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MINERS AND MERCHANTS IN BOURBON MEXICO
1763-1810

BY
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FOR MY MOTHER
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PREFACE

Eight years have passed since, after a summer’s wandering through Mexico, I came to Guanajuato, Valenciana and San Miguel Allende and there, almost by chance, found what I wanted to study. With the place chosen, the time could only be the eighteenth century, the period when these towns assumed their present form. By inclination, I was, anyway, a student of colonialism. But if the scholar chooses his theme it is the availability of source material which disposes the lines he must pursue. Very little of much value has been written about eighteenth-century New Spain. To this very day the best account is still Alexander von Humboldt’s *Essai politique sur le Royaume de la Nouvelle-Espagne*, first published in 1811. During the struggle for Independence and the decades which followed Juan López de Cancelada, Fray Servando Teresa de Mier, Manuel Abad y Queipo, Lorenzo de Zavala, Sir Henry Ward, José María Luis Mora and Lucas Alamán all provided valuable descriptions of the colony and its society. At much the same time an effort was made to print such informative compilations as the *Informe general* of Viceroy the Count of Revillagigedo and the *Historia general de Real Hacienda* of Fabián de Fonseca and Carlos de Urrutia. But then, during the latter half of the nineteenth century, the interests of most Mexican scholars shifted towards the early periods of their national history. In particular many set about the great work of rediscovering the Indian past. Others, of whom in our own days Silvio Zavala is the most distinguished, concentrated their researches upon the sixteenth century. Foreign scholars also followed this tendency to study the formation rather than the florescence of colonial society. Here the names of François Chevalier, Robert Ricard, J. H. Parry, George Kubler, Charles Gibson and José Miranda immediately come to mind. Then again, that remarkable series of monographs produced by the Berkeley ‘school’ of Carl O. Sauer, Lesley Byrd Simpson, Sherburne F. Cook and Woodrow Borah has been largely devoted to the Indian and his fate subsequent to the Conquest. Only H. I. Priestley in his *José de Gálvez, Visitor-General of New Spain*, published as long ago as 1916, selected a theme which was, like my own, concerned with Spaniards and the eighteenth century. All this has meant that I have had to serve my historical apprenticeship in an unmapped field of study with few more guides to lead me than Humboldt, Ward, Revillagigedo, Alamán and Padre Mier. These are the men who have helped me most in my research.

The three studies into which this book is divided are mainly based, however, not on any printed sources but on archival material. They follow
Preface

the trajectory of my own research. ‘The Revolution in Government’ is almost entirely built upon notes taken in the Archivo de Indias at Seville, whereas ‘Guanajuato’ depends upon an extensive use of the local notarial records; the intervening piece ‘ Merchants and Miners’ has a more variegated base, with the section Minería of the Archivo General de la Nación in Mexico City supplying the weightiest bricks. It should be emphasised that all three studies are designed to stand as autonomous approaches to late eighteenth-century Mexico; there is no logical progression from one to another. Nevertheless, ‘Guanajuato’ will probably not yield its full meaning to a reader unacquainted with the preceding study of ‘Miners and Merchants’. My purpose in writing this book has been first to define a historical period, which I name Bourbon Mexico, and then to describe its salient features.

Naturally in the course of seven years’ research and composition I have incurred many intellectual and other debts. David Joslin, my undergraduate supervisor at Pembroke College, Cambridge, gave me good counsel when I started and much needed encouragement when I sent him the first draft of my book. Frederick Bowser, from our days together in Seville until the present, has been a patient listener, a sceptical reader and a kindly critic. Many other persons, each in his own way, have assisted me. I wish to thank, at London, my dissertation supervisors, R. A. Humphreys and John Lynch, my fellow students, Nancy M. Farriss and Juan Maignan; at Seville, Enrique Otte, Miguel Maticorena, Pierre Ponsot, Günter Vollmer; and, on visit, J. H. Parry; in Mexico City, Ignacio Rubio Mañé and Gonzalo Obregón, Jr.; in Guanajuato, Manuel Leal, Tiburcio Alvarez and Jesús Fraustro Rodríguez; in San Miguel Allende, Miguel Malo Zozaya; at Berkeley, William P. McGreevey, José Antonio Matesanz, Peter Mathías, Raymond K. Kent, and—not least—Woodrow Borah. Several institutions have rendered me financial assistance. In the first place, without an award of a Henry Fellowship to Yale College I would never have visited Latin America. Later, the central research fund of London University gave me a supplementary grant for my months at Seville and the Astor Foundation made it possible for me to undertake research in Mexico. At Berkeley, the Center of Latin American Studies has generously provided me with sufficient funds to devote no less than three summers to complete this book. Finally, I wish to thank my wife Celia Wu; she alone knows how much I have relied upon her help.

Guanajuato-Berkeley

1966–9

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<tr>
<td>ACM</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGI</td>
<td>Archivo General de Indias (Seville)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGN</td>
<td>Archivo General de la Nación (Mexico City)</td>
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<td>AGS</td>
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<td>BRP</td>
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<tr>
<td>CV</td>
<td>Cancillería de Valladolid</td>
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<tr>
<td>FV</td>
<td>Fundación Valenciana (Mexico City)</td>
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MEASURES AND MONEY

Some explanation of the units of measurement and value used in the text may prove helpful.

All yards are Castilian yards (varas) which comprise 33 English inches or 0.835 metres.

The term ‘hundredweight’ translates the Spanish unit quintal which was composed of 4 arrobas or 100 libras. It weighed about 101\frac{1}{2} English pounds. All pounds and ounces are of the Castilian variety.

The fanega approximately equalled 1.5 English bushels.

The silver peso of Mexico, sometimes referred to as the peso fuerte or duro was equal in value to the American dollar of that epoch. It divided into 8 silver reales and 20 reales de vellón, the unit of account then used in Spain. 8\frac{1}{2} pesos were cut from each Castilian mark of silver. The following table should clarify these equivalents.

1 mark = 8\frac{1}{2} pesos
1 mark = 8 ounces
1 peso = 8 reales de plata
1 peso = 20 reales de vellón
1 real = 12 gramos
1 real = 34 maravedis
GLOSSARY

Note on Spanish Words in Text

Where possible common English forms of Spanish place-names have been used, e.g. Biscay and Seville instead of Vizcaya and Sevilla, Mexico rather than México. To avoid an unsightly text most Spanish terms have not been italicised especially those which occur frequently or are more familiar.

Acuerdo: an agreement or decision, a resolution of the audiencia
agente fiscal: a lawyer who assisted the Crown’s attorneys
alcabala: sales tax
alcalde del barrio: ward magistrate
alcalde del crimen: junior judge in audiencia, a member of the sala del crimen
alcalde mayor: district magistrate
alcalde ordinario: municipal magistrate
alcaldía mayor: district governed by alcalde mayor
alférez real: senior member of town council
alhóndiga: municipal granary
almacén: store, warehouse
almacencero: merchant of Mexico City, usually the owner of an import house
arrastre: crush mill
asesor general: the viceroy’s legal advisor
audiencia: high court of justice
aviador: financial backer
avíos: supplies and cash advanced on credit by aviador
ayuntamiento: town council
azogueiro: supervisor of amalgamation process
Barrenadores: mine-workers, blasters
barrenderos: mine-workers, pick-men
buscones: mine-workers, who received half the ore produced in lieu of wage
Cabildo: town council
cacique: Indian chief
caja real: provincial treasury
cajero: apprentice merchant
castas: half-breeds
catastro: register of property, census
Glossary

cédula: royal decree
consulado: merchant guild and its court
consulta: recommendation, resolution of Council of the Indies
contaduría: audit department
corregidor: district magistrate
corregidor de letras: district magistrate who was a lawyer
Depositario general: town councillor
dinero: measure of silver quality, 24 grains
Encomienda: a grant of Indians
encomendero: possessor of an encomienda
expediente: file, case
Fanega: measure of dry weight, about 1.5 bushels
fiel ejecutor: town councillor charged with inspection of municipal
market, etc.
fiscal de lo civil: Crown attorney attached to audiencia, handling all non-
exchequer and non-criminal matters
fiscal de real hacienda: Crown attorney, attached to audiencia, handling
all exchequer cases
fuero: exemption from royal jurisdiction, right to trial by members of
same profession
Gañán: peón
gachupín: Spaniard, born in Europe, resident in New Spain
gente de razón: lit. people of reason, in effect, all non-Indians
gente decente: the respectable, persons of quality
granos: grains
Hacienda: large landed estate
hacienda de beneficio: a refining mill
hacendado: owner of an hacienda
hidalgo: a person of gentle birth
Junta de real hacienda: chief financial committee of viceroyalty
junta superior de real hacienda: chief finance committee after creation of
intendencies
Legajo: a bundle of documents
leyes de partida: medieval code of Spanish law
libranza: promissory note, Mexican variant of bill of exchange
Malacate: whim
Malagueño: native of Malaga
maravedí: coin, 34 to a real
Glossary

media annata: half year’s income paid as taxation by officials during first term of office
mercader: merchant
Montañés: native of province of Santander
Obraje: large textile workshop
ordenanzas: ordinances
oidor: judge in audiencia
Partido: share of ore taken by mine-workers
policia: administrative functions of government, especially public works
polizón: unlicensed immigrant
procurador general del común: town councillor charged with representing the interests of the public, especially of the poor
pueblo: Indian village
pulque: alcoholic beverage made from the juice of the maguey plant
pulquería: tavern, a bar
Rancho: small estate, a hamlet of farmers
real: coin, if of silver worth one eighth of a peso
real orden: a ministerial decree
regidor: town councillor
repartimientos de comercio: public distribution (usually enforced) of merchandise and stock by district magistrate
rescatador: independent refiner
residencia: judicial review of an official’s record
Sala del crimen: lower court of audiencia which heard all criminal cases
superintendente subdelegado de real hacienda: superintendent of the exchequer
Temporalidades: government department which administered the ex-Jesuit estates
tenateros: mine-workers, porters
tratante: dealer, petty trader
tribunal de cuentas: the court of audit
tribunal de minería: the mining court
Vagos: vagabonds, migrant labourers unattached to either haciendas or Indian pueblos

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1 An arrastre gallery [Salgado, Guanajuato]