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978-0-521-29173-6 - A Concise History of Mexico: From Hidalgo to Cardenas,
1805-1940

Jan Bazant

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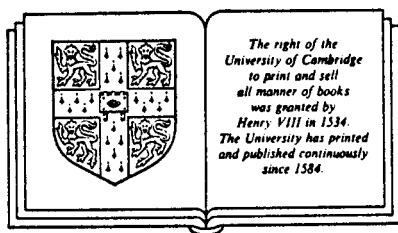
A Concise History of Mexico

from Hidalgo to Cárdenas

1805-1940

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Of all that extensive empire which once acknowledged the authority of Spain in the New World, no portion for interest and importance, can be compared with Mexico; - and this equally, whether we consider the variety of its soil and climate; the inexhaustible stores of its mineral wealth; its scenery, grand and picturesque beyond example

William H. Prescott, *History of the Conquest of Mexico*, Book I, Introduction

But it is the (Mexican) people, their origin and environment, their nature and development, their virtues and their shortcomings, their loves and hates, and the gross wrongs flung upon them by foreign foes, their long struggle for freedom, for physical and intellectual emancipation, - it is (in the description of these things) that the historian finds his most pleasing task.

Hubert Howe Bancroft, *A Popular History of the Mexican People*, Preface

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Preface

Mexico, as indeed other Latin American countries and Latin America in general, has for a number of years been the object of considerable interest in the United States as well as in other parts of the world. Many monographs have been written on different aspects of Mexican modern history, most of them emphasizing, in accordance with the prevailing trend, social and economic developments. The time has arrived to attempt a synthesis. Given the limited amount of space at my disposal, I have chosen to focus attention on what I believe to be one of the dominant, central themes of Mexican history: the struggle for land on the part of those who do not possess it at all or do not possess it in sufficient quantity to satisfy their basic needs; yet not everyone is driven by the hunger of land or more land and wealth. Some men, motivated more by pride, strive for status, prestige, honor, power, and even glory. Other aspects of Mexican history such as foreign relations, military campaigns, art, and other cultural achievements are also important, but I think that they can be best understood in the light of the basic theme I have outlined.

Considering all this and taking into account recent literature, I have constructed a political narrative set against the dark background of socio-economic forces. One chapter has been devoted to each period of modern Mexican history, with a short introduction covering the conquest and the colonization.

I am deeply grateful to my wife and to Professor John H. Elliott for many valuable suggestions and comments on the

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language as well as on the balance and focus of the book. I also wish to thank Otakar Pacold for inviting me to his winter home in Florida where I was able, in peace and quiet, to finish this book.

J. B.

August 1976