ROOTS OF INSURGENCY

Mexican regions, 1750–1824

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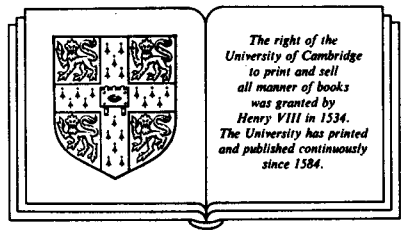

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Introduction

There is a need for a fresh view of the process of Independence in Latin America. This has become particularly important, in view of the increasing interest in the formative period of national development during the first half of the nineteenth century.[1] Furthermore, recent studies of the late colonial period in the Viceroyalty of New Spain (Mexico) have placed an emphasis on the regional context of economic developments, and it has now become possible to compare and contrast social conditions among and within the provinces.[2] Few such works, however, have examined the 'Independence period.' Their conclusions have rarely been projected into the complex processes of regional change that accompanied and formed part of the Mexican revolutionary movement of the 1810s. It is the purpose of this book to examine the regional dimension of the process of Independence, particularly in its social aspects. The focus will be upon the protracted insurgency that developed from the initial, failed attempt in 1810 to overthrow Spanish peninsular rule by a revolutionary uprising. The intention here is to make the connection between the social tensions of the late colonial period and those of the nineteenth-century Mexican Republic. The War of Independence (1810–21) constituted a broader expression of the limited popular discontent which from time to time erupted in the periods both preceding and following it. Stripped of the nationalist casing, the struggles of the 1810s often subsumed earlier conflicts and foreshadowed later ones. Very few works, to date, have attempted to make this connection.[3] As a result, it has proved difficult for historians to determine exactly how the Latin American Independence movements relate to either the colonial or national experience of the countries concerned. We have, accordingly, been left with the traditional periodisation, which ends the colonial period at 1810, and begins the national period at some stage in the early 1820s. This has meant that the decade of the great upheavals has become a period in itself,

apparently unconnected to what preceded or followed it – if it was, in fact, dealt with in specific relation to either of them at all. The underlying continuities have only sketchily been appreciated.[4] It is perhaps feasible to argue that the struggles of the 1810s formed one, albeit turbulent, aspect of the broader period, 1650–1850, that stretches from the post-Conquest era to the Liberal Reform Movement and the early stages of 'modernisation'.

Most traditional histories of the Independence movements have focussed on the national dimension, rather than the regional. The earliest historians traced the developments of the Mexican nation. In many respects, their historical reconstruction of events formed part of a general endeavour to create a sense of nationhood, which could not only contrast with the colonial past, but also transcend the regional component elements of the newly independent sovereign state. Historical interpretation provided the means whereby national consciousness could come into existence. In that sense, the works of Lorenzo de Zavala, Fray Servando de Mier, José María Luis Mora, Carlos María de Bustamante, and Lucas Alamán complemented the contemporary European historical tradition of tracing the development of nation-states.[5] Such historians had little interest in regional identity, which represented a potentially centrifugal force. On the whole, they stressed the national elements in the struggle of Mexicans for political liberation from Spanish Imperial rule. From their founding efforts emerged the powerful modern trilogy of 'Independence – *Reforma* – Revolution.'

Even so, geography and settlement patterns provided a natural basis for regional sentiment in New Spain, as in other Spanish American territories. Distinct regional characteristics and problems, moreover, explained the different responses to government policy. Little effort is required to demonstrate that a multiplicity of particular regional and local issues characterised political life in the colonial and national periods. These, in any case, were the usual features of pre-modern or modernising societies. What needs to be explained is how a political entity such as New Spain managed to cohere at all. The explanation does not appear to lie in coercion, since no effective police force controlled the whole extent of territory, and military force remained largely non-existent until the 1770s. The explanation probably lies in the common interests that transcended regional differences and enabled the political and economic system to function at a national level. A major dynamic was the revival of silver-mining, stimulated by the investment of mercantile capital. These networks of interest, however, did not supersede the reality of regional economies, but served to connect region

to region, and region to centre. Although this ensured that each province was not entirely autonomous, we cannot, nevertheless, speak of a 'national economy' in the sense of an integrated infrastructure and market. The relationship between locality, province and centre that made such cohesion feasible still remains inadequately understood. Yet, despite the potential centrifugal tendencies regularly apparent, neither New Spain nor independent Mexico was simply the sum of its component parts. It was a functioning economic system with a central political power that was not negligible, even after 1821.[6] Government in colonial Spanish America did have at least some significant impact on society, if only by virtue of the religious symbolism and dynastic legitimacy upon which it was founded. Appreciation of such points should provide a greater understanding of how pre-modern government functioned.

Realities and perceptions

A general deterioration of lower-class living standards in a number of regions appears now to be an established fact for the fifty or sixty years preceding the outbreak of the insurrection of 1810. If we add to this the sense of grievance amongst the Spanish American professional classes at the lack of opportunities for them in bureaucratic office and government, then we have a potentially inflammatory social combination. Much, however, depends on our understanding of contemporary perceptions of grievance. In the latter case, these have been given considerable attention in the literature to date, beginning with the Mexican nationalist historians of the post-Independence period. In the former case, less has been said, if only because source materials of lower-class grievances are not easy to come by, since, by definition, such social groups did not belong to the articulate élites. Nevertheless, repeated litigation over land, labour, water rights, pasture, and traditional customary practices indicated lower-class consciousness of a deteriorating or threatened position. Conflict – usually in the form of peasant land invasions, landlord enclosures or abuse of labour – brought these tensions to the surface. In most cases, the perceived causes of social deprivation were the actions of entrepreneurial-minded landowners or of the merchant–investors who operated in the localities. These long term social grievances should, of course, be separated from the short term impact of dearth in 1808–10. The latter was the action of natural agencies, rather than of human, and, accordingly, involved a different mechanism of response. Appeals to the supernatural represented the

traditional response to terrestrial calamities. When, however, human agencies sought to benefit from such natural catastrophes, then perceptions altered once more to focus upon the evil-doers. Perceptions of human causes of material deprivation often led to the identification of the source of mischief, and the transfer of the social grievance to a political plane.

The problem on the political plane was for the provincial creoles to find a common cause with the lower classes, and, once having done so, to provide the leadership in a common movement of opposition. Hatred of the Europeans (*gachupines*) provided such a rallying cry, sanctioned as it were, by the symbolism of the cult of the Virgin of Guadalupe. Religion provided not only clerical leadership but a moral justification for the source of legitimate dissent.

When examined in regional terms, the economic growth of eighteenth-century New Spain reduces itself to the expansion of particular sectors of the economy in specific areas. The chief of these were the mining, cereal and livestock sectors of the centre-north-west, principally the plateau known as the Bajío, central Guadalajara, and the mining zones of Guanajuato, San Luis Potosí and Zacatecas. Even so, the diocese of Puebla still produced the second largest diocesan revenues after the Archbishopric of Mexico, and greater than those of the diocese of Michoacán in which the Bajío was situated. During the long periods when warfare and blockade disrupted transatlantic trade, particularly between 1795 and 1808, the woollen industry of Querétaro and the Bajío towns, and cotton manufacture, chiefly in Puebla and Guadalajara, also grew. A number of recent scholars have pointed to the connection between economic expansion and recovery of population. D. A. Brading argues that the rapid economic growth of late Bourbon Mexico, a major facet of which was the striking revival of the silver-mining industry, rested upon the demographic recovery prior to 1760. For the period, from c. 1660 until the 1720s, Brading suggests a rate of population growth of 2.5 per cent, falling to 1 per cent between 1727 and 1736, and to zero after 1760.[7] Eric Van Young attributes the expansion of the regional economy of Guadalajara to population increase. There again the rate of demographic growth appears to have been greater in the earlier part of the century, from 1710 to 1770, though the increase in the population of the city itself took place after the 1760s, partly as a result of migration from the countryside.[8] Nevertheless, the city of Puebla still remained New Spain's second most populous urban area after Mexico City itself. Sherburne Cook and Woodrow Borah, in their estimates for the broadly defined west-central

region of Mexico, point to a rate of population increase above 2 per cent for each decade of the eighteenth century after 1710, with the highest rate in the 1760s at 2.69 per cent. Thereafter, a gradual fall occurred to 2.4 per cent in 1790–1800, followed by a substantial drop to 0.69 per cent in the 1800s. The rate of increase sustained between 1710 and 1800 was not reached again until the 1940s.[9] The rate of population growth in the Guanajuato–Querétaro zone was greater than in the rest of New Spain. There, as we shall see, increasing demand for foodstuffs altered conditions of labour.[10]

Writing in 1955, E. R. Wolf drew attention to the recovery of both population and economy after the late seventeenth century, but stressed the regional application of this phenomenon. The principal zones affected were those located beyond the northern limits of pre-Columbian Meso-America, regions, that is, characterised by distinct cultural patterns from those of the more heavily indigenous central and southern zones of New Spain. The Bajío and the mining zones were cases in point. Wolf pointed to the interrelation between agriculture, mining, and textiles as a significant contributory factor to economic growth. Inter-regional relationships stimulated and reflected this new activity. Bajío cereals, for instance, supplied both the Mexico City grain market and the northern zones. Regions in the north, such as San Luis Potosí, Zacatecas, or Coahuila tended to become the economic hinterland of the expanding centre-north-west.[11] John Tutino argues that the area from Querétaro to San Luis Potosí became closely integrated into the central Mexican social and economic system during the eighteenth century.[12] Jan Bazant's examination of San Luis Potosí's landed estates highlights the orientation of their products to the urban markets of Querétaro and Mexico City.[13] The Guadalajara region clearly illustrated this connection between the growth of the urban area and the development of the hinterland. Ramón Serrera's examination of the regional economy suggests the primacy of urban demand, to which the wool trade and the cotton industry responded. The growth of the market helped to determine the degree of specialisation in the surrounding zones. Serrera stresses that the rise of Guadalajara in the later eighteenth century shows a clear case of an expanding regional economy in which silver-mining was not paramount in determining the pace of growth. The contrast with Guanajuato was striking.[14] The rapid growth of the city of Guadalajara during the eighteenth century, from 1,500 to c.40,000 inhabitants, particularly in the 1760s when the population doubled, was the cause and effect of the expansion of government and commerce. The urban demand for wheat placed heavy demands on the

rural maize economy and its traditional Indian-peasant cultivators in terms of land usage. The growth of the rural population meant that after the 1780s, Indian villages could no longer count on a maize surplus.[15] In the Guadalajara zone, moreover, in contrast to the Bajío, an Indian village society still remained intact at the end of the colonial period, in spite of serious encroachments. The majority of the sixty-two Indian villages of the Intendancy of Guanajuato, however, had already lost or sold their lands by the end of the eighteenth century. Most of their population worked on the private estates.[16]

Quite clearly two different worlds existed on either side of the Río Lerma, which had been the northern boundary of the Aztec Empire. Claude Morin emphasizes this contrast in his examination of the diocese of Michoacán during the eighteenth century. The region north of the river had been the preserve of the barbarian tribes or *Chichimecas* in the pre-Hispanic period. The southern zones, corresponding largely to colonial Michoacán, had been settled by Tarascan cultivators. Given the absence of Indian-peasant communities north of the Río Lerma, the new Hispanic municipalities tended to consist of modest farmers. The open area of the Bajío remained under free-ranging livestock until demand increased for cereals in the expanding mining communities of the adjacent regions. Within Michoacán itself, considerable sub-regional variation existed between villages which still possessed the legal minimum of 600 *varas* of land circumference (101 hectares) at the end of the eighteenth century, and those which did not. One-fifth of all the Intendancy's villages no longer possessed this *fundo legal*. All such villages were located in the triangle between Pátzcuaro, Zacapu and Cocupao. Those villages which continued to possess the *fundo legal* or more could be found in the Sierra Tarasca, where private estate owners had little interest in the poor grasslands of the pine-clad hills. Almost all villages from which part of the legal minimum had been taken were located north of a line through Valladolid, Zacapu and Tlazazalca, on the plain of Zinapécuaro and on the shores of Lake Pátzcuaro. This was the principal area of hacienda cereal production, with a large non-Indian component in the population, an area of fertile soil, access to water supply and in proximity to the main urban markets.[17]

In the Altos de Jalisco, vitally located across the route between Guadalajara and Zacatecas, no significant indigenous population group competed with the pioneering advance of Hispanic settlement in the sixteenth century. A series of small villages emerged, a different pattern of settlement and landownership than elsewhere. The social basis of the region lay in its small-scale properties known as *ranchos* and its cattle

estancias, rather than in large-scale proprietorship. Beneath the *rancheros* were share-croppers and rural workers, though no really sharp social or economic distinction separated them from the former. From the earliest times of defence against marauding *Chichimecas*, it had been possible to speak of a kind of *'nacionalismo local'* in the region. The Altos grew in response to the mining zones, for which they provided foodstuffs. This regional interdependence reinforced rather than debilitated local characteristics and enabled the consolidation of local power groups opposed to central government incursions.[18] Van Young points to the increasing importance of the Altos and the Bajío as wheat suppliers to the city of Guadalajara in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century.[19]

On the Bajío estates, land was frequently rented to tenants and small farmers, since proprietors generally did not reside on their haciendas. Hacienda lessees (*arrendatorios*) and resident labourers (*gañanes*), moreover, were complemented by associated families (*arrimados*) and temporary labourers. The status and condition of the two latter groups were considerably below that of the *gañanes*, who were paid wages and a maize ration. *Gañanes* could earn as much as three pesos per month. They tended to be few in number in the Bajío, and, in fact, hacienda owners were often indebted to them rather than vice versa. Given their situation, *gañanes* were in a relatively favourable economic position, in comparison to that of the hard-pressed tenant. This view is confirmed by Bazant's study of mainly livestock or mezcal haciendas in San Luis Potosí. On estates within a reasonable vicinity of the provincial capital, the resident workers, referred to as *peones acasillados*, received a monthly wage and a weekly maize ration. This security made them, in effect, a relatively privileged group within the rural labour force. The absence of a pre-colonial Indian structure in San Luis Potosí explained the predominance of the large estate there, and the demand for resident labour. Tutino's comparison of social relations in San Luis Potosí and Querétaro emphasises the importance of rural employment in the former and of rental arrangements in the latter. He argues that employment gave rural families greater security in adverse times such as those of the 1800s, but that in Querétaro, in contrast, the economic problems of that decade led to the destabilisation of conditions on the land. Such regional differences, despite similar social systems, helped to explain why estate residents responded differently towards the issue of insurgency in the 1810s. Furthermore the surplus population created a pool of migrants competing for temporary jobs. In Querétaro, at any rate, the temporary labour force oscillated between the land at planting and

harvest time and the city's textile workshops (*obrajes*) during the rainy season. Temporary labourers on the land, moreover, sometimes sub-rented from existing tenants.[20]

Despite the varied structure of rental arrangements and different labour practices, the hacienda owners tended to control access to arable, pasture and water supply. Tenant restlessness, coupled with surplus manpower created a potentially volatile situation in the centre-north at the beginning of the nineteenth century. As haciendas, often through the investment of mercantile capital, developed into more commercially viable units, lesser proprietors, such as *rancheros*, found themselves increasingly squeezed out. The *ranchero* sector encountered a problem of lack of available land during the half century before 1810, at a time of increased population. The *rancho* is always difficult to define, especially since it was sometimes an independent entity and at other times a dependent part of an hacienda. In both the Bajío and Guadalajara, the estimated number of *ranchos* was high in relation to the total number of haciendas, and showed that, prominent as the latter were in the central grain-producing zones, their hegemony was not unchallenged in the less fertile areas or in upland regions such as the Altos de Jalisco.[21]

Long term economic changes in the centre-north-west contributed to the deterioration of living standards among lower social groups. By the end of the eighteenth century, the increasing prosperity of the Bajío, cereal cultivation along entrepreneurial lines, and the greater abundance of the labour force enabled hacienda owners to exercise greater pressure on the work force. There was a tendency towards rent increases and the replacement of traditional customary rights by cash payments. This process formed a parallel development to the replacement in the mining industry of the traditional share-out or *partido* system, in accordance with which mine workers took away some of the ore as part of their salary. From 1790, the Guanajuato mines went over to a wage system.[22] Such trends in social and economic relations had profound repercussions among both industrial and rural workers, and helped bring about a consciousness that status and conditions were deteriorating, as a result of identifiable causes. Tutino argues that pressure by private proprietors led to some evictions or migrations from estates. Such actions interrupted family continuity on the land. Increasing economic demands in the form that they took in the Bajío were perceived as threats to the peasant community as such. These trends in the late colonial decades in the eastern Bajío created a fertile ground for rebellious sentiments when imperial and environmental crises struck together from 1808 to 1810.[23] In central Guadalajara, the hacienda dominated the rural economy.

With the intensification of cereal cultivation and the rise of urban demand in the late eighteenth century, land values rose, sometimes spectacularly. Since grain farming required a regular labour force, changes in the recruitment of labour and the inducements offered to it resulted. Furthermore, the recovery of the Indian population of the Guadalajara lakes region increased pressures on land area and usage. Land suits grew in number and bitterness in the latter half of the century.[24] For the Indian population, 'the perceived cause of the increasing strain was the active encroachment on peasant resources of a growing rapacious capitalist agriculture which happened to be in the hands of the whites'. The conditions of the Indian village population and of the rural lower classes worsened in the late colonial period, specifically in the countryside around Guadalajara. Commercial agriculture, rising prices, relatively stable wages, population growth, inability of the peasant sector to benefit from increased market demand – these were the contributory factors. Possibly they helped to explain the growing evidence of rural violence in this period.[25]

Many estates in the Querétaro zone attempted to reduce their resident workers to a more subservient condition. Tutino's view is that they were never wholly successful, and that insurgency during the 1810s demonstrated 'that estate residents had yet to be driven into easy or absolute submission to the colony's great landed families'. The tighter social structure in San Luis Potosí perhaps helped to account for the lesser popular impact of insurgency there and the availability of recruits for the Royalist militia.[26] Querétaro was, of course, a highly urbanised zone. By the end of the eighteenth century, more than half the population of the eastern Bajío lived in cities. In the city of Querétaro itself, the growth of population beyond the capacity of the economy to absorb the excess labour force, led to serious social problems, not least of which was crime, a preoccupation of the municipal authorities during the 1790s and 1800s. John Super argues that, although crime in the Bajío countryside had always preoccupied eighteenth-century officials, they saw conflicts as more identifiably racial or social by the end of the century, and blamed the numerous itinerant groups in the region.[27]

Given the economic expansion of the centre-north-west, profound differences continued to exist between those regions and the more heavily indigenous centre-south. Claude Morin makes a striking contrast between the type of labour relations obtaining in the centre-north-west and those in the eastern and southern zones. Morin compares conditions in Michoacán with those, for instance, in the Puebla-Tlaxcala region. In Michoacán, increased agricultural productivity

resulted – as in the Bajío and Guadalajara – from greater irrigation and the extension of the cultivated surface. Such trends were usually accompanied by enclosures and disputes over water rights. In Puebla and Tlaxcala, estate owners, unable to adopt similar procedures through different ecological conditions and institutional practices, sought to raise production by increased pressure on the labour force. Morin argues that the result was a worsening of labour conditions on the land in Puebla–Tlaxcala in comparison with Michoacán. Resident estate workers in Tlaxcala and in Tepeaca, one of Puebla's principal maize districts, complained of long hours and of ill-treatment by hacienda owners or their managers. Morin suggests that the opening of new lands in the western zone enabled the work force there to 'escape the unbridled exploitation of their counterparts in eastern Mexico'.[28] James Riley's examination of labour relations in Tlaxcala draws attention to the generally small extent and perennially low yields of the Tlaxcala haciendas. Estate owners remained close to bankruptcy, a situation which led to pressure on the labour force and repeated litigation with the Indian villages.[29]

Puebla was the second most densely populated region after Guanajuato. However, in many Puebla districts the condition of the haciendas was little better than in Tlaxcala. By 1790, all such estates in the district of Cholula, near the provincial capital, were burdened with mortgages, nearly 70 per cent of which were in favour of some sort of religious foundation. Proprietors borrowed usually to supplement deficient incomes or to pay off past debts, rather than to make improvements. Eleven of the thirty-eight haciendas in Cholula were bankrupt. The *ranchos* seemed to have fared better, since only one of the sixteen was bankrupt. In Puebla's most populous district, San Juan de los Llanos in the north-east, which contained an estimated total of 41,928 predominantly Indian inhabitants in 1804, seven of the hacienda owners and ten lessees controlled the thirty-six estates. Of the sixty-two *ranchos*, half were under proprietors and the other half under tenants. Strikingly, only the Intendancy of Guadalajara, with 1,511 *ranchos*, exceeded Puebla, with 911, in the number of *ranchos* listed within its territory. Most of the Puebla *ranchos* were run as family enterprises. The haciendas tended to be market orientated, and, in contrast to the *ranchos*, required a substantial outlay of labour and capital, neither of which could be automatically counted upon. Such weaknesses constantly frustrated Pueblo *hacendados*' efforts to gain the upper hand in relation to the labour force.[30]

Both in Puebla–Tlaxcala and in Oaxaca, further to the south, Indian

villages were reluctant to perform labour services on hacienda land. Often they resisted impressment, whenever attempted, during the planting and harvesting seasons. William Taylor points to the depressed condition of hacienda agriculture in Oaxaca and to the village retention there of subsistence lands, to which the present labour force understandably attached priority. Both in Tlaxcala and in Oaxaca, there was a rapid turnover in ownership of landed properties. Only in a few areas beyond the Valley of Oaxaca did the private estate acquire significance.[31] In the province of Oaxaca, the principal local figure was generally not the hacienda-owner, but the district administrator, the *alcalde mayor*, behind whom stood his merchant–creditor or *aviador*, usually a merchant of Mexico City or Antequera de Oaxaca, the provincial capital. By virtue of this financial connection, royal administrators, starved of proper salaries, became the commercial agents of monopoly suppliers to the Indian districts, who, in return, collected local products such as cotton textiles, cotton or the prized scarlet dye. Since the late colonial bureaucracy largely failed to eliminate such practices, the ensuing abuses continued. The conduct of district administrators and their lieutenants had been and remained a source of unrest throughout the Indian districts.[32]

The Indian element continued to predominate overwhelmingly in the south and on the central plateau, where, according to Cook and Borah, it constituted between 85 per cent and 90 per cent of the total. This component, however, became much smaller in the west-central region, at 60–65 per cent in New Galicia and Michoacán, and at 35–40 per cent in areas in which no major pre-Columbian settlement had been evident.[33] These regional variations correspond by and large to the proportions given by Taylor for the early nineteenth century: an Indian population of 88.3 per cent in Oaxaca, 75 per cent in Puebla, and 62.5 per cent in the Intendancy of Mexico. In Michoacán the Indian component fell to 42.5 per cent, a minority of the total population. In several areas of the central zone, Taylor points out that non-Indian elements predominated: in commercial mining and administrative centres, such as Actopan, Pachuca, Toluca and Taxco.[34] Evidence from eighteenth-century tributary counts shows an increase in the tributary population. In 110 districts of New Spain in 1714–19, Cook and Borah calculated 292,000 tributaries and 359,000 children aged between four and fifteen years; the figure for 1746–50 showed 338,000 adults and 464,000 children. Making allowance for changes in classification put into effect in the 1790s, the tribute assessment for 1804 for the whole of New Spain included 904,108 persons. From this figure Cook and Borah

estimate a total Indian population of 3,265,720.[35] Within the province of Oaxaca, which contained the largest Indian population in New Spain, demographic recovery began during the course of the seventeenth century, and the process had been substantially completed by 1740. Population continued to grow until the 1810s, when a brief slowing down or even halt took place until the 1830s. Thereafter, the recovery resumed.[36]

Despite the protected juridical status of the Indian population under the Laws of the Indies, the exaction of tribute placed enormous burdens upon villagers. On many occasions, chiefly during times of food shortages, they could not sustain this obligation. Charles Gibson points out that 'by universally observed custom, any determined effort to collect tribute was accompanied by an exodus from the community'. Payment of tribute clearly differentiated the Indian element from the rest of the community.[37] Official records, at least until 1810, preserved the ethnic categories into which the population was divided, in order to distinguish the tribute-paying elements from those which did not pay tribute. This capitation tax marked out the conquered from the conquerors. Even so, the majority of the Mexican population was racially and culturally mixed (*mestizo*) by 1810. For the most part it was in the central and southern zones, where Indians had predominated in the Conquest period, that this component of the population preserved its distinct identity. Elsewhere, the three primary races, Europeans, Indians and Africans, merged with considerable rapidity to form a composite population by the end of the colonial period. Cook and Borah estimate that mixed racial types constituted half the total population at that time. The *mestizo* population did not pay the capitation tax required of the conquered race. Free negroes and mulattos were eligible to pay tribute, though slaves did not.[38] In practice, a large proportion had gained exemption through service in the militias of the Gulf and Pacific coasts.[39]

The preservation of these ethnic and caste distinctions exacerbated the social tensions of the late colonial period by adding a racial dimension. The Wars of Independence produced an explosion of such racial hatreds and fears. A great deal of bloodshed resulted. No other generation but that which lived through the experience of the 1810s had experienced such repeated horrors. The archival documentation abundantly reflects it. It is a major historical task, however, to account for the outburst of violence on such a scale. Central to any explanation of its occurrence is an understanding of the provocative power of social and racial disdain. No amount of meticulous quantitative methodology can

elucidate such an intangible, yet all-pervasive factor. The disdain expressed very frequently by the dominant castes or '*gente de razón*' towards those described as '*los naturales*', '*los indios*', and '*los castas*', was real enough. Disdain, of course, was implicit in the very term, 'Indian', a misnomer applied from the time of the Conquest to describe the American inhabitants encountered and subdued in stages by the Spaniards. Given the adoption of this term by the colonial judicial system and the persistent administrative use of the term 'Indies', it was not long before the subdued peoples began to refer to themselves by this combined term of abuse and legal classification. Indeed, it is difficult for historians to avoid using the term; it is so deeply ingrained in our entire historical thinking concerning the colonial and early national periods. Borah, Piel, Taylor and others have tried hard to rise above this perpetuation of the old pseudo-racial terminology by opting for the socio-economic description, peasant.[40] Yet this, also, presents difficulties in view of the complex social stratification within the 'Indian' caste, 'Indian' legal prerogatives under the *ancien régime* judicial system, and, not least of course, the distinct colonial and ethnic experience of the Mexican 'peasant', in relation, say, to the French or Italian peasant.

Ideology and leadership

Racial and social resentments acquired a religious hue in the outbreak of the insurrection of September 1810 in the Bajío, led by the dissident American priest, Father Miguel Hidalgo. From 1803, Hidalgo, a former rector of the celebrated Valladolid College of San Nicolás Obispo, had been parish priest of Dolores on the fringes between the cereal plateau and the silver-mining communities of the Guanajuato sierra.

Hidalgo was a typical representative of the Mexican professional classes, a group we may conveniently refer to as the 'provincial bourgeoisie'. The bureaucratic revival of the Spanish absolutist state after c.1770 and the increasing monopolisation of senior offices in Church and State by incoming *peninsulares* antagonised and frustrated the colonial professional classes. In the jobs trauma of late Bourbon Mexico lay the origin of the political dissidence of the 'provincial bourgeoisie' and, ultimately, of their readiness to inflame lower-class discontent against the Europeans. The leaders of the conspiracies of 1809–10 and of the insurrection of September 1810 all came from this social group. Hidalgo's intellectual interests were as broad-ranging as his social contacts. His ideas owed a great deal to the philosophical and

educational reforms of the Mexican Enlightenment. In particular, he had been influenced by the Mexican Jesuit scholar, Francisco Javier Clavijero, like whom he was to acquire a knowledge of such Indian languages as Otomí and Nahuatl. Although a 'modernist' in his reaction to the neo-scholastic tradition in Mexico, inherited from the Spanish Counter-Reformation, Clavijero had become interested in the history of the apparition of the Virgin of Guadalupe. In 1532, the Virgin Mary had appeared to an Indian on the hill of Tepayac, the site of an Aztec shrine to Tonantzin, the moon goddess. The fact of the apparition demonstrated that the inhabitants of the Americas did not depend exclusively upon the Spanish Conquerors for their relationship to the divine. The tradition of Guadalupe, as it developed in the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, contributed subtly to the undermining of the moral basis of Spanish rule. Clavijero, furthermore, derived many of his ideas from the early Franciscan friars, who in the 1520s had brought to Mexico the ascetic ideals of the late medieval Observants, heirs of the Spirituals. To them, the conquest of the Americas had provided an opportunity to found an American version of the Apostolic Church. This ideal of a purified American Church, freed from the corruptions of Europe, appealed greatly to the clerical leadership of the 1810 rebellion.[41]

The Franciscans, however, had always viewed the Aztec associations of the cult of Guadalupe with suspicion. Nevertheless, they had propagated other Marian cults in Mexico by taking the image of the *Purísima Concepción* to Zapopan, near Guadalajara, and to San Juan de los Lagos, which became the poles of attraction for the cult of the Immaculate Conception. They had also sponsored the cult of Our Lady of Ocotlán, venerated at a hill-top basilica outside Tlaxcala. There were, in other words, several important cults of the Virgin in New Spain. The Peruvian Jesuit historian, Rubén Vargas Ugarte, in fact, described Mexico as '*tierra mariana*', and cities such as Querétaro, Celaya, Lagos, Guanajuato, Guadalajara, San Luis Potosí and Zacatecas – all centres of upheavals in 1810–11 – had profound Marian associations. They were, it should be stressed, the cultural heartlands of *mestizo* Mexico.[42] It was the seventeenth-century savant, Carlos Sigüenza y Góngora, who developed the neo-Aztec features of the Guadalupe cult. Clavijero, among others, took these ideas further. He not only regarded Indian civilisation as the 'classical antiquity' of Mexico, but argued that the Spanish Conquest had debased it. Such neo-Aztec tendencies were, however, confined to no more than a small group of Mexican intellectuals, who, since there was no social danger of an Indian revanche,