



COMMENTARY

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Many factors and forces of local expression and politics lend meaning and life to Mexican history and historiography. Some of these are of obvious ethnic cultural origin. Others, such as the *cabildo*, the *corregidor*, the bishop, and the Intendant are of obvious Hispanic provenience. The last of these Spanish-Mexican political import, the Intendancy, had a regional uniqueness and sectional influence over later political history which survived into the national era, in the rise of federalism, and was located within the states' rights sentiments of Valentín Gómez Farías, and even of Mariano Otero. The contribution of Edmundo O'Gorman to "geographic-territorial history" and the formation of the later Mexican states already discovered one effect of the Intendancy, who was both a local administrator and an imperial official. The territory which the Intendant tried to develop economically had always to be viewed as the spoke of the axle and wheel of Spanish Empire. To paraphrase Pierre Chaunu, the Intendant had always to look over his shoulder and watch the attitudes of Mexico City, Veracruz, Seville and Madrid.

Something ought to be said, briefly, about the educated and intellectual level of these intendants. On the whole, they were a non-noble elite, most of them were intelligent commoners. Perhaps we ought to look for a phrase like the "noblesse de la robe" to describe their values, the *letrados*, officials, aides, office staffs and others who worked for them. Those Intendants who came to colonial Mexico were products of the economic societies of Spain, and the generation of the Bourbon Reforms. In Mexico, as in Brazil, both the Iberian colonial systems entrusted their basic wealth and the administration of their overseas domains, to enlightened men of science, merchants, university graduates, experienced military, and others suitable to that age of "useful" (i.e. relevant) knowledge.

Many intendants and their staffs in Mexico (judging from the applications filled out and filed in the Ramo de Intendencia in Mexico's Archivo General de la Nación) were certainly forerunners of the "civil servant". Just by widening this single factor and comparing it with Brazil, it is surprising how many Intendants and their staffs were part of the literate elite scattered throughout both Ibero-American viceroyalties. What Humboldt said with admiration about the Intendant Amat of New Spain, has been said about the Intendant Camara of Brazil. The scientific-civilian library found in Guanajuato in 1802 can only be matched with that remarkable library of the Conde da Barca in Brazil in 1816. Many of the intendancy staffs brought their rich libraries with them and left them in America when they died. It is not far-fetched at all to suppose that when they got to their posts in the provinces and intendancies they always found a few Mexican creoles eager to talk with them about the new

world being born in the Old World. Creole Mexico talked "shop", books, and about ideas and events in Paris and Philadelphia with this Hispanic elite.¹

No one who has studied and handled the applications and certificates for intendency jobs, found in the Ramo de Intendencia can any longer believe that everyone coming to Mexico from Spain was a *peruleiro* who made a lot of money, or a *gachupin* who could only put on airs. Although from the Intendant down these officeholders were not part of any large population migration, they nevertheless seeded Mexico's local places, *cabildos*, and larger regions with a civil service ability and the habit (good and bad) of keeping records and paper. This literacy, although done in excess in cases, also provided the subscribers for Alzate's *Gazeta de México*, as well as Humboldt's favorable opinions.

The movement of Western European men and ideas into Mexico, from the time of Father Kino, survived the expulsion of the Jesuits. The Intendency officials were literary and conversational, and their enlightenment did something in the localities to replace the teaching void. Unfortunately, there is little or no written record of their advices, conversations, suggestions, and "spiritual" role.

Some Intendants, like Francisco Rendón of Oaxaca, did all they could in their home Intendencies, and even while visiting others, to promote and develop the local industry. They were good and faithful servants of the *Sociedades Económicas de Amigos del País* of Spain. In the little-known manuscript journal of Josiah Smith (father of the well-known Hispanist

¹ A little comparative historiography, on the French and Spanish intendant systems, would be worth while here. The latest historical study, which also connects most closely the intendency with the elite of the French Enlightenment is by Vivian R. Gruder, *The Royal Provincial Intendants. A Governing Elite in Eighteenth Century France*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1968. A marginal remark in this book refers to the Intendants as "little kings" of the ancien regime.

Two articles in the Spanish journal, *Revista de Indias*, are worth attention: Alain Viellard-Baron, "L'Intendant Americain et l'Intendant Français", *Revista de Indias*, año XI, enero-junio, 1951, N° 43-44, pp. 237-250, and Miguel Artoola "Campillo y las Reformas de Carlos III", *Revista de Indias*, año XII, oct-dic. 1952, núm. 50, pp. 685-715.

In addition to John Lynch's administrative account of the intendency of La Plata, and Lillian Fisher's overall Spanish American intendency, two more useful studies should be cited. For a recente work on the entire intendant system, see Dra. Gisela Morazzini de Pérez Enciso, *La Intendencia en España y en América*. Caracas: 1966, with a lively introduction by E. Arcila Farías.

A model study of the scientis-Intendant, with basic documents and sources, is Marcos Carneiro de Mendonça, *O Intendente Camara. Manuel Ferreira de Câmara Bethencourt e Sa, Intendente Geral das Minas e dos Diamantes, 1764-1835*. São Paulo. Companhia Editora Nacional, 1958. [Brasiliiana series], volume 301.

Had Old Spain allowed Andres del Río to be an Intendant in New Spain, the comparison of the Hispano-Mexican scientist with the Luso-Brazilian would have been complete. So far as I have read no men of science became political administrators or Intendants in Mexico, or elsewhere in Spanish America. They had legally, administratively, economically or militarily-trained intendants as a rule.

Buckingham Smith), Josiah kept the journal or memorandum of his Journey from Veracruz to the City of Mexico.

Written in 1815-1816, Smith gives an account of the economic life of the Intendancy of Puebla. In addition the Smith notes give a glimpse of one of the Intendants of that day, the rather unique figure of Francisco Rendón. Already known to us from the Diary of Francisco de Miranda, the Venezuelan, and the several monographs on Spain and the American Revolution. Identified by Smith as the Intendant of Oaxaca, Rendón "who speaks English" seems to have been visiting Puebla when Smith arrived. He took him to meet the governor, and around the city. With Rendón, as his guide, Smith saw the development of Puebla's famous local manufactures:

These of earthenware are carried to far greater perfection than I should suppose with the machinery which they have. It is very well shap'd and the patterns and colours are pretty . . . all kinds of articles are made.

But Smith also found the prices "are high compar'd with English ware".

As to the other manufactures which the Intendant kept alive in Puebla, Smith described the woolen manufacture, cotton textiles, hats, saddlery, boots and shoes. What was most astonishing to him was the absence of tools in the many manufactories ("they have very few tools and no machinery"), with Indians providing the working force. The Intendants of New Spain were unable to bring in any Industrial Revolution, and the woolen looms were very clumsy. The Puebla wool prices, notwithstanding the cheap Indian labor, were as much as 250 to 300 percent higher than British machine-produced. He liked the green glass, which he compared in quality to the Dutch.

In this part of Mexico, a few years later, we also have the writings and the lobbying of Esteban Antuñano on the industry of Puebla, and the advance of manufactures there. The special place of Puebla was not only well served by the Intendancy there. The Spanish-Mexican consulados, between Veracruz and Mexico City, maintained the Camino Real. It was not only Josiah Smith who praised the road as "deserving as much praise as any in the whole of Christendom". Soldiers, mule harriers, and convoys of teamsters were part of the throng which took Josiah Smith to Mexico City. This artery, which linked the commerce of the Atlantic seaboard with Mexico City almost guaranteed that the middleman-merchant interest of those intendancies would dominate over the infant and undeveloped manufactures of Puebla, no matter how Antuñano argued later.²

If this was the politically and economically important route of Mexican history, from the beginning, other observers preferred to draw attention

² Jesús Reyes Heróles, "El Caso Antuñano", *Historia Mexicana*, xi, oct.-dec. 1961, núm. 2, pp. 246-262, as well as his 3 volume work on Mexican liberalism; Pierre Chaunu, "Veracruz en la Segunda Mitad del Siglo xvi y Primera del xvii", *Historia Mexicana*, IX, abril-junio 1960, pp. 521-557. Chaunu stresses the importance of the same highway that held together the commercial capitalism of the 16th century that Josiah Smith travelled in the early 19th century. It must have been very importante, and well kept and guarded.

to the important of the North region of Mexico. The Bishop of Durango in 1765, like Henry Ward later on in 1827, favored the wealth, character, and customs of the *provincias internas* and Durango. As Powell and Dusenberry have indicated in recent historical writing the Iberian influences on mining and ranching were much greater than in commerce or in manufactures. Mesta practices and the *minería* prevailed from Coahuila up to Texas. The Intendants there did little to harm the vast ranching properties of the Aguayos, whose records are in the Sánchez Navarro collection at the University of Texas.³ It took the generation after independence for the advocates of more industry in those northern regions of Mexico to take up the theme of protective tariffs. As in Puebla, at about the same time, northern voices spoke out for industry and manufactures, in addition to mining and ranching. One of them was the noted Mexican historian and bibliographer, José F. Ramírez, native to the region but a national figure just the same.

Long after the Intendancy had come and gone, the local natural resources like the political powers, had come under both the economic and political controls of Mexico City.⁴

In fact the Intendancy had more direction over local and regional economic and fiscal growth than the later Mexican federal states had. The *Museo Mexicano* of 1843, the later *Museo Nacional*, as well as the *Noticias Estadísticas* of many writers, and even of *comisiones de hacienda* in the national Congress, reveal the political process and shift in this matter. But 19th century historians were slow to find out, and in the Díaz Era (1892) one individual still protested against the 19th century historians who scorned the regional studies and ignored the important history which the Mexican provinces and states had made. By a coincidence of chronology, almost 100 years before (about 1792) an Intendant had argued right up to the level of the Viceroy for the greater autonomy, local control and local use, of the vast silver riches of Zacatecas. He asserted his own responsibility to the "intendancy in his charge", and in my opinion, was far more courageous politically for local rights than many a state governor during the later federal period.⁵

³ Gloria Grajales, *Guía de Documentos para la Historia de México existentes en la Public Record Office de Londres (1827-1830)*. Comisión de Historia del Instituto Panamericano de Geografía e Historia. Comité Interamericano de Archivos, Publicación núm. 5. México: Editorial Fournier, 1967, citing F. O. 50/42 (1828), ítem N° 77: ff. 85-86, 302, 306, and "Respecto de la Compra de la Propiedad del Marqués de San Miguel de Aguayo, en el Estado de Texas y Coahuila por la Cía. Baring en 1825", p. 8.

⁴ On the matter of the Intendancy and the local cabildo, see the essays in Nettie Lee Benson, ed. *Mexico and the Spanish Cortes, 1810-1822*. Latin American Monographs, núm. 5. University of Texas, Institute of Latin American Studies, Austin, 1966. Of the 8 essays by these graduate students which deal with the intendancy and the decline of the ayuntamientos and cabildos, the most pointed is R. L. Cunniff, "Mexican Municipal Electoral Reform, 1810-1822", pp. 59-86.

⁵ The instructions of the Viceroy Caribay (1809) to provide elections of deputies to the Cortes of Cadiz opened up arguments between those who favored election by ayuntamiento and the Viceroy "who called for the elections to be held

The three Mexican monarchies of the 19th century (Spain, Iturbide, Maximilian) were different in the ways in which they tried to balance Mexico's interior parts with the center. The Spanish Intendant seems to me to provide more locally helpful recognition. They had little chance to make use of their military talents. Their expertise lay mainly in administrative, economic and related roles. But they could also talk about Jovellanos, Campomanes, Yriarte, Voltaire, even Franklin. Some of them, as we have seen, and Humboldt noted in Guanajuato, brought *buen gusto* to their regions, probably adding a touch of salon to the intendency capitals. In sum, they brought with them an enlightened elite and an educated civil force to the capitals, alongside the creole society of the cabildos. Through them, the new Spain of the Bourbons, Basques and Castilian regalism fitted the Mexican New Spain to creole independence of mind, but did not completely fit the parts to the center.

On the other hand the intendency records show very well how the plural intendancies kept their controls over the civic liberties of the creole cabildos. Their bigger influence upon future history of Mexico was the emergence of the states from the territorial boundaries and the very names of the 12 original intendancies. Of course it is not enough to merely recite the similarity of the names of the intendancies with those of many states. The facts of history, interest, protest and federalism created local counterpressures which altered political boundaries and names. Localism became freed within former intendancies so that one or more new states were carved from the one intendency. Moreover, without shrinking the shadow of the intendency over the states, it is also quite necessary to make room in this explanation for the popular forces, the ethnic elements, and even the individual biography of important Mexicans to bring all the factors into the story. Some of these in fact show contradictions, and indicate that men of many regions and even remote localities were the very ones who sustained political centralism and nationalism. In the biography of Matías Romero, later in the 19th century, and indeed in the lives and politics of the so-called "Oaxaca Dynasty", from Juárez to Díaz or the

in each capital of an intendency". Nettie Lee Benson, ed. and trans. "A Governor's Report on Texas in 1809", 58, *Offprint Series*, Institute of Latin American Studies, Austin, 1968, reprinted from *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, LXXXI, núm. 4, April, 1968, p. 607.

The political position of the intendants, and the recommendations of the Viceroy of New Spain (acting) opens on to the suggestion that the Intendants, who had centralized the local cabildo, Indian villages, local funds, wage-labor, road-building, and administration under his own power, put these elements under Mexico City, and then under Seville and Madrid. While without the Intendency there would be no Mexican state, and only incomplete urban and community studies, it is equally worth suggesting that the Intendency nurtured within the Spanish Empire what might have become a commonwealth or dominion idea, working with creoles who would be political equal to Iberians. Certainly the Intendants, if not enemies of *audiencia* judges and the Viceroy's, were not as "tory". The Intendency system seems to have elements which might have forestalled nationalism and Independence, while keeping trade, mining, and politics within the empire.

"Sonora Dynasty" from Corral to Calles, we can see the region blended into, and even lost, within Mexico's nationalism.

Nevertheless, what is meant is that national growth moved as a graduation from the unit to the whole, and not as either a romantic-doctrinaire nationalism, or one held by a core of logic. As Torres Bodet, in his first Ministry of Education, pointed out rather aptly the first cultural experience after the family was the local environment, the town, and the region, then the state, and then the nation. If education were close to history, it would then follow that path and, like history, move to the national and the international. In this process of development both the intendency at the beginning of nationhood, and *indigenismo* in more recent days have given meaning to Mexican events and aims.

The intendency, as name and fact, continued into the Iturbide years, even if Iturbide dropped the name, but kept the local divisions under the names of "provinces". Just as the intendant dropped the office of "corregidor", Iturbide ended the *partido*. The political-provincial geography and territorial outline was about the same as the intendency. The evolution of the states, territories, "Distrito Federal", departamentos, prefectures, well reflect the political talk and the historical effect of all these local forces.⁶ But that was only one aspect of the political legacy. There was another. It may be that the intendants brought with them libraries, an awareness of the Age of Enlightenment, and a commitment to some sort of economic and administrative change. But they continued to charge a political price for this. The intendency system perpetuated local and regional ignorance of the art and practice of politics. Only a few creoles took part in the modernization of the Mexican mind; fewer still took part in the political process.

The ups-and-downs of the localities and regions, especially when the time came for representative government, revealed that an inexperience in politics, compared with Mexico City, was another legacy from the Intendency. Confusion, vacillation, and ignorance of tactics, undermined the

⁶ Two historians, Edmundo O'Gorman today, and Orozco y Berra in the 19th century, have combined history and geography to trace and depict the century of regional political division and subdivision since the creation of the 12 intendancies. See also the essays by Howard Cline and Peter Gerhard in the forthcoming Handbook of Middle American Ethnology, dealing with intendancies, municipios and community plus regional roots.

In his essay on New Spain Humboldt mapped the original intendancies, while their outlines are given by O'Gorman and by Navarro García (1964). Cline (figure 23) has superimposed Humboldt's map of the intendancies upon modern Mexican states to show the derivation and connection.

Compared with the Humboldt map of 1811, the map numbered 1306 and called "Carta General de la Nueva España dividida en intendancias como era en 1810, República Mexicana, 1849", lays down some new outlines. It is in the Orozco y Berra Collection or Mapoteca, in the Dirección de Geografía, Meteorología e Hidrología, at Tacubaya, México. Most outlines of the intendancies would have to start with the map by Dr. Carlos de Urrutia, made for the second Viceroy Conde de Revillagigedo, and approved by Miguel Constansó in 1793, which is numbered 1061 in the mapoteca "Catálogo de los Planes de la Colección de Orozco y Berra".

effectiveness of municipio and states' rights power, even if they did produce great political leaders and many talents. José María Bocanegra tells the story very well in his *Memorias para la Historia de México Independiente, 1822-1846*:⁷

Preciso es de confesar que los diputados de las provincias fuimos [Bocanegra was elected from Zacatecas as one of the 25 from Aguascalientes] víctimas de nuestra inexperiencia y falta de conocimiento en la táctica de la asamblea [of 1821-2]. Lo cierto es que tampoco los contrarios eran hombres muy versados en la táctica de los cuerpos legislativos; pero tenían dos ventajas sobre los de las provincias: primera, su mayor facilidad para dirigir y lograr las maniobras y trabajos, como que su residencia en México y sus viajes a Europa les habían dado y daban práctica, y más conocimiento del mundo; y segunda, la combinación y acuerdos directivos de sus logias.

That the very same politically backward provinces could also produce clear political talent, on a different level however, can be seen from the parallel fact that Valentín Gómez Farías was elected with Bocanegra to the same Congress of 1821. There were provincial political brains, but no grass-roots political life.

Bocanegra was explicit in making clear, in his *Carta de Un Payo a un Mexicano*, that local life, provincialism in customs, and remoteness from the center of things should not lead to a provincialism of spirit because it wanted equality of representation in national government and politics with the sophisticated capital. He felt that a larger number of provincial deputies would protect the region from the influential few, and presumably would insure against the defects of inexperience and political ignorance. It is strange that he never raised the economic question of how much wealth Zacatecas (and other regions) produced for Mexico, and what political equality it should get in return. Bocanegra, who was also an elected member of the Zacatecas *Sociedad de Amigos del País* fought against the politically harmful effects of the lack of unity among the separate provinces (for that matter, so did Iturbide at the end, in 1824), but the province of the state never attained the singleness of direction and administrative direction that the larger entity of region-Intendancy possessed. Feuds, rivalry and internal disunity added to the separateness of the states under the federal system. Mexico City prevailed. Bocanegra blamed the federal system for a great deal. He blamed it for the ruin of Chihuahua. Greed and indolence in the capital prevented help to Chihuahua from the wild Indian tribes; Chihuahuans grew to hate Mexico. Many in the North became angry at the alienation of mineral resources, and especially of lands which were "quickly honey for speculators in land". Guanajuato remained aloof, and he accused its upper classes of being tied to the Spaniards, even after the expulsion laws. "Nowhere in Mexico have peninsular ideas such a hold" (II, 396). Guanajuato's rich governor was not interested in representative government, and saw only a phantom in Federalism.

⁷ Edición oficial dirigida por J. M. Vigil, 2 tomos, México: Imprenta del Gobierno Federal, 1892-1897, I, 39.

They already knew that many of the changes and revolutions of the central states had little effect upon the outer departments, wrote Bocanegra.⁸ There were others however, who saw matters in the language and self-interest of economics. When Mariano Otero wrote a short biography of F. Gamboa, another native of Jalisco (1717-1794) he added accusations against Mexico's monopoly of the coinage of the silver and the consequent effect on the economy of the regions. He was especially concerned with the producers of Guanajuato, Zacatecas, Chihuahua, Sonora. Prices were high in the interior regions; there were no competitive ports for shipment or for import. Otero used an 18th century life to report the same thing existing in his own day:⁹

In the interior all articles were very high and circulation of money so scarce that Sr. Gamboa mentions the fact that money to pay salaries of the Guadalajara audiencia had several times to be sent from Mexico. We may calculate what influence this one privilege of the capital exercised upon the population, industry, and wealth of the republic.

Nationalism, when it became secure, changed both the positive and negative side of the intendancy heritage. The creation of the states and of representative government, and the rise of strong political figures provided both force and political power. Although both Juárez and Díaz governed Mexico basically as a single national state, they were not able to go too far or too fast. The era of the restored republic and of Díaz heard many regional voices and negotiated many local problems. There were indeed many Mexicos outside of Mexico City and Veracruz, and they began to be heard through Tampico, Monterrey, Jalisco, Yucatán, Sonora and other local places.¹⁰

If the basic aim of Jalisco was for railways, or that of Tampico for modern port works, the issue of the tariff marks the economic face of regionalism for other states and regions. There were many other issues to identify the cause and to supply a shape and a name. Some dealt with education, and with the state university. Recent claims point to need for dams, roads, and local agrarian needs. Regionalism has many roots in history, although few in historiography. There are too many social, ethnic and cultural elements in Mexican nationality to see the parts that are too

⁸ Political events did not send strong shock waves into the interior. It may be that the contemporary hydrographic and hydroelectric regionalism, with dams, roads, population, and industry may hit deeper local roots, in spite of the government one-party system.

⁹ *Museo Mexicano*, t. II (1844), Mariano Otero, "Apuntes para la Biografía de Francisco Xavier Gamboa", pp. 53-64.

¹⁰ Emperor Maximilian could never carry out his full intention of visiting the provinces. Therefore the official government journal of the Department of Jalisco, tomo I, Sept. 1864, reminded him in an editorial:

"Jalisco has always been, as a considerable part of Nueva Galicia, or as a state, or as a Department, one of the most important parts of Mexican territory. The gifts which God has given us, the fertility of our soil, the abundance of all the elements of our prosperity, the physical and geographical location of our lands, have given Jalisco a high importance in the destiny of the whole nation".

far from the center. The exceptions to this enter history when the local leaders became great national figures. Historical biography notices this, and this brief commentary has passingly drawn attention to the Oaxaca and Sonora groups. But the first figures to provide recognizable local interest and accent were the intendants, and the intendency was the first institution to provide an agency. Although they in turn were loyal servants of Spain-in-Mexico, the intendants gave outline, if not impulse, to what was to become Mexico. Even when viewed so briefly here, the Spanish contribution was not all bad for Mexico's growth.