriage of Francisco Xavier de Casabajal, *español*, to María Manuela la Pinto, *española*, April 15, 1721. (Archivo de la Parroquia de la Santa Veracruz, *Casamientos de Castas*, vol. 5, fol. 108).

the ethnic status of the couples. An elaborated racial classification scheme, called *casta*, was established by the Spanish authorities and applied by the priests. In the parish of Santa Veracruz the following racial classifications were used in the marriage documents:

- Negro (tended to denote a pure black man)
- Mulato* (Spanish and Negro)
- Mulato blanco* (Spanish and Negro, usually called a *mulato*)
- Mulato prieto* (Negro and *parda*)
- Mulato lobo* (*Pardo* and Indian, commonly called a *lobo*)
- Morisco* (Spanish and *mulato*)
- Mestizo (Spanish and Indian)
- Castizo* (Spanish and Mestizo)
- Indio* (an Indian)
- Indio ladino* (an Indian who had adopted Spanish customs and spoke the Spanish language)
- Lobo* (same as *mulato lobo*)
- Coyote* (usually used to denote a mestizo)
- Chino* (Negro and Indian, or a person born in the Philippines)
- Pardo* (Negro and Indian)
- Moreno* (euphemistic term for a person of African descent)
- Español* (white)

There are many difficulties surrounding the exact meaning of these terms. Take, for instance, the elastic term *chino*. Dr. Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, the leading authority on the Negro in Mexico, maintains that the term was used to denote the offspring of a Negro-Indian couple and that during the 17th and 18th centuries the terms *mulato* and *chino* were synonymous.⁸ But Professor Joaquín Roncal asserts that the word *chino* indicated a child born to an Indian-*lobo* couple.⁹ On the other hand, Nicolás León, who made a detailed study of the colonial caste system, defines a *chino* as a person having twenty-five per cent Indian and seventy-five per cent Negro blood.¹⁰ In the parish records of Santa Veracruz, the term *chino* sometimes denoted a person of Asian descent, born in the Philippines. Unfortunately, the church records do not always show the place of birth of the *chino*, and without an extensive genealogical investigation it is frequently impossible

8. Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, *La población negra de México*, p. 178.

9. Joaquín Roncal, "The Negro Race in Mexico," *HAHR*, XXIV:3 (August, 1940), 533.

10. Nicolás León, *Las castas del México colonial o Nueva España* (México, 1924), p. 20. León also indicated that the term can mean as well a person from the Philippines.

to know whether a given *chino* was of African or Asian descent. Because of the confusion in regard to the use of the term *chino* in the parish of Santa Veracruz, I have only included *chinos* in the analysis of marriage patterns when the *chino* married a person of African descent.¹¹

The term *español* also requires explanation. In colonial Mexico, the term *español* or *blanco* did not necessarily indicate purity of blood. Angel Rosenblat, in his classical study of *mestizaje*, warns that the term

. . . at no time in the history of America implied purity of blood. A mestizo crossed with a Spaniard was called *castizo*; the *castizo* with a Spaniard was known as an *español*; that is to say, one was white who had one-eighth Indian blood. In a similar manner, the crossing of the mulatto with white produced a *cuarterón*; the *cuarterón* with white a *quinterón*; the *quinterón* with white produced a white; that is to say that one was white who had one-sixteenth Negro blood.¹²

The student of interracial marriages must also contend with the fact that the priests did not always record the ethnic status of both persons in the marriage records. Frequently the terms "*vecino*" and "*natural*" were the only designations used in the parish records of Santa Veracruz to describe one of the partners of a marriage. Frequently the term *vecino* merely meant a resident of a particular city or town, e.g., Francisco Joseph Flores, *mulato libre, vecino de esta ciudad*." On the other hand, a given individual simply might be described as a "*vecino de esta ciudad*," without indicating the *casta* of the person. The *vecino*, whose racial status was not recorded by the priest, is included in this study only when the other party to the marriage was of African descent.

A further complication arose in those instances where the priest used the term *natural*, but did not specifically indicate the race of the party. Generally speaking, the Spaniards regarded the Indians as *naturales*. Professor Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán describes the Spanish view of the Indian by pointing out that "The Indians were classified as *naturales*, without reason. Their culture kept them submerged in

11. In view of the fact that there were a small number of marriages involving *chinos* recorded in the *Casamientos de Castas*, the adoption of the cited criterion would have an insignificant effect on the delineation of the marriage patterns of persons of African descent.

12. Angel Rosenblat, *La población indígena y el mestizaje en América* (2 vols., Buenos Aires, 1954), II, 137. Rosenblat was referring to the legal definition for white and Negro. Passing was a common practice in colonial Mexico, and some fair-skinned mestizos were able to pass themselves off as white.

nature."¹³ But the term *natural*, as used in the *Casamientos de Castas* of Santa Veracruz, did not necessarily mean an Indian. The priests often described individuals as "*mulato natural*," "*morisco natural*," "*indio natural*," "*lobo natural*," "*castizo natural*," etc. In other instances, the term *natural* was simply employed to indicate the place of birth, e.g., "Ana Neña, *española, natural y vecina desta ciudad*." Undoubtedly many of the *naturales* married to persons of African descent were Indians, but on the basis of the marriage records, one can only speculate as to the race of those who were simply described by the term *natural*.

In the parish records of Santa Veracruz, the ethnic status of approximately three per cent of the persons marrying individuals of African descent was not indicated. The term *vecino* was used to describe nine males and eleven females; thirty-one males and twenty-seven females were listed as *naturales*; and the remaining twenty-one were unclassified by the priests of Santa Veracruz. Apparently the priests had difficulty in assigning a *casta* classification to these ninety-nine persons and resorted to vague terminology or simply ignored racial groupings. As all of this group of individuals married persons of African descent, it was logical to record these marriages in the *Casamientos de Castas*.

The focus of this paper is on legitimate unions, recorded and performed by the priests of the church. It must be pointed out, however, that many Negroes and mulattoes, especially slaves, would have had difficulty in securing money for the expense of marriage, unless they had masters willing to assume this cost. As a consequence of this financial difficulty and for other reasons, a large percentage of the persons of African descent did not get married. The increase of the Negro population of colonial Mexico was, to a considerable extent, due to the frequency of extra-legal unions and the resultant birth of many illegitimate children. A spot check of the baptismal records of the *castas* indicated that illegitimate births also were common in the parish of Santa Veracruz.

Marriage records of the *castas* are of special interest since the Spanish rulers of colonial Mexico discouraged Africans from marrying outside their racial group. In 1527 the king of Spain declared:¹⁴

13. Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, *Medicina y magia: El proceso de aculturación en la estructura colonial* (México, 1963), p. 76.

14. *Recopilación de leyes de los reynos de las Indias mandadas imprimir y publicar por la magestad católica del rey don Carlos II* (3 vols., 4th ed., Madrid, 1943), ley 5, libro VII, tit. V.

In so far as possible, Negro men who marry should endeavor to marry Negro women. And we declare that these, and the others who are slaves, do not become free because they have married, even though this be the will of the master.

In view of the fact that the Spanish brought to Mexico three times as many Negro males as females, it would have been difficult to have required that all Negroes marry within their racial group. Numerous efforts, however, were made to keep Negroes from marrying or living with Indian women. Negroes and persons of African descent, with some exceptions, were prohibited from living in Indian villages. An elaborate, but none too successful, scheme was established to separate the Indians from the whites and Negroes. But unlike the case in the British colonies, the Negro in Hispanic America was not specifically forbidden to marry outside his racial group.

During the period 1646-1746, the priests of the parish of Santa Veracruz married 1,662 couples, of whom one or both parties of the marriages were persons of African descent.¹⁵ In terms of the ethnic status of the 3,324 persons involved in these marriages, 2,378 (71.5%) of the individuals were of African ancestry, 847 (25.5%) were of non-African origin, and ninety-nine (3.0%) were not given a *casta* classification by the priests. The overwhelming majority, approximately 98%, of the persons listed in the marriage records as having Negroid blood were classified by the priests as Negroes, mulattoes, or *moriscos*. Specifically, 1,748 persons marrying during the period covered by this study were reported to be mulattoes (996 males and 752 females), 329 were Negroes (207 males and 122 females), and 234 were *moriscos* (118 males and 116 females). The remaining persons of African descent included the following: eight *mulatos prietos*, thirty-two *lobos*, five *pardos*, five *morenos*, and seventeen *chinos*.

One of the remarkable features of the marriage patterns of persons of African descent in the parish of Santa Veracruz was the fact that 847 individuals of non-Negroid ancestry married persons of color. The non-African partners of these marriages included 522 mestizos, 126 *castizos*, 116 Indians, 6 *indios ladinos*, and 77 *españoles*. Among the non-Negroid groups, mestizos displayed a greater tendency to marry persons of African descent than did Indians and Spaniards. It is interesting to note that 126 *castizos*, who in view of the harsh restrictions imposed on persons having African blood normally would have been expected to marry other *castizos* or Spaniards, chose instead to

15. All of the statistics of this study are based on the Archivo de la Parroquia de la Santa Veracruz, *Casamientos de Castas*, vols. 1-7.

marry persons of African descent. In choosing spouses having Negroid blood, these *castizos* lessened the social mobility of the children resulting from such unions. Likewise, the marriage of seventy-seven Spaniards to persons of African ancestry represented a departure from the expected Spanish norm.

The marriage record of the parish reveals that in the case of 52.2% of the marriages involving persons of African descent either the husband or the wife did not have any Negroid blood, and only in 47.8% of the 1,622 marriages were both parties of African descent. It is obvious that the efforts of Spanish officials to encourage persons of African descent to marry within their *casta* group was not a marked success in the parish of Santa Veracruz.

The Negroes of Santa Veracruz exhibited a marked tendency to marry either Negroes or mulattoes. In the case of the 207 male Negroes marrying during the period covered by this study, approximately 46.3% (96) married Negro women and 25.1% (62) selected mulatto mates. The remaining forty-nine Negro males married non-African women. Among the Negro males of the latter group, twenty-three married *mestizas*, fifteen wed Indians, seven chose *moriscas*, one took a Spanish wife, one selected a *loba*, one elected to marry a *castiza*, and one married a woman whose *casta* status was not shown in the marriage records.

The 122 Negro women of the parish who married demonstrated an even greater propensity to select a Negro or mulatto spouse. Nearly 78.6% (96) of the Negro females married Negroes, and 16.4% (20) selected mulattoes. Only six Negro females opted to marry other than mulattoes or Negroes. Among the latter group of female Negroes, two married *mestizos*, two wed *chinos*, and two selected mates of unlisted *casta*.

The marriage patterns of the male and female mulattoes was more diversified than that of their Negro counterparts. Male mulattoes of the parish were only slightly more prone to choose a woman of African descent than one of non-African ancestry. During the period 1646-1746, 996 male mulattoes married, and of this number 532 chose wives from the African *casta* groups, whereas 464 selected wives outside of the Negroid castes. The male mulatto, in selecting a non-Negroid bride, gave first preference to *mestizas*, some 284 marrying women of this *casta*, and second preference to *castizas*, with eighty-six men marrying women from this group. Approximately 42.3% (421) of the male mulattoes chose mulatto wives. Male mulattoes, however, were not apt to marry Negro women. A mere 2.1% (20) of the male

mulattoes of the parish elected to marry Negroes. In terms of the general tendencies of the mulatto males, about 70.8% (705) elected to marry either a *mulata* or a *mestiza*, with 42.2% selecting *mulata* wives and 28.6% choosing *mestiza* wives.

The marriage patterns of the female mulatto were not very different from those of the male mulatto. Of the 752 marriages involving female mulattoes, 73.5% married either a mulatto or a mestizo. The female mulatto showed a slightly greater tendency to marry Negroes, in that 8.3% (62) took their husbands from this *casta* as compared with 2.1% for the male mulattoes. On the other hand, forty-one mulatto women married men whose *casta* status was not indicated in the marriage records. A majority of women of this group married men who were listed as *naturales*, probably Indians.

The 234 male and female *moriscos* of the parish displayed an interesting pattern of marriage which, to a considerable extent, defied the norm that one could have expected to characterize this group. Because of their fair complexion, the *moriscos* were in a favorable position to pass for white.¹⁶ *Moriscos* had only one-fourth Negro blood, and if they married Spanish or *castiza* women, the children resulting from such unions would be in an even better position to emerge from the *castas* altogether. To be sure, approximately 16.9% (20) of the 118 male *moriscos* of the parish were able to wed Spanish women and 12.7% (15) found *castiza* mates, while none of the male *moriscos* entered into wedlock with Negroes, *mulata prietas*, *lobas* or *chinas*, and only three chose Indian brides. On the other hand, about 18.6% (22) of the male *moriscos* did select mulatto women as their spouses, and the children of these couples remained among the Afromestizo population of Mexico City. And 46.5% of the male *moriscos*, avoiding this tendency toward *mulataje*, chose either a *mestiza* or a *morisca* wife. Specifically, twenty-three *moriscos* selected *morisca* brides and thirty-two wed *castizas*.

The 116 *morisca* women of the parish exhibited a predisposition to seek a mulatto, mestizo, or *morisco* husband. Approximately 75.0% (87) of the female *moriscas* chose husbands from the above three groups, with 40.2% (35) selecting mulatto mates, 33.3% (29) marrying mestizos, and 26.5% choosing *moriscos*. Only seven *moriscas* of

16. *Moriscos* who were slaves were in an inferior position, "since their master found ways to make their situation evident, branding them with hot irons in places where the insignia of servitude could not for a moment be hidden. The faces of many of them were completely covered with brand legends saying: 'I am the slave of señor Marqués de Valle,' 'I am the slave of doña Francisca Carrillo de Peralta.'" Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, "Races in Seventeenth Century Mexico," *Phylon*, VI:3 (1945), 215.

the parish of Santa Veracruz married Negroes, and a mere three were wed to Indians. It is rather surprising to note that female *moriscas* were not as apt as males to attempt to cross the color line by marrying persons with higher percentages of white blood. In the case of the *moriscas*, a mere 8.6% (10) chose *castizo* husbands and only one married a white man. The female *moriscas* in no instance married *mulatos prietos*, *pardos*, or *morenos*, but two did wed *chinos*.

The *Casamientos de Castas* revealed that during the period 1646-1746, only thirty-two *lobos*, seventeen *chinos*, eight *mulatos prietos*, five *morenos*, and 5 *pardos* were married by the priests of the parish of Santa Veracruz. The persons of these five groups numbered only sixty-seven, consisting of thirty-seven males and thirty females. In view of the small number of marriages involving these five *castas*, no detailed attempt has been made to analyze their marriage patterns. A few interesting facts, however, were observed regarding these groups. Only in three instances did persons in them marry Negroes. Indians also avoided marrying into these groups. A majority of the marriages of *lobos* and *chinos* involved free persons of these two groups who married free individuals of other groups.

The marriage records of the parish of Santa Veracruz also provide the social scientist with an interesting opportunity to study the marriage patterns of slaves and free persons. During the period 1646-1746, a majority, approximately 74.6%, of the 2,378 persons of African descent who married were free individuals, and only 21.2% were slaves. The slaves married by the priests of the parish consisted of the following: 159 male Negroes, 88 female Negroes, 188 male mulattoes, 65 female mulattoes, 2 female *moriscas*, 2 *mulatos prietos*, 3 *chinos*, and a *moreno*. Priests of the parish of Santa Veracruz, however, failed to record the legal status, free or slave, of 4.2% of the individuals of African descent. It would be logical to assume that the ninety-nine individuals of this group were free, or that the priests had valid reasons to doubt the status of such persons.

An analysis of the marriages in terms of the legal status of the couples reveals that in the instance of 1,120 marriages both the husband and wife were free. Mulattoes constituted 54.6% of this marital group. The free male mulatto's first choice for a wife was a free mulatto woman, while his second and third choices were *mestizas* and Indian women respectively. Only two free mulatto men elected to marry free Negro women. In contrast, some thirty-nine free mulatto males increased their social mobility by marrying free Spanish women. A majority of the free mulatto women, 291 out of 516, chose mulatto

mates; forty-five married *castizos*; twenty-two wed *moriscos*; and 122 selected mestizos. Surprisingly, only thirteen free mulatto women married free Negro men. The marriage patterns of the free mulatto, especially the men, definitely revealed the tendency of this group to favor interracial marriages.

The number of marriages involving free Negroes was very small. In the cases of the nine free Negro women so identified, all but one married either a free Negro or free mulatto male. The marriage patterns of the thirty-three free Negro males were more varied, in that they selected mates from all of the *casta* groups except *mulatas prietas*, *lobas*, *chinas*, *pardas*, and *morenas*. However, in only two instances did a free Negro man marry an Indian woman.

In view of the fact that almost all of the *moriscos* of the parish of Santa Veracruz were free, one is not surprised to find that the *moriscos* preferred not to lower their social status by marrying slaves. During the period of one hundred years covered by this study, only two marriages were recorded of *moriscos* marrying slaves. One of these marriages involved a free *morisco* choosing a *morisca* slave as his wife, and the other marriage was between a free mulatto male and a slave *morisca*. Free *moriscos*, male and female, studiously avoided marrying persons having dark skins.

Despite the fact that the slaves of colonial Mexico were subjected to numerous discriminatory laws, it was possible for the slave, as a consequence of marriage, to improve the status of his children.¹⁷ In view of the fact that the black slaves were not required by law to marry a slave, it was logical for these individuals to prefer free spouses if they could find them. This was particularly true of the male slave, because by marrying a free woman he would ensure that his children would be born free. The status of the child was dependent on the legal status of the mother. In the parish records of Santa Veracruz, 508 persons of African descent and listed as slaves married during the years 1646-1747.

The 253 mulattoes constituted the largest group of slaves whose marriages were recorded. A majority of the male mulatto slaves, 151 out of 188, sought to improve their lot by marrying free women. However, they avoided marrying free Negro women; only three male mulatto slaves elected to wed such women. On the other hand, sixty-

17. A description of the repressive legislation against the Negro can be found in William H. Dusenberry, "Discriminatory Aspects of Legislation in Colonial Mexico," *The Journal of Negro History*, XXXII:3 (July, 1948), 284-302; and Edgar F. Love, "Negro Resistance to Spanish Rule in Colonial Mexico," *The Journal of Negro History*, LII:4 (April, 1967), 89-103.

eight of the male mulatto slaves married free *mulata* women, forty-three chose *mestiza* wives, seventeen wed Indians, eleven picked *castiza* brides, five selected Spanish spouses, two elected to marry *lobas*, and two decided in favor of *moriscas*. The male mulatto slave clearly tended to favor marrying free *mulatas*, *mestizas*, or Indians.

Mulatto female slaves encountered slightly more difficulty than male mulatto slaves in marrying a free spouse. Approximately 38.5% (25) of the slave mulatto women were able to find free husbands, with sixteen marrying free men of African descent and nine being wed to husbands outside of the Negroid *casta* groups. One of the mulatto women slaves was even able to marry a Spaniard.

The Negro slaves of the parish of Santa Veracruz apparently encountered more difficulty in trying to marry free persons. Slightly more than one-third of the 247 number of male and female Negroes listed by the priests as slave were able to marry free individuals. In the case of female Negro slaves, only ten found free husbands, and, with one exception, their husbands were either free Negroes or mulattoes. The Negro male slaves was slightly more successful than the Negro female slave in being able to marry a free person. Seventy-six male Negro slaves (48.4%) did find free wives. Approximately 78.9% of these Negro male slaves chose to marry free mulattoes, mestizos, or Indian wives. Only 15.7% of the male Negro slaves elected to wed free Negro women.

Relatively few free men of the parish married slaves. Specifically, only thirty-seven men listed as free elected to marry slaves, and a majority of the free persons of this group were mulattoes, twenty-one out of the thirty-seven men of this marital group. A mere ten men of non-Negroid blood (eight mestizos, one *castizo*, and one Spaniard) chose to marry slaves.

Most slaves, of course, married other slaves. Approximately 6.7% (113) of the marriages of persons of African descent in the parish of Santa Veracruz during the period 1646-1746 involved male slaves wedding female slaves. The women of this group, with one exception, were either Negro or mulatto. A majority (67) of these women were Negroes. In the case of the male slaves of this marital group, 112 were Negro or mulatto and one was a *chino*. The eighty Negro male slaves of the above group, however, represented 50.3% of the male slaves marrying during the period of this study. Negro male slaves, therefore, tended to marry other slaves of African descent. The above pattern was even more pronounced for the female Negro slave, in

that 84% of this group of slaves married either Negro or mulatto slaves.

The legal status of one of the parties was not indicated in 159 marriages involving persons of African descent. This category of marriages was distributed as follows: in the case of 64 marriages the husband's legal status was not indicated and the wife was free, in 5 marriages the husband's legal status was not shown and the wife was a slave, in 49 marriages the husband was free and the wife of unknown status, in 8 marriages the husband was a slave and the wife's status was not listed, and in 33 marriages neither husband's nor wife's legal status was revealed in the marriage records. The most conspicuous fact to be drawn from the marriage patterns of this group is that only five men and eight women of African descent, whose legal status was not indicated, married slaves.

The priests, in recording marriages, were required to indicate the place of birth of the couples. Negroes in colonial Mexico were classified as either *criollos* (born in America) or *bozales* (African born). In the case of the 207 Negro males marrying in the parish, 59 were born in Africa. The marriage records listed these African-born Negroes either by area of origin (Congo and Angola) or by tribes (Malinke, Malemba, and Mandingo). A majority of the *bozales* (41) were from Angola. This fact is not surprising, since a large percentage of the African slaves in colonial Mexico were brought from this area of Africa.¹⁸ As might be expected, the *bozales*, most of whom were slaves, tended to marry Negro slave women.

Scholars have tended to take the position that few Spaniards in colonial Mexico married persons of African descent. For example, the famous Mexican historian Lucas Alamán claimed that it was rare for a Spaniard to marry a person having African blood.¹⁹ But no one has attempted to ascertain precisely the rarity of such marriages. During the period 1646-1746, 4.6% of the marriages in the parish of Santa Veracruz involving persons of African descent were Afro-Spanish weddings. The seventy-seven Afro-Spanish marriages taking place in the parish of Santa Veracruz were as follows:

Negro-Española	1
Mulato-Española	44
Mulato prieto-Española	2

18. Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán maintains that in seventeenth century colonial Mexico, a majority of the African-born slaves were from the Congo and Angola. *La población negra de México*, p. 245.

19. Lucas Alamán, *Historia de Méjico* (4 vols, 2nd ed., México, 1968), I, 25.

<i>Mulato lobo-Española</i>	3
<i>Morisco-Española</i>	20
<i>Pardo-Española</i>	2
<i>Español-Mulata</i>	4
<i>Español-Morisca</i>	1

As indicated above, the greater number of Afro-Spanish marriages involved free mulatto males marrying Spanish women. In all but five of the Afro-Spanish marriages, the Spanish partner was a woman. One would have expected more *moriscos* than mulattoes to have married Spanish women, but this was not the case.

Five mulatto slaves wed Spanish women, and one Spaniard married a female mulatto slave. One can only imagine what reasons and circumstances would have led Spanish women to elect to marry slaves. In any event, the marriage records do not suggest that the mates chosen by these Spanish women were not their personally owned slaves.

As noted earlier, the Afro-Spanish marriages listed in this study, however, do not represent the total number of such marriages in the parish during the one hundred year period. All marriages studied by the author were taken from the *Casamientos de Castas* of the parish of Santa Veracruz. A spot check of the *Casamientos de Españoles* of the parish revealed that some marriages of Spaniards to persons of African ancestry were recorded in the registry of Spanish marriages. The total number of Afro-Spanish marriages, therefore, probably was slightly greater than indicated in the *Casamientos de Castas*.

This analysis of marriages of persons of African descent represents a pilot study. Theoretically, it would be possible, based on available records in the other parishes of Mexico City, to ascertain the marriage patterns of almost all persons of Negroid blood marrying in the colonial bishopric of Mexico. It must be realized, however, that this type of study sheds light on only one aspect of interracial contacts. In view of extensive concubinage and other types of illicit sexual intercourse among the three races of Mexico, it is obvious that marriage was not the sole or even major basis for the process of *mestizaje* and *mulataje*.