INTRODUCTION

Colonialism, Social Compacts, and the Taxonomy of Poverty

On May 1, 1722, the Bishop of Quito, Luis Francisco Romero, wrote the King of Spain, Philip V, bemoaning the plight of many poor urban residents.[1] According to Romero, the number of "pobres mendigos" (poor beggars) had greatly increased in recent years. Even though the poor could be found "everywhere," it seemed to him that more of them could be found in the city of Quito than elsewhere. Dressed in mere sackcloth, beggars had no more than "four kernels of corn or barley to eat," and "they slept wherever the night fell upon them." Without homes, they traveled from one parish to another seeking alms. They lay exposed to hunger, the elements, and public shame. Even more alarming, their eternal souls lay at risk, for many knew neither the sacraments nor how to confess. Romero presented the example of one poor man of seventy years who could not even make the sign of the cross. He lived "like a heathen among Christians." The bishop politely requested financial aid from the king to provide for a religious assistant to care for the poor, for both their temporal and their spiritual welfare.

Bishop Romero's letter to Philip V leads us into the little-explored subject of colonial urban poverty.[2] As centers of bureaucracy, commerce, and nascent industry, Spanish colonial cities were the loci of both great wealth and great disparity. Romero's words elicit a sensitive portrayal of the misery, dependence, and destitution that confronted city folk, and the distress that these conditions provoked among ecclesiastical and secular authorities. Contemporary travelers further corroborated Romero's account of the inequities of urban life, by noting the opulence of Quito's grand mansions, the gold- and silver-drenched churches, and the lively festivities at the fringes of which street urchins, in rags and without abode, solicited the charity of others.[3]

In addition to conveying the hardships faced by Quito's lower-class residents, Romero draws our attention to the responses to poverty. Implicit in his letter to the crown lay a social contract, or compact: the moral imperative of the church and state to care for paupers. The seventy-year-old pauper's outstretched hand, cupped to receive food or perhaps small coins, pointed to a long-standing tradition of alms-giving dating back to medieval Europe, and to a precedent for what were the rules governing relations between the poor, the wealthy, the church, and the state.[4] All parties held related notions of mutual rights and obligations framed in a culturally pervasive argument about poverty. In return for alms, the "pobre mendigo" would pray on the behalf of his benefactor, easing the patron's path to heaven. To give to the poor was to acknowledge a spiritual bond and a human obligation.

At its core, to give was an expression of power. The act of extending alms to the poor and the bonds formed through alms-giving defined the contours of a community and who within that community held a moral claim. Patron and pauper held rights and duties as community members, from the level of the church stoop to that of the royal crown. Bishop Romero's letter to the king captures well the relationship between poverty and power and the necessity to care for the poor as a way to strengthen both the social fabric and the legitimacy of the sovereign over his far-flung subjects.

In this book, I follow Romero's lead, by making the poor, and the social compacts that called for their relief, my central concern. I follow the plight of the poor in mature colonial Quito—capital and Audiencia—from the apex of late-colonial society to the rumblings of Independence. I ask how the exigencies of colonialism created changing social compacts over poverty; that is to say, I am interested in how the negotiation over colonial governance informed the meanings of "poverty" and the means to alleviate that poverty. As such, this study is not about the material successes and failures of Quito in the Spanish empire; rather, it explores imperial and local attitudes about poverty, and the ways in which the response to poverty by various actors, including the poor themselves, shaped the social compacts upon which colonial governance lay. At its heart, this study posits that poverty held many meanings for the various colonial actors, and that these meanings were the sites of shifting practices and negotiation over the right to rule. There are three major arguments, each one reflective of larger social and political trends throughout the empire in the late-colonial period: first, poverty is a condition as well as a social construct; second, different groups exercised agency in claiming and winning recognition of their poverty and the assistance of the king and the colonial state; and finally, that the state altered its role

over time, becoming an active guarantor of welfare and inadvertently undermining the compacts upon which the right to rule lay.

Poverty, though "everywhere," as Romero noted, is not static. Both the domain and meanings of poverty changed over the course of the colonial era, and the pauper in the church portal suffered want and confusion because of this. In 1722, the beggar seems to have gone unaided, although he harked back to a medieval understanding of the poor as the rightful recipients of assistance. Bishop Romero recognized the material and spiritual poverty of this particular man and that of many other *quiteño* residents. By conveying their needs to King Philip V, the bishop indicated a rising modern role of state authorities in poor relief, while also calling upon the traditional paternalistic role of the king as the guardian of his vassals. Not quite ready to take up such a central role in poor relief, Philip V pointed back to the bishop, reminding him of the church's responsibility to succor this beggar out of the ecclesiastical coffers. Neither Romero nor Philip V questioned the pauper's worthiness as someone deserving of a handout; rather, their debate was over who would foot the bill. How the beggar perceived his own worthiness is not stated in the colonial documents, though the act of begging suggests that he felt he had a right to seek alms in a public and sacred space.

More than a half-century later, had the same pauper solicited alms publicly, the debates over who was "deserving" and of what kinds of aid would have been quite different. The man might still have begged in public, suggesting the continued reciprocity between patron and pauper. However, as a consequence of his alms-seeking efforts, the "pobre mendigo" might have been placed in the newly erected poorhouse against his will, picked up during one of the city's police rounds or perhaps by a priest, according to new practices of incarcerating itinerate beggars who were deemed "vagrants." Poor relief—for the little it was—still functioned; and the debates about who was worthy of poor relief likewise remained. But in both cases, their workings had changed: the "pobre mendigo" now skated between being seen by the colonial authorities as a member of the Christian community worthy of alms and as a social pariah worthy of enclosure.

The colonial church and state altered their response to the poor. In Spanish America, unlike in Spain, the monarch acted as the head of both church and state under the *patronato real*, thereby overlapping religious and secular obligations; the letter by Bishop Romero to Philip V evinces this tension between the two wings of governance. The figure of the king jumped between Iberian and colonial expectations. Over the course of the colonial period, and most dramatically at the height of a series of state-led changes known as the Bourbon reforms (1759–1808),

the secular wing of colonial governance adopted a more active role in the lives of vassals. The centralizing state took up the responsibility of poor relief (*beneficencia*), usurping in part the role of the church and supplanting more informal and spiritually based acts of charity (*caritas*). Thus, late-eighteenth-century Spanish America witnessed the emergence of a pension fund for widows, a public charitable pawnshop (the Monte de Piedad), poorhouses, and other initiatives directed toward abating colonial subjects' penury.

While similar poor-relief reforms took place in Europe—specifically, during the poor-relief debates of the early modern period and later during the rise of the state and the proletarianization of labor—European discourses on poverty played out differently in the local setting of Quito. The kinds of compacts formed and the portion of the local population assisted differed from Europe. Colonialism disturbed the flow of charity between the recipients of alms and their gracious donors, and between a bountiful king and his needy subjects.[5] The unique ethnic spectrum of colonial Spanish America literally colored poor-relief efforts: socio-racial categories inflected local ideas of whom among the poor were deserving and undeserving of aid and for what ends. Quito's diverse population composed of Spaniards, Andeans, Africans, and people of mixed descent posed problems for Iberian-designed poor-relief measures that did not take into consideration the caste hierarchy of colonial society.[6] The labor and taxation demands of the colonial state necessitated a rigid color/class hierarchy; therefore, a base of laboring poor had to remain, drawn from Indian, African, and *casta* groups. Spaniards should not have been poor, for their race secured them economic privilege. Thus, in this colonial society based on a hierarchal racial or caste system (*sistema de castas*), conflict arose between the general ideals of poor relief and the real economic demands of colonial rule: not all the colony's poor were members of the Christian community in need of assistance, and not all the poor were the "poor of Christ."

That the poor are "always among us" and that poverty is omnipresent perhaps explains in part why so few historians have considered poverty as a category in itself worthy of analysis: poverty is so evident that it goes unnoticed.[7] Understanding poverty and the poor is a great challenge, let alone addressing how to alleviate poverty. Historians have had trouble simply in defining who the poor were, as scholars seem to have been trapped in the moral pathos and skewed euphemisms of the era, which made the poor the dredges of society, vehicles of salvation and patronized victims all at the same time. The reasons for such divergent visions are a reflection of the many kinds of poverty and the place of poor people within the larger community. In the case of Spanish American historiography, few historians have thought through what

"poverty" *means* in a colonial setting. Economic studies of supposed and real recessions and downturns abound.[8] Historians have contributed to our knowledge of economically weak and defenseless groups—*los miserables*, or the wretched among the indigenous peoples and slaves.[9] Some writers have taken pen to paper to depict the mostly unwilling subjects of social assistance and social control, such as the underclass of urban miscreants.[10] Others have made the urban plebe the protagonist of their social histories, considering the implications of impoverishment upon gender relations.[11] Research prods us to consider the poor whites of colonial society, the unanticipated paupers in a society that was designed to prevent the immiseration of Spanish peoples.[12] Yet, to date, few studies have asked what poverty meant in colonial Spanish America, or what poverty tells us about colonialism. How did different kinds of poverty function as categories that bolstered, or undermined, the colonial state and colonial governance?[13] Much about the social and political meanings of immiseration remains to be explored. In a society rife with racial, generational, gendered, and class divisions, where the system of domination—colonialism—functioned precisely because of hierarchical difference, poverty merits our consideration.

THE MANY MEANINGS OF POVERTY

Let us return to the letter described at the beginning of this chapter. Bishop Romero's observations are quite unique, especially in an age that displayed a deep indifference to the lower classes so long as they provided their labor and practiced some semblance of the Christian faith. Much like today, people in colonial Spanish America turned a blind eye to poverty until they were directly confronted by it. As a consequence of this myopia, the sources that might invite historians to study the lives of the urban poor are limited. Thus, when I first came across Bishop Romero's letter in the Archivo General de Indias, in Seville, Spain, I was struck by the richness of his description of poverty. It seemed to me that I might be able to conduct a type of ethnography from within the archives, much as my modern-minded colleagues practice ethnography in the streets of Quito today. I could picture the paupers about whom Romero worried, and I could sympathize with his desire to see to some sort of provision for them. Heartened by this possibility, I came to the conclusion that through reading a diverse group of sources, I might indeed peer into the past lives of the poor. If a historian cast her net widely enough, I hoped, the less fortunate members of colonial society might be brought to the surface in rich detail.

The work that follows is the product of my optimism. Soon after embarking on my investigation into the urban poor that Romero had described in his letter, however, I came to realize just how difficult it would be to study the poor and poverty. In one type of letter, such as that of Juan de Espinosa, I might encounter an unemployed, blind pauper who lacked the economic means to afford the most basic necessities of life—reasonably regular food to ward off hunger, shelter and clothing to protect against exposure to the elements and to avoid the social stigma of not being able to care for oneself; that is, an individual for whom poverty meant economic destitution.[14] In another letter, I might meet a most unlikely poor person, such as Don Tomás Losada Quiñones, who bemoaned his poverty but who nevertheless enjoyed a large track of land in the fertile valley of Chillo Gallo.[15] The wide spectrum of individuals crying poverty raised a whole host of questions: Who were the supposedly poor people? What did it mean to be "poor"? Why does it seem that so many people of varying economic means spoke of poverty? Did poverty mean one thing for some and something else for others?

The more I tried to study the poor, the more the scene got crowded by people claiming poverty and seeking assistance. These people did not seem to be the "pueblo bajo," or street urchins, that I had thought I would encounter, but rather they were people of Spanish descent and of some economic means. These "not-so-poor" poor wrote the monarch and the president of the *audiencia*, lamenting the hard times they were enduring and beseeching aid. At first, I wished to brush aside these "false" poor (by which I meant the "not destitute," rather than the "idle," as the false poor were understood at the time) and get back to the business of looking for the needy members of society. Eventually, as the presence of the not-so-poor in the archival documents became clearer to me, I came to realize that I suffered from my own myopic vision. I had assumed that the poor would be made up of only those who were economically and politically marginalized, similar to the modern sense of that term. Yet, what I found before me was a diverse group—the Poor—a socially constructed entity, the very kind of thing that historians like to ponder. Included in the Poor were not just the *economic poor*, who suffered from want, but also the *social poor*, a group of people whose lives did not match their expectations. Thus, in colonial times, a blind man and a landowner could both convincingly claim poverty, and they could both turn to the colonial state for assistance.

Two sets of poor people emerge as the protagonists in this study of colonial poverty: we may call them the "economic poor" and the "social poor," though these expressions were not used during the colonial era. There existed poverty as a form of economic destitution, in the sense

familiar to us today. These were poor people, like the old pauper at the church portal, who resided at the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder. In a colonial setting, Indians, mestizos, and peoples of African descent lived close to bare subsistence. They were the *miserables*, or "the wretched ones."[16] According to colonial logic, it was acceptable for them to be poor, for they were the "degraded" folk of little honor in this multiracial, colonial society, who were expected to form the economic poor of laborers and tributaries. Their poverty, as such, did not contravene the principles underpinning colonialism. The presence among the poor of Spaniards (mainly American-born Creoles), however, contradicted social and normative precepts. Poor Spaniards posed a problem to a hierarchal social structure, in which people of Spanish descent were supposed to reside at the top.

An important corollary about the poor complicates matters even further: the categories of the economic and social poor do not fit neatly into colonial-era notions of who might be "deserving" or "undeserving" of aid. The economic poor were considered worthy of certain kinds of aid, based on their separate juridical status as laborers and tributaries: at times of bad droughts, earthquakes, disease, or in moments when their very survival as a people or their land base were in danger, *then* the state would offer aid. (This was a kind of do-not-kill-the-goose-that-lays-the-golden-egg approach to poor relief.) Aid to the social poor, however, was done with a different spirit in mind: in a colonial setting poor relief was not so much about containing the poor or alleviating misery as it was about maintaining privilege. An underlying function of social assistance, then, was to fortify a failing social structure that gave rise to poor Creoles. Thus, the economic poor were "deserving" of some kinds of aid at some times, but they were "undeserving" of other kinds of assistance, such as pensions, land grants, or labor disbursements; these were reserved for the social poor among "respectable" folk.

Crown paternalism toward the economic poor, or *miserables*, did not attempt to alleviate the basic condition of poverty via pensions, relief from tribute payment, or through the provision of land grants. Paternalism for the wretched addressed their spiritual condition and sought to prevent the excessive exploitation of *miserables* by powerful people. As one Spanish jurist wrote, with regard to the wretched Indians, they were "the feet of the body of the republic and as the feet carry the weight of all the body, it is in the interest of the body to look after the feet and make sure that they are shoed and cared for in order to prevent stumbling that could cause a fall, and then put in danger the rest of the body, and even the head."[17] "Shoe-giving" might include the protection of a minimum

land base for Indians, subsidized hospital care, and limits placed on the exploitative living and working conditions of slaves. The *miserables* were assigned legal protectors to pursue justice and to resolve problems of notorious abuse or public disorder (extortion, marital discord, community conflict, and the like). Disciplinary, or social-control measures, might further complement this paternalism when the poor turned into threats ("criminals" prone to drunkenness, riot, and other forms of disorderly conduct). Any form of economic help as such thus came to them in individual acts of charity by the wealthy, not from the state. Only at times of extreme hardship, such as epidemics and drought, did the state step forward to provide direct financial assistance.

In sum, the economic poor—those who lived close to the edge of subsistence—were considered to be part of the socially expected and acceptable milieu of colonial society as long as they were descended from those who made up the "debased" or dishonorable strata of that society. They posed a problem only if they created a nuisance and it became necessary to exercise social control over them (as in the case of masses of riotous urban poor, aimless drunkards littering the streets, and vagrants), or if their masters engaged in ruinous excess that might contravene the principle of protecting Indian producers that was embodied in crown regulation and Spanish paternalism. When the state "assisted" the *miserables*, this help most often took the form of social control, which might include forced labor in one of the cities' many bakeries (*panaderías*) or workshops (*obrajes*), or in the region's defense forts (*presidios*); enclosure in a poorhouse; or deposit in a respectable home. Because of the color/class/honor scheme of colonial society, the economic poverty of the wretched did not undermine the colonial structure; indeed, colonialism depended upon their participation as poor people to provide labor and pay tribute.

In contrast to economic poverty, there was poverty as social expectation. "Social poverty" refers to those people who were deprived of the resources appropriate to their social station and cultural *worth* in colonial society. One example might be a down-on-her-luck landowner. This kind of poverty may seem counterintuitive to our present-day sensibilities. It is the kind of poverty that made it possible in the early modern world for someone like Doña Antonia Ybañeta, a landowner originally from Riobamba, to cry poverty while at the same time enjoying more than adequate means for a life of relative comfort, with a home, her choice of food, and fashion accessories to adorn her ample wardrobe.[18] Her point: not poverty as we understand it today, but poverty in the sense of inadequate reward given her social position as the honorable widow of a court official.[19] Such moanings against unmet expectations were not uncommon. Many persons of respectable standing—that is, of Spanish

descent—lamented the hard times they had fallen to and beseeched the monarch and the colonial state for aid. Thus, claims for assistance were levied based on the assumptions and aspirations of particular groups and communities within colonial society. In this light, what poverty meant for a Spaniard might not have had the same meaning for an Indian, and the same would be true for state mechanisms of poverty relief.

In colonial society there was indeed an important social compact with the crown, founded upon the nexus of social standing and economic reward. From the early days of Conquest, the crown had given the best *encomiendas* (access to indigenous labor and tribute) to those most meritorious and most honorable, at least in theory. Those without merit and honor received little, if any, reward. Throughout the colonial era, a similar logic applied, whereby the Spanish crown secured the right to rule through the distribution of greater or lesser rewards and privileges (ranging from *mita* quotas of indigenous laborers, through commercial concessions, tributes, and pensions). When individuals like Doña Antonia Ybañeta, who do not seem so poor in our eyes, pleaded poverty, they were referring to themselves as poor in the classic colonial sense: they were "poor" relative to what a person of their standing needed in order to keep up appearances and, indeed, to live in accordance with who they were. They asked the colonial state to accord them rewards and relief based on their social station. The concept of *calidad* may help us better understand the meaning of "social poverty": *calidad* referred to an individual's biological, reputational, and class position. Doña Antonia's *calidad* as an honorable, widowed, Creole woman defined her relative poverty. The social poor were, for the most part, Creoles who either no longer lived the lifestyle to which they were accustomed or who never attained the life they had anticipated.

By recognizing this distinction between the economic and the social poor, the taxonomy of poverty becomes clearer. "The poor" was not a social class, at least not in the Marxist sense, nor was it a term used by elites to designate the disparate social groupings below them. The poor heralded from all sectors of colonial society, thus making poverty not just a class issue, but rather a socio-racial one. These self-defined poor included well-endowed landowners, merchants, artisans, and even high court officials. The poor also encompassed the physically disabled, the elderly, youth, widows, laborers, and tribute payers. The key to individual narratives and arguments of poverty was to establish that one belonged to the respectable, worthy poor, rather than to the poor who ought to remain poor, that is, the wretched and the vice-ridden folk who made up the lower echelons of the socio-racial hierarchy. If one was successful in constructing oneself as among the deserving poor, one was able

to invoke the compact that bound the colonial state to come to the aid of its honorable and meritorious vassals. If one was unsuccessful, the state might not come to the individual's aid, or worse, it might offer repressive forms of assistance suited to the undeserving poor (that is to say, they were "deserving" of a very different kind of "aid"). Thus, poverty and its relief bolstered colonial differences made manifest by socio-racial and gendered categories. This explains why for some people issues of honor and merit played a prominent role in the construction of their arguments as members of the deserving poor. For the so-called undeserving poor, honor and merit were not expected attributes. According to this framework, an honorable widow's poverty was distinct from that of a wandering orphan, and a poor "white" differed from a poor "Indian."[20]

Hence, like the famous *casta* paintings of the eighteenth century that illustrated the racial stations of colonial inhabitants, a verbal canvas accentuated the different moral connotations of, and relief strategies for, the poor: a Spanish man with an Indian woman begot a mestizo; a white widow with honor begot a pension.[21] There were many terms used to characterize the deserving poor: *pobres de solemnidad* (the solemn poor), *pobres vergonzantes* (the shamefaced poor), *pobres jornaleros* (the laboring poor), *pobres peregrinos y extranjeros* (poor pilgrims), *pobres enfermos* (the sick poor), *pobres presos* (the imprisoned poor), and *mendigos* (beggars). Other terms characterized the marginalized poor: *pobres falsos* (the false poor), *vagabundos* (vagabonds), and *holgazanes y ociosos* (the lazy and vice-ridden poor).[22] And in Spanish America still another category emerged, *indios pobres*, or *miserables* (poor Indians, or the wretched). It was under these umbrella categories of the deserving and undeserving of different kinds of aid that the pauper in the church portal, the blind man, the letter-writing landowner, and the honorable widow would be placed, according to each one's implicit position as part of the economic or social poor.

These many meanings of poverty and the related practices of charity and social welfare made unequal social and political relationships more fixed and manageable. Depending on one's label, social taxonomies determined one's form of poverty and the kinds of relief available. Yet these social boundaries were far from stable. Just as an Indian who moved from the countryside to the city and adopted Spanish clothing could thereby become a cultural *mestizo*, an *español* who fell into poverty might be barely distinguishable from his indigenous counterpart in the late colonial era. Over time, a major tension and problem emerged precisely because the line between social and economic poverty became blurred. Poverty as either a failed social expectation or as an economic reality no longer served to separate the poor. Nor, for that matter, did

poverty in the late eighteenth century serve to differentiate the distinct social compacts tying the colonial state to particular vassals. The Spaniard might hold the title of "Don," use shoes, and wear threadbare clothing that was not yet in tatters, but by the late eighteenth century, so too could urban nonwhites. Poverty thus became a moving category in which one's own argument of poverty, rather than external markings alone, determined one's gradation or grouping within the social hierarchy of the poor. As a colonial order based on socio-racial difference weakened, colonial categories of poverty (of the deserving and undeserving poor, and of the economic and social poor) bled into each other, and so too did the bounded meanings of poverty and their social compacts.

ON THE FRINGES OF EMPIRE: LEGITIMIZING COLONIALISM THROUGH POVERTY COMPACTS

In the later colonial period, the regional capital and the Highlands of the Audiencia of Quito offer a window onto the compacts of poverty that existed in other regions of Spanish America and for other colonial experiences.[23] Historical studies place their emphasis on different aspects of colonialism: some examine forms of land and labor extraction;[24] some consider the experiment of social engineering in the "civilizing" missions;[25] some ask how pre-contact societies survived, resisted, adapted, accommodated, or assimilated;[26] and others have sought to describe how colonizers identified themselves through their relations with the colonized "other."[27] Such ventures into the logic of colonialism contribute to a complex picture of domination, resistance, adaptation, and rule. Rather than add yet another issue to the mix, this study seeks to return to a central question regarding power relations in a colonial setting: Why and how did colonial rule last for over three hundred years?[28] One contributing factor to answering this question is an interpretation of colonial society as consisting of a series of social compacts.

Colonialism was not a foregone conclusion or a secure hegemonic project. If we conceive of the colonial state as both a series of ongoing negotiated relationships (state-formation) and as an almost tangible end product (the state), then we may witness how the workings of social compacts, such as those concerning poverty, both contributed to Spanish hegemony and constantly challenged it.[29] Examples of the construction of social compacts include petitions for pensions or legal aid and the establishment of institutions for the city's indigent. Social compacts were contingent and continually changing, as the urban poor and the state worked out the moral economy of poverty and the giving of aid.[30]

Due to the specificities of colonial Spanish America, and Quito in particular, consent rather than coercion carries a greater explanatory value for the endurance of a colonialism in which the dominant class drew upon the labor and production of others.[31] Consent in this context did not mean merely co-optation or accommodation. Neither was consent "spontaneous" on the part of subaltern groups, nor were social eruptions the result of "empty bellies."[32] Rather, consent emerged from ongoing practices of give-and-take.[33] In the process of working through the conflicting projects and aspirations of colonial agents—processes that were inherently violent because of uneven power relations—some visions won out over others. In this development, however, aspects of the diverse visions folded into resulting accords and mutual understandings (or workable misunderstandings).[34] To borrow a phrase from John Leddy Phelan, such accords lay in an "unwritten constitution," a series of unspoken, yet widely understood combinations of principles and expectations of how society *should* function.[35] These accords, referred to here as social compacts, framed the rights and obligations between the monarch and his subjects (e.g., between Philip V, Bishop Romero, and the pauper who sought assistance in 1722). In so doing, *quiteño* folk and colonial state actors shaped the nature of governance and subordination. In Quito, and presumably elsewhere in Spanish America, this society of tacit compacts formed along the lines of socio-racial class: Creoleness and respectability of the "gente decente" (decent people) on the one side, and the "pueblo bajo" from the lower classes on the other. Compacts were in place for both sides, since maintaining these boundaries of respectability and poverty was paramount to the success of colonialism.[36]

By the end of the eighteenth century several factors had unwoven the tacit accords that had bound the urban poor and the elite together in the colonial project in Quito: the spread of urban poverty, the launching of administrative reforms, and, in response to both, the subsequent mounting pressure from civil society. Fading boundaries of social race further loosened tacit compacts corresponding to one's social station in the caste system: the rise of dark whites into higher social strata and the fall of poor whites into the ranks of the urban poor muddied what had been clear distinctions between racially mixed mestizos and white Creoles.[37] These transformations illustrated a more widespread process of undoing of a cluster of "unwritten constitutions" or "pacts of reciprocity" that had held colonialism together, but once undone, laid the groundwork for subsequent anticolonial struggles.[38]

Poverty is a social site of negotiation—a "nested arena of contestation"—within which different colonial actors worked out their rights and obligations according to the place of the poor in society and the function

of poor relief.[39] By attending to poverty, we witness the relationships among distinct sectors of society and how the obligations, rights, and expectations that underlay the social compacts evolved over time.[40] Such transformations affected colonial state-formation. The state was far from immutable; despite the longevity of laws and regulations that enshrined Spanish interests, doing politics in the colonies changed from a conquest state to a paternalistic state to a mature colonial and absolutist state. Throughout these political transformations, one of the greatest challenges to the social compacts came from shifting governing ideologies, even as older principles and values tenaciously held their ground.

The inherent incompatibility of distant Iberian rule and local expectations came to a head with the replacement of the Habsburgs by the Bourbons. The transition in rule meant more than a change in family: it signaled distinct attitudes of rule.[41] While theologians and reformers had long agreed to the monarch's direct responsibility for the common good and the spiritual and material well-being of his peoples, the means to such ends changed. During the Habsburg era, this concern was vague, disparate, not clearly articulated. A vassal/subject of any standing could freely come before the king—most often by sending a letter, though one supposes that a court appearance would have been made by a special few. One could bend the monarch's ear about one's woes and worries and call upon his magnanimity. The Bourbons represented a different breed of ruler. They were the bureaucratic kings who were not interested in individual circumstances. Individual pleas held little sway, as royal decrees encompassed large swaths of colonial society. An economic justification for meddling more into the lives of a heterogeneous group of the poor, as opposed to impoverished individuals, conjoined with a different perception of the state as an efficient bureaucracy under an absolute monarch. With the stepping-in of the Bourbons—the height of reforms coinciding with the reign of Charles III (1759–88)—we witness a more prominent role of the state in poor relief, a broadening in the meaning of poverty, and an expansion of kinds of assistance. Paradoxically, while "poverty" came to encompass more meanings and consequently more people, we see concerted attempts to classify the poor into narrowed categories of the worthy and the unworthy. For some, the more circumscribed realm of worthy necessitated shifting poverty arguments to meet new requirements of what constituted a worthy pauper, and for others, worthy meant more oppressive measures of poor relief, such as forced enclosure in the poorhouse. Still others were deemed unworthy altogether, and thus fell outside benevolent acts of alms-giving and into the realm of the deviant poor.

The study of poverty sheds light on subject–state relations and the negotiation over the rules of colonialism. Challenges to poverty compacts

did not come only from above; they also came from below. Poor residents—whether a down-on-his-luck landowner, an indigenous migrant, or one of the many other kinds of poor found in the Highland region—were neither passive nor resigned to their lot or to what opportunities the state provided for them. As many studies show, colonial vassals resisted the social legislation of the Bourbons that sought to transform them into ideal vassals.[42] And they altered it.[43] It was not just a question of residents not obeying colonial laws ("obedezco pero no cumplo"), but rather the ways by which colonial actors engaged with the state actually transformed the state. Thus, we cannot think of the state as a monolithic entity—whether Habsburg or Bourbon. Nor can we see the state as a conglomeration of different state agents or institutions all speaking in a unified voice, or even as holding the same objectives and legal interpretations.[44] Residents altered the very institutions that governed them, thereby engaging with the multifaceted state, though not always in the hoped for or intended ways. Thus, the question here is not about taking the state out of the analysis or of putting it back in.[45] Rather, it is about engagement, interconnections, mutually informing and transforming sites between state and society. In some examples, the state, with its regulators, mediators, and enforcers, might have seemed irrelevant and distant to the daily concerns of the urban poor. Yet when one brushed up against the state, either voluntarily through seeking state assistance or involuntarily when confronted by authorities, people interacted with the state, whether they wanted to or not. Furthermore, the state required a legitimacy that could only be maintained through the continued satisfaction of some of the expectations of its subjects, even the most lowly. The negotiation over these compacts, such as the one that took place between Philip V, Bishop Romero, and the pauper in 1722, lay at the heart of colonialism, and their failures foretold future problems: though the *pobre mendigo* made himself actively visible, and did so in a long-established cultural argument about poverty, it seems that the buck kept passing between the secular and religious arms of the state without ever landing in the pleading pauper's open palm.