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IN BOURBON MEXICO
1763-1810

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MINERS AND
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MEXICO
1763-1810

BY

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Berkeley*



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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

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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 Maiguashca; 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 Mathias, 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.

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ARCHIVAL ABBREVIATIONS

ACM	Archivo Casa Morelos (Morelia)
AGI	Archivo General de Indias (Seville)
AGN	Archivo General de la Nación (Mexico City)
AGS	Archivo General de Simancas
AHG	Archivo Histórico de Guanajuato
AHGP	Archivo Histórico de Guanajuato, Protocolos
AHH	Archivo Histórico de Hacienda (Mexico City)
AHN	Archivo Histórico Nacional (Madrid)
AMM	Archivo Municipal de Morelia
AHL	Archivo Histórico de León
AMZ	Archivo Municipal de Zacatecas
APS	Archivo Provincial de Santander
BN (Madrid)	Biblioteca Nacional (Madrid)
BN (Mexico)	Biblioteca Nacional (Mexico City)
BM	British Museum (London)
BRP	Biblioteca del Real Palacio (Madrid)
CV	Cancillería de Valladolid
FV	Fundación Valenciana (Mexico City)

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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 101½ 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. 8½ pesos were cut from each Castilian mark of silver. The following table should clarify these equivalents.

1 mark = 8½ pesos

1 mark = 8 ounces

1 peso = 8 reales de plata

1 peso = 20 reales de vellón

1 real = 12 granos

1 real = 34 maravedis

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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

almacenero: 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

azoguero: supervisor of amalgamation process

Barrenadores: mine-workers, blasters

barreteros: 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

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[More information](#)*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 vicerealty*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

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- 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
- policía: 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 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

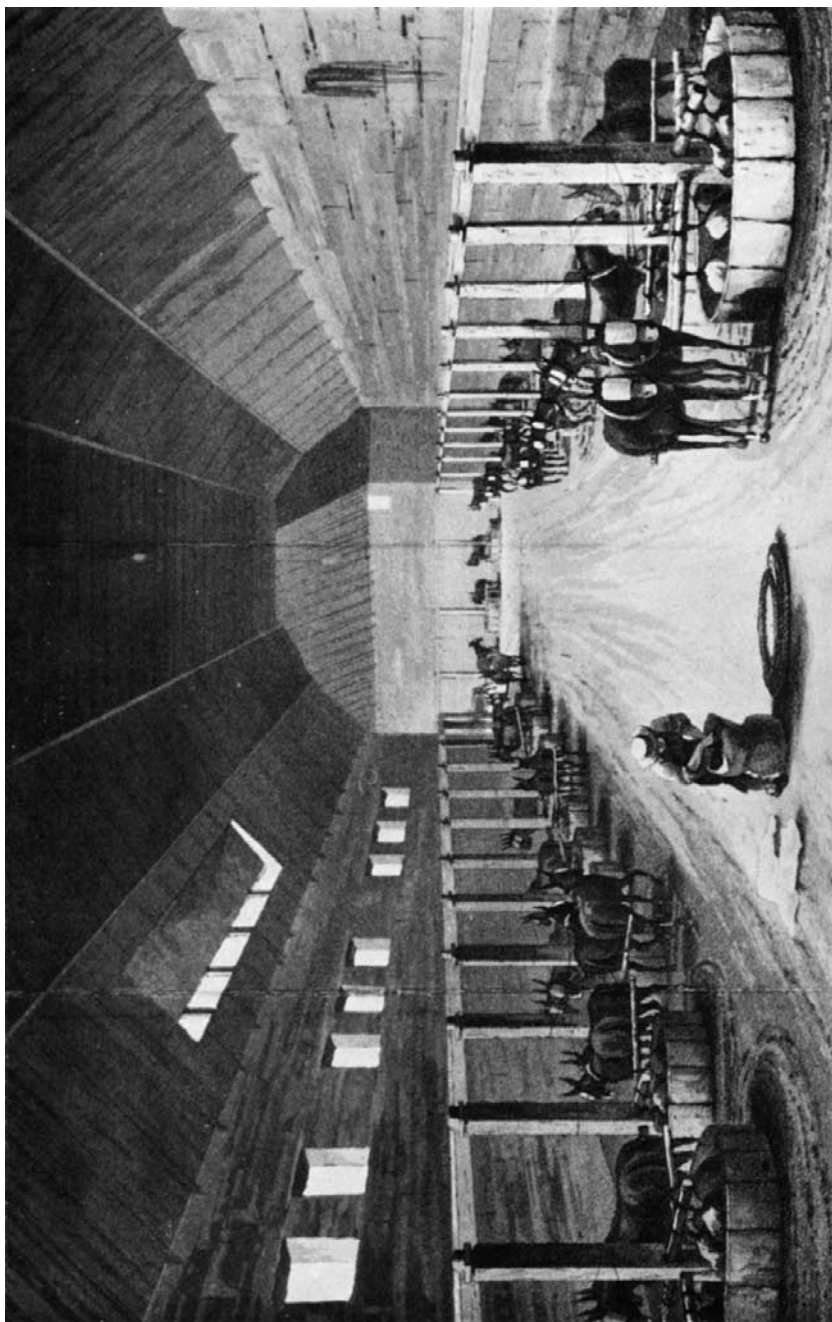
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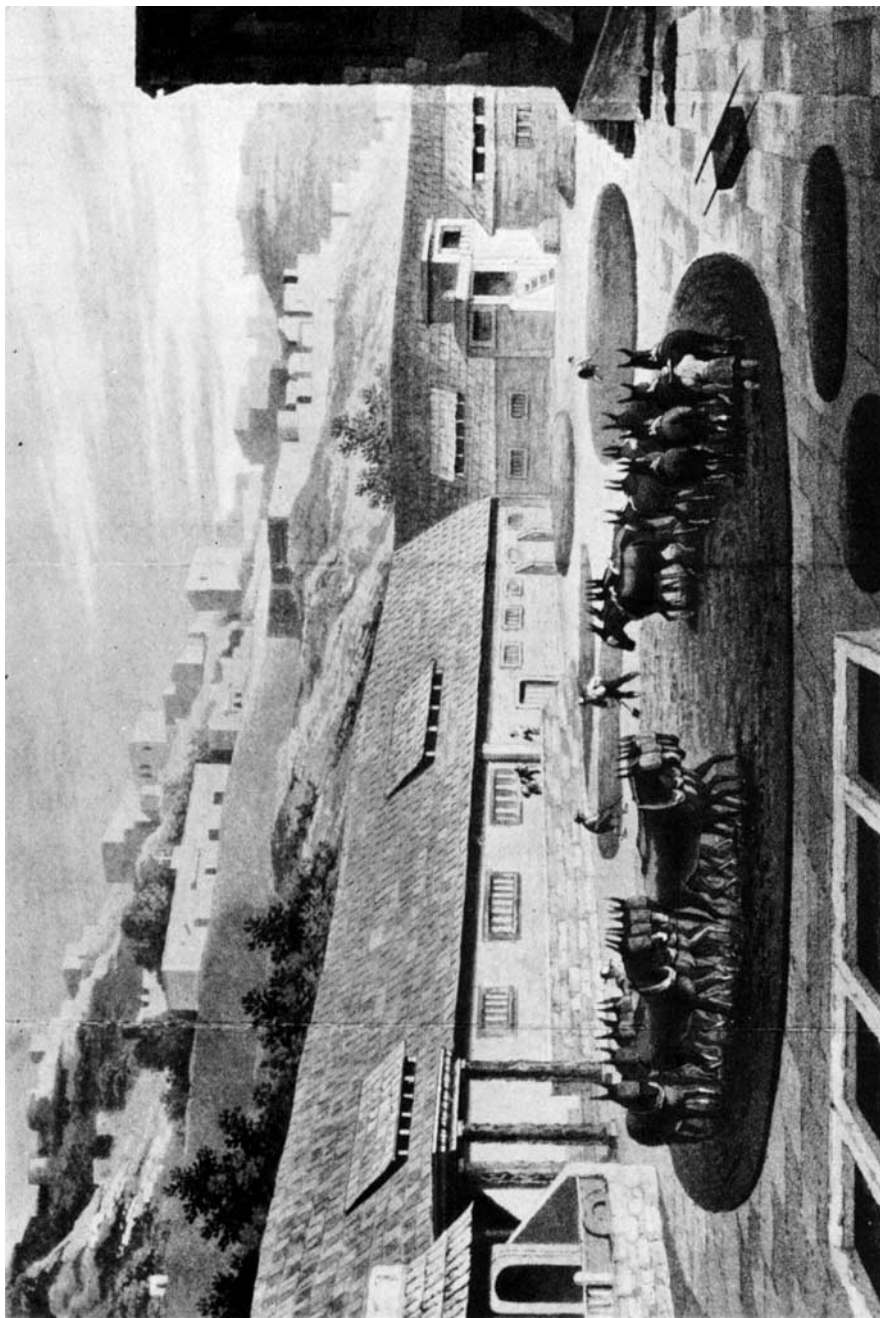
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2 *Patio of refining mill [Salgado, Guanajuato]*