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STATE, FRONTIER AND CITIZENSHIP:

The North, between the old regime and the formation of the Mexican nation

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Summary

The work area of this study is the current state of Chihuahua in the Mexican republic. During the colonial period it was a part of the Nueva Vizcaya province. The province constituted, at the same time, part of other entities within a territorial conglomerate called *Provincias Internas* (internal provinces). All of Mexico's northern states formed part of this territorial unit (Sonora, Sinaloa, Durango, Coahuila, Nuevo León, Tamaulipas and Chihuahua) along with the current U.S. states of California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas. Although the study is focused merely on Chihuahua and Nueva Vizcaya (the province that Chihuahua segregated from), it is linked to all the territorial conglomerate of the internal provinces. All provinces shared common elements such as being non-delimited frontiers, having missions and *presidios* (fortresses) and the precariousness that distinguished them from the Hispanic territorial groups. They were grouped under a single administrative-political and military entity which was called *comandancia general* (general command). A study about Chihuahua requires a consideration of the territorial and political ensemble in which it was inserted, in order to acquire a deeper knowledge on the theme.

The question that originated and structured this thesis is: How was the state of Chihuahua formed and integrated into the Federación mexicana (Mexican federation)? The history of Mexico's establishment as a nation under a federal system has been explained by the colonial territories figures. That is how Hira de Gortari explains it from an *Intendencia* (Intendancy system) perspective. Beforehand, Nettie Lee Benson had already worked on that matter and she determined that the *diputaciones provinciales* (provincial councils or deputations) were an essential element in the federalism formation. But for Antonio Annino, it

was the territorial oligarchies that, through the *ayuntamientos* (town councils), signed the interoligarchic pact in order to create the nation by means of a federation. The aforementioned question is addressed in this study from a different approach. My approach is very closely-related to the covenant interoligarchic pact but, its central explanatory element is the provincial autonomy. It starts at the idea that the political-territorial articulation problems contributed to its appearance. The oligarchies anchored in the *ayuntamientos* had fierce conflicts when converting their urban centres to capitals and bases of local power, which determined the territorial fragmentation.

Usually, historiography has considered in its integration studies, 1821 as a starting point when Independence was proclaimed in Mexico. The same happens with the independence studies that generally start in 1810 when the uprising of insurgent forces began. Thus, those temporal arcs form real historiographical boundaries which are difficult to cross. We think that in order to achieve a deeper analysis of the creation of the state of Chihuahua, we should go through those boundaries. So, we start with two fundamental events that marked the Hispanic grouping, more precisely the North, and that originated in Spain in 1767: the Jesuit expulsion and the Sierra Morena colonization project in Spain that was implemented in the internal provinces. The first one was executed by the visitor-general José de Gálvez. The second was also implemented by him, together with other very important Bourbon public servants like Teodoro de Croix and Felipe de Neve. The temporal arc ends in 1830 with two fundamental events: the expulsion of the Spaniards and the prohibition of secret societies. The federal pact has already been signed but the federal-political-territorial articulation is questioned by those striving to have a centralist articulation. Together with Horst Pietschmann I think that the big conflict (centralism or federalism) between the vice regal centralist authorities and the provincial authorities was the colonial precedent of the acute and complex problems that dominated the XIX century independent state. These problems have been little studied for the North regarding its precedent developed in the old regime, but in my opinion it is vital for the comprehension of Mexican liberalism. Actually, Pietschmann sets the example of the viceroyalty that was determined to infringe on the internal provinces' general command autonomy. His approach seems crucial in explaining the state's nature formed by the

territorial oligarchies by means of concession, imposition and conflict.

One of the most relevant debates in the historiography about the independence period is about the level of political-territorial articulation existing between the Spanish Empire and its colonies. According to Estrada Michel, when the old regime was about to end, Spain was in the middle of its indeterminacy regarding its territorial perspective. The problem went down to the "colonies or kingdoms" and, when the war of Mexican independence began, according to Timothy E. Anna, the viceroy was in charge of a lax collection of political jurisdictions. The colonial regime was essentially a delicate balancing exercise. Social tensions and regional autonomy aspirations constituted the core of the independence process.

For some researchers, the above-mentioned created a confusing and not well territorial delimited panorama; they see the *intendencias* (Intendancy system) structuring by the monarchy as a serious attempt at reorganizing territories in order to solve the aforementioned problems. But another revisionist researchers group refutes that, stating there were no such objectives in the previous institution. Led by Beatriz Rojas, they declare that the new Hispanic (novohispanic) territorial order was delimited with a higher degree of perfection and more carefully than previously thought. Thus, the *intendencias* adjusted and reinforced the existing order.

In chapter 1 attention is given to the colonizing project based on rationalist- enlightened concepts having Sierra Morena as a model for the northern settlement. One of this project's key principles was the creation of small secular ownerships and the liberal ideological precedent of the XIX century. Historian Josefina Vázquez suggested that Carlos III's aspirations were to remodel the land or fields to turn Spain into a small farmers' nation. Also, she stated her interest in knowing if that was ever considered in the Indias (Indies). All works related to the northern colonization have had an American or local approach; they have not deepened into the ideological aspects or colonizing political actions emitted from the metropolis. We think it has been like that because they have focused on the political aspects in the expansion and consolidation of the Spanish Empire under the Hapsburg order. The Bourbon regime has been treated as having continuity although its ideological aspects are totally different to the order

that preceded it. One of this work's important contributions was to scrutinize and define the Sierra Morena project as a Bourbon paradigm, not only the colonization but also the new society that was intended to be built. Under the aegis of the Sierra Morena's paradigm, men such as Gálvez, Croix, Neve and Borica outlined and followed what prefigured a truly enlightened Bourbon programme for the internal provinces boundaries. The creation of the secular, small land owner-militiaman was ideal for the frontier and the establishment of colonies as its main instrument. For this enlightened people, colonizing the frontier was not an evangelization goal anymore, but a state power consolidation. It procured a presence to impose political, economical and social dominance. This required an agricultural procedure, a regime and a settler's statute along with a new northern society order. The colonies became the new structuring and integrating element in the frontier society.

The new settlements were multiethnic, although lure the Indians, did not mean reassessment but making them the king's subjects. Something that seems a clear manifestation of equality is just a rationalist expression that considers these men as mere support factors in service to the state. In the long run, colonies became the melting pot that propelled the blending of races and the spreading of Spanish among the Indians, incorporating them into the dominant society.

Chapter 2 explores the way in which the Gálvez-Croix clan becomes a power group. The clan enacted a series of reforms in the North and established the general command of the internal provinces as an instrument to militarize the frontier. In addition, all the general commanders' efforts were directed to get a broader definition and institutionalization of the North as a political-territorial entity. The enlightened Bourbon programme organized militias, making the frontier settler a militiaman by providing him with land. Likewise, chapter 2 analyses the northern society's geo-spatial perception of the frontier.

This chapter retakes the debates and analyses the problems of the North as a frontier and its search for its institutional definition, which has been of special interest to researchers in Mexico and The United States. North American scholars have made and consolidated various historiographic trends and schools around today's Southwestern border in the United States. However, with respect to the new Hispanic (novohispanic) aspect, the

characterization has not been achieved yet. This chapter aims to provide that characterization. The term "frontier in the Northern society" is polysemous. The way it is handled, let us see a relativistic and pluralized concept and that is why we do not talk about a frontier, but about various boundaries or borders. The Bourbon officials were determined to eliminate lax borders in order to establish a unified frontier as a key element in the North's geo-spatial definition. The line of *presidios* established from coast to coast to seal the border has been seen purely as a military movement. More than anything, its importance had to do with the geographic and social space definition; so, with the line of *presidios*, the North passed from multiple boundaries to the bi-frontier concept: an external and internal border. The term external referred to the land located North of the line and the other one referred to the ones located south. It is in 1804 when the United States bought Louisiana from France, when the new Spanish Northern society would begin to set their geographic-spatial frontiers' horizons or bi-frontier in a single borderline.

In chapter 3 the secular aspect of the Bourbons in the North is analyzed along with the Jesuits expulsion. The chapter also refers to the policies followed towards friendly and hostile ethnic groups. Here we can see one of the aspects of the enlightened Bourbon programme about frontier subject as a secular individual. We analyzed two essential institutions in the creation of the North: the missions and the ethnic groups. These topics, as many others, have been analyzed by historiography as the Bourbon period being a continuity of the Hapsburg period. In this chapter we conclude that, in reality, the Bourbons were determined to break the Hapsburg religious and social order. Historiography has considered this rupture only in the economical and political aspects. The aforementioned is very complex because, in many documents, the Bourbon officials look like fervent missionaries and many times they are referred as mission promoters; however, the Bourbons did not want this institution as a social structure and organizer in the North.

The Jesuits expulsion opened the doors to the secularization of missions but the Bourbons were unable to accomplish it when they met the North's precarious reality. The visitor-general José de Gálvez thought that the Indians' backwardness regarding their integration to Spanish culture was the responsibility of the missionaries. He accused them of blocking the Indians so they

could become small land owners and prevented colonization. But when trying to do without the missions a question arose: what would be the Bourbons' method to integrate Indians into the Hispanic culture? Their rationalist perception was that, by the mere fact of giving them a piece of land, they would become efficient and productive small farmers. Reality brutally struck Gálvez when he realized those Indians had not embraced the concept of private property, which forced the Bourbons to accept a double strategy. They kept using the missions as social expansion and integration instruments, and on the other hand they applied an extermination policy of the enemy Indians in accordance with a set of instructions provided by the viceroy Bernardo de Gálvez. The policies fought the Indians unscrupulously so that they would destroy each other. This chapter concludes that this occurred because they did not have an integration system for the Indians.

A series of attacks made by the hostile Indians, and by those who were thought to have been integrated to the colonial system, had a force and organization never seen before. Through multiethnic coalitions and a new fighting culture, the natives created a serious crisis in the northern society. The way out of this, was the application of an ambiguous policy by the Bourbon officials combining war with peace. A pact with the Indians was reached under the core idea that a bad peace was better than a good war.

Chapter 4 explores the northern political space definition regarding the uprising of Miguel Hidalgo in 1810 in the viceroyalty of New Spain. The insurgent war shows the contradictions of the complicated political-territorial articulation of the internal provinces with the viceroyalty derived from its demands for autonomy. Autonomous aspects of the internal provinces are analyzed. They have been seen and analyzed as an inherent integrated region of the viceroyalty of New Spain. However, the authorities' biggest desire was to get distant from the viceroyalty. The insurgence put the general commander face to face with the viceroy in demand of autonomy and a Northern political-administrative definition. We can see how the powerful oligarchy established in the *ayuntamiento* de Chihuahua began a battle to become the articulating governmental and cultural entity of the North.

The decisions made by the Crown regarding multiple territorial modifications and political-administrative functions of the general

commanders caused the weakening of the Project they had created themselves. The viceroys of New Spain were powerful enemies to the general commanders. If something can well define the historic relationship between the internal provinces with the viceroyalty of New Spain, it is conflict. An unknown topic we discuss in this chapter is the fight of the town of Chihuahua to become the governing entity of the entire North, that is, to become its official capital.

Chapter 5 shows how the Cádiz constitution and, from the establishment of elections in the constitutional *ayuntamientos*, deputies appointed to the Spanish Cortes and deputations appointed to provinces (*diputaciones provinciales*), altered the relationship of power in one of the internal provinces, the Nueva Vizcaya. It also shows the hidden rivalry between the Spaniards and the creoles and likewise the autonomist stance taken by the congressmen of the internal provinces. The Cádiz constitutional figures such as *Cortes, diputaciones provinciales, ayuntamientos* and citizenship are analyzed. The chapter analyses *in extenso* the different debates due to the new suggested order of the Cádiz constitution and the arising of the Mexican nation. The national unity ideology has established molds and historiography cultural barriers. That is why there is no acknowledgement in the public belief of the Northern society that the states within the federation could have been formed by themselves or integrated as independent blocks. One of the contributions of this thesis is showing that such perspective existed. It is important to know why it was not accomplished because the nation's ideological postulates are based on it.

On the other hand, a crucial and complicated topic in the North, due to the nationalist feelings it provokes, demonstrates the participation and contribution of the internal provinces in favour of independence. Mexican historiography has seen, in the few rebellion attempts, a determined participation in favour of the independence of what once were the internal provinces of the west. But the American historiography envisages a monarchist position. This study concludes that the internal provinces were autonomous in relation to the viceroyalty but they supported the monarchical order regarding Madrid.

Chapter 6 shows how the Chihuahua oligarchy created the state of Chihuahua. The unifying process of this elite towards the interoligarchic pact established the Mexican federation. This was

considered the best way to preserve the autonomous aspects already held in the *comandancia general* (general command).

This chapter analyses how regions with a strong tradition of autonomy, like those which conformed the province of Chihuahua, were integrated into the Mexican nation. This occurred due to strong internal contradictions in the separation of the territorial and political conglomerate known as the internal provinces. The general commander fragmentation was caused by the oligarchy localism present in places like Chihuahua and Durango. This also brought a higher degree of defenselessness against global problems, like the Indies War, revived in 1832, and the American threat. The search for support against those dangers worked in favour of the integration to the Mexican nation and the abandonment of the idea of provincial autonomy. When separating in two, the Northern Province was more populated and stronger, the Nueva Vizcaya remained weaker and these results spread across all provinces of the general command.

The internal provinces had a lot of armed conflicts together with political, social and territorial problems that were different to the ones authorities in Mexico had, favouring autonomy over the viceroyalty. In the internal provinces the territorial design did not have its precedent in the *intendencias*, neither were the *diputaciones provinciales* an essential political factor of Mexican federalism. They were just the means by which the territorial oligarchies expressed their opinion regarding the autonomy. In the case of the state of Chihuahua, its territorial precedent would be the electoral district created in the elections for *diputaciones provinciales* and the Spanish *Cortes*; but the establishment of that district was resolved by the territorial organizational focal points of the town of Chihuahua as its governmental and cultural core entity. The territorial oligarchy of the town created for itself a state in the federation. In contrast, the *diputados* (deputies) of the internal provinces managed themselves in three foregrounds of autonomy: the local anchored to its *ayuntamiento*, the provincial and the multi-provincial (West and East). They made big efforts to keep those large territorial conglomerates under one administrative political entity and joined them to the federation. However, the first demonstration of their autonomy was through self-government; oligarchies pushed to have their towns function as centres for state power. That is why autonomy prevailed locally

and caused those large territories to break up and join the national interoligarchic pact.

Chihuahua and many other autonomous provinces preferred or were forced to join what it used to be the viceroyalty of New Spain so a sole nation would be created instead of multiple independent nations. The internal provinces were left under viceregal orders and, along with the use of military force to restrain and put down the rebellion, ended up wearing down the viceroyalty, thereby weakening the autonomy in the territorial grouping. In addition to this, the political leaning regarding local autonomy prevailed among the most powerful *ayuntamientos* and the unity project lost its strength. Autonomy in the North was helped by the problems in the political-territorial articulation of the old regime. The territorial oligarchies wanted to preserve their power; as expressed by their autonomy standpoints. The political-territorial articulation that would be established for the new regime should have avoided lessening the autonomy. That is the reason why they saw the federal representation system as a primary solution. That constituted the core of the conflict in the decades following independence. It would be a bloody, armed and political war between Federalists (autonomists) and Centralists.

A new ethos was created based upon rationalist and individualist principles. It was organized and structured around these principles and its maximum social and legal expression continued to be the citizen. Individual rationalism is expressed in actions like private ownership and the right to vote, among others. This ideology was the main political instrument of the national states and that eventually caused an attack and undermined the communal social expressions. The new ethos construction does not begin at the declaration of independence as a new nation project definition; its ideological foundation had already been defined in the old regime. There is continuity between the expressions of the old on the Hapsburg model and the new, based in Bourbon impositions, and they were passed down to the new regime.

There are various documents that were reviewed for this thesis: in Mexico City there were the Archivo General de la Nación and the Archivo del Arzobispado de México, in the State of Chihuahua the Municipal Archive of Chihuahua, Ciudad Juárez, Parral and Jiménez, also we consulted the Archivo Histórico del Arzobispado de Chihuahua, the Archivo Histórico Parroquial de Valle de Allende, the Archivo Histórico de El Carrizal, the Archivo

Histórico del mineral Jesús María y José, the Archivo Histórico del Poder Judicial de Estado de Chihuahua), the Archivo Histórico del Registro Público de la Propiedad and the Archivo del Registro Agrario Nacional. At the University of Texas at El Paso, I studied the Guides to Microfilm Collections and Juárez Municipal Archives along with the Indies general archive online (Archivo General de Indias).